

EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND CALL 2 VISIT

European Social Fund provision in YouthAction Northern Ireland

GET SET for Work

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

YouthAction Northern Ireland (NI) is contracted by the Department for the Economy (DfE) to deliver the GET SET for Work 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 YouthAction NI 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, 65 participants¹ were registered on the project.

ETI met and spoke with a sample of participants during their learning and development and mentoring sessions and in a focus group meeting. Forty-nine percent of the participants completed the online questionnaire. Almost all of the participants responded very positively.

Nearly all of the respondents to the questionnaire indicated that they find the project both interesting and challenging and it is preparing them well for their progression to employment and further education and training.

The participants spoken with reported that they received high levels of support to address their mental health and anxiety issues, including in particular the 'walk and talk' sessions that they had with the staff during periods of lockdown. They all reported that participating on the project helped them to focus on their personal goals, to gain new skills and overcome their barriers and resulted in improved levels of 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 GET SET for Work 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:

- continue to prioritise the emotional wellbeing needs of young people by developing further its LIFEMAPS framework; and
- work together with other organisations to share learning and effective practice to influence government priorities to sustain essential services for young people.

Key Findings

The Call 2 visit identified the following key findings.

- The curriculum provided for the participants is very good and meets well their learning, development and progression needs. They have the opportunity to complete a range of relevant level 1 qualifications including for example employability, youth work practice, diversity and good relations, health and safety, manual handling, food hygiene, childcare, first aid and customer care. There is an appropriate focus on developing skills for life, learning and work, with for example, money skills sessions, employer-led skills building days and opportunities for volunteering and work placements. Participants spoken with provided a range of examples of skills development, including their participation in a video production called 'Hidden' that highlights disability discrimination in the workplace and which is being shown at a local film festival.
- The participants are supported by the GET SET journey process that provides them with a clear roadmap informed by a comprehensive baseline assessment which leads to individualised programmes with appropriate goals and actions. Regular reviews take place with the participants to monitor and recognise the progress they are making. The staff use well-considered youth work approaches to support the participants in their GET SET journey. The learning and development sessions observed had a range of learning activities, including team group work and whole group tasks. All of the participants engaged well and have formed good and mutually respectfully working relationships with their peers and the tutors.
- The project promoter has identified the need to further support the emotional wellbeing of the participants. As a result its LIFEMAPS framework is being developed further to prioritise and support these needs with an appropriate focus on, for example, intrinsic motivation, emotions, mindfulness, accomplishments, purpose and connections. In addition, a helpful resource has been produced which supports well and guides the participants through the framework. The mentoring sessions are enabling and empowering and linked to the LIFEMAPS framework. The discussions with the participants were focused appropriately on setting goals for their future and the action-planning was well-matched to their interests, needs and work aspirations. The participants are encouraged to be proactive in addressing their needs and realising their goals with encouragement, challenge and affirmation from the mentors.

- All of the outcomes on the project are very positive. Over the four-year period, to date, the target for recruitment, has almost been met and almost all of the participants have been successfully retained. The project promoter has taken account of the findings of the previous ETI inspection², including for example developing routes for participants to progress into employment and further education and training that have resulted in high levels of progression of participants with the target being exceeded.
- There is effective leadership and management of the project. The project promoter has a proactive board of directors, with a wide range of expertise and experience to provide continued support and challenge. The leadership of the senior management team is strategic and committed to working together with other organisations to share learning and effective practice and resources. A high priority is placed on quality improvement, and the quality improvement planning process is well embedded, and all of the staff have good opportunities to be involved in the process. Clear priorities are identified with well-considered actions and regular review to ensure the desired improvements are being made.
- All of the staff are highly motivated and demonstrate commitment to the project. They have a clear understanding of the complex need of the participants. They were well-supported to move quickly to remote and online delivery. This included the development of the virtual Rainbow Factory for performing arts and the YouthEmpowered online digital hub which is continuing to be an important resource for participants.
- The project promoter is an effective advocate for young people and has, for example, led on a successful funding application with four other youth organisations for a pilot programme to sustain essential services for young people and influence government priorities.
- There are well-established links with a range of organisations who work with young people, including 187 youth work member organisations across NI. Effective links have also been established with the wider youth service, jobs and benefits staff, employers, Health and Social Care Trusts and schools. The project promoter is also working in partnership with local communities to help young people build pathways for their future. These links are used well to support recruitment to the project and underpin the provision for care, welfare and support.

Safeguarding

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

² [European Social Fund provision in YouthAction Northern Ireland - GET SET for Work \(etini.gov.uk\)](https://etini.gov.uk)

Overall outcome

At the time of the Call 2 visit, and in the areas evaluated, YouthAction Northern Ireland demonstrates a high level of capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the quality of the provision for the GET SET for Work ESF project.

APPENDIX

A. Call 2 Performance Data

European Social Fund – GET SET for Work	Over the four-year period ³
Numbers of enrolments and % against target	761 (90%)
Numbers of participants into employment upon leaving and % against target	227 (96%)
Numbers of participants into education and/or training upon leaving and % against target	346 (111%)
Retention - Numbers and % against target	748 (98%)

B. Methodology and evidence base

The arrangements for this face-to-face and remote visit included: the observation of eight sessions of practice (face-to-face); speaking with a sample of participants (15) during their learning and development and mentoring sessions and in a focus group meeting; discussions with key stakeholders (employers and board members); 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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