



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

European Social Fund provision  
in Acceptable Enterprises

Hands on Training

Report of an Inspection  
in November 2016



The Education and Training Inspectorate  
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education  
Department for the Economy  
and other commissioning Departments

CUSTOMER  
SERVICE  
EXCELLENCE



CSE



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%

## Performance levels

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels when reporting on outcomes for participants, on provision for learning and development, on leadership and management, and on the overall quality of the provision.

Current performance level
Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

## Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the organisation:

<b>Overall effectiveness outcome</b>
The organisation has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the participants. The ETI will monitor the organisation's progress in addressing any area(s) for improvement through its annual scrutiny inspection.
The organisation demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the participants. The ETI will monitor the organisation's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement through its annual scrutiny inspection.
The organisation needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the participants. The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement, which includes the need to produce an improvement plan, which will be the basis for a formal follow-up inspection.
The organisation needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the participants. The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the areas for improvement, which includes the need to produce an improvement plan, which will be the basis for a formal follow-up inspection.

<b>Key Performance Indicators and Definitions</b>	
<b>Retention</b>	The percentage of enrolments measured over the full duration of their programme.
<b>Achievement</b>	The percentage of participants who completed their targeted individual outcomes.
<b>Progression</b>	The percentage of successful completers who achieved positive progression.

## Contents

<b>Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. Inspection method and evidence base	1
2. Focus of the inspection	1
3. Context	1
4. Overall findings of the inspection	2
5. Outcomes for participants	2
6. Provision for learning and development	2
7. Leadership and management	3
8. Overall effectiveness	4
Appendix	
A. Project registrations	

## **1. Inspection method and evidence base**

Two ETI inspectors observed 16 participants in two learning and development sessions; and interviewed 12 participants in focus group meetings. Discussions were held with the chief executive officer, the project co-ordinator, the four client support officers, and the owner of a partner organisation. Samples of the participants' work and personal action plans were examined; planning documentation for the learning programmes, the project promoter's self-evaluation report and other relevant documentation were scrutinised.

## **2. Focus of the inspection**

The inspection focused on:

- the outcomes for participants;
- the effectiveness of the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes;
- the quality of provision for learning and development; and
- the quality of the leadership and management.

## **3. Context**

Acceptable Enterprises is a social enterprise firm which was established in 1999 and is contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the European Social Fund programme, Hands on Training.

Acceptable Enterprises works with a range of local businesses and employers, and has a mixed workforce of able bodied employees working alongside people with a disability. Acceptable Enterprises operates from a training centre in Larne to support people with disabilities in the North Eastern area. The main aim of the organisation is to provide meaningful work experience and employment opportunities, along with training and personal development for vulnerable or disadvantaged adults aged from 16 to 60 years within the community. The project Hands on Training is managed on a day-to-day basis by a project co-ordinator and its primary objective is to enhance the employability skills and reduce unemployment for people with a disability. The participants have the opportunity to undertake accredited qualifications in employability, office administration, hospitality and catering, horticulture and retail and warehousing at entry level, level 1 and level 2, as well as to engage in a range of associated social enterprise activities.

The project co-ordinator is supported by a small team that includes four client support officers and a facilitator. At the time of the inspection 29 participants<sup>1</sup> were registered on the project. All of them attend the project and engage in training and social enterprise activities for two to four days each week according to their individual needs. All of the participants were taking part in employability activities in the organisation's businesses in production, on-line retail, packaging, horticulture, catering and hospitality, as well as partnership work with a local business.

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

#### 4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Outcomes for participants	Good
Provision for learning and development	Good
Leadership and management	Good

#### 5. Outcomes for participants

The outcomes for participants are good. Most demonstrate good standards of work; they engage well and can apply their learning to complete tasks to the required level. In one of the sessions observed the participants are developing well their knowledge and understanding of horticulture through the completion of their targeted qualification and are able to develop their practical skills in the allotments, adjacent to the centre, where they grow vegetables which are then either sold or used in the cafe. Almost all of the participants' employability skills and capabilities are being enhanced through their work-experience placements within the social enterprise, and the work activities at the bottling plant provided by the partner organisation.

The participants are making good progress in the completion of their accredited, learning and development activities. Almost all of them report that the project also provides them with good opportunities to meet socially, develop working relationships and friendships, improve their communication skills, and that their confidence, motivation and capacity for learning have improved as a result of participating on the project.

Recruitment to the project, to date, is in line with the targets set. In year 1 of the project 25 participants were recruited against a target of 14. In year 2 a further 10 participants have been recruited with 29 remaining on the programme. The retention rate to date is outstanding at 83%. Of the six early leavers, two participants have been employed as staff members within the AEL and one by an external employer.

All 29 of the participants have achieved their targeted level 1 employability qualification and all have been registered, and are making good progress, on appropriate professional and technical level 1 qualifications.

The project needs to enhance the levels of external employer engagement, and increase the number of industry visits, guest speakers and work-experience placements in order to meet the employment targets set in the original bid.

#### 6. Provision for learning and development

The quality of the provision for learning and development is good. The curriculum is well planned and provides an appropriate framework for the enhancement of the participants' personal and employability development, as well as their professional and technical skills at level 1. The learning programmes match well the range of social enterprise activities and there are good opportunities for the participants to apply their learning. The planning for each participant is clear, accessible and easily understood by them. The project team work hard to ensure that the learning and personal development needs of the participants are met, that good relationships are established, and that the participants have good opportunities to develop self-confidence and self-esteem.

The quality of the directed training sessions observed is good. The learning resources have been adapted and differentiated to meet well the individual needs of the participants. Participants engage well in the sessions, are motivated and report their enjoyment of the training provided, including the work experience opportunities. The tutor provides good guidance and support to ensure that each participant is progressing through their tasks at an appropriate pace. The participants are supported well in their classroom and practical activities by the client support officers. The directed training sessions would, however, benefit from more detailed planning and differentiation which would enable clearer monitoring of progress being made by individual participants. The processes used to quality assure the quality of provision for learning are also in need of further development.

The quality of the care and welfare provided for the participants is very good. Very effective links and partnerships have been established with a range of external organisations and agencies to support the delivery of the project. Effective sign-posting and referral processes are in place to meet the personal support needs of the participants. The introduction of a participant advisory group (HOT Talk) provides good opportunities for participants to contribute to and inform the ongoing development of the project and the wider social aspects of the programme. The participants and staff members are all provided with a standard uniform which enhances the collegial and team approach of the project delivery.

An appropriate induction process is in place to identify the participants' training goals and learning needs and quarterly reviews are carried out. The processes used to track and monitor the progress the project is making against agreed targets, and the progress the individual participants are making in the development of their personal, social and employability skills are mostly good. The quality of the participants action plans would benefit from greater standardisation and consistency to ensure that all provide the detail and specific short-term targets against which progress can be more easily measured.

## **7. Leadership and management**

The quality of leadership and management is good. The client support officers are supported well by the project co-ordinator to plan the delivery of the project. Effective working relationships have been established between staff and participants. The roles and responsibilities of staff are clearly defined.

Links with employers, community and voluntary agencies need to be developed further to provide appropriate progression opportunities for participants beyond the life of the project and to ensure the project meets the targets set in the original bid. The project staff are working hard to develop further links with the local further education college to provide essential skills support for the participants.

The quality of the accommodation is very good and provides good accessibility for the participants. The provision of in-house social enterprises activities and the access to practical work experiences is also very good.

Good progress has been made in the development of an in-house system to monitor distance travelled by individual participants with regard to their personal, social and employability skills and attributes. A good start has also been made on auditing processes with a focus on the standardisation and consistency of supporting documentation.

The processes used for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning require further development. The project team have clearly identified appropriate areas for improvement but need to set more specific targets against which progress can be measured. There is a need to use the data being collated more effectively to demonstrate better the impact of the outcomes of the project, and to include feedback from key stakeholders in the self-evaluation report.

On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, Acceptable Enterprises has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding young people and adults at risk.

## **8. Overall effectiveness**

Acceptable Enterprises has the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interests of all the participants. To improve the provision further, Acceptable Enterprises needs to:

- enhance the levels of external employer engagement, including more industry visits, guest speakers and work experience placements; and
- develop further their self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes.

## APPENDIX

### Current registrations by programme

Programme	Numbers of enrolments	% against target
Hands on Training Year 1	25	179%
Hands on Training Year 2	10	40%

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