

EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND CALL 2 VISIT

European Social Fund provision in
Limavady Community Development Initiative

Empower, Qualify, Upskill and Learn (EQUAL)

Report of a Call 2 Visit in January 2022



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Context

Limavady Community Development Initiative is contracted by the Department for the Economy (DfE) to deliver the Empower, Qualify, Upskill and Learn (EQUAL) 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 January 2022, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a Call 2 visit to Limavady Community Development Initiative 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, 25 participants¹ were registered on the project.

ETI met and spoke in focus groups with a sample of participants, some of whom have just started the project and others who had just finished the project. Furthermore, just over half of a group of participants (13 of 24) who had just finished the project at the time of the Call 2 visit completed the online questionnaire.

All of the participants reported that they were well supported by the staff. The participants that had completed the project indicated that their self-confidence and self-esteem improved as a result.

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 EQUAL 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:

- reduce the number of participants leaving early without a positive outcome; and
- improve the monitoring and evaluation of the project.

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 offer for the participants is good and has been revised as the project has developed to better match the learning, development and progression needs of the participants. They have the opportunity to complete relevant qualifications alongside the development of their employability skills. Commercially and industry relevant work experience is undertaken through a number of social enterprises operated by the project promoter.
- The mentoring sessions observed were well-planned with the content pitched at an appropriate level for the participants. The pace of the sessions was good, the participants engaged well and demonstrated a good understanding of the work being undertaken. The staff provide high levels of support to meet the complex needs of participants, with a particular focus on their personal and social development to help them become more independent and raise their aspirations.
- All of the outcomes on the project are very positive. Over the four-year period, to date, the target for recruitment has been exceeded; most of the participants have been successfully retained. The organisation has identified an increasing number of participants with anxiety issues and is working to further support these participants through more one-to-one sessions, to reduce the number of participants leaving early without a positive outcome. There are high levels of progression of participants into employment or education and training. Participants who do not progress at the end of the project are provided with opportunities to volunteer through other services provided by the project promoter.
- Good links have been established with a wide range of external agencies and these are used well to support recruitment to the project; underpin the provision for care, welfare and support, for example dealing with mental health issues; and to enable the participants to make progress in their learning and skills development.
- There is effective leadership and management of the project. Management have taken appropriate actions to address the areas for improvement identified during the baseline visit in March 2019. The project promoter has identified, through the quality improvement planning process, the need to improve further the monitoring and evaluation of the project and to demonstrate more effectively how the project is impacting on the development of the participants' soft skills, as well as the overall impact the project is having on improving the life chances of the participants.

Safeguarding

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

The project promoter, however, needs to:

- update the policies for child protection and safeguarding young people and adults at risk, along with the other policies scheduled for review this year; and
- provide clearer reporting procedures to all staff members and participants in relation to the organisation's approach to the safeguarding of young people and adults at risk.

Overall outcome

At the time of the Call 2 visit, and in the areas evaluated, Limavady Community Development Initiative demonstrates capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the quality of provision for the EQUAL ESF project.

APPENDIX

A. Call 2 Performance Data

European Social Fund – EQUAL	Over the four-year period ²
Numbers of enrolments and % against target	228 (131%)
Numbers of participants into employment upon leaving and % against target	15 (94%)
Numbers of participants into education and/or training upon leaving and % against target	33 (127%)
Retention - Numbers and % against target	183 (80%)

B. Methodology and evidence base

The arrangements for this face-to-face visit included: the observation of six sessions of practice (face-to-face); focus group meetings with a sample of eight participants; discussions 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%

² 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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