

# EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND CALL 3 VISIT

European Social Fund provision in  
Springboard Opportunities Ltd

JobWorks+

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

Springboard Opportunities Ltd (Springboard) is a registered charity supporting young people and communities, with a focus on helping people maximise their positive choices.

Springboard is contracted by the Department for the Economy (DfE) to deliver the JobWorks+ 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 (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 Springboard 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, 26 participants<sup>1</sup> were registered on the project.

The ETI met and spoke with a sample of participants during a learning and development session and in two focus groups. They all report that their confidence and resilience has improved through participation on the project. They are proud of the work-related skills they are developing, including teamworking. They are already applying their new skills and qualifications achieved across a range of voluntary and employment opportunities (youth groups, summer schemes, swim coach) in their local communities. They feel well supported and valued, and appreciate the opportunity to inform and enhance the delivery of the programme through frequent “check-ins” with staff.

Thirty-seven percent of participants completed the online questionnaire, including current participants and those who have recently left the project. All reported that: the programme was well managed, interesting and challenging; the induction process prepared them well; and, overall they were happy with their experiences.

## 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:

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<sup>1</sup> All performance data in this report was provided by the ESF project promoter.

- to continue to increase recruitment to the project and the progression of participants into employment, in line with the targets set, for the remainder of Call 3; and
- to develop a wider range of employer partnerships.

The arrangements for safeguarding were also included.

## Key Findings

The Call 3 visit identified the following key findings.

- The curriculum provided is matched well to the individual learning and personal development needs of the participants, aged from 16 years to 24 years who are not in employment, education or training. The project has four development pathways, of which one is mandatory. The mandatory pathway 'Engage' includes a detailed induction and assessment stage to set personal, training and employment goals which inform an individualised Personal Training Plan. The individualised programme can then be enhanced as appropriate by one of the other three pathways: 'Enable' which allows the young person to focus on intensive personal and professional development; 'Explore' which focuses on needs led mentoring; or 'Empower' which helps participants navigate the labour market and successfully access employment or further education/training options. An effective aftercare service is provided post-programme.
- The participants are assigned an employability worker on entry to the project who agrees an individualised programme with them which best meets their needs, provides regular one-to-one personal support, and tracks their progression in removing barriers to progression and developing soft skills and job readiness. Where appropriate, the employability workers also signpost participants to a personal development coach to support and address their individual barriers to progression through, for example, a six-week programme to address anxiety and promote emotional wellbeing. In the session observed participants enjoyed working together and learning from each other through a well-planned and meaningful activity.
- Through the short, tailored programme, usually three to four weeks in duration, informed and underpinned by the outcomes of initial assessment, the participants can access a range of accredited and appropriate level one qualifications such as Leadership in Youth Work and Stewarding, and Vocational Skills, as well as the Construction Skills Register (CSR) cards. They also benefit from opportunities to develop and enhance work readiness skills to support their transition into further education, training, and employment.

- The employability workers are flexible in their approaches to supporting participants with their development. Staff are passionate and committed to supporting the needs and aspirations of the participants through for example: helping them to develop routines, stay motivated, safe, and healthy. There is an appropriate focus on helping participants to remove barriers to learning, through both practical and emotional support. Discussions with the staff and participants highlight the sensitive and person-centred ethos and approaches across Springboard as an organisation. The emphasis is clearly placed by staff on the development of positive and trusting working relationships with the participants to identify their skills, dispositions, interests, and barriers to progression.
- There is an awareness that recruitment must be managed better, with improved planning for exit and progression of participants to employment. While there is a continued focus on recruitment, the overall recruitment is in line with the target set to date. There is also a clear focus on increasing into employment outcomes (at 52% percent against the target to date), with staff actively planning additional recruitment events and identifying employers who require part-time staff. These events will target participants seeking to work, but who need to work less than 16 hours per week. The target set for participants progressing to education and/or training has been exceeded. In addition, the organisation has set a target for the achievement of level 1 qualifications and to date has achieved 48% of their overall target. Almost all of the participants recruited have been retained on the project.
- The project is well-managed, with effective tracking of the progression of participants through an internal monitoring system. The staff report that they are well supported in their roles and have good opportunities to undertake continuous professional development through a range of training including online courses. More recently training has focused appropriately on trauma informed practice and emotional wellbeing.
- A quality improvement planning cycle is well-embedded into the work of the organisation. Key and appropriate areas for improvement have been identified and agreed with the staff team. However, the associated actions for promoting improvement should be more specific and measurable. Overall, the leadership and management are planning effectively for learning and quality improvement, including planning for sustainability and progression of the participants. The organisation is planning for the continued promotion of sustainable outcomes from Call 3 and have started the process of identifying alternative funding streams in order to continue this type of provision.
- Effective partnerships are well-established with the local council, and a range of training organisations and employers (including JMD Training, Eventsec, Leadership through Sport and Business, British Telecom). These are being extended further, with a wider range of employer stakeholders to: continue to provide a range of employment and training opportunities specific to the needs

and aspirations of the participants; and support and enhance delivery of the project. Employers report positively on the good match of participants who are referred to their programmes. These partnership arrangements provide employment opportunities and in some cases an apprenticeship programme with accredited specialist qualifications.

## **Safeguarding**

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

## **Overall outcome**

At the time of the Call 3 visit, and in the areas evaluated, Springboard demonstrates a high level of capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the quality of the provision for the JobWorks+ ESF project.

# APPENDIX

## A. Call 3 Performance Data

European Social Fund – JobWork+

Since 1 April 2022<sup>2</sup>

Numbers of enrolments and % against target	105 (81%)
Numbers of participants into employment upon leaving and % against target	30 (58%)
Numbers of participants into education and/or training upon leaving and % against target	41(128 %)
Retention - Numbers and % against target	6 (94%)

## B. Methodology and evidence base

ETI observed a learning and development session, spoke with a sample of participants during the learning and development session and in two focus group meetings, had discussions with key stakeholders, including employers and training providers and key staff (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%

<sup>2</sup> 1 April 2022 - <DN Insert date of visit>.

## 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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