



Education and Training
Inspectorate

European Social Fund provision in
DFPF Ltd trading as People 1st

Community Family Support
Programme

Report of an Inspection in
December 2017



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

DFPF Limited, trading as People 1st, is a private company contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the Community and Family Support Programme (CFSP) European Social Fund Project (ESF) project in the Lisburn and Castlereagh and the North Down and Ards council areas.

The main aim of the project is to support families with high levels of need to develop their capacity to reach their full potential by addressing employment, education, training, health and socio-economic issues that impact on their lives. The project also aims to enhance social inclusion by reducing economic inactivity. The target group is families with a 16 to 24 year old member in the “not in education, employment or training” category. Usually one member of the family unit is registered as the main participant. The project promoter provides a range of individually-tailored and needs-led interventions which include: family support and referral services to address family member’s health, social and economic needs; and employability mentoring support services to address family members’ (of 16+ years) educational, employment and training needs, in order to promote progression to employment, training or education.

The CFSP project is managed by a project manager, supported by a co-ordinator who is also the project’s employment engagement officer (EEO). The project operates out of premises in Lisburn but is delivered across four distinct geographical areas of the two council areas by a team of four family liaison officers (FLOs).

At the time of the inspection, 45 participants¹ were registered on the CFSP project. The participants stay on the project for up to 12 months and attend between one and four hours each week.

2. Views of participants

The inspection team met with a sample of participants across the project, individually and in small groups. All of them talked positively about their participation on the CFSP project and stated that it had significantly improved their levels of confidence and self-esteem. Most of the participants commented that the support and service provided met their needs as individuals, which subsequently impacted positively on their family. They report that they value highly the advocacy role undertaken on their behalf by the family liaison officers in securing services from a range of statutory and specialist agencies. The participants also report that they are receiving very good quality support from the project staff and are at various stages of addressing personal and social issues or enhancing their employability skills.

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.

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	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Outcomes for learners	Very good
Quality of provision	Very good
Leadership and management	Very good

KEY FINDINGS

5. Outcomes for learners

Almost all of the participants interviewed are making very good progress in developing their confidence and self-esteem and in addressing barriers to their social inclusion and employability. In the one-to-one and small group sessions observed, almost all of the participants were also making good progress in developing their interpersonal, communication and oracy skills. The project staff have high expectations for the progress and achievement of the participants.

At the time of the inspection, the project had achieved 69% of its overall recruitment target with 268 participants (families) registered to date, against the three-year target of 390 (2015-18). The project started in August 2017, five months later than expected, and in the first year only recruited 69 of their target 130 (53%) participants. In year 2, 113 participants were recruited against a target of 130 (87%) and to date in year 3, 86 participants have been recruited against the target of 130 (66%). It is noteworthy that in year 1 of the project retention was very good (75%); retention has been outstanding in year 2 at 80% and to date in year 3 at 88% respectively. A total of 173 of the 268 (65%) participants recruited have successfully engaged in the programme and achieved their agreed goals, while 45 (17%) remain on the programme.

Overall, 42 of the participants completing the programme to date have moved into employment, exceeding the three-year target of 35. In addition, 35 leavers (60%) have achieved a level 1 accredited qualification and a further 74 have progressed to further education or training, well above the overall target set.

People 1st have made a good start in measuring the distance travelled and progression in soft skill outcomes for the participants who have engaged in the project, through the use of an enhanced end of programme questionnaire. This process, however, should be developed further in order to capture more fully the impact of their work.

Almost all of the participants demonstrate high levels of commitment to overcoming their personal, social and health barriers in order to progress towards being employable. The provision of tailored, needs-led one-to-one, family and employability support is a strength of this project and has been a key factor in achieving and sustaining the high retention rates to date, despite the complex barriers experienced by most of the participants. The high quality service has also contributed to positive outcomes for participants and their families in terms of increased social inclusion, improved family relationships, positive parenting and increased engagement with specialist provision.

6. Quality of provision

The CFSP project delivers a flexible programme which is tailored well to meet the wide range, and often complex, participants' individual needs. All of the participants are initially assessed using an appropriate assessment tool which provides a useful framework for the family liaison officer and participant to discuss and evaluate a range of factors, including their: emotional, financial, health and safety needs; setting boundaries; social networks; family routines; and learning and development needs. The outcomes from this in-depth and comprehensive assessment informs an agreed action plan which identifies their barriers to progression and employment. While the action plans specify the range of barriers identified, they are not structured clearly enough to prioritise specific actions and set measurable targets against which progress can be more easily measured. The action plan should also be revisited more regularly with the participants so that they can understand and reflect on their progress to date.

Where appropriate, there are appropriate opportunities for participants to engage in an extended range of short accredited programmes at level 1. In addition to the provision which aims to enhance job search, CV building and interview skills, participants can undertake accredited programmes in areas such as first aid, food safety and hygiene, health and safety, manual handling and safeguarding. The project staff have also developed a range of enrichment activities which are used well to enhance social inclusion, such as knit and natter, a nurturing programme and a weekly parent and toddler group.

The completed documentation records the often intensive work which takes place and includes the signposting and referral of just over one-half of the participants who have engaged with the project to a wide range of statutory, community and voluntary provision; these include the community mental health services, drugs and alcohol support, debt management and Women's Aid, in order to meet their specific needs. While the intensive work carried out does not always result in employment outcomes, it does impact positively on the quality of family life, and improves the life chances for those involved with the project. A key strength of the provision is the high quality team work along with the personal attributes and professional skills sets of the project staff.

The one-to-one sessions are planned well and of a high quality in meeting the needs of the participants. In the best practice, the project staff use a range of interactive approaches and strategies to engage participants actively in their learning and development and to challenge them to progress further towards employability. The sessions are enhanced through the effective use of good quality learning resources. The project staff appropriately encourage the participants to reflect, develop their independence and to take responsibility for their own learning and development.

A small number of participants have been able to access short volunteering opportunities and this, along with the provision of work experience placements, have appropriately been identified as an area for further development.

Care and welfare impacts positively on learning and outcomes for participants. The project staff are very caring, respectful and supportive of the wide range of participants with whom they work. They are particularly skilled in building positive relationships quickly with each participant in order to address effectively their barriers to progression.

7. Leadership and management

The People 1st directors and senior management team have a clear vision for the continued development of the CFSP project and the complementary provision that participants can access. The strategic planning is participant-centred with a strong commitment to invest appropriately in staff, accommodation and resources. The organisation has demonstrated a high level of responsiveness to external feedback. Despite recent staffing changes in the project, the quality of delivery remains high. The organisation has ensured that all team members are experienced and demonstrate high levels of commitment to engage and support participants, most of whom present with a wide range of complex needs, to participate fully on the project.

People 1st support well the continuing professional development of staff to ensure that they have the appropriate knowledge and skills to work well with, and meet, the participant's individual needs. The organisation also provides good quality support for staff in their work through the provision of one-to-one case reviews and opportunities for reflective practice in monthly team meetings involving the project manager, the co-ordinator and their colleagues. On a small number of occasions, project staff have appropriately been provided with additional external specialist support. Due to the intensive nature of the work, People 1st should give consideration to providing more regular opportunities for the project staff to meet and debrief with an external specialist.

The organisation has recently introduced driving theory sessions as a recruitment incentive which they plan to deliver across the two council areas. The project staff have also recently produced a quarterly, user-friendly one-page newsletter which provides a range of "good news" stories which is shared with key stakeholders. Staff in referral agencies particularly value this feedback on the progress made by participants. It is important, however, that People 1st formulates a clear plan to address the shortfall in recruitment, in order to meet the overall target for the project.

There is an organisation wide self-evaluation process and quality cycle and while the processes still need to be refined and further embedded, the CFSP team are highly reflective and have accurately identified most of the main areas for improvement. However, the action planning should be developed further to prioritise and identify more specifically the key actions to promote improvement, and to use more measurable targets to facilitate monitoring of progress.

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

People 1st's Community and Family Support Programme demonstrates a high level of capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interests of all the participants.

A. Project registrations

Programme	Numbers of enrolments	% against target
European Social Fund Community and Family Support Project 2015/2016	69	53%
European Social Fund Community and Family Support Project 2016/2017	113	87%
European Social Fund Community and Family Support Project 2017/2018	86 (to date)	66%

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 observed 13 participants in a range of settings, including one-to-one mentoring sessions, learning and development sessions, focus groups, volunteering opportunity and work experience placements. Discussions were held with People 1st's management team, the project manager, the co-ordinator, the family liaison officers and other key stakeholders. The management information systems, including the tracking and monitoring systems, personal action plans, and the family liaison officers' planning documents were examined. The project promoter's self-evaluation report, quality improvement plan and other relevant documentation were 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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