



Education and Training
Inspectorate

European Social Fund provision in
Reed in Partnership

Work Routes NI

Report of an Inspection in
March 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

Reed in Partnership is a private limited company and is contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the European Social Fund (ESF) project Work Routes NI. In November 2016 Reed in Partnership subcontracted the delivery of Work Routes to Rutledge Recruitment and Training, as a delivery partner in their supply chain. Under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) regulations (TUPE) Rutledge Recruitment and Training took over Reed in Partnership's employees' contracts to support the continued delivery of the project within the supply chain arrangement. Work Routes NI is a voluntary programme designed to support those who are unemployed and economically inactive to remove participants' complex barriers and provide them with employment services.

Whilst Reed in Partnership continues to manage the contract, with oversight for quality and compliance, the project is led locally by Rutledge Recruitment and Training's operations director, and managed by the programme manager and the advisor manager, supported by an employment and skills trainer, a recruitment manager, a health and wellbeing officer and a team of employment advisors. At strategic level the project is overseen by Reed in Partnership's supply chain manager and head of continuous improvement, who report to the managing director and their board of directors. Within Rutledge Recruitment and Training the operations director reports to their senior management team. Rutledge Recruitment and Training collaborates with a number of organisations, including strategic partners, complementary providers and referral agencies to support and deliver the aims of the project.

At the time of the inspection, 217 participants¹ were registered on the Work Routes NI project. The programme is delivered in three key stages to the participants who attend needs assessment and action planning, pre-employment support and employability, job search support and job brokerage activities. The participants are provided with an individualised learning programme to support them in accessing a range of employment support services and mostly non-accredited provision. The project has delivered accredited provision to a minority of participants.

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.

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

3. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Outcomes for learners	Good
Quality of provision	Good
Leadership and management	Good

KEY FINDINGS

4. Outcomes for learners

Reed in Partnership is effective in identifying and registering participants from the target group. In 2015/16, the recruitment target for the project was exceeded (104%) with 217 participants being recruited. During 2016/17, with one month remaining, recruitment has reached 97% of the target with 256 participants recruited to date.

The number of accredited qualifications achieved during 2015/16 is below the target. Of the 217 participants who completed the project during 2015/16, 6% achieved a level one qualification in employability and 5% in retail. During 2016/17 this has improved in the level one employability, and the organisation has exceeded the target with 21 participants achieving this qualification. In retail, the organisation remains below target, with five participants out of a target of 18 achieving the level one qualification. To address this area for improvement it is appropriate that the project promoter is developing the curriculum to provide a wider range of qualifications for participants to achieve appropriate accredited training to better prepare them for employment, particularly those who are furthest from the work-place.

The retention rate for the project in 2015/16 is very good (76%) and good (65%) in 2016/17. The project has been successful in progressing participants into employment, exceeding the target (238%) in 2015/16, with 50 participants' moving into employment. The progression into employment in 2016/17 has been exceeded (226%) to date, with 106 participants progressing toward employment. The participants' progression rate to self-employment has remained below target in 2015/16 and 2016/17 when one participant (50%) moved into self-employment. In 2015/16 the participants' referral to complementary services has exceeded the target (133%) and is progressing toward the 2016/17 target with 31 of a target 35 participants referred to complementary services. The project has remained below target in supporting participants into voluntary work, achieving 50% of the target in 2015/16 and 40% to date in 2016/17.

Most of the participants build good levels of confidence to overcome their diverse social, emotional and personal barriers to employment. All of the participants interviewed during the inspection provided positive feedback about their experiences on the project to date and could identify clearly the progress they had made in building their self-confidence and motivation to progress to employment. Through their engagement with the project almost all of the participants can demonstrate improved employability skills, with the minority (10%) achieving relevant accredited qualifications. The participants demonstrate a good understanding of the work being undertaken to support their progress toward employment. Where appropriate, participants are supported by the project promoter to engage in complementary services, such as counselling, so that they can overcome their barriers and to progress to employment.

5. Quality of provision

Reed in Partnership has developed an employability curriculum offer that includes wellbeing support and employer liaison, to support the development of the participants' personal, social, and employability skills. The provision is participant centred, delivered in a flexible manner, and supports appropriate progression opportunities. It includes a range of mostly non-accredited provision and a limited range of accredited qualifications and employability activities. The complementary services provided to participants are well developed, these include an extensive range of counselling and other services to provide targeted support for the participants to support their progress toward employment. The range of employment services provided by the project is highly valued by the participants and is impacting positively on improving their employment opportunities.

The participants' personal files capture well their prior experiences, qualifications, and barriers to learning and employment. The initial assessment processes are well-planned to include the use of a robust barriers and needs assessment for each participant that is linked to an action plan that results in individualised and tailored support for each individual. The participants are kept well-informed about their progress through the systematic review processes. The organisation provides support sessions to identify and measure each participants' progress in their personal and social skills, and the impact the programme is having on improving their skills and capabilities to progress to employment. There are also extensive links to signposting to a range of services to support participants who have specific needs, including social and health related problems, to a diverse range of services. The participants interviewed were positive about their experiences on the programme and the range of employment support they received from staff.

The quality of the provision for learning and development, including the learning and training sessions observed is mostly good. In the sessions, there was clear planning for learning and appropriate use of a range of resources to support the employability skills development of the participants. The staff engage effectively with the participants and foster good relationships through a range of well-considered strategies including one-to-one support. To improve further the quality of the learning and training, the organisation needs to enhance the participants' development of personal responsibility and independent learning skills to support their progress to the next stage of their learning, training or employment.

The arrangements for care and welfare impacts positively on the participants learning and development. The processes and systems for identifying and managing individual support needs are well-established and effective. A coherent approach to planning, identifying, reviewing and supporting the participants' individual needs is in place and works well. As a result most of the participants overcome successfully their barriers to learning and progression. The managers and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to meeting the care and welfare needs of the participants. They are allocated an advisor and receive individual guidance and support as part of the project delivery.

6. Leadership and management

The strategic management of the project includes a clearly defined supply chain relationship between Reed in Partnership and Rutledge Recruitment and Training to support the effective delivery of the project through a consistent and standardised approach. The supply chain partner has developed strategic partners and extensive links with referral agencies and complementary services across the local area. The organisation also works closely with the community and voluntary sector in the local area to deliver the project effectively across the Armagh Banbridge Craigavon Council, and is represented on the Council Economic Forum. To support the delivery of the project, extensive links and partnerships have been established with a broad range of statutory, voluntary and community organisations.

Management and staff are committed to making the project a success resulting in a well planned provision with effective channels of communication to support the delivery of the provision and employment services. The management information system and processes are well-planned and used effectively to track progress, and provide an effective mechanism for advisors to track initial assessment, reviews and in-work support. Staffing levels for the project are good, with clear roles and responsibilities established to successfully manage the project, including a clearly defined health and well-being role to support both staff and participants. Staff interviewed are enthusiastic and committed to supporting the participants. The quality of the accommodation to deliver the training and support the participants is good.

Reed in Partnership demonstrates commitment to self-evaluation and quality improvement. The management and staff have acted positively on feedback received from the ETI and this has resulted in the introduction of up-dated processes to address the areas identified in previous inspections. For example, the organisation has placed an appropriate emphasis on obtaining feedback through the stakeholder questionnaire and introduced a step-by-step approach, using a participant progression tool developed in conjunction with staff, to review participants' progress in overcoming individual barriers and further support their progression to employment. However, there is a need to refine and develop the processes further, particularly the analysis and use of key performance data to improve the monitoring of participants' progress and better inform the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes.

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding participants reflect the guidance from the Department.

7. Overall effectiveness

Reed in Partnership demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the participants. There are areas for improvement that the organisation has demonstrated the capacity to address. The areas for improvement are to:

- further develop the curriculum to provide a wider range of qualifications for participants to achieve appropriate accredited training to better prepare the participants for employment, particularly those who are furthest from the work-place;
- improve further the quality of the learning and training, to enhance the participants' development of their independent learning skills to support better their progress to the next stage of their learning, training or employment; and
- refine the use and analysis of data to improve the monitoring of participants' progress and better inform the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes.

The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.

A. Project registrations

Programme	Numbers of enrolments	% against target
Work Routes 2015/2016	217	104%
Work Routes 2016/2017	256 (to 28/03/17)	97%*

* This % is to the end of March 2017. There is 1 further month still for the 2016/17 registrations.

B. Inspection methodology and evidence base

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

Three ETI inspectors observed 8 participants in 6 learning and development sessions; visited 1 placement provider, had discussions with 4 strategic partners and interviewed 6 participants in focus group meetings. Discussions were held with the supply chain manager, the safeguarding officer, the programme manager, the head of learning and development, the health and well-being officer, the recruitment manager, employment advisors, the employment and skills trainer, the advisor manager, strategic partners, the head of continuous improvement, a community organisation, employers and a referral agency. The management information systems, including the tracking and monitoring systems, the participant progression sheet, personal training plans and reviews, programmes of work and session plans 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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