EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND CALL 3 VISIT

European Social Fund provision in Training for Women Network Ltd

Promote, Advance and Support for Success (PASS)

Report of a Call 3 Visit in October 2022

The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Contents

Context

Training for Women's Network Ltd (TWN) is a network for the promotion of women's training and development throughout Northern Ireland, through policy, training, and education.

TWN is contracted by the Department for the Economy (DfE) to deliver the Promote, Advance and Support for Success (PASS) 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 TWN 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, 33 participants[1] were registered on the project.

ETI met and spoke with a sample of participants during a learning and development session and in a focus group. The participants spoke about how they have accessed help and developed greater confidence, self-awareness, and self-motivation through the project. Participation has enabled some to now move into employment.

Twelve percent of the participants completed the online questionnaire. They reported that the project is well managed, they are making good progress and are well informed about how to stay safe and secure when in the organisation or engaging online. They know who to go to when they have a problem or concern.

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 improve further the systems used to track and monitor the progress of the participants; and

- to keep the recruitment of participants under review during the remainder of Call 3.

The arrangements for safeguarding were also included.

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[1] 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.

- TWN's PASS project is targeted at young female participants. Its referrals to date have come mainly from a Community Partners Network. At the time of the visit, as well as project delivery provided directly by the project promoter, there is provision through an established relationship with Short Strand Community Forum and a more recently formed relationship with Glow NI, with sessions facilitated by procured tutors from these organisations. There are service level agreements in place with both organisations. Importantly participants from within and across communities have come together through the project and they have fostered new friendships, as well as establishing working relationships.

- The curriculum provision aims to support participants' personal development and enhancement of their employability skills. There has been a necessary emphasis on establishing a more consistent induction process within TWN (and across partner organisations) led by core TWN staff. Induction is now more clearly focused on developing a fuller understanding of participants' prior educational attainment, work experiences and previous programmes, to better inform their training needs analysis and identification of potential progression opportunities.

- All participants can access a range of online non-accredited training programmes such as personal development, information technology (IT) skills, employability skills if required. Participants have benefitted from undertaking driving theory.

- The project promoter's digital learning environment is in the process of being updated to provide better access to content using mobile technologies. The reviewed online suite of available courses is being added to and updated, for example, with the introduction of training on more contemporary IT applications, mentoring, mental health, wellbeing and safeguarding. Support in the access and use of this digital learning environment is provided to participants, as well as TWN staff and procured tutors.

- Through group and one-to-one mentoring sessions, the project staff deliver a holistic programme of support which allows participants to address particular barriers, such as building confidence, self-esteem, and resilience. They can also undertake volunteering opportunities. Where required, there is signposting of participants to a range of community, statutory and support organisations to enable them to overcome their barriers to progression. The learning and development session observed, was characterised by good working relationships and appropriate contextualisation of the learning.

- The systems in place for tracking and monitoring delivery and participant progression, including the development of their soft skills, are being updated. The intent is to better capture in a timely manner the participants' prior attainment and barriers, as well as the ongoing impact the project is having on improving their life chances.

- The number of participants recruited, to date, is low at 41% against the overall recruitment target. The continued review of recruitment methods is appropriately identified as an area of improvement. Engagement is underway with a series of identified organisations that the project promoter has worked with previously. Where an agreement is reached to undertake procured delivery with any of these organisations, it has been indicated that further service level agreements will be put in place.

- Similarly, to date, the number of participants progressing to employment and education and/or training is low at 40% and 18% against the respective targets. A strategic meeting is planned for mid-December 2022 to review delivery and progress against targets at that point and for the remainder of the project. This will be a critical point at which if necessary to consider overall targets with DfE.

- Almost all of the participants recruited have been retained on the project. There is planning for exit and progression of participants, with the management committed to ensuring that every participant recruited to the project can complete with appropriate support mechanisms for those who require these at the end of Call 3.

- A full-time youth worker works with TWN participants on the project and has additional responsibility for college liaison/other community opportunities. As well as procured tutors, the staffing complement includes those who work across this project and another ESF project delivered by TWN. There are staff with clearly identified responsibility for safeguarding on the project and across TWN. Arrangements are in place for reporting on safeguarding by the other organisations delivering the provision.

- Overall, there is sufficient evidence that the leadership and management is planning for learning and quality improvement, including planning for sustainability and progression of participants. The self-evaluation and quality improvement planning process has been informed by a review of the previous quality improvement plan. However there needs to be more robust and rigorous analysis and use of available data and information to better evaluate the impact of the project.

Safeguarding

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

The project promoter, however, needs to:

- develop further the code of conduct, to reflect more fully the operational roles and responsibilities of the project staff and ensure all policies are ratified.

Overall outcome

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

APPENDIX

A.   Call 3 Performance Data

European Social Fund – PASS	Since 1 April 2022[2]
Numbers of enrolments and % against target	33 (41%)
Numbers of participants into employment upon leaving and % against target	4 (40%)
Numbers of participants into education and/or training upon leaving and % against target	7 (18%)
Retention – Number of early leavers and % against target	2 (94%)

B.   Methodology and evidence base

ETI observed one learning and development session, spoke with a sample of participants in the session and in focus groups, had discussions with key stakeholders 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%

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[2] 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 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.