



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

European Social Fund provision in  
Network Personnel

Community and Family Support  
Programme

Report of an Inspection in  
November 2017



The Education and Training Inspectorate  
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education  
Department for the Economy  
and other commissioning Departments

CUSTOMER  
SERVICE  
EXCELLENCE



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## **1. Context**

Network Personnel is wholly owned by the Workspace Group, a charity with its headquarters in Draperstown, and is contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the Community Family Support Programme (CFSP) European Social Fund (ESF) project in Antrim and Newtownabbey, and Mid and East Antrim. The Project aims to engage with families with high levels of need in order to support eligible family members to realise their potential, by addressing their barriers to finding and sustaining employment through developing their employability skills. The project promoter, provides a range of individually-tailored and needs-led interventions which include, employability mentoring support services to address family members (of 16+ years) educational, employment and training needs, and family support and referral services to address family member's health, social and economic needs in order to promote progression to employment, training or education. The participants engage in mentoring sessions with project staff and can also select from a range of accredited and non-accredited short training courses based on their needs and interests. The participants are typically involved with the project for between a four to six-month period, although this varies according to individual participants' needs.

Network Personnel is managed by a chief executive officer as part of the Workspace Group and he is supported in his role by a voluntary board of directors. Network Personnel deliver a range of funded employability programmes including two further ESF projects. The CFSP project is managed operationally by a programme manager, an assistant manager, two co-ordinators and two administrators. The project operates out of premises in Antrim and Ballymena and is delivered by a team of four family liaison officers, three employment engagement officers and one officer who has a combined role as both a family liaison officer and employment engagement officer.

At the time of the inspection, 64 families<sup>1</sup> were registered on the project<sup>1</sup>.

## **2. Views of participants**

The inspection team met with a sample of participants across the two offices, individually and in small groups. All of the participants reported positively about their participation on the CFSP project and stated that it had significantly improved their level of confidence and self-esteem. Most of the participants commented that the programme provides a start to the process of improving the quality of their lives and subsequently that of their children. The opportunity to engage in a range of short accredited courses, gain qualifications and develop social networks were also cited as strengths of the project. The participants report that they are receiving 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Very Good
<b>Quality of provision</b>	Very Good
<b>Leadership and management</b>	Very Good

### KEY FINDINGS

#### 5. Outcomes for learners

The majority of participants interviewed are making good to very good progress in developing their confidence and self-esteem and in addressing barriers to their employability. In the sessions observed the majority of participants were also making good to very good progress in developing their communication and oracy skills.

Network Personnel have achieved, to date, 50% of the overall target set for the recruitment of individual participants to the programme (2015-2018), due mostly to the high number of lone parents and the smaller number of members in each family or household recruited than initially predicted. Difficulties regarding these specific targets have been brought to the attention of the Department and are currently under review. However, the project staff have been very effective in identifying and registering families from the target group. At the time of the inspection, the project was ahead of its overall recruitment target with 378 families registered to date, well above the three year target set of 339 (2015-18). It is positive that 314 families have successfully engaged in the programme and achieved their agreed goals, while 64 families remain on the programme. Overall the participants completing the programme to date have achieved a total of 769 short accredited and non-accredited courses, 56% of the overall target set. It would be important for project staff to encourage more of the participants to participate in short accredited and non-accredited courses.

The retention rate on the project was outstanding (91%) in 2015-16, very good (84%) in 2016-17 and is outstanding (96%) to date in 2017-2018. On completing the programme, the project staff has been successful in progressing 65 participants into employment to date, well above the 55 target set, and in progressing 113 participants into further education or training to date exceeding the target set of 109.

Almost all of the participants demonstrate high levels of commitment to overcoming personal, social and health barriers in order to progress towards employment. 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 on the project to date. It has also contributed to positive outcomes for participants and their families in terms of increased social inclusion and participation in community provision, improved family relationships and positive parenting, and increased engagement with specialist provision.

## **6. Quality of provision**

The CFSP project delivers a flexible programme which is tailored to meet the participant's individual needs. As appropriate, at the first or second interview, all of the families are initially assessed and a family support action plan is agreed that identifies their often complex barriers to employment and the actions planned to address them. At an agreed point when the family member is ready an employability officer then becomes involved to help move the participant towards employment. A strength of the provision is the high quality team work, and complementary skills sets between the family liaison and employability staff.

The completed documentation records clearly the often intensive work which takes place and includes signposting to, and use of, community provision such as Mums and Tots, Lighthouse, Yoga sessions in order to meet individual participant's specific needs. However, on occasion despite intensive support and inputs from project staff resulting in job offers, many participants are still not ready to move into employment. The work carried out does impact positively on the quality of family life for those involved in the project.

Network Personnel offer a broad and relevant curriculum of short accredited and non-accredited programmes that all participants on the CFSP project can access. It is a strength of the project that participants also have the option to address and enhance their literacy and/or numeracy barriers by completing a level 1 essential skills qualification and to complete short accredited courses in a range of specialist areas such as children's care, learning and development, health and social care, information technology, and retail as well as construction skills register, first aid, food safety, and manual handling. Effective use of complimentary therapies such as relaxation techniques and the use of essential oils are commented on by participants as helping them develop more effective and helpful coping strategies.

The directed training sessions are planned well. In the best practice the facilitators use a range of interactive approaches and active learning strategies to engage participants in their learning and development. The sessions are enhanced by very good learning resources. The tutors and family employment officers appropriately encourage the participants to reflect, develop their independence and to take responsibility for their own learning and development. The mentoring sessions are of a high quality and demonstrate the professional skills of the family liaison and employability staff in engaging and challenging the participants to progress further towards employability.

A small number of participants are able to access short work experience or volunteering opportunities and this is an area which project staff have indented as an area of further development.

Care and welfare impacts positively on learning, teaching and outcomes for participants. The family liaison and employability officers and all of the project staff are very caring, respectful and supportive. In particular, the family liaison and employability officers are proactive and skilled in building positive relationships with each participant in order to address effectively their barriers to progression. A comprehensive range of links with external agencies is in place in order to access any required specialist support for the participants.

## **7. Leadership and management**

The Network Personnel senior management team have a clear vision for the continued development of the CFSP project and the complementary provision that participants can access. There is participant focused strategic planning and a strong commitment to invest in staff, accommodation and resources.

There is a very good induction process for new staff and they feel they are supported well by the organisation. Network Personnel support well the continuing professional development of staff and they can access a wide range of resources on the internal network. Internal and external communication is very good and includes the effective use of social media.

The project promoter is appropriately exploring a range of social impact tracker packages which will demonstrate more clearly the distance travelled and progression in soft skills which are outcomes achieved by almost all of the participants on the CFSP project.

Provision for the care and welfare of the project staff is a key strength through the provision of one-to-one case reviews and opportunities for reflective practice with co-ordinators, and with their colleagues. There is also a well-planned series of team meetings for delivery staff, middle and senior managers which contribute to the overall development of the project as well as opportunities for sharing best practice.

There is an organisation wide self-evaluation process and quality cycle and while the process still needs to be refined and further embedded, the CFSP team are highly reflective and have accurately identified most of the main areas for improvement. The team are aware that they need to continue to gather data in a format which demonstrates trends and more clearly identify areas for improvement. The action planning needs to be developed further to be more succinct, use more measurable targets and prioritise more effectively the key areas for improvement.

## **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**

Network Personnel 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 Family Support Project 2015/2016	162	62%
European Social Fund Community Family Support Project 2016/2017	209	60%
European Social Fund Community Family Support Project 2017/2018	111 to date	32%

**B. Inspection methodology and evidence base**

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework is available on the ETI website [www.etini.gov.uk](http://www.etini.gov.uk).

An ETI inspector and an associate assessor observed 13 participants in a range of settings including two mentoring and six learning and development sessions, and two focus groups meetings. Discussions were held with Network Personnel's management team, the project promoter manager and assistant manager, the two co-ordinators, six of the family liaison and employment engagement officers. The management information system, including the tracking and monitoring systems, samples of the participants' work and personal action plans, and mentors' 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	
<b>Retention</b>	The percentage of enrolments measured over the full duration of their programme.
<b>Achievement</b>	The percentage of participants who completed their targeted individual outcomes.
<b>Progression</b>	The percentage of successful completers who achieved positive progression.

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