

EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND CALL 3 VISIT

European Social Fund provision in The Prince's Trust in
Northern Ireland

Journey to Success

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

The Prince's Trust is a United Kingdom-wide charity supporting young people aged 11 to 30.

The Prince's Trust in Northern Ireland is contracted by the Department for the Economy (DfE) to deliver the Journey to Success 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 aimed at young people aged from 16 years to 24 years who are not in employment, education or training. It 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 The Prince's Trust in Northern Ireland 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, 171 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 reported that staff are supportive and empathetic, that they knew who to contact if they had an issue or problem, and that the support they received was individualised and tailored to meet their learning and development needs. All of them were able to provide examples of how they had benefitted from their time on the programme, for example, the development of their communication and employability skills, undertaking a work-experience placement or being supported into part-time employment.

Eight percent of the participants completed the online questionnaire. They all indicated that: they receive accurate, timely updates and information; their programme is well managed; they feel confident to contact their mentors/tutors when they do not understand or have a query about something; and 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:

¹ 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 or education or training, in line with the targets set, for the remainder of Call 3; and
- to refine the progression planning process to better capture the participants' holistic journey, achievements and distance travelled while on the project.

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 matched appropriately to the individual learning and personal development needs of the participants. Informed by the outcomes of initial assessment, the participants access a range of programmes that are tailored to address their barriers to progression, promote their personal and social development and support their transition into education, training and employment. These include pre-employment programmes which support the development of the participants' skills and competences through, for example, group activities, community projects, and work experience placements. An employment programme with a range of local, regional and national employers supports progression to full-time or part-time employment; and an enterprise programme allows the participants to explore, with the support of an experienced volunteer/mentor, the possibility of setting up their own business and becoming self-employed. In addition, participants can avail of opportunities to become volunteers or youth ambassadors for the Prince's Trust in Northern Ireland.
- Project participants have opportunities, through wider Prince's Trust focus group sessions, to give their views on a range of issues including the content, design and quality of the available programmes. Going forward, it will be important for the organisation to continue to review the curriculum offer and the quality of the programmes available, to ensure that they remain responsive to the evolving needs, interests, and aspirations of the participants.
- Each participant is assigned a youth development lead on entry to the project who agrees an individualised programme with them, provides regular one-to-one personal support, and tracks their progression. A range of processes are in place, including the use of progress plans and 'My Journey' records, to chart progress and development. The processes need to be more integrated and streamlined, including the revision and development of the progress plans to incorporate the outcomes of initial assessment and information of engagement with the participants. The information could also be used more effectively to inform the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning process. The participants would also benefit from more detailed recording and reporting of the progress being made in the development of their skills and achievement of their personal targets and goals.

- The majority of the learning and teaching observed was effective. In the more effective practice the sessions were well planned, the content was relevant, effective questioning was used to stimulate discussion, and the participants were engaged and enjoying their learning. In the less effective practice, the sessions were overly tutor-led. The use of online platforms made discussions on wellbeing challenging, and non-verbal communication was difficult to ascertain. Going forward, it will also be important to develop clear guidance to inform and support guest speakers, mainly to ensure consistency in the quality of the sessions they deliver for participants.
- The staff have developed caring and sensitive relationships with the participants; they have a clear understanding of their needs and are flexible in their approaches to support them with their learning. There is an appropriate focus on helping participants to remove barriers to learning, through both practical and emotional support. For example, the youth development leads also signpost participants to other partner organisations to support and address their individual barriers to progression; a number of participants are currently accessing counselling support through an external provider. Discussions with the staff and participants, highlighted the sensitive and participant-centred ethos and approach across the organisation.
- While there is an awareness that recruitment has to be managed better, with improved planning for exit and progression of participants a priority, the project promoter should consider and review as appropriate the overall targets with DfE. Overall, two-fifths of the recruitment target has been realised to date and there has been positive progression of participants into employment or education and training. Almost all of the participants recruited have been retained on the project. Senior management report that their intention is to support participants who have enrolled on the projects to progress regardless of their enrolment date. The organisation has indicated it will not cease working with or supporting Journey to Success participants at the end of Call 3.
- Staffing across the Prince's Trust organisation was recently restructured and as a consequence, staff involved in the delivery of the Journey to Success project have undertaken externally delivered management training, which has supported the development of more collegial working relationships and practices. The quality improvement planning process needs to be further embedded into the work of the organisation, particularly at an operational level. The areas for improvement need to be identified more specifically and the associated actions should be more measurable, with their impact on the quality of the provision being more regularly reviewed and evaluated. Overall, there is sufficient evidence that the organisation is planning appropriately for learning and quality improvement, including planning for sustainability and progression of participants.

- The staff report that they have good opportunities to undertake continuous professional development through a range of training including online courses, shadowing opportunities, availing of flexible working arrangements and attending celebration days. A strong emphasis has been placed within the overall Prince's Trust organisation on enhancing safeguarding practices and structures through: appointing dedicated safeguarding staff, developing a shared safeguarding platform, and developing a progressive accredited training framework. Locally, a dedicated safeguarding adviser and three safeguarding champions have been appointed to provide easily accessible advice and guidance to staff. In order to support these developments better, safeguarding policies and procedures should reflect more closely Northern Ireland legislation and practice.
- The project staff have established mutually beneficial partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders across the education, community, business and youth sectors. The sector knowledge, skills and understanding underpinning these partnerships contributes well to the delivery of the project and supports the development of the participants' employability and transversal skills.

Safeguarding

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

The project promoter, however, needs to:

- develop the safeguarding policy to reflect more closely the child protection and adult safeguarding legislation of Northern Ireland; and
- update the reporting arrangements to include named contacts internally and the contact details for local child and adult gateway teams.

Overall outcome

At the time of the Call 3 visit, and in the areas evaluated, The Prince's Trust in Northern Ireland demonstrates capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the quality of the provision for the Journey to Success ESF project.

APPENDIX

A. Call 3 Performance Data

European Social Fund – Journey to Success

Since 1 April 2022²

Numbers of enrolments and % against target	343 (41%)
Numbers of participants into employment upon leaving and % against target	38 (37%)
Numbers of participants into education and/or training upon leaving and % against target	98 (31%)
Retention – Number of early leavers and % against target	11 (97%)

B. Methodology and evidence base

ETI observed four session observations, spoke with current participants during their learning and development sessions and with current and past participants in a focus group meeting, had discussions with key stakeholders, including a delivery partner and a youth ambassador, and key staff (including 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 – 4 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 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 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 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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