

# EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND CALL 3 VISIT

European Social Fund provision in Springvale Employment  
and Learning

YouthStart

Report of a Call 3 Visit in November 2022



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



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## Context

Springvale Employment and Learning is contracted by the Department for the Economy (DfE) to deliver the YouthStart European Social Fund (ESF) project from July 2022; delivery of which began in August 2022. The project is 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.

Following an initial baseline visit in September 2022, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a Call 3 visit in November 2022 to Springvale Employment and Learning 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, 25 participants<sup>1</sup> were registered on the project.

The ETI met and spoke with a sample of participants during their learning and development and one-to-one mentoring sessions. The participants engaged openly with ETI and their tutors and employability work coaches, speaking about their barriers to progression and how they are being supported to address these.

Thirty-six percent of the participants completed the online questionnaire. They reported that: the programme is well-managed, interesting and challenging; they are well-informed about how to stay safe and feel secure when in the organisation or participating online; and they know who to go to when they have a problem or concern. Overall, they are 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:

- to further develop effective tracking and monitoring of participant engagement; and
- to develop opportunities for participant progression to employment.

The arrangements for safeguarding were also included.

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

## 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 project is targeted at young people aged 16 to 24, who are not in education, training or employment and the curriculum provided is well-matched to their needs. All participants can access accredited qualifications, along with non-accredited provision, including employability, personal development, and both individual and group health and well-being sessions. An “IT agenda” programme provided through partnerships with employers allows participants to access training and work placements, with a guaranteed interview at the end. The opportunity for participants to undertake essential skills has recently been introduced, to date the uptake has been low.
- A key area for improvement, identified through the self-evaluation process, is the development of a shorter intervention programme, to meet the needs of those more able participants to enable their quicker progress to employment.
- There was detailed planning for the learning and development sessions observed. While there were good working relationships and focused questioning to engage participants individually, the sessions would have benefitted from more planned opportunities for group discussion and team-working to promote active learning.
- Through the one-to-one mentoring sessions, the coaches support well the participants to address individual barriers to employability and to develop further their confidence, resilience and self-esteem. They are encouraged to realise and develop further their employability skills, and to raise their aspirations, most having had previously negative experiences in education. Where required, there is signposting of participants to a range of specialist emotional and mental health organisations to support them to overcome their barriers to progression.
- Appropriately priority is being given to the further development of more effective processes for tracking and monitoring participant engagement as part of the quality assurance cycle. This includes the continued development and implementation of the learner profile proforma, identified as an area for improvement at the ETI baseline visit. While it now captures well the outcomes of the initial assessment of learning needs and any barriers to progression, it should be better used to: support participants to set individual progression targets; inform the participant action plan; and plan for the delivery of provision. It should also capture more effectively information about the progress participants are making at key review and exit points, including the overall development of their soft skills, to better demonstrate the impact the project is having on improving their life chances.

- Recruitment has been identified as an area for improvement. While almost all of the participants recruited have been retained on the project, the number of participants recruited to date is low at 33% against the overall target. Progression of participants to employment has also been appropriately identified as an important area of improvement; at the time of the Call 3 visit, none had yet progressed to employment. The project promoter is in the process of developing academies in hospitality and retail to help address this. The number of participants progressing to education and/or training is low at 36% against the target. It is necessary that the project promoter consider and review as appropriate the overall targets with DfE.
- Overall, the leadership and management has identified and appropriately prioritised areas for improvement, including the planning for learning and quality improvement, sustainability and progression of participants. These prioritised areas should be more clearly and succinctly defined in the quality improvement plan, with associated actions and measurable targets. The experiences of staff within the wider organisation in undertaking self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes should be used to support the project staff in developing further the project's processes.
- There is a commitment to ensuring that all participants recruited, and who remain on the project when Call 3 ends, can complete. The project promoter is also reviewing how longer-term support can be provided for participants at the end of Call 3, if required.
- Almost all of the project staff have youth work backgrounds, and they all have a range of experiences working with young people with learning, personal and social development needs, as well as particular individual barriers. In order to further support their ongoing professional development, it is important that staff have access to appropriate professional learning opportunities.
- The organisation has a range of well-established links and partnerships from which the project can benefit.

## Safeguarding

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

## Overall outcome

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

# APPENDIX

## A. Call 3 Performance Data

European Social Fund – YouthStart

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

Numbers of enrolments and % against target	25 (33%)
Numbers of participants into employment upon leaving and % against target	0 (0%)
Numbers of participants into education and/or training upon leaving and % against target	9 (36%)
Retention – Number of early leavers and % against target	1 (96%)

## B. Methodology and evidence base

ETI observed three learning and development sessions, two one-to-one mentoring sessions and spoke with the participants in these sessions, had discussions with key stakeholders, including employers and a facilitator with industry 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 – 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 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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