

EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND CALL 3 VISIT

European Social Fund provision in
Fermanagh and Omagh District Council

Access to Success, Progression, Inclusion, Recognition
and Employment (ASPIRE)

Report of a Call 3 Visit in October 2022



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



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Context

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council is contracted by the Department for the Economy (DfE) to deliver the Access to Success, Progression, Inclusion, Recognition and Employment (ASPIRE) European Social Fund (ESF) project, as part of a third Call for projects which will run from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. 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 October 2022, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a Call 3 visit to Fermanagh and Omagh District Council on behalf of DfE to evaluate the capacity of the project promoter to identify and bring about improvement in the quality of the provision.

Views of participants

At the time of the Call 3 visit, 154 participants¹ were registered on the project.

The ETI met and spoke with a sample of participants during their learning and development sessions and in a focus group. They were highly positive about the individualised advice, guidance and support provided. They value the opportunities to gain qualifications, develop a curriculum vitae, and participate in work experience placements. They reported that the programme had helped to build their confidence and self-esteem and supported them well to progress towards employment.

Nine percent of the participants completed the online questionnaire. They reported that they find their programme both interesting and challenging and it is preparing them well for their next steps, either into employment or further training or education. They also indicated that they feel well-supported and are happy with their experiences on the project and feel confident to contribute to discussions in training sessions.

Focus of the Call 3 Visit

During the Call 3 visit, ETI evaluated the effectiveness of the quality improvement planning processes and focused on two of the key areas which the organisation had prioritised for improvement through its self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes:

- to prioritise targeted recruitment of the economically inactive; and
- to increase access to the provision for those facing barriers due to rural isolation.

The arrangements for safeguarding were also included.

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

Key Findings

The Call 3 visit identified the following key findings.

- Input from employers has been used to develop a broad and appropriate curriculum that meets well the needs of the participants, allowing them to progress to employment and/or further education and training.
- The curriculum provided includes level 1 programmes in Information Technology, health and safety in the workplace, skills for employment, training and personal development, payroll for business, computerised bookkeeping, and social media. In addition, there is a good range of occupationally relevant short courses including autism awareness linguistic phonics, child protection training, construction skills register, first aid at work, foundation food safety, manual handling, paediatric first aid and refresher forklift licence. Fast track options are also available to participants where appropriate.
- While delivery currently takes place in Fermanagh Rural Community Initiative premises in Enniskillen and in council premises in Omagh, there are also plans to work with community organisations to deliver the provision in other more accessible locations.
- The training sessions observed were effective and underpinned by the staff's clear understanding of the holistic needs of individual participants. The participants receive high levels of support from the staff and very good working relationships have been developed. An appropriate range of strategies were used to engage the participants, and they have made very good progress in their learning and development.
- The project promoter has strategically planned the recruitment of participants, to ensure that they have sufficient time to complete their programme and progress from the project. To date two-thirds of the overall target number of participants have been recruited. Very good progress has been made by the participants, with a significant number of level 1 qualifications and industry specific qualifications being achieved by the time of the visit. Good progress is also being made on achieving the targets for participants moving into employment and further education and/or training.
- The project promoter reported that of those aged between 16 and 64 in the council area, 30% are economically inactive; therefore, recruitment from this target group is prioritised and monitored closely. Several strategies have been implemented, including working with schools and community groups to engage this hard-to-reach target group.
- The project promoter is also prioritising increasing access to the provision for those facing barriers due to rural isolation which is a particular issue in the council area. The project promoter is working successfully with rural transport initiatives to provide affordable travel for the participants to attend sessions in Enniskillen and Omagh. When possible and appropriate, on-line learning is being used to make the provision more accessible. The staff work very well together in both teams and across both sites in Enniskillen and Omagh.

- The strategic leadership at all levels is highly effective with very good partnership working involving a wide range of key stakeholders, including the local health trust, schools, employers and the community and voluntary sectors. Overall, the leadership and management are planning effectively for learning and quality improvement, including planning for sustainability and progression of the participants. The quality improvement planning process is well-embedded and used to promote improvement of the provision. The leadership is actively working to secure alternative funding sources to enable the project to continue post-March 2023.

Safeguarding

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

The project promoter, however, needs to:

- ensure that that the safeguarding champion undertakes the appropriate training as soon as possible; and
- improve the safeguarding signage in rooms used by the participants on both sites.

Overall outcome

At the time of the Call 3 visit, and in the areas evaluated, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council demonstrates a high level of capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the quality of the provision for the ASPIRE ESF project.

Appendix

A. Call 3 Performance Data

European Social Fund – ASPIRE

Since 1 April 2022²

Numbers of enrolments and % against target	237 (66%)
Numbers of participants into employment upon leaving and % against target	50 (46%)
Numbers of participants into education and/or training upon leaving and % against target	12 (50%)
Retention - Numbers and % against target	226 (95%)

B. Methodology and evidence base

ETI observed ten sessions of practice, spoke with participants individually and in a focus group meeting, had discussions with key stakeholders, including employers and collaborative partners and with key staff (including quality improvement and safeguarding arrangements). All participants had the opportunity to complete a confidential questionnaire. Inspectors also scrutinised relevant data and documentation.

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 1 April 2022 – 17 October 2022.

Overall outcome

ETI use one of the following outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the project promoter:

At the time of the Call 3 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 3 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 3 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 for the Economy 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 3 visit, the arrangements for safeguarding the participants of the xx ESF project reflect current legislation and practice.

Based on the evidence available at the time of the Call 3 visit, the arrangements for safeguarding the participants of the 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 3 visit, the arrangements for safeguarding the participants of the xx ESF project are unsatisfactory. <DN insert detail>.

ETI will return to the project promoter within six working weeks to monitor and report on progress in addressing the safeguarding issues which have been identified.

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