EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND CALL 2 VISIT

European Social Fund provision in
The Orchardville Society

Ignite 2

Report of a Call 2 Visit in March 2022

The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Contents

Context

The Orchardville Society is contracted by the Department for the Economy (DfE) to deliver the Ignite 2 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 March 2022, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a Call 2 visit to the Orchardville Society 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, 201 participants[1] were registered on the project.

ETI met and spoke with a sample of participants at their work placements, during health and well-being activity sessions and in a focus group meeting. Thirty-two percent of the participants completed the online questionnaire. All of those spoken to and who responded to the questionnaire were very positive about the support and guidance they receive.

They were able to provide a range of examples of their skills development, including both vocational and wider skills. They report that the opportunities provided by the project including work placements and social activities have improved considerably the quality of their lives, particularly their confidence and self-esteem.

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 Ignite 2 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:

- re-engage participants and recover activity levels; and

- ensure the technology infrastructure is fit for the future.

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[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. Participants undertake a tailored programme that addresses well their individual needs including: wellbeing for work, with flexible coaching sessions; jobsearch skills; world of work activities with workplace visits, industry speakers and work shadowing/sampling opportunities; and, employability hub placements with vocational mentors who guide and support participants furthest from employment. While the project does not have specific targets for qualifications, there are a good range of qualifications offered. These include employability skills, well-being, personal and social development and future/digital skills qualifications, as well as qualifications in the areas of administration, catering/hospitality, retail and warehousing. The participants report that these opportunities raise their aspirations and they become more independent and motivated and well prepared to engage in meaningful work activities. In addition, the project promoter organises a wide range of social activities that normally take place in the evenings and are highly valued by the participants, including for example an adventurers club and movie clubs.

- The staff all display high levels of skill, commitment and enthusiasm, providing effective levels of support to meet the needs of participants. A particular feature of the provision is the support provided to both employers and participants. The staff, where appropriate, assist the employers to develop job roles that match well the abilities, skills and aspirations of the participants. Frequently, support continues after the participant has left the programme, including for example employment support and access to health and fitness sessions.

- During the first lockdown, the project promoter moved quickly to remote delivery and developed the capacity of staff and participants to successfully deliver and engage in the programme using a remote delivery model. This included one-to-one and group sessions, with a particular focus on mental health and well-being, including social activities. However, the pandemic has impacted negatively on engagement levels for a minority of the participants due to their wider health issues and high levels of anxiety. Currently there is a well-considered strategy to re-engage these participants after appropriate risk assessments and significant progress has been made.

- A comprehensive initial assessment takes place that includes parents/carers where appropriate. A baseline is established that clearly identifies the individual participant's strengths and barriers. This informs a comprehensive, individualised action plan which is developed and agreed with the participant. Progress is regularly reviewed against specific targets, with appropriate challenge and support being provided. All of the outcomes on the project are positive. Over the four-year period, to date, recruitment on target, and almost all of the participants have been retained. There are high levels of progression of participants into employment or education and training, with both targets

being exceeded. Most participants have retained their employment for six months or more. In addition, there has been significant achievement of accredited and non-accredited qualifications by the participants. An annual awards ceremony is held in a high profile venue to recognise the progress and successes of the participants. The participants report that taking part in this ceremony is a huge boost to their self-esteem and confidence.

- There is highly effective leadership and management of the project at all levels. The project promoter has acted on the areas for development identified in the previous inspection[2], including for example refining and embedding the quality improvement planning process. The process is well-embedded with clearly identified and well-considered actions to further improve the provision for the participants. The actions have appropriate specific and measurable targets. Through the quality improvement planning process, the need to ensure the technology infrastructure is fit for the future has been identified as an area for improvement. As a result, progress is being made on developing a digital transformation strategy by external consultants that is due to be completed in April 2022 and is also linked to the corporate plan.

- There are effective working relationships and the staff report that they are well supported by their managers. The staff work well together as a team, collaborating online to regularly support each other and share effective practice. A comprehensive tracking system is in place that management use to regularly review the progress of each participant with the relevant staff to ensure any issues are addressed at an early stage and to monitor staff caseloads.

- The project promoter has well-developed relationships with a wide range of external organisations, including health and social care trusts and employers. These links are used well to underpin the provision for care, welfare and support, which enables participants to make progress in their learning and skills, providing good e progression pathways to further education and training. The project promoter has also worked with both the public sector and private industry in order to expand its range of social enterprises, which includes five cafes to provide additional work experience opportunities for the participants.

Safeguarding

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

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[2] European Social Fund provision in the Orchardville Society – Ignite project (etini.gov.uk)

Overall outcome

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

APPENDIX

A.   Call 2 Performance Data

European Social Fund – Ignite 2	Over the four-year period[3]
Numbers of enrolments and % against target	447 (90%)
Numbers of participants into employment upon leaving and % against target	90 (103%)
Numbers of participants into education and/or training upon leaving and % against target	126 (148%)
Retention - Numbers and % against target	411 (92%)

B.   Methodology and evidence base

The arrangements for this face-to-face and remote visit included: the observation of one session of practice (face-to-face); visiting six work placements, speaking with participants and employers; speaking with a sample of participants (14) during health and well-being activity sessions and in a hybrid face-to-face and on-line focus group meeting; speaking with a sample of parents/carers (ten) in a virtual focus group meeting; speaking with a sample of employers (4) in a virtual focus group meeting; 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%

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[3] 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.