

EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND CALL 3 VISIT

European Social Fund provision in
Roe Valley Community Education Forum

Learn2Earn

Report of a Call 3 Visit in December 2022



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



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Context

Roe Valley Community Education Forum (RVCEF) is a registered charity delivering training and development initiatives along with support services across the Roe Valley. More recently its services have been extended to cover other areas within the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area.

RVCEF is contracted by the Department for the Economy (DfE) to deliver and lead the Learn2Earn European Social Fund (ESF) project, as part of a third Call for projects which will run from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. RVCEF delivers the project in partnership with Ballycastle Community Workshop Training Limited (BCW) and West Bann Development (WBD) based in Coleraine. This project is aimed at the unemployed and economically inactive.

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 December 2022, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a Call 3 visit to RVCEF 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, 57 participants¹ were registered on the project.

The ETI met and spoke with a sample of participants during their learning and development sessions and in focus groups. They commented positively on the opportunities provided to sample learning and work experiences across a range of vocational areas, as well as to develop their confidence by meeting new people and establishing new friendships. In addition, they reported improvement in their Information Technology (IT) skills through engagement with the project.

Thirty-seven percent of the participants completed the online questionnaire. They all reported that: their programme is well managed; the organisation has provided clear guidance around acceptable and unacceptable behaviours while they are learning; the sessions in the organisation are well delivered; and the programme is preparing them well for progression to employment or education and/or training.

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

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 ensure that overall project targets are achieved; and
- to provide targeted individual support for the participants to enable progression.

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.

- An appropriate curriculum is provided to best meet and support the learning and development needs and interests of the participants. They have opportunities to undertake a range of level 1 awards including barbering, business administration, introduction to health and social care and children's and young people's settings, essential skills in literacy and numeracy, food hygiene, hairdressing, IT skills, and skills for the workplace. The standard of the training accommodation and physical resources in place to support the delivery of the project is good.
- The tutors and mentors are well-experienced in working with participants with learning, personal and social development needs, and are committed to supporting their progression. Almost all of the participants present with barriers to progression; they have varied previous educational achievements and experiences. The staff display good levels of skill and commitment and have established productive working relationships with them, developing well their aspirations and personal confidence.
- The sessions observed were well planned and effective. The participants engaged purposefully in activities, developing knowledge and their confidence, communication, employability and teamworking skills. They demonstrated a range of skills, for example the proficient use of software applications to prepare a written report and provide a verbal report back on a piece of research they had completed on local social services.
- Non-accredited workshops, specialist support and signposting to a range of other appropriate organisations help the participants overcome their individual barriers to progression and employment, including accessing support for emotional health and wellbeing. During Call 3, a professional counselling service for participants has been made available to all partners across the project, and appointments can be initiated through referrals by project staff or self-referral by the participants. The counselling service has been impactful in helping some participants deal with anxiety or social isolation.

- Effective systems are in place to track and monitor the progress the participants are making. Initial assessment and the monitoring of distance travelled informs a well-rounded personal action planning process. Within the plans, targeted individual support is identified to enable the participants to overcome barriers to progression. The action plans are reviewed and updated regularly, with a detailed engagement log capturing any actions taken to deal with issues arising.
- There is a clear focus on ensuring that overall project targets are achieved. The recruitment of participants to the project to date is 70% against the overall target. In order to address the shortfall in recruitment, additional provision is planned across the partnership for January 2023, including a stress management course in WBD and a cookery course in both WBD and RVCEF. The project promoter should consider and review the overall target for recruitment with DfE.
- Almost all of the participants recruited have been retained on the project. Progression of participants to employment to date has been positive, at 82% of the target. The target for progression to education and/or training has been exceeded. The management team is committed to ensuring that as many of the participants as possible, who remain on the project at the end of Call 3, complete and achieve their individual targets. The partnership is also investigating other funding opportunities to meet the needs of those in the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area.
- The project is led and managed effectively, underpinned by mutually respectful relationships established between managers and staff of RVCEF and its partner organisations. Team meetings are held monthly to manage the project, to address emerging issues and to share best practice. Stakeholder feedback indicates that effective communication and working relationships have been developed with the organisation.
- Overall, the leadership and management is planning appropriately for learning and quality improvement, with a self-evaluation and quality improvement planning process in place. Informed by a concise evaluation of the quality of the project, relevant areas for improvement have been identified in the action plan, including planning for sustainability and the progression of participants.
- A good range of links and partnerships exist with stakeholders including statutory agencies, community and voluntary organisations for referral and recruitment purposes.

Safeguarding

Based on the evidence available at the time of the Call 3 visit, the arrangements for safeguarding participants of the Learn2Earn ESF project reflect broadly current legislation and practice.

The project promoter and its partners, however, need to develop further:

- the adult safeguarding policy to include reference to adults in need of protection and the categories of abuse for both child protection and adult safeguarding; and
- reporting arrangements to consistently include the contact details of designated staff in each partner organisation and their local child-protection and adult gateway teams.

Overall outcome

At the time of the Call 3 visit, and in the areas evaluated, RVCEF demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the quality of provision for the Learn2Earn ESF project.

APPENDIX

A. Call 3 Performance Data

European Social Fund – Learn2Earn

Since 1 April 2022²

Numbers of enrolments and % against target	98 (70%)
Numbers of participants into employment upon leaving and % against target	18 (82%)
Numbers of participants into education and/or training upon leaving and % against target	20 (154%)
Retention - Numbers and % against target	9 (91%)

B. Methodology and evidence base

ETI observed four training and development sessions, spoke with a sample of participants in focus group meetings, had discussions with key stakeholders and with key staff across all the partner organisations (to include 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%

² 1 April 2022 - 5 December 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 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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