

EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND CALL 3 VISIT

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

Reaching Further

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 Reaching Further 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 people aged from 18 years to 30 years who may have additional support needs, for example, those with a disability, mental health needs, ex-offenders, care experienced and asylum seekers. 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 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, 246 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 were keen to share their experiences of being on the project. They all spoke very positively about the tailored, personalised and empathetic support which they receive and how flexible the staff are in meeting their needs. They are very proud of their achievements through their participation on the project. The participants spoke of the high levels of pastoral care and support they receive and the difference that this has made to their lives. In addition, they spoke highly of the range of cultural learning experiences and informative discussions that they have had with the staff.

Seven percent of the participants completed the online questionnaire. All of them indicated that the Prince's Trust provided clear guidance and rules around acceptable and unacceptable behaviours while learning, and all felt confident to engage in discussions and to ask questions if they did not understand something. Almost all of them reported that their programme was well managed and was both interesting and challenging.

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 further develop the provision for the care and welfare of young people, staff and volunteers; and
- to embed further, effective equality, diversity and inclusive practices across the provision.

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 well to the individual learning and personal development needs of the participants, supporting the development of their personal, social and employability skills. Informed appropriately by initial assessment, the participants access a range of courses and programmes from the suite available through the wider Prince's Trust organisation. These focus on addressing their barriers to progression through promoting personal and social development and supporting transition into education, training and employment. There are opportunities to develop participants' employability skills through pre-employment programmes which include group activities, community projects, and work experience placements progressing to full-time or part-time employment. Participants who wish, are able to explore, with the support of an experienced volunteer/mentor, the possibility of setting up their own business and becoming self-employed. They can also avail of volunteering opportunities and youth ambassador roles.
- The participants are assigned a youth development lead on entry to the project who provides them with regular one-to-one personal support, agrees an individualised programme with them, monitors their progression and development and supports them pastorally.
- A range of processes are in place such as progress plans and 'My Journey' records to chart the progress and development of each participant; these are reviewed and updated regularly. Going forward, it is important to streamline the processes, including the revision and development of the progress plans to incorporate the initial assessment and engagement information. The participants would also benefit from more detailed recording of their skills, goals and achievements. A greater focus on the efficacy and impact of the support and learning experienced by the participants will assist the organisation in their quality assurance of the project.

- The majority of the learning and teaching observed was effective. In the more effective practice, the sessions were well planned, relevant to the needs and interests of the participants, the staff used effective questioning to stimulate discussion among the participants, who were fully 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, sensitive and empathetic relationships with 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 the participants to remove barriers to learning, through both practical and emotional support. The youth development leads also signpost participants to other partner organisations to support and address their individual needs, aspirations and interests. As a consequence, a number of participants are currently accessing counselling support through an external provider. Discussions with the staff and participants, highlighted the sensitive and people-centred ethos and approach across the Prince's Trust organisation.
- Following the return to face-to-face work, the Prince's Trust have identified the need to develop further their provision for the care and welfare of young people, staff and volunteers. The focus on young people has included: the integration of wellbeing content into all of the core programmes; the provision of counselling support for young people through a partner organisation; and enhanced, regular roundtable focus group meetings on mental health and wellbeing with young people. For staff, actions identified and taken to date include: a focus on the promotion of self-care and work-life balance including hybrid and flexible working patterns; a new, supportive performance management system; and a refresh and intensification of the work of the social and wellbeing committee to plan a range of staff activities both during and after working hours. There is evidence of the organisation listening to young people and taking responsive action, for example, enhanced information on Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) provision for young women and the introduction of two additional volunteer progression mentors. Actions have been identified to extend the provision to include volunteers.
- The organisation has also focussed on embedding further, effective equality, diversity and inclusion practices across their provision and programmes. This work began with a detailed staff survey to identify their levels of confidence and skills in working with underrepresented groups. Included in this work has been a focus on inclusive practices linked to LGBTQ+ and with asylum seekers. Through effective partnership working with key organisations the Prince's Trust has worked hard to provide support and training to meet identified staff needs. For example, they have linked with a LGBTQ+

organisation to work towards their accreditation framework. The organisation's outreach work to connect with asylum seekers and to support their development and progression is a strength of the programme. The staff have built an excellent rapport with the participants and through sensitive discussions with the participants have learned what their needs are and how best to support them.

- There is an awareness in the Prince's Trust that recruitment has to be managed better, with planning for exit and progression of participants a priority. Overall, nearly half of the recruitment target has been realised to date. There has been progression by participants to employment, education and/or training. However, the project promoter should consider and review as appropriate the overall targets with DfE. Almost all of the participants recruited to date have been retained on the project. The Prince's Trust intends to support any young person enrolled on the programme regardless of their enrolment date beyond the end of Call 3.
- Collegial working relationships exist among staff. The organisation recently restructured its staffing and project staff have engaged in management training which supports the development of effective working structures and relationships. The staff report that they have opportunities to undertake continuous professional development through a range of training approaches 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 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 and achievable, 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 effectively for learning and quality improvement, including planning for sustainability and progression of participants.
- 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 of these partnerships supports the delivery of the project and the development of the

participants' employability and transversal skills. For example, an external programme facilitator spoke of the supportive relationship fostered with the Prince's Trust, the well-attended sessions and engagement by participants which has resulted in participant progression to full-time employment with the facilitator.

Safeguarding

Based on the evidence available at the time of the Call 3 visit, the arrangements for safeguarding participants of the Reaching Further 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 Reaching Further ESF project.

APPENDIX

A. Call 3 Performance Data

European Social Fund – Reaching Further **Since 1 April 2022²**

Numbers of enrolments and % against target	299 (47%)
Numbers of participants into employment upon leaving and % against target	29 (29%)
Numbers of participants into education and/or training upon leaving and % against target	23 (31%)
Retention - Numbers and % against target	10 (97%)

B. Methodology and evidence base

ETI observed five sessions, spoke with a sample of participants during their learning and development sessions and in a focus group, held discussions with key stakeholders, including a delivery partner, a volunteer mentor and other collaborative partners and with 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 - <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 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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