



Education and Training
Inspectorate

European Social Fund provision in
Derry Youth and Community
Workshop

LEMIS North West

Report of an Inspection in
March 2018



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments

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1. Context

Derry Youth and Community Workshop (DY&CW) is a registered charity which is contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the LEMIS North West European Social Fund (ESF) project. The main aims of the project are to identify and address barriers to employment for unemployed and inactive participants, from 16-65 years of age, in order to progress them into employment.

The project is managed by the chief executive and the project manager, supported by a team of ten mentors, a quality assurance manager and an administrator. The project operates out of two offices in Londonderry (Derry), and one in Strabane through its partnership with Job Directions. At the time of the inspection, 138 participants^[1] were registered on the LEMIS North West project. The participants' attendance on the project varies and is dependent on their barriers to employment; it can range from a minimum of four weeks up to a maximum duration of one year.

2. Views of participants

All of the participants interviewed during inspection commented positively about their engagement on the LEMIS project and in particular on the high levels of individualised advice, guidance and support offered. They valued the opportunities to gain accredited qualifications, develop their CVs and undertake mock interviews. They reported that these had helped to build their confidence and self-esteem and supported them well when researching and making job applications.

3. Focus of the inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all participants, the inspection linked internal and external approaches to evaluate the:

- outcomes for participants;
- quality of provision; and
- effectiveness of the leadership and management.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Outcomes for learners	Very good
Quality of provision	Good
Leadership and management	Good

^[1] All performance data in this report was provided by the ESF project promoter at the time of the inspection.

KEY FINDINGS

5. Outcomes for learners

The participants demonstrate good standards in their wider communication and speaking and listening skills. They are also developing well their employability skills, for example, CV writing, attending interviews and receiving feedback, researching vacancies and making job applications.

Through a variety of recruitment strategies, including the development of effective links with a range of referral agencies, the project promoter has exceeded the overall recruitment target by 10% over the three year period 2015-18, with 1,314 participants recruited against a target of 1,200. Whilst the retention rate was low in years one and two, at 53% and 70% respectively, it has improved significantly and is currently outstanding at 94%.

The project promoter has a strong focus on progressing participants into employment. Consequently, over the duration of the project it is a strength that the overall progression into employment target (31%) has been comfortably exceeded at 41%. It is also of note that two-thirds of those participants who secured employment also sustained it for six months or more. The target set for progression into further education or training (37%) has not been achieved (28%), and this has been identified appropriately by the project promoter as an ongoing area for improvement.

Whilst no specific targets were set for achieving qualifications, it is noteworthy that participants have good opportunities to access a range of full or partial accredited qualifications, including some which are delivered through online learning. These qualifications are delivered flexibly to suit the participants' circumstances and learning needs. A small number of participants have also been signposted to higher level essential skills qualifications at level 2 in order to help them progress into employment or further education or training. Although the project promoter tracks well the employment outcomes for participants, the use of data could be improved, for example, to more effectively identify trends and patterns in outcomes, and also to report on the added value for the participants.

All of the participants commented on improved levels of confidence and self-esteem as a result of their participation on the project. Whilst the project promoter has introduced a bespoke five point system to measure the barriers to employment on entry and on progression from the project, there is limited evidence of how soft skills are being assessed, tracked and monitored in order to show the positive impact the project is having on the lives of the participants.

6. Quality of provision

The project offers an appropriate range of learning and development activities, including one-to-one mentoring and job search. These are delivered in a flexible manner to best suit the needs of the participants and help them overcome their barriers to employment. Whilst the provision of formal qualifications is not a specific focus of the project, it is noteworthy that participants are provided with good opportunities to access a range of accredited and non-accredited training such as food safety, first-aid, essential skills and individual vocational units, in order to improve their chances of gaining employment.

An appropriate induction programme has been developed, including an initial assessment which is used well to inform the participants' individual action plans. Participants are very well supported with evidence of regular and detailed contact with them. There is also effective signposting to other relevant support and employment agencies and evidence that participants are being encouraged to progress as quickly as possible. The quality of the individual action plans are good overall, although they could be further developed and used more effectively as a working document to track better the participants' progression, including their acquisition and application of the softer skills.

The quality of the learning and development activities in the small sample of sessions observed was good. Effective practice was characterised by high levels of support for participants and clarity in the delivery of key information and learning. As a result, the participants were clearly well-informed about the next steps in their training and learning. The project staff have an in-depth knowledge about the benefits and welfare system and provide the participants with appropriate and realistic advice and guidance. They assist them with 'better off' calculations to demonstrate the positive impact of returning to work.

The processes for care and welfare are impacting positively on the learning and development needs of the participants. There are well-established links with a wide range of community and voluntary agencies to appropriately signpost participants to more specialised provision or additional advice and guidance where required. The informal and relaxed nature of the mentoring sessions enables the employment mentors to build effective levels of trust and good working relationships with the participants within short time frames. The team are very good at identifying the participants' prior experience and skillsets and use this information well to boost their confidence and highlight their existing employability skills, which they then build on. An appropriate outreach aspect to the provision enables the mentors to meet with potential participants within their own community, where required, to provide an overview of the project and to minimise any potential anxiety about enrolling. The project promoter is also developing well its use of social media to share and celebrate good news and success stories and to market the project more effectively.

7. Leadership and management

The project is managed well at strategic and operational levels. Clear lines of communication exist between all of the project staff and its partnership organisation. Regular management meetings take place and provide good opportunities for the project staff to discuss performance and discuss appropriate action points when there are concerns around individual participants. An appropriate management information system is used to track and monitor the project's progress against performance targets and to produce relevant monthly reports. The overall quality of the training environment in both of the Derry offices is good and includes access to IT suites and appropriate one-to-one mentoring areas.

All of the staff commented on the supportive leadership and management and the very good continuing professional development opportunities to further enhance their roles and broaden their expertise; these have included certificates and diplomas in counselling, specialist autism qualifications and mental health first-aid training. It is a strength that all of the project mentors regularly attend information events and training around the arrangements for welfare and benefits. As a result, they are able to provide accurate and up-to-date advice and guidance on the transition from benefits, which is often cited as the biggest barrier to employment.

There are good links and partnerships with a range of community and voluntary agencies, Jobs and Benefits offices and other relevant external agencies to support recruitment to the project and to signpost participants, where required, to more appropriate training or support. Mentors report that their caseloads are manageable, and it is a strength that each of them have responsibility for a specific list of referral agencies to ensure that links are maintained and that the participants are allocated to a mentor with a good working knowledge of their assigned community or referral agency. Good links have also been established with recruitment agencies to signpost participants to job opportunities along with a range of employers to support effective progression to employment, where applicable. The project promoter is aware of the need to better monitor the reasons for low progression to further education or training.

Whilst there are quality assurance processes in place, including a good use of benchmarking data and local labour market intelligence, the self-evaluation process could be used more effectively to demonstrate better, along with the key underpinning evidence, the key strengths and areas for improvement. There is also a need for a consistent use of prioritised and more measurable actions in the quality improvement plan.

8. Safeguarding

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding participants reflect the guidance issued by the Department.

9. Overall effectiveness

Derry Youth and Community Workshop's LEMIS North West project demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the participants. There are areas for improvement that the project promoter has demonstrated the capacity to address.

The areas for improvement are:

- to develop better processes to report on the impact of the project on improving the participants' personal and social development; and
- further develop the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes including the more effective use of data and the clearer identification of the key strengths and areas for improvement.

The ETI will monitor how the project promoter sustains improvement.

A. Project registrations

Programme	Numbers of enrolments	% against target
LEMIS North West ESF project 2015/2016	542	158%
LEMIS North West ESF project 2016/2017	473	124%
LEMIS North West ESF project 2017/2018	299	63%

B. Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework is available on the ETI website: www.etini.gov.uk.

Two ETI inspectors and one associate assessor observed seven participants in a range of settings, including one-to-one mentoring sessions, focus groups and learning and development sessions. Discussions were held with Derry Youth and Community's chief executive and quality assurance manager, the LEMIS North West's project manager, the manager of the partnership organisation, the project's administrator and six employment mentors. The management information system, along with the project's planning documents, the participants' files and individual action plans, and the project's tracking and monitoring systems were examined. The project promoter's self-evaluation report, quality improvement plan and other relevant documentation were also scrutinised.

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%

Performance levels

The ETI use the following performance levels when reporting on outcomes for learners, quality of provision and on leadership and management.

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 project promoter:

The project promoter has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the participants. The ETI will monitor how the project promoter sustains improvement.
The project promoter demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the participants. The ETI will monitor how the project promoter sustains improvement.
The project promoter needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the participants. The ETI will monitor and report on the project promoter's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.
The project promoter 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 project promoter's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be 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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