



Education and Training
Inspectorate

European Social Fund provision in
Fermanagh and Omagh District Council

Access to Success, Progression, Inclusion,
Recognition and Employment (ASPIRE)

Report of an Inspection
in November 2016



Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments



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 met with a total of 35 participants in five learning and development sessions, eight workplace visits and two focus group meetings. Discussions were held with the management and project team, two partnership organisations, one community forum and eight employers. The management information systems, including the tracking and monitoring systems, samples of the participants' work, personal action plans, reviews of progress, programmes of work, and session plans were examined and the project promoter's self-evaluation report was 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

The Fermanagh and Omagh District Council (The Council) operates in partnership with the Western Health & Social Care Trust (WH&SCT), the Education Authority (EA) and delivery partner Fermanagh Rural Community Initiative (FRCI) to support unemployed or economically inactive participants, in the Fermanagh and Omagh areas. The aim is to provide individually tailored and specialist support to meet the participants' employability and skills development needs. The Council as lead partner is contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the European Social Fund project, Access to Success, Progression, Inclusion, Recognition and Employment (ASPIRE). Each participant is assigned a personal mentor for the duration of the project and they have the opportunity to undertake a range of employability focused qualifications which include industry specific training opportunities, information and communication technology (ICT) qualifications and level one vocational qualifications in business administration, customer service and retail.

The project is facilitated by a 16-strong team which includes strategic management and operational staff, including Head of Service, Programmes Manager, Senior Project Officer, four Project Officers, two ICT Officers, two Liaison Officers, Research and Marketing Officer, three administrative staff and a Finance Verification Officer. The programme operates from bases in Omagh and Enniskillen. At the time of inspection 206 participants¹ had been registered during year two of the project and 61 (31%) of the participants were in a suitable work-experience placement.

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 participants	Very good
Provision for learning and development	Very good
Leadership and management	Very good

5. Outcomes for participants

The outcomes for participants are very good. The majority of them are demonstrating very good standards of work and are progressing well in the learning and development sessions and activities. All of the participants report high levels of satisfaction with the project and can articulate how their work experience placement is matched to their individual needs and aspirations and is developing well their personal, social and employability skills.

All of the employers interviewed are very positive about the project and the progress the participants are making in their work experience placements. They report that the participants' confidence and communication skills have improved significantly and that they are developing a range of additional skills, through the provision of short industry-specific courses, to further support them in their placement and in future progression opportunities.

Recruitment to the project, to date, is in line with the targets set. In year one of the project, the retention rate was outstanding at 86% and the achievement rate for completed level one qualifications was also outstanding at 98%. In year two, at the time of the inspection, the retention was on target at 68%, and it is of note that 52% of year one leavers secured employment, exceeding the project target of 35%.

6. Provision for learning and development

The quality of the provision for learning and development is very good. The sessions and activities are planned well, participant-centred, and match the range of activities outlined in the project bid. The delivery is tailored for one-to-one support, small group and larger group training as appropriate and is characterised by a strong rapport between the staff and the participants. The participants have access to a well-considered curriculum which includes a range of employability focused vocational and ICT qualifications.

Very effective links and partnerships have been established with a wide variety of organisations, agencies and community engagement forums to support the delivery of the provision. This includes access to additional specialist and bespoke industry training for example: manual handling and Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) through the partnership working with the WH&SCT, and Child Protection Awareness training through partnership working with the EA.

All of the participants have access to high quality work-experience placements and these are well matched to their individual goals and aspirations. However, the organisation and project staff need to ensure that effective and timely advice and guidance is in place, as the participants approach the end of their programme, to support positive progression.

The quality of the care and welfare provided for the participants is very good. The project team and personal mentors provide a high level of individual care and welfare support and effective signposting arrangements are in place. The provision of a valuable 12 week health and wellbeing programme, which has included sessions on healthy eating and building resilience, is supporting well participants with mental health barriers to employment; this includes one-to-one specialist provision as well as an opportunity to participate in a weekly walking group. All of the participants interviewed report positively on the impact this programme is having on their overall health and wellbeing. An annual celebration event is also held to recognise the personal development and achievements of the participants.

There is a comprehensive induction process in place and the quality of the participants' personal action plans is mostly good and these are reviewed every six weeks. The initial assessment should be strengthened to reflect sufficiently the knowledge the project leaders have about the participants and the support that is being provided.

7. Leadership and management

The quality of the leadership and management is very good. The project is managed very effectively at both strategic and operational levels. The organisation has adapted well to recent staffing changes and demonstrates responsiveness to their previous baseline inspection findings, for example the research and marketing of the project has been strengthened. The roles and responsibilities of staff are clearly defined and strong working relationships have been established between management, staff and participants.

The curriculum provision has been extended and strengthened to include vocational qualifications at level one and strong links with the local college of further education facilitates the appropriate delivery of in-house essential skills provision, as well as progression opportunities. In addition the quality of the accommodation in both centres is good and provides good access for the participants. It is also a strength that the Council has agreed to meet participants' transport costs if they have been identified as a barrier to participation in the project in line with the Travel Support Guidance.

The high quality partnership working between the Council, the WH&SCT, the EA and FRCI including a variety of additional providers, is a key strength of the provision. There are strong communication channels and a cycle of meetings to discuss the project's progress towards targets and other pertinent issues. An example of this is evident in the inclusion of the health and wellbeing strand in the provision and the participants' access to high quality work-experience placements, job specific training opportunities and resources available through the WH&SCT. Overall employer engagement and effective channels of communication on the project is very good; in year one of the project, the organisation successfully engaged with 170 employers; 87% of their target.

There is a comprehensive management information system/social impact tracker in place which is effectively recording and measuring the project's progress towards targets and the distance travelled in the participants' personal and social skills development. The project also benefits from the wider resources available within the Council's services, for example a geographical information system which records the location of participants, alongside additional participant information and is used well to identify areas underrepresented and which need to be targeted. Management need to make further use of the reporting facilities, available in these systems, to improve and inform the quality of provision.

The organisation demonstrates a commitment to developing effective processes to quality assure specific aspects of the provision across the region and is collating well a variety of stakeholder feedback. The processes used for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning require further development, including a more effective use of a range of key performance data, and the inclusion of feedback from participants, partnership working, and other key stakeholders to better reflect the impact the project is having on the participants' lives.

On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the Council's ASPIRE project has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding young people and adults at risk.

8. Overall effectiveness

The Council demonstrates a high level of capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the participants. To improve the provision further, the Council need to:

- develop further the self-evaluation processes including the better use of performance data and feedback from all stakeholders to better inform planning; and
- review the initial assessment documentation to measure the distance travelled more effectively.

APPENDIX

Current registrations by programme

Programme	Numbers of enrolments	% against target
European Social Fund ASPIRE 2015/2016	192	96%
European Social Fund ASPIRE 2016/2017	206	69%

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