



Education and Training
Inspectorate

European Social Fund provision in
Disability Action

Job Match

Report of an Inspection in
June 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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Contents

Section	Page
1. Context	1
2. Focus of the inspection	1
3. Overall findings of the inspection	2
4. Outcomes for learners	2
5. Quality of provision	3
6. Leadership and management	4
7. Overall effectiveness	5

Appendix

- A. Project registrations
- B. Inspection methodology and evidence base
- C. Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

1. Context

Disability Action is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee and is contracted by the Department for the Economy (DfE) to provide the Job Match European Social Fund (ESF) project. Job Match aims to help people with disabilities achieve their employment and career potential, and to address the under representation of disabled people in paid employment by providing personalised support under a supported employment model. To support this aim, people with disabilities access a tailored one-to-one employment service, mentored job search and intensive support to find and sustain paid employment. The approach prioritises the choices and aspirations of the disabled person, engages one-to-one to build a vocational profile, seeks to secure employment through effective job matching, direct advocacy with employers, and to provide ongoing in-work support to achieve high levels of job sustainability. The project targets people with a disability or disabilities, over 16 years of age, who are economically inactive or unemployed, where disability is their primary barrier to paid employment and who require specialist tailored support to access and sustain paid work.

Disability Action is managed by a chief executive officer (CEO) who is supported by a Board of Directors. The CEO is supported by a senior management team, which includes the Assistant Director of Employment Services who has overall responsibility for the Job Match project. Operationally Job Match is managed by a dedicated team leader and is delivered by a team of nine supported employment officers (SEOs) across Northern Ireland, with offices located in Belfast, Carrickfergus, Londonderry, Dungannon, Enniskillen and Newry. Each SEO has responsibility for a caseload of participants and has a specific geographical area to mirror the Department for Communities (DfC) coverage through the Jobs and Benefits Offices network, which form one of the main sources of referrals to the project. Participants agree a personalised contact and activities plan with their SEO to progress them towards paid employment, including self-employment. The SEOs utilise a range of locally based provision from across the public, private and voluntary sectors to meet individual participant needs. They also work with local employers to secure work placements, work trials and volunteering opportunities to bring participants closer to the labour market and help to secure paid employment opportunities.

At the time of the inspection 116 participants^{1[1]} were registered on Job Match. The participants typically attend or engage with SEOs for 12 hours each month, for up to six months pre-employment and six months in-work support. During the inspection 23 (20%) of the participants were in the initial assessment and vocational profiling phase; 70 (60%) of participants were formulating job goals or self-employment opportunities, or engaging in work readiness activities with their SEO; 9 participants (8%) were in a work trial or work-experience placement or volunteering; 14 (12%) had recently started paid work and they and their employers were being supported. Of the 26 leavers at the time of inspection 11 (42%) progressed to other DfE training programmes.

2. 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;
- the effectiveness of the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes;

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

- the quality of provision for learning and development; and
- the quality of the leadership and management.

3. 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

4. Outcomes for learners

Recruitment to the project in 2015/16 is in line with the target set for the Job Match project with 103 participants recruited against the target of 113. In 2016/2017 the target of 270 was not achieved with 211 participants recruited. The target for participants entering full-time employment on completion of their programme was exceeded in year one, with 12 against a target of 11 progressing to paid full-time employment, while in year 2, 18 participants against a target of 23 was achieved. The target for participants entering part-time employment on completion of their programme was exceeded in year one, with 14 against a target of 3 progressing to paid part-time employment, while in year 2, 15 against a target of 21 was achieved. In the second year of the project a further seven participants left the project to establish their own businesses which exceeded the target set. In years 1 and 2 while the target numbers of participants progressing to further education have not been reached, the numbers of participants progressing appropriately to other Department programmes have both exceeded the targets by 168% and 126% respectively.

Almost all of the participants engage very well with their SEO and in their programme, and those who progress to employment are developing good to very good standards of work in their workplaces, depending on the stage of their programme. One participant has developed well her retail skills and has secured part-time paid employment; another participant has been able to pursue his interest in the car industry and has now been employed as a car valet: a further participant has secured part-time employment in a delicatessen. Almost all of the employment opportunities are very well matched to the interests of the participants and employers are supported very effectively and well informed, where required, to make reasonable adjustments to the work environment. The employers interviewed commented on the high level of work-readiness skills demonstrated by participants on entry to their placement and employment, and on the support provided by the project staff. Retention on the project in year 1 was outstanding with 91% of the participants retained on the programme, it was good in year 2 with 63% retained, and to date in year 3, 91% of the participants remain on the programme. In year 2 a higher number of participants progressed early from the programme to employment or further training.

While the project initially did not set targets for participants progressing to self-employment opportunities, seven participants have to date established and sustained bespoke businesses. For example, participants have set up businesses in: signage which has been well supported through Access to Work assistive technologies; and a home bakery selling cakes and condiments to local markets and small businesses. A significant minority of the participants have left the project and progressed, with support and guidance from Job Match staff, to other projects where they can undertake professional and technical qualifications which match well their interests and aspirations.

The participants interviewed by the inspection team were very positive about the levels of support and challenge provided by the staff on the project to date, and in particular, reported their commitment to engage with the programme, and develop their wider employability skills through support for curriculum vitae development, job search and applications and interview skills. A majority of the participants report improvements in their levels of confidence and self-esteem through their engagement with the project and mentoring support from SEOs. The participants value highly the ongoing support with the project which, in many cases, provides opportunities for external contact to address social isolation and promote social inclusion. While participants are provided with an opportunity to comment on the life and work of the project at the end of their programme, more opportunities should be provided during the project, and the outcomes used more effectively, to inform self-evaluation report and quality improvement planning. Similarly more frequent meetings of the Service User Group would be beneficial to both these processes.

5. Quality of provision

The overall provision within Job Match is based on an agreed supported employment model and matches well the aspirations and potential of almost all of the participants and provides them with appropriate progression opportunities. There is an effective induction process which leads to a vocational profile and the development of a personal action plan. The quality of the planning for the individual participants is very good.

The participants are well informed about all aspects of the Job Match programme and the guidance and support provided to almost all of them both internally and by external agencies impacts positively on their individual programme and outcomes. For a small number of participants who have no clear career pathway, consideration should be given to devising a range of activities which would help them make more informed choices.

The feedback from the employers interviewed was very positive and was characterised by the effective support provided for them and participants both pre and post-employment, ongoing communication, and the opportunity for specialist support in the provision of reasonable adjustments. This has allowed some of the employers to employ people with disabilities for the first time.

A further strength of the provision is its highly individualised, person-centred approach which enables all of the participants, with a diverse range of individual needs to realise their interests and move to or towards employment. The guidance and support offered to participants are informed effectively by the detailed vocational profiling process.

The provision for the care and welfare of the participants impacts positively on their development, progression and outcomes. There is an inclusive, caring ethos demonstrated by the project promoter with respectful working relationships evident between the participants and staff. The participants report that they feel well supported, challenged and encouraged by staff and that they enjoy the programme. The staff address a wide range of

additional barriers to participation through their knowledge and understanding of the impact of the disabilities, provision of transport, as well as self-esteem, confidence building and personal and social skills development. There is also good signposting and use of services from a range of in-house and external agencies to support participants who have specific additional needs, in addition to the high quality support provided by the SEOs.

6. Leadership and management

The strategic leadership of the project is strong at all levels. The Board are responsible for the governance of Disability Action and inform and influence well the strategic direction of the organisation. Disability Action has taken the lead in working operationally and strategically within the disability sector and with the Northern Ireland Union of Supported Employment to promote the supported employment model of delivery. The Job Match project is supported well by its steering group² and its membership provides appropriate challenge and works towards reducing replication and competition in the local area to ensure that as far as possible participants are referred to the project or provider which best meets their needs and interests.

The senior management team are highly committed to the development and delivery of the project and high levels of support are provided for the project team by the assistant director. Opportunities for appropriate continuous professional development are provided to enhance further the skills and knowledge of the staff. The roles and responsibilities of all staff are clearly defined and staff skills and attributes match very well their job roles. All of the staff are highly committed to meeting the individual needs of the participants and the strong interpersonal skills of the SEOs are used effectively at initial contact with participants in order to develop a rapport and positive working relationships. The SEOs are well informed about the legal framework for supported employment. There is a strong team ethos in spite of the dispersed model of delivery with clear lines of communication to the team leader. There is a well-developed cycle of quarterly meetings, remote fortnightly meetings, regular one-to-one supervision and the effective use of paired or group peer reflection activities. Staff openly share their knowledge and expertise with their colleagues in the best interests of participants. All of the staff are fully committed to maintaining and sustaining a high quality service to participants and where appropriate their parents/carers. The quality of the accommodation and resources are mostly very good with ease of access for participants with a range of disabilities.

The project's performance is tracked effectively by the in-house management information system in order to meet Departmental requirements. All SEOs are supplied with appropriate mobile technology to support their work with participants and to facilitate ease of access to shared folders. While the project has introduced a system to measure the impact of engagement in the project on individual participants' personal and social skills, this has not been applied consistently and the outcomes need to be collated and used better to inform self-evaluation.

Job Match staff have developed strong links and partnerships with a wide range of organisations and external agencies to support the appropriate progression opportunities of the participants. In addition, the project promoter provides opportunities for past participants to gain paid employment in the project and there are effective links with referral agencies to recruit participants to the project, and with external careers services to provide them with additional advice and guidance.

² ² The project steering group includes service users, and representatives from the Disability Employment Service, the Northern Ireland Union of Supported Employment and the wider disability sector, to provide the project with overall strategic support.

The staff are responsive to external evaluations and feedback and continue to take account of feedback from previous ETI visits to bring about improvements. While the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes have been extended and strengthened to include a good use of data, feedback from all stakeholders needs to be used more effectively. Quality assurance processes have also been enhanced to include monitoring of participant vocational profiles and action plans and sharing of best practice, however this needs to be developed further to include direct observation of more mentoring sessions. The quality improvement plan identifies well the areas for improvement but would be enhanced further by clearer action points and target setting against which progress could be more effectively measured.

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding participants reflect broadly the guidance from the Department. However, the project promoter needs to:

- update its safeguarding policy and procedures, to ensure that reporting arrangements are clear and appropriate across the project and in line with current guidance; and
-
- ensure that the two newly appointed designated officers attend safeguarding training as planned.

7. Overall effectiveness

Disability Action demonstrates a high level of capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interests of all the participants.

The ETI will monitor how the project promoter sustains improvement.

A. Project registrations

Programme	Numbers of enrolments	% against target
European Social Fund Job Match 2015 /2016	103	91%
European Social Fund Job Match 2016/2017	211	78%

B. Inspection methodology and evidence base

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

Four ETI inspectors observed and met with 18 participants, including three past participants, in a range of settings including mentoring sessions, focus group meetings and an external training session. Discussions were held with the senior management team, five members of the steering group, eight supported employment officers (SEOs), Disability Action's Employment Advocacy Officer and Workable Officer, eight referral agencies which support the work of the project, the Head of Careers at the local college of further education, Careers Adviser, one work-experience placement provider, three employers and one parent. The management information systems, including the tracking and monitoring systems, samples of the participants' work and the personal action plans 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 organisation:

The organisation has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the participants. The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.
The organisation demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the participants. The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.
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. There will be 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. 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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