



Education and Training
Inspectorate

European Social Fund provision in
Derry City and Strabane District
Council

Kickstart to Work

Report of an Inspection in
April 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

The Derry City and Strabane District Council (The Council) is contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the Kickstart to Work European Social Fund (ESF) project. The Council operates in partnership with the North West Regional College (NWRC) and the Loughs Agency to support individuals who are unemployed and economically inactive to move closer to employment through individually tailored and specialist support to meet the participants' employability and skills development needs. The project aims to provide a holistic client-centred model through its five stage menu of support: needs assessment & personal development; employability skills and job skills management; addressing education, training and barriers; work experience and employment initiatives; and post employment support. Participants are referred to the Kickstart to Work project by the Jobs and Benefits Offices in Derry City and Strabane although there have been an increasing number of participants self-referring in response to the council's marketing campaign, social media and other initiatives. The participants have the opportunity to undertake a range of qualifications which include level one vocational qualifications in employability skills; customer service, hospitality, retail and tourism through the Hospitality and Retail, Tourism Training for Employment (HARTE); industry specific qualifications in coaching paddle sports, angling and power boating through the Maritime Programme; and employability skills. Participants can also access job opportunities in the construction industry through the Social Clauses programme.

The project is facilitated by a team incorporating strategic management and operational staff, which includes a head of business, a project manager, a project officer, a jobs brokerage officer, two mentoring and employment officers, and an administrative officer. The programme operates from a base in Derry City but has access to council premises in Strabane and across the region to facilitate the delivery of the accredited qualifications.

At the time of the inspection 126 participants¹ were registered on the project: 20 on the HARTE programme; 32 on the Maritime programme. The remainder maintain mostly weekly contact with a mentor and employment officer according to their individual needs engaging in mentoring support, curriculum vitae work, job search, and interview preparation. Ten of the current participants are currently waiting for written confirmation of job offers.

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

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

3. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Outcomes for learners	Very Good
Quality of provision	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding

KEY FINDINGS

4. Outcomes for learners

Recruitment to the project in both 2015/16 and 2016/17 has exceeded the target set for the Kickstart to Work project with 382 and 250 participants respectively recruited against the target of 246. The target of 48 of the participants entering employment on completion of their programme has also been exceeded in each year, with 76 and 67 participants respectively progressing to paid employment. The number of participants progressing to further education was exceeded in the first year of the project with 63 against the target of 41 entering a further education programme, but not reached in the second year with only 44% of the target reached. The numbers of participants progressing to other Department programmes or to voluntary work are both in line with the targets set. Seventy percent of the participants who completed their programme leave the project with relevant vocational, employability and personal development qualifications. A further fifteen per cent of participants leave the projects with enhanced confidence and self-esteem following mentoring support and employability support for curriculum vitae development, job applications and interview skills.

Most of the participants demonstrate high levels of commitment to overcoming personal challenges. They engage very well in the training and learning programmes and those who progress to employment are developing good to very good standards of work in their workplaces. The participants on the Maritime programme, were able to demonstrate an increased knowledge in water safety, life-saving, communication and overall team-building skills. The participants on the HARTE programme, also reported an improved knowledge of the Hospitality, Retail and Tourism sectors through a series of relevant industry visits. The majority of participants were motivated to achieve and all had a clear purpose for being on the programme such as support for the development of their wider employability skills, training or employment opportunities and were well informed about all aspects of the provision. Retention on the project in year 1 was good with 64% of the participants retained on the programme, and this has improved to outstanding in year 2 with 98% of participants retained.

The regular participant reviews capture well the progress that participants make in their personal development. In addition, all of the participants interviewed provided positive feedback about their experiences on the project to date and could identify the progress they had made and the range of tailored and individualised support they had received. This included, for example; improved employability skills and access to employment routes that would not be available to them outside of the project.

In addition the participants reported positively on the development of their social skills through engagement with the project, for example new friendships and support networks, improved self-esteem, confidence, communication, team working skills and overall health and wellbeing.

5. Quality of provision

The curriculum offer is matched well to the needs of the participants, and to the local priority skills development areas as identified by the council. The programme is well designed and participants have the opportunity to avail of a range of training and support opportunities including an effective induction programme and appropriate guidance from project staff, to inform the participants and to help them to self-select onto the programme which best meets their needs and interests. The council works collaboratively with the other ESF projects in the area and regularly signposts participants to other projects whose provision better meets their needs.

A range of appropriate training opportunities are offered to participants who are job ready including: the opportunity to achieve the construction skills register card (CSR); forklift qualification; Heavy Goods Vehicle license, or a security licence (SIA). The outcomes and impact of these short interventions are very good. There are also good opportunities for participants to progress to undertake an essential skills qualification in literacy and numeracy up to and including level 2 with the local college. The working relationship between the council and the local college has resulted in an effective partnership which facilitates progression opportunities for the participants on the Kickstart project.

The teaching and learning observed ranged from good to very good and is mostly very good. The best practice is characterised by supportive learning environments, access to an appropriate range of training facilities and resources, and practice such as effective planning, appropriate questioning, a variety of teaching strategies, one-to-one work, small group activities, and role play. There is a need to strengthen further the tracking of individual participant's progress in the accreditation of their employability qualification. At all stages of engagement with council staff, there are high expectations for achievement and progression, which are matched well and appropriate to the varied profile of the participants.

The feedback from employers was very positive and was characterised by the effective support provided for both the employers and participants both pre and post employment, ongoing communication, and the opportunity for two week work-experience placements which help with the selection process.

A further strength of the provision is its highly individualised approach which enables all of the participants, from a diverse range of backgrounds to realise their interests and move to or towards employment. The guidance and support offered to participants are informed effectively by a detailed initial assessment process.

The care and welfare provided for the participants impacts positively on the learning, teaching and outcomes. There are strong supportive working relationships developed between staff and participants. There is also very effective use of a dedicated barriers fund to help remove barriers to participation and progression, for example, through payment for travel, lunches, childcare, and / or uniforms for work experience placements. A high level of importance is placed on providing high quality bi-annual celebration and graduation events to celebrate participants' successes on the project.

6. Leadership and management

The management team are highly committed to the development and delivery of the project. All of the roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and all of the project staff are highly committed to addressing the wide range of learning, training and employability needs of the participants. There are clear lines of communication and all of the staff are fully committed to maintaining and sustaining a high quality service to participants.

The strategic leadership of the project is strong at all levels. The council has taken the lead in working operationally and strategically with other ESF providers to reduce replication and competition in the local area and to ensure that as far as possible participants are referred to the project which best meets their needs and interests.

The project's performance is tracked effectively on the in-house management information system. In addition, the delivery of the project is enhanced significantly by the excellent partnerships the council has developed with the local college and with the Loughs Agency and the links with a wide range of key employers. The engagement with partners and key stakeholders is collaborative, effective and flexible and results in high quality experiences for the participants.

The staff are responsive to external evaluations and feedback and continue to take account of feedback from previous ETI visits to bring about improvements. The self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes have been extended and strengthened with feedback from all stakeholders, and the very good use of data in the report. Quality assurance processes have also been enhanced to include: interim moderation of standards across the team; team teaching; weekly meetings; and the ongoing sharing of best practice. The quality improvement plan would be enhanced further by the use of more specific target setting against which progress could be more effectively measured.

The overall quality of resources and accommodation is very good. For example the project benefits from the wider resources available to the council for example access to The Guildhall for the delivery of the employability classes. It also benefits from the very good resources and accommodation offered through its partnership with the NWRC for the onsite delivery of the HARTE programme which enables greater access to technology enhanced learning. Also the access to high quality water based activities through the Loughs Agency provides opportunities for volunteering and further training that can lead in some cases to employment or self-employment.

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding participants reflect broadly the guidance from the Department. However, the project promoter needs to:

- clarify the safeguarding reporting arrangements with the two partner organisations and formalise these through the service level agreements.

7. Overall effectiveness

The Derry City and Strabane District Council demonstrates a high level of capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interests of all the participants.

The ETI will monitor how the project promoter sustains improvement.

A. Project registrations

Programme	Numbers of enrolments	% against target
European Social Fund Kickstart to Work 2015/2016	382	155%
European Social Fund Kickstart to Work 2016/2017	250	102%

B. Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework is available on the ETI website www.etini.gov.uk.

Three ETI inspectors observed and met with 16 current participants, including 12 past participants, in a range of settings including two learning and development sessions and a focus group meeting. Discussions were held with the senior management team, three trainers/mentors, the Council's head of business, two partnership organisations, six employers and a social clause focus group. The management information systems, including the tracking and monitoring systems, samples of the participants' work and individual action plans, and the trainers' 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 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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