



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

European Social Fund provision in  
Upper Springfield Development Trust  
Community Family Support Project

Report of an Inspection in  
June 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

Upper Springfield Development Trust is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee providing a range of community development and support programmes, and is contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the Community Family Support European Social Fund (ESF) Project. The Community Family Support Project aims to engage with families with high levels of social need in order to support eligible family members to realise their potential, with a focus on developing their employability skills. The project promoter, in partnership with four city-wide delivery partners<sup>1</sup>, provides a range of needs-led intervention programmes to address the participants' personal and family-related barriers to progression to employment, training or education. The project is individually-tailored and includes, where appropriate, family mentoring and support, social events, health and wellbeing activities, employability training and/or short accredited vocational courses. The participants attend sessions for a minimum of two hours each week over a six-month period, although this varies according to participants' needs and across the delivery partners.

The Upper Springfield Development Trust is managed by a chief executive officer and supported by two assistant chief executive officers, a board of trustees, programme managers and financial support staff. The Community Family Support Project is managed by a programme manager, a project co-ordinator and a recently appointed administrative assistant. In Upper Springfield Development Trust and across the delivery partners, a team of five family support mentors and five employability mentors<sup>2</sup> work with the participants, including their family, to provide and co-ordinate appropriate support interventions.

At the time of the inspection, 41 participants<sup>3</sup> were registered on the project.

## 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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Capacity for sustained improvement</b>
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Good
<b>Quality of provision</b>	Good
<b>Leadership and management</b>	Good

<sup>1</sup> Details of partnership arrangements are provided in Appendix B

<sup>2</sup> At the time of the inspection a process was in place to appoint an additional mentor

<sup>3</sup> 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

Despite the delayed start to the project, the project promoter and the delivery partners have worked hard to identify and engage positively with families in the target group. In 2015/16, 120 families engaged with the project which is just under the project target of 130; resulting in 146 individual participant registrations which is significantly under the project target of 300. In 2016/17, engagement with families increased significantly to 231 against a target of 130; resulting in 238 individual participant registrations which was under the target of 300. While recruitment in 2015/16 was too low at 56%, it improved significantly in 2016/17 to 79%; recruitment is recognised by the project promoter as an area requiring close monitoring and ongoing development. It is notable that the overall retention rate, for 2015/16 and 2016/17, is outstanding at 82%.

Most of the participants are developing well their employability skills and are increasing their social mobility. In particular, there is discernible improvement in their work readiness and, where appropriate, they are also developing positive parenting skills. While there is evidence of a minority of the participants improving their educational attainment at a basic level, the number of recognised qualifications achieved is below the project target; to date 59 participants achieved a qualification against a projected target of 120. However, of those who registered on the project, 15% of them achieved a qualification against the target achievement rate of 20%.

Over the periods 2015/16 and 2016/17, only 56 participants progressed to education and training programmes against a project target of 120; 45 progressed to employment against a target of 60; and 101 progressed to job search activities against a target of 300. However, for those who registered on the project, the progression rate to employment, education or training is 25% against the target progression rate of 30%.

A key strength of the project is the well-targeted individualised supported provided for the participants which improves significantly their personal and social skills. All of the participants interviewed reported that the project is having a positive impact on their self-confidence and personal capabilities. Through the well-documented case reviews, it is evident that the participants are addressing successfully their personal and social barriers to positive progression. It is notable strength of the project that, to date, 235 participants have demonstrated enhanced social integration, 200 have improved their family relationships and 196 engaged positively in specialist support projects, which exceeds significantly the respective project targets of 122, 142 and 81 participants.

### 5. Quality of provision

The curriculum offer is broad, balanced and tailored well to meet the assessed needs of the participants. In particular, the project is delivered flexibly and includes an appropriate range of enrichment opportunities for the participants. These include: positive parenting, walking and day trips, cooking and e-safety training. A key feature of the provision is the comprehensive and well-considered confidence building strategies that are targeted and deployed effectively to meet the diverse and complex personal development needs of the participants. In addition, there is a holistic family focus on building capacity and opportunities to enable the participants to explore and navigate more successfully possible progression pathways.

The participants benefit from a structured induction process and initial assessment which informs well their personal action plans, against which their progress is reviewed regularly. The setting of revised priorities, in light of participant reviews, in order to inform future training and/or interventions requires further refinement to ensure each participant is progressing at an optimal pace. It is also necessary for the project promoter to review and develop a more consistent approach to participant monitoring and reviewing across the delivery partners.

In the small sample of the sessions observed, the learning and development is highly effective; the sessions are characterised by high levels of participant engagement, personalised support and clear evidence of progression in developing the participant's personal capabilities.

The care and welfare provided for the participants impacts positively on their development. There is an inclusive, caring ethos fostered by the project promoter and the partner organisations. A comprehensive range of links with external agencies is in place in order to access any required specialist support for the participants. In particular, the mentors are proactive and skilled in building positive relationships with each participant in order to address effectively their barriers to progression. The participants are encouraged and supported to develop social networks within and beyond the project, which is underpinned well through the project's range of planned social events.

## **6. Leadership and management**

The project promoter has a clear and well-considered strategic vision to provide a range of projects aimed at building resilience and social inclusion within families in order to increase progression rates to employment, education or training. The project promoter and all of the delivery partners employ staff that are enthusiastic and highly committed to providing mentoring support in a sensitive manner that addresses effectively the assessed-needs of the participants.

Across the provision, the planning of the mentoring support and associated interventions is responsive to the needs of the participants, although the planning arrangements within and across the delivery partners lack consistency. While the project promoter is developing cohesive and robust planning arrangements within its own provision, there is a need to continue to standardise the planning arrangements across the delivery partners in order to effect best practice and optimise resources. It is noteworthy that the delivery partners are increasingly sharing good practice and engaging in joint planning; the recent appointment of a project administrator to strengthen collaborative planning and reviewing across the partnership is an important and timely development.

Upper Springfield Development Trust has established a pertinent range of relevant links and partnerships in order to inform, plan and facilitate the delivery of its strategic aims and objectives. In particular, the well-considered partnership with four community development charities across Belfast ensures that the Community Family Support Project is targeting well, and accessible to, families in significant need of mentoring support and training. Across the partnership, including with other ESF project promoters, communication is effective, underpinned with a shared vision and passion to achieve successfully the key aims of the project.

The quality of the accommodation and learning resources is good to very good; the premises are bright, resourced well and strategically located to provide easy access to families across Belfast. While a complement of highly-motivated, skilled and empathic mentors meet well the demand levels for mentoring support, there is limited staffing capacity to deliver training. Further consideration with regard to increasing the training capacity within the project is an important area for development for the project promoter.

Quality improvement across the delivery partnership is a high priority and supported well by the project promoter. Regular partnership review meetings and a strong focus on the accurate data capture provide a sound basis for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning. Across the delivery partnership, a good start has been made to identify key strengths and areas for development within the project. Key data is, however, not used robustly enough to inform and underpin the self-evaluation reports. As a result, the quality improvement plan does not prioritise and target well enough the key areas for improvement.

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:

- establish clearer overarching safeguarding arrangements with partner organisations, particularly in relation to implementing processes and procedures.

## **7. Overall effectiveness**

Upper Springfield Development Trust demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the participants. There are areas for improvement that the project promoter has demonstrated the capacity to address and these include the need to:

- improve recruitment to the project in order to meet better the project's achievement and progression targets;
- rigorously analyse and use data to better inform and underpin planning at all levels within and across the partner organisations; and
- strengthen further the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning process, particularly to identify, prioritise and address more robustly the key areas for improvement.

The ETI will monitor how the project promoter sustains improvement.

**A. Project registrations**

Project	Numbers of enrolments	% against target
European Social Fund Community Family Support Project, 2015/16	146	56%
European Social Fund Community Family Support Project, 2016/17	238	79%

**B. Partnership arrangements**

The project promoter, Upper Springfield Development Trust is located in West Belfast, and works in partnership with Aston Community Trust (North Belfast); GEMS NI (South Belfast); East Belfast Mission (East Belfast); and Greater Shankill Integrated Services in conjunction with Impact Training (Greater Shankill) to deliver the Community Family Support Project across Belfast.

**C. 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).

Three ETI inspectors observed and met with ten participants in three learning and development sessions and a focus group meeting. Discussions were held with the chief executive officer, assistant director, programme manager, project coordinator, the support mentors, and the four partnership organisations. The management information systems, including the tracking and monitoring systems, samples of the participants' work and personal action plans were examined. The project promoter's self-evaluation report, quality improvement plan and other relevant documentation were scrutinised.

**D. 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	
<b>Retention</b>	The percentage of enrolments measured over the full duration of their project.
<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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