

EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND CALL 2 VISIT

European Social Fund provision in
Upper Springfield Development Trust

Community Family Support Programme - Family First
Belfast

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

Upper Springfield Development Trust is contracted by the Department for the Economy (DfE) to deliver and lead the Community Family Support Programme (CFSP) - Family First Belfast European Social Fund (ESF) project through a consortium partnership with four other organisations across Belfast. 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 Upper Springfield Development Trust 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, 102 participants¹ were registered on the project.

ETI met and spoke with a sample of participants during their learning and development and mentoring sessions, in a focus group and through one-to-one telephone conversations. They were happy with how mentors engaged with them, listened to them and helped them to access the support needed. They indicated that support has included building a curriculum vitae (CV), developing strategies for confidence building, addressing family matters and providing a listening ear and practical support with day-to-day living.

Twenty-three percent of the participants completed the online questionnaire. They all indicated that the programme is interesting, challenging and well managed. They feel confident to contact their mentor(s) or tutor(s) when they don't understand or have a query about something. They also indicated that the face-to-face sessions in the organisation are well taught and delivered and that the programme is preparing them well for their next steps. They are well informed about how to stay safe and feel safe and secure.

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 CFSP - Family First Belfast ESF project.

The arrangements for safeguarding were also included.

¹ All performance data in this report was provided by the ESF project promoter.

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 internal quality assurance audit process for the benefit of the participants; and
- improve the participants' access to meaningful training opportunities, including a level 1 award in community development.

Key Findings

The Call 2 visit identified the following key findings.

- The curriculum offer for the participants is very good. It is informed well by feedback from the project's participant focus groups and the 12 principles which underpin delivery of CFSP, notably the promotion of a strength-based perspective which recognises resilience. The qualifications on offer cover a range of credited and non-accredited courses, including personal development, employability and vocational courses. Opportunities for referral to higher level courses are also available.
- Tailored provision includes for example delivery of sessions on parenting skills, healthy family meals on a budget, developing money management skills and managing home schooling during the pandemic. Participants can avail of a core suite of 10 OCN courses, such as managing personal finances, healthy living and social media, along with free courses. A level 1 award in community development has been developed and accredited, and planning for its implementation is underway. In the effective practice observed there were strong and positive relationships established with the participants, with sessions structured and tailored to their individual needs.
- The initial Life Zones assessment is effective in targeting and reducing the barriers participants are experiencing, and features regular review points. The assessment is linked to key areas such as family set-up, employment and skills. The assessment informs individualised family and employability action plans drawn up within four weeks of starting the programme. The focus is on enhancing and improving participants' everyday lives. Over the four-year period, to date, all of the outcomes on the project are positive; the overall target for recruitment has been met, and the targets for the progression of participants into employment or education and training have been exceeded. A majority of the participants have been successfully retained on the project.
- The family support and employability mentors work with the family of participants, focusing on relationship building, establishing trust and building confidence through achievement. They engage and consult with participants to identify solutions, directly matched to the expressed needs of the families participating. The mentors are represented on all of the family support hubs across Belfast and with their backgrounds in youth, community and family support work, they have purposeful links with community based organisations and other relevant agencies which they utilise for the benefit of participants.

- The programme is well-established with regular meetings of the consortium at all levels of leadership and management focused on the delivery of provision. Appropriate actions have been taken to address the areas for development identified in the inspection of June 2017². The consortium has continued to deliver provision and provide a responsive service in a most challenging operating environment.
- An appropriate quality improvement planning process is in place. It should be refined further to more clearly: identify the key strengths and areas for improvement in the provision; and demonstrate the impact the project is having on improving the life chances of the participants. Common methodologies for monitoring and evaluation are used across the consortium partners. A reviewed, streamlined quality assurance audit process has been in place since October 2021 and has focused on releasing mentors' time to work directly with participants. They have reported that they feel more encouraged and motivated by the process, and that it does free up more time for mentoring the participants. Its continued implementation, along with the observation of practice should inform the monitoring of the quality and consistency of provision.
- Through the consortium partnership, the organisations have benefitted from learning from each other over time. An online project management computer application for partner communication and collaboration is used. On behalf of the project, through the network of the CFSP providers across Northern Ireland, the consortium is able to share good practice and lobby collectively on matters of common interest.

Safeguarding

Based on the evidence available at the time of the Call 2 visit, the arrangements for safeguarding the participants of the CFSP - Family First Belfast ESF project reflect current legislation and practice.

Overall outcome

At the time of the Call 2 visit, and in the areas evaluated, Upper Springfield Development Trust demonstrates capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the quality of provision for CFSP - Family First Belfast ESF project.

² [European Social Fund provision in Upper Springfield Development Trust - Community Family Support Project \(etini.gov.uk\)](https://www.etini.gov.uk)

APPENDIX

A. Call 2 Performance Data

European Social Fund - CFSP Family First Belfast Over the four-year period³

Numbers of enrolments and % against target	780 (106%)
Numbers of participants into employment upon leaving and % against target	129 (172%)
Numbers of participants into education and/or training upon leaving and % against target	245 (163%)
Retention - Numbers and % against target	553 (71%)

B. Methodology and evidence base

The arrangements for this face-to-face visit included: observation of three sessions of practice (face-to-face); speaking with a sample of participants (13) during their learning and development and mentoring sessions, in a focus group and through one-to-one telephone conversations; discussions with consortium partners and with key staff (including the 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%

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.

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