



Education and Training
Inspectorate

European Social Fund provision in
Access Centre Northern Ireland (NI)
Limited

The Skills to Succeed 2 project

Report of an Inspection
in October 2016



Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments



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%

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:

Overall effectiveness outcome
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.

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

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1. Inspection method and evidence base

Three ETI inspectors observed ten participants in two directed training sessions, spoke with 14 participants in focus group meetings, met one project partner, and interviewed one employer. Discussions were held with the project manager, the tutor, the voluntary placement officer and support staff. Samples of the participants' work, training plans, reviews of progress, the tutors' programmes of work and the project promoters' 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

Access Centre Northern Ireland Limited (Access Centre) is a private limited company that operates from two training centres in Belfast and Newry to support people with disabilities in the North Belfast, Newry, and Armagh areas. Access Centre is contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the European Social Fund project, Skills to Succeed 2. The aim of the project is to support people with disabilities to develop administration and information and communication technology (ICT) skills, and to assist them to make positive progress to further education, community-based provision, voluntary work, or employment. The participants have the opportunity to undertake qualifications in employability, office administration, and information technology (IT), at level 1, as well as other non-accredited training.

The project manager is supported by a small team that includes a tutor, a voluntary placement officer, and a small number of support staff and volunteers. At the time of the inspection 21 participants¹ were registered on the project. All of them attend training for one day each week. Seventeen (81%) of the participants were also taking part in employability activities; 14 of them were taking part in a project-based learning activity across both of the training centres, and a further three participants were undertaking work-experience placements with local employers.

¹ 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 of them demonstrate good standards of work; they engage well in their learning and make good use of a range of learning resources, specialist software and equipment to complete tasks to the required level. They are developing their administration, employability and IT skills well through the completion of their targeted qualifications. Most of the participants are participating well in a project-based employability activity with a small number also developing relevant employability skills and capabilities through their work-experience placements.

The participants are making good progress in the completion of their accredited, and non-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 one of the project, the retention rate, and achievement rate for accredited qualifications were outstanding at 100% and 98% respectively. The retention rate for year two of the project, to date, is very good (74%); staff have maintained contact with most of the early leavers to plan for their return to the project at a later stage.

6. Provision for learning and development

The quality of the provision for learning and development is good. The learning programmes are planned well to meet the learning and personal development needs of the participants, and match the range of activities outlined in the project bid. 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. Appropriate arrangements have been developed to allow participants with physical disabilities, wheelchair users or those who have a guide dog, to access training. The range of employability activities offered also supports the development of the participants' personal, social and work-related skills.

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. Monthly session planning documents and lesson plans are in place and the tutor provides good guidance and support to ensure that each participant is progressing through their tasks at an appropriate pace. The sessions are mostly practical training with one-to-one support for the participants; limited opportunities are provided for the participants to take part, periodically, in other activities such as whole-group work or discussion groups.

The quality of the care and welfare provided for the participants is very good. Very effective links and partnerships have been established with a wide range of external organisations and agencies to support the delivery of the project. Sign-posting and referral processes are in place to meet the personal support needs of the participants, for example, counselling services offered through one of the project partner organisations. The project team maintain regular contact with all of the participants to help them overcome any barriers to learning and development. An annual celebration event is also held to recognise the personal development and achievements of the participants.

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 participants' are making in the development of their personal, social and employability skills are under-developed. The participants' personal training and review plans should be more detailed and demonstrate more clearly the impact the project is having on improving their life chances. The processes used to quality assure work-experience placements and monitor and review the participants, while on a placement, are in need of further development.

7. Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management is good. The project team are supported well by the manager to plan the delivery of the project in both training centres. Effective working relationships have been established between staff and participants. The roles and responsibilities of staff are clearly defined and good opportunities exist for staff to access relevant continuing professional development.

Effective links and partnerships have been established with a range of referral and support agencies to help the participants who present with a wide range of complex needs and disabilities including mental health, sensory and physical disabilities. Good links have also been established with rural transport networks to ensure that all participants can access learning and development opportunities in the two training centres. Links with further education colleges, employers, and voluntary agencies need to be developed further to provide appropriate progression opportunities for participants beyond the life of the project.

The quality of the accommodation in both training centres is good and provide good access for the participants, however, the Belfast centre premises is small with limited space for the management and administration staff, and for the project delivery. The quality of the equipment and the learning resources used is very good; a good range of software and information communication technology equipment is in place and these are adapted well to support the individual learning and development needs of the participants.

The processes used for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning require further development. There is a need for a more focused and formalised evaluation of the project, the more effective use of a range of key performance data, and the inclusion of feedback from participants, project partners, and other key stakeholders in the self-evaluation report, and the use of more specific and measurable targets in the quality improvement plan.

On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, Access Centre has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding young people and adults at risk. However the project promoter needs to:

- update the safeguarding policy;
- provide updated safeguarding training for the designated person and deputy designated person as soon as possible; and
- display information in both training centres to inform participants about who to contact if they have a concern, in a format that best suits their needs.

8. Overall effectiveness

The Access Centre demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the participants. To improve the provision further, the Access Centre needs to:

- refine and improve the processes for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning; and
- strengthen the recording, tracking and monitoring processes to report more effectively on the progress the participants are making in the development of their personal, social and employability skills.

APPENDIX

A. Project registrations

Programme	Numbers of enrolments	% against target
European Social Fund Skills to Succeed 2 Project 2015/2016	21	105
European Social Fund Skills to Succeed 2 Project 2016/2017	27	108

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