



Education and Training
Inspectorate

European Social Fund provision in
Extern Group Northern Ireland

Moving Forward, Moving On Project

Report of an Inspection in
February 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

The Extern Group is a charitable organisation, and is contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the Moving Forward, Moving On European Social Fund project. The main aims of the project are to provide mentoring support to young people who are aged from 16 to 24 years of age and have completed an alternative education placement, or who have offended, or are at risk of offending. The participants develop a personal action plan to identify and work towards their targeted outcomes. They are provided with opportunities to attend one-to-one mentoring sessions, participate in employability and support clinics and other group fora, undertake accredited qualifications, participate in relevant work sampling activities, and progress to appropriate work-experience placements.

Almost all of the participants enter the project with a range of complex personal and social issues, low academic achievement, and significant barriers to learning and employment.

The Moving Forward, Moving On project is managed by a programme manager who is supported by a project manager, a project co-ordinator, seven mentors, and a group of mentors who are deployed when required. At the time of the inspection 44 participants¹ were registered on the project, which is delivered in flexible manner to meet their personal circumstances and individual support and development needs.

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:

- 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. 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

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

KEY FINDINGS

4. Outcomes for learners

The number of participants recruited to the project, to date, is high and is in line with the targeted number; in year one of the project, the recruitment target of 130 participants was achieved (100%), and in year two of the project, to date, a total of 116 participants have been recruited against a target of 130 (89%). Outcomes on the project are positive. In year one, and in year two to date, the target set for a participant to achieve one level 1 qualification has been exceeded; 34 participants achieved in year one (170%), and 27 participants have so far achieved in year 2 (135%), against a target of 20 in each year. It is also positive that 25 (19%) of the participants in year 1 achieved three or more accredited qualifications and 22 participants (19%) so far in year 2.

The number of participants progressing to a Department training programme² in year one was exceeded with 68 participants doing so out of a target of 45 (151%), and in year two, to date, 46 participants have progressed out of a target of 45 (102%). In year one of the project, the progression rate into other training programmes³ was an area for improvement with only 12 participants out of a target of 31 (39%) progressing, however, the target in year two has already been exceeded with 45 participants progressing out of a target of 41 (109%). No participants, in either year one, or year two to date, have progressed into voluntary work against the targets of 42 and 32 respectively, and this needs to be improved.

Almost all of the participants demonstrate a positive disposition and engage well on the project. They report high levels of satisfaction with the support provided by the mentors in the one-to-one sessions and the group fora. In particular, they report that they value highly the opportunities to overcome social isolation and develop friendships, and the help they receive to overcome and sustain progress in achieving their personal goals, for example, in abstaining from substance abuse and offending. Through participation in the project, the participants develop well their understanding of the triggers that contribute to their challenging behaviours, improve their confidence, self-esteem, and motivation, and develop their capacity to overcome their significant and often complex barriers to learning and employment. The Extern Group celebrates the achievements of the participants by highlighting success in the achievement of qualifications and the progress made by them in pursuing their personal goals.

Most of the participants undertaking professional and technical training engage well and are making appropriate progress in the completion of their training programmes. They are undertaking training across a range of professional and technical areas including engineering, hair and beauty, joinery, retail, and warehousing and a small number of them have secured work-experience placements. The standards of work demonstrated by the participants are variable, however, they are improving key employability skills such as attendance and time-keeping.

5. Quality of provision

The curriculum offer has been very well developed to match the ability levels, personal circumstances, and learning and development needs of the participants. It includes accredited employability qualifications, an accredited in-house programme that has been specifically designed to support young people who have offended or who are starting to offend, and enhancements such as a qualification in information and communications technology. In addition, there is a range of short non-accredited provision which is tailored

² The Department's Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes

³ Alternative training programmes such as the Prince's Trust programme

to the needs of the participants in group settings and includes elements such as anger management, healthy living, and information on welfare support. The participants are also sign-posted to other qualifications, such as essential skills training, and appropriate professional and technical programmes and career pathways, on offer from the range of education and training providers who work with the Extern Group to support the delivery of the project.

The participants are assigned a mentor on entry to the project who provides regular one-to-one support. The mentors meet with the participants when they join the project to discuss their previous experiences and achievements and to identify their main challenges and barriers to education, training and employment. The information is used well to develop a personal action plan and an agreed programme of interventions to support them to overcome a wide range of personal, social, emotional issues including addiction and offending behaviour, and support their journey to progress into and sustain their participation in education and training or employment.

Further ongoing one-to-one mentoring support provides the participants with consistent and systematic personal support, informed advice and guidance on the range of support and welfare services available to them, and tailored individualised careers education, information advice and guidance. The process is further complemented by an intensive mentoring support programme which is available for those participants who are identified as being at risk of possibly regressing on the project, for example, re-offending or re-engaging in substance abuse. Critical crisis points in the participants' planned schedule are identified and a planned programme of supervised activities with a pair of mentors is put in place.

A 'keep safe-stay safe' framework has been developed by the Extern group and is an effective intervention tool used to focus on particular issues such as addiction, offending, risk-taking, homelessness, or when a placement or relationship is breaking down. A number of fora have been put in place such as the Lad's and Dad's programme, the Young Mum's group, and the Youth Forum to support the participants to overcome social isolation, to develop their personal and social and life skills. The participants also have prompt access to counselling and other specialist services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAHMS) and addiction services.

The quality of the mentoring, group sessions, and support clinics observed, is very good. They are well-planned and effective strategies are used by the mentoring support officers to encourage the participants to reflect on their experiences and build on their achievements to date. In the group sessions, activity-based communication strategies are used effectively to encourage the participants to challenge negative attitudes and behaviours, and to develop their capacity to change their behaviours and develop emotional resilience. The support clinics across a range of training organisations are used well to support the participants to sustain their participation on their training programme by providing a listening ear, liaising with the staff in the training organisations to identify and resolve any issues or problems arising, and advocating for them with external support services.

The provision for care and welfare impacts positively on the participants' personal and social development and their progression outcomes. The participants report that the staff demonstrate a genuine concern for their health and welfare and mutually respectful relationships are evident between them. The participants interviewed felt safe in the organisation and knew who to contact if they had an issue or problem. The Extern Group also place an appropriate emphasis on ensuring that staff have access to appropriate training to support them in their work, such as therapeutic crisis intervention, addressing aggression, and dealing with violence from young people.

6. Leadership and management

The project is led and managed very effectively at both strategic and operational levels and appropriate action has been taken to address the areas for improvement from previous ETI feedback. Effective management systems and processes have been put in place to manage the project, record and report on the progress of the participants, and inform future planning. Regular meetings take place with mentors to provide updates on the progress the participants are making on the project. The information is collated and summarised using a traffic light system and is used well to identify any participants at risk of regressing and the actions needed to address this. An appropriate in-house system has also been developed to measure the impact of the project on the personal, social and emotional capabilities of the participants.

Very effective links and partnerships have been established with a wide range of statutory referral agencies, and other community and voluntary organisations and training providers to support the delivery of the project. The partner organisations report very positively on the project and the work the staff are doing to support the participants. Although there is good communication between all the partner organisations and the Extern Group, there is a need for the mentors to capture more effectively details about the content of the programmes being undertaken and the support provided for those participants who have progressed to a training programme with an external supplier organisation. This is to ensure that the support being offered in both organisations is complementary, that opportunities to provide appropriate support are not missed, and that there is no unnecessary duplication or overlap in the provision.

Management and staff are hard-working and committed, which reflects the positive and supportive ethos of the organisation in addressing issues relating to young people who have attended alternative education provision, have a history of offending behaviour, and/or are at risk of social exclusion.

While the processes used for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning have improved, they need to be developed and refined further, particularly, the better analysis and use of key performance data, the use of feedback from key stakeholders, and the clearer identification of strengths and areas for improvement in the self-evaluation report, and the prioritisation of areas for improvement and the use of more specific targets in the quality improvement plan.

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:

- ensure that the reporting arrangements in the safeguarding flowcharts are clear and transparent with named individuals in the project; and
- review and update safeguarding policies and procedures, including the staff code of conduct, to promote safe working practices for staff.

7. Overall effectiveness

The Extern Group 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
Moving Forward, Moving On ESF project 2015/2016	130	100
Moving Forward, Moving On ESF project 2016/2017	116	89

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 27 participants during their mentoring sessions, employability and support clinics, and group fora, including nine participants interviewed in two focus groups. Discussions were held with the programme manager, project manager, project co-ordinator, mentors, staff from partner organisations, and participants. The management information systems, including the tracking and monitoring systems, samples of the participants' work and personal training plans, and planning documents were examined. The project promoter's self-evaluation report 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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