

EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND CALL 2 VISIT

European Social Fund provision in
Clanrye Group Ltd

Positive Directions

Report of a Call 2 Visit in April 2022



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



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Context

The Clanrye Group is contracted by the Department for the Economy (DfE) to deliver the Positive Directions 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 April 2022, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a Call 2 visit to the Clanrye Group 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, 76 participants¹ were registered on the project.

ETI met and spoke with a sample of participants in their training, development and mentoring activities and in a focus group meeting. Eighteen percent of the participants completed the online questionnaire. All were very positive about the high levels of support they receive from the staff.

The participants reported that as a result of their participation on the project, they were experiencing reduced anxiety levels and improved mental health, confidence and self-esteem. This has empowered them for example to leave their home, join group sessions, communicate with strangers, mix socially and achieve qualifications.

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 Positive Directions 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 opportunities for additional social enterprise projects; and
- re-start external horticulture partnership projects to further enhance the skills, knowledge, and progression of participants.

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. They undertake a flexible programme that builds their confidence and addresses well their individual barriers. The curriculum includes: a range of qualifications from entry level to level 2; project work; social enterprise activities; enrichment activities, including trips and work place visits; volunteering opportunities; and, work experience. Qualifications are available in employability skills (customer service and retail), healthy living, horticulture, information and communication technology and independent living skills that match well the needs of the participants. A range of social enterprise activities help the participants to develop employability skills, including following instructions, applying numeracy skills, working as a member of a team and using customer service skills.
- The staff are highly committed and provide effective levels of support to meet the complex needs of participants. They have created an empathetic environment where priority is given to building the participants' confidence and self-esteem. The participants have the flexibility to work at their own pace, at an appropriate level. The sessions observed were characterised by the use of relevant, meaningful contexts and well-designed practical activities that match well the participants' learning styles and result in effective learning and appropriate progress being made.
- During lockdowns the project promoter moved quickly to remote delivery and developed the capacity of staff and participants to successfully deliver and engage in the programme. The remote delivery model included one-to-one and group sessions and social activities with a particular focus on mental health and well-being; the participants continue to have access to a range of online resources that have been developed as a result, including assessments, videos and well-being activities.
- All of the outcomes on the project are positive. Over the four-year period the target for recruitment has been exceeded; most of the participants have been successfully retained. The project promoter has acted on the areas for development identified in the previous inspection², including for example the need to extend the placement and employment opportunities of the participants. As a result there are high levels of progression of participants into employment or education and training, with both targets being exceeded. With Call 2 closing, any participant who is exiting Call 2 and enrolling on Call 3 will be recorded with an outcome of into education or training³.

² [European Social Fund provision in the Clanrye Group - Positive Directions project \(etini.gov.uk\)](https://www.etini.gov.uk)

³ As per DfE European Social Fund Information Memo 09/22 – Performance monitoring – updating participant data.

- A comprehensive initial assessment takes place and an appropriate action plan is developed and agreed with each participant. Progress is regularly reviewed against specific targets, with appropriate challenge and support being provided. The progress the participants are making in developing their soft skills is tracked and used well during mentoring sessions to challenge and motivate them. The project promoter has developed an on-line system to more effectively track this progress.
- There is highly effective leadership and management of the project at all levels. The staff and managers have good working relationships and the staff report that they are well supported. The staff work well together as a team with regular and effective communications. Monthly case load review meetings take place where all of the relevant staff meet with the co-ordinator. These meetings are used to monitor the participants' progress and provides good opportunities to identify, discuss and address any issues that are impacting on their progress.
- The project promoter has effective quality improvement planning processes which result in the identification of appropriate actions to further improve the provision for the participants. For example, the need to re-start external horticulture partnership projects to enhance the skills, knowledge, and progression of participants has been identified as an area for improvement as a result of the pandemic. Progress is being made on developing a number of initiatives including community horticulture projects. The actions could be further improved with more specific and measurable targets.
- The project promoter has well-developed relationships with a wide range of external organisations, including health and social care trusts, employers and further education and training. These links are used well to underpin the provision for care, welfare and support, and to enable the participants to make progress in their learning and skills through work experience opportunities.

Safeguarding

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

Overall outcome

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

APPENDIX

A. Call 2 Performance Data

European Social Fund – Positive Directions	Over the four-year period ⁴
Numbers of enrolments and % against target	404 (105%)
Numbers of participants into employment upon leaving and % against target	83 (134%)
Numbers of participants into education and/or training upon leaving and % against target	147 (131%)
Retention - Numbers and % against target	335 (83%)

B. Methodology and evidence base

The arrangements for this face-to-face and remote visit included: the observation of three sessions of face-to-face practice; discussions with participants (seven) in their training, development and mentoring activities and in a focus group meeting; discussions with volunteers and past participants, an employer (in a virtual meeting), and 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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