

# EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND CALL 2 VISIT

European Social Fund provision in  
The Women's Centre Derry

PROSPER 3 Project

Report of a Call 2 Visit in March 2022



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



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## Context

The Women's Centre Derry is contracted by the Department for the Economy (DfE) to deliver the PROSPER 3 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 Women's Centre Derry 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, 73 participants<sup>1</sup> were registered on the project.

ETI met and spoke in focus groups with a sample of participants during their learning and development sessions and in focus groups. Furthermore, 67% of the participants completed the online questionnaire.

Almost all of the participants found their course was preparing them effectively for their next steps of finding a job or progressing onto another course or further training. Overall, they are happy with their experiences on the course and they feel that they are making good progress on their programme. Those participants ETI spoke with stated that they have valued the opportunity to undertake courses online during the pandemic. They spoke eloquently and passionately about the positive and transformative impact the project has had on their lives and the excellent levels of support and kindness provided by staff.

## 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 PROSPER 3 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:

- review the induction process and initial assessments to ensure that they are fit for purpose; and

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<sup>1</sup> All performance data in this report was provided by the ESF project promoter.

- extend the range of qualifications available to facilitate progression to a wider range of vocational courses.

## Key Findings

The Call 2 visit identified the following key findings.

- The curriculum offer for the participants is very good: the courses are aligned to industry needs locally and to the Northern Ireland Skills Barometer. The curriculum is reviewed regularly to ensure that the participants are supported to develop and progress to higher level education, training and employment. An extensive range of accredited qualifications is available, these include: computerised accounts; book-keeping & accounts; introduction to counselling; adult social care and a wide range of vocational skills.
- As a consequence of the pandemic, the centre introduced a new qualification to help participants who are parents to support their children's learning. The participants reported that this has helped them to better understand their children and how they learn. Other recently introduced qualifications include for example a qualification supporting individuals with dementia. To further align with local skill needs, the curriculum is being extended to include, digital fabrication and parametric modelling. The inclusion of the essential skills qualifications is an important feature of the offer and crucially includes the opportunity for the participants to progress from entry level and Level 1 to Level 2.
- Following feedback received from past participants, the management appropriately reviewed the induction programme. This has included the initial assessment requirements to address participant concerns regarding the burdensome nature of the induction. This has resulted in a more manageable, accessible and user-friendly process. New vocational skill scan tasks have been introduced while literacy, numeracy and ICT initial assessments have been adapted; this informs tutors of pertinent information to enable them to provide appropriate levels of support for the participants as they progress through their course.
- The organisation is inclusive and provides the participants with a safe place in which they can meet, develop and prosper. The access to crèche facilities enables mothers to maximise their engagement on the project. The participants cite the positive impact of the project on their lives, in improving their self-confidence and communication skills and in removing or supporting them to address barriers they are experiencing. This enables them to take up opportunities to volunteer and progress to part-time or full-time employment. Career planning is facilitated by the local Further Education college's Careers Academy and participants report that this has been helpful in encouraging them to progress to further education programmes.
- The sessions observed were effective in promoting successful learning, with good use made of interactive approaches. The working relationships established between the tutors and the participants create a safe and trusted learning environment where the participants can develop and thrive.

- All of the outcomes on the project are very positive; its overall enrolment target for Call 2 has been exceeded and almost all of the participants have been successfully retained on the project. Progression to further education and training, and into employment has exceeded overall targets. Most of the participants who complete their programme successfully achieve an accredited qualification.
- Appropriate actions have been taken since the inspection of November 2016 to continue to improve the provision further. The senior management team demonstrate a strong commitment to combatting the economic inactivity of women and to the improvement agenda for the benefit of the participants. The staff commented on the clear roles, responsibilities and reporting structures, the high levels of effective teamwork and wide-ranging support from senior managers. A communication platform is used effectively to manage delivery of the project and to maintain communication between the staff, tutors and participants.
- There are well-established self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes in place. A well-developed management information system tracks and monitors the project outcomes and the participants' progress. The project promoter was agile in moving to online delivery of the courses, introducing a new blended learning platform which is populated with a good range and variety of resources to support learning. This platform continues to enable participants who are unable to attend through illness or for other reasons to successfully engage in and achieve their qualifications.
- Effective partnerships have been established with a wide range of stakeholders to support and enhance delivery of the PROSPER 3 project. For example, they work with local councils through an ESF forum to support economic engagement for women and to broaden and enrich the opportunities for women on the project.

## Safeguarding

Based on the evidence available at the time of the Call 2 visit, the arrangements for safeguarding the participants of the PROSPER 3 ESF project reflect broadly current legislation and practice.

The project promoter, however, needs to:

- review and contemporise policies and procedures to safeguard young people and adults who may be at risk.

## Overall outcome

At the time of the Call 2 visit, and in the areas evaluated, The Women's Centre Derry demonstrates a high level of capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the quality of provision for the PROSPER 3 ESF project.

# APPENDIX

## A. Call 2 Performance Data

European Social Fund – PROSPER 3	Over the four-year period <sup>2</sup>
Numbers of enrolments and % against target	828 (116%)
Numbers of participants into employment upon leaving and % against target	299 (119%)
Numbers of participants into education and/or training upon leaving and % against target	236 (150%)
Retention - Numbers and % against target	753 (91%)

## B. Methodology and evidence base

The arrangements for this face-to-face visit included: the observation of three sessions of practice (face-to-face); discussions with a sample of 20 participants during their learning and development sessions and in focus group meetings; discussions with key staff (to include quality improvement and safeguarding arrangements); and the opportunity for all 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%

<sup>2</sup> 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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