

EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND CALL 3 VISIT

European Social Fund provision in
Include Youth

Give and Take

Report of a Call 3 Visit in January 2023



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



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Context

Include Youth is a regional rights-based charity with an office in Belfast and a further six offices in Armagh, Ballymena, Derry/Londonderry, Enniskillen, Newtownards and Omagh. The charity is contracted by the Department for the Economy (DfE) to deliver the Give and Take European Social Fund (ESF) project, as part of a third Call for projects which will run from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

The project is targeted at young people aged 16 to 24, who are not in education, training or employment and aims to improve their employability, personal and social development, enhance inclusion, and promote integration and good relations. It works with, and supports, young people who are care experienced, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) and from disadvantaged communities.

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 January 2023, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a Call 3 visit to Include Youth 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 participants were registered on the project (all performance data in this report was provided by the ESF project promoter).

The ETI met and spoke with a sample of participants during their learning and development sessions and in focus groups. A small number of participants also completed the online questionnaire. All of the participants spoke very positively about the extent to which they are supported by the youth workers and other staff. They appreciate how the staff actively listen and respond to their individual and group needs, within a welcoming and caring environment. They value the in-house provision for the essential skills in Information and Communications Technology (ICT), literacy, and numeracy, and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and the opportunity to achieve qualifications. All of them enjoy their wider experiences on the project, including the range of practical activities such as cookery, circus skills, and volunteering in a foodbank. They also value the opportunities to meet, socialise and develop friendships with peers.

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:

- develop a system for data capture that allows reporting on impact beyond the outputs requested by individual funders; and
- review and develop further direct observations of practice.

The arrangements for safeguarding were also included.

Key Findings

The Call 3 visit identified the following key findings which include any areas for improvement to be addressed for the remainder of the third Call.

- The curriculum provided is well-matched to the participants' needs and aims to address the many barriers they experience. It is focused on raising aspirations, building confidence and self-esteem, and promoting health and well-being. The flexible curriculum delivery suits well the learning styles of the participants, with the provision of small group learning and development sessions and regular one-to-one mentoring sessions. The mentoring sessions are facilitated by a youth worker or social worker assigned to the participant on referral to the project. When required, specialist social worker input and transition support is also provided to enable the participants to progress to, and remain engaged in employment, education and/or training.
- All participants can access accredited qualifications, along with non-accredited opportunities, such as for example, life skills development through cookery, gym participation, and weekly support for a local foodbank. A key component of the project work is that the participants prepare, cook and eat food together, often sharing recipes and their experiences from different cultures. Accreditation is available at level one in employability skills, progression to employment and personal development, as well as in the essential skills (ICT, literacy, and numeracy). Where appropriate, participants undertake supported work experience placements.
- The organisation has recently received centre approval to deliver ESOL, allowing it to develop further its work with UASC. The delivery of ESOL classes provides additional support to a greater number of young people in the Belfast Trust area and at the other Give and Take sites across Northern Ireland. The organisation works in partnership with colleagues in the statutory, community and voluntary sectors to ensure best practice with UASC.
- Key features of the organisation are the innovative and creative approaches used to connect participants to positive role models. The organisation recognises the value and example that past participants provide to participants. As a result, a new role has been developed called the Expert By Experience (EBE) model of participation, whereby previous project participants, who are also care experienced, are employed, supported, and trained to mentor current participants. There are currently five young people in EBE roles across the Give and Take sites; this further embeds the active participation of young people, meeting their own needs, as well as advocacy and inclusion across the organisation.
- Work experience and employment opportunities are provided for participants within and outside the organisation. There are effective, supportive partnerships, for example, with a social enterprise business, which provided the opportunity for a young person to gain meaningful paid work experience.

- In the sessions observed, the staff demonstrated empathetic and supportive working relationships with the participants. As a result, the participants engaged well in the activities and were developing as appropriate their employability, personal and social skills. Through discussion, the staff facilitate the participants to plan for themselves, with affirming feedback and goal focused action planning. To improve this process further, the action plans need to identify and capture the participant's targets and skills development, aligned to an associated review process which demonstrates progression more clearly. The information gathered from the initial assessment and the monitoring of distance travelled in overcoming barriers needs to be used better to inform these plans.
- Almost all of the project staff are youth work trained. All of the staff are caring and sensitive, with a sound understanding of the needs, challenges and issues facing the participants. They are committed and enthusiastic and their skills are well-matched to their job roles.
- A review of the process for first-hand, direct observation of practice has taken place in consultation with the staff; they are very supportive and recognise the value of this process. Supporting documentation has now been agreed to underpin the observation cycle and this will inform further the ongoing development of practice and professional learning at individual and organisational level.
- The overall recruitment target has been exceeded and almost all participants have been retained on the project. Progression to employment to date is at 63% of the target, and progression to further education and/or training has exceeded the target. The project promoter has also set internal targets for qualification achievement: to date, 226 (50%) young people have achieved a level one qualification against a target of 65%; and 257 (57%) young people have completed a vocationally relevant course against a target of 65%.
- The quality improvement planning process is embedded into the work of the project. Areas for improvement or further development and the associated actions required are identified clearly and are based on regular feedback from participants and staff. In order to develop this process further and to complement the review of direct observation of practice, a review of participant-centred documentation is required to capture more holistically the outcomes from the initial assessment, including the participants' barriers and skills on entry, and progression during and on exiting the programme.
- The staff are engaged in exploratory work around data capture processes, to develop a system that will capture, analyse and disseminate more effectively the information pertaining to the organisation's programmes and provision. Through their work with external consultants, they have now identified the system which best meets their needs. Funding constraints have prevented the organisation from moving to the next stage and investing in the system. Alongside this work, Include Youth has recently trained all staff in a new process to measure and capture the development of participants' wider employability, personal and social skills. The staff have appropriately recognised the need to collate more effectively the information on individual participants and to continue to integrate the new process for recording wider skills development.

- The strategic and operational leadership and management of the project has secured effective and mutually beneficial working relationships with the five Health and Social Care Trusts (the Trusts). The youth work staff work closely with their social work colleagues in the Trusts to understand and address the issues which face the participants. The Trusts' staff report that Include Youth is an inclusive and innovative organisation, citing in particular the flexibility of the provision, the support provided during and after participation, the EBE model and the range of appropriate, supported work experience placements.
- As well as its work with the Trusts, Include Youth has long established and well-conceived partnerships with a range of voluntary, community and statutory organisations. These collaborative partnerships help the staff identify, plan for and advocate on behalf of young people who face major barriers to education, employment and training. The organisational values of equality, inclusion, opportunity and integrity are well embedded into their interactions with participants, their key stakeholders and evident in the working relationships among the staff.
- Highly positive feedback was received from a range of stakeholders on how Include Youth is clearly congruent to its values, prioritising the needs and welfare of the young people in all interactions. They highlighted the appropriateness of the name of the organisation and how well the organisation's inclusive ethos permeates all that it does in working with and on behalf of young people.
- Overall, the leadership and management is planning effectively for learning and quality improvement, including planning for sustainability and progression of participants. Include Youth is involved in a range of collaborative funding bids to continue delivery of its work and to support participants as they move towards the end of Call 3. Its core work with care experienced young people, which is funded by the Trusts, will continue.

Safeguarding

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

The project promoter, however, needs to:

- develop further the adult safeguarding policy to update the definition of adults at risk of harm and in need of protection; and
- extend further the external reporting arrangements for both child protection and adult safeguarding, to include contact details for the regional child and adult gateway teams, particularly in relation to those young people who do not have a social worker or link to a Trust.

Overall outcome

At the time of the Call 3 visit, and in the areas evaluated, Include Youth demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the quality of provision for the Give and Take ESF project.

APPENDIX

A. Call 3 Performance Data

European Social Fund – Give and Take

Since 1 April 2022
(1 April 2022-23 January 2023)

Numbers of enrolments and % against target	453 (113%)
Numbers of participants into employment upon leaving and % against target	38 (63%)
Numbers of participants into education and/or training upon leaving and % against target	219 (122%)
Retention - Numbers and % against target	9 (98%)

B. Methodology and evidence base

ETI observed four sessions of practice, spoke with participants during their learning and development sessions and in focus groups, had discussions with key stakeholders, including the Trusts, work experience providers and employers. ETI visited Include Youth offices in Belfast and Armagh and had discussions with key staff (including the quality improvement and safeguarding arrangements). 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%

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 the 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 the 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 the 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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