



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

European Social Fund provision in  
Roe Valley Community Education  
Forum

Causeway Learn to Earn

Report of an Inspection in  
January 2020



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**

Roe Valley Community Education Forum (RVCEF) is a registered charity that operates from training premises in Limavady. It is contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the European Social Fund project, Causeway Learn to Earn. The project is delivered in collaboration with two partner organisations, Ballycastle Community Workshop Training Limited (BCW) and West Bann Community Development (WBCD), across the Causeway Coast and Glens council area.

The project aims to combat poverty, reduce economic inactivity and enhance social inclusion by supporting the development of the participants' personal, social and employability skills through the provision of relevant level 1 accredited training, mentoring support and work-experience placements.

At the time of the inspection, 66 participants<sup>1</sup> were registered on the Causeway Learn to Earn project. All of them attend training for at least one full day per week.

The project is managed by the programme manager who is supported by an office administrator, the project manager in BCW, the centre manager in WBCD, three mentors, three employment liaison officers and eleven tutors. All of the staff involved in the management and delivery of the project, across the partner organisations, are employed on a part-time basis.

## **2. Views of participants**

The inspection team met and spoke with a sample of participants during their learning and development sessions and in focus groups. They are positive about their experiences on the project and, in particular, the good relationships that exist between them and the staff. All of the participants interviewed stated that they feel safe, well-supported and know who to contact for advice or guidance. They highlighted the positive impact that participation on the project is having on developing their levels of confidence and self-esteem and enhancing their general mental health and well-being.

## **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>     | Capacity to identify and bring about improvement |
| <b>Outcomes for learners</b>     | Very good  |
| <b>Quality of provision</b>      | Good   |
| <b>Leadership and management</b> | Good   |

#### KEY FINDINGS

##### 5. Outcomes for participants

The project promoter has developed effective links with a range of external agencies. These links, along with an effective, proactive social media presence, have helped to support high levels of recruitment to the project. In year one, the recruitment target of 130 participants was fully achieved and to date in year two 117 participants have been recruited against an overall target of 130 (90%). In WBCD, the provision of crèche facilities and childcare places has been a key factor in removing barriers to participation in learning and employment and has enabled a minority of the participants to undertake training that they previously wouldn't have been able to access.

Most of the participants are well-motivated and positively engage in their learning and training. They demonstrate good or better written and oral communication skills. The work in their portfolios of evidence is of a good or better standard, it is individualised and there is evidence of effective marking for improvement by the tutors to support ongoing development. In numeracy, for example, the participants can use and analyse data related to vocationally-relevant business scenarios to a good standard. In information technology (IT) users, they demonstrate increased confidence and competence in developing and formatting spreadsheets, can compose and send emails and produce business letters. The participants in childcare are able to carry out risk assessments to good effect and recognise the importance of robust safeguarding arrangements in a childcare setting; they can also identify and critique appropriate age-related reading materials for young children.

The overall retention rate of participants to date is outstanding (83%); it is very good for year one (78%) and is currently outstanding for year two (90%). In year one, most of the project targets were exceeded; 45 economically inactive or unemployed participants, out of a target of 20 (225%), progressed directly to employment, and 32 participants, out of a target of 33 (97%), sustained employment after six months. In addition, 15 economically inactive participants, out of a target of 14 (107%), progressed to other education or training programmes. It is noteworthy that almost all (95%) of those participants who completed their training programme achieved a level one qualification. In year two, to date, 16 unemployed participants, out of a target of 10 (160%), have progressed directly to employment. Also, most (82%) of those participants who completed their programme have achieved a level one qualification. There is a need, however, to increase the low percentage (16%) of participants availing of a relevant work-experience placement.

Through their engagement on the project, most of the participants demonstrate improved wider skills and dispositions. The evidence shows that they are making good progress in overcoming their personal and social barriers to learning and employment. Most of the participants work well with their peers, participate in a range of extra-curricular activities and improve their interpersonal skills through meeting and dealing with customers in the workplace.

## **6. Quality of provision**

The curriculum offer provides the participants with good opportunities to achieve accredited qualifications in a range of professional and technical areas. They are also able to access the essential skills of literacy and numeracy as well as undertake non-accredited programmes relating to the development of their wider skills and dispositions such as mental health awareness, money management and effective communication. In WBCD, the participants are provided with good opportunities to sample a number of professional and technical areas at the outset of their programme, to ensure that it best meets their learning and development needs and aspirations. While the curriculum is supporting well the development of the participants' personal, social and employability skills, it is noteworthy that, across the three partner organisations, almost all of the participants recruited are female. There is a need for management and staff to review the curriculum offer and consider in particular how it could better support the recruitment of more male participants.

The quality of the provision for learning and development in the sessions observed is good overall. Most of the sessions are characterised by well-considered planning, including appropriate levels of stretch and challenge, the use of good learning resources, effective questioning and appropriate use of information and learning technology. There is a need, however, to monitor attendance in the sessions, which was variable during the inspection. In addition, in a few of the sessions observed the use of more interactive learning strategies would have enhanced the overall learning experience for the participants.

The arrangements for care and welfare impact positively on the participants' learning and development. The staff, including across the project partners, demonstrate a strong commitment to meeting the care and welfare needs of the participants and engage effectively with them. They foster very good relationships with the participants and provide individualised and well-targeted guidance and support for them. Appropriate signposting and referral processes are also in place to address wider issues such as mental health, housing and social welfare.

The initial assessment process is mostly effective in identifying the participants' barriers to learning and employment and these, with their personal development and support needs, are captured well in their personal training plans. The inspection has identified, however, that a small number of participants are reluctant to fully disclose their barriers to learning and development at the early stages of their programme and do so only as their confidence and relationships with staff develop. Regular reviews are carried out by the mentors to track and monitor the progress the participants are making in their learning and training. The development of the participants' personal, social and employability skills is captured and reported on effectively in graphical format in their personal training plans.

The provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance is good. The project promoter engages well with a number of external agencies, including the Department's careers service and the local further education colleges to support the delivery of formal careers-related sessions. The provision is further supplemented by in-house careers advice workshops, curriculum vitae writing, mock interviews and one-to-one careers sessions for the participants. While the participants are supported well to develop an understanding of their personal skills and attributes, and the most appropriate progression pathways for them, the information is not currently recorded or reviewed sufficiently in their personal training planning or as part of the progress review process.

## **7. Leadership and management**

The project is managed effectively by the project promoter and the partner organisations. Good working relationships exist between management and staff across the three organisations; a regular schedule of meetings is in place and standardised documentation and processes have been established. Good links and partnerships have also been established with a wide range of external organisations and support agencies to support the delivery of the project.

A number of management information and reporting tools have been developed to track and monitor the overall progress the participants are making in their learning and progression. These are mostly used well by management to provide the basic level of information needed to manage and co-ordinate the project across the partner organisations. The tools and processes are at an early stage, however, and need further development and refinement in order to provide a more integrated and cohesive management and reporting system across all of the providers. Appropriate processes are in place to monitor and support improvement in the quality of learning and teaching and the mentoring support process for participants.

Staff are well-qualified and experienced in the delivery of learning and training programmes and are provided with appropriate opportunities to undertake relevant continuing professional development. The quality of the accommodation and resources for learning and training is good across the partner organisations.

Since the baseline inspection, the project promoter along with the partner organisations have developed a more appropriate self-evaluation and quality improvement planning process. This is informed by a range of data and information, including feedback from the participants and other key stakeholders. Going forward, there is a need to continue to refine the process, including the better use and analysis of data, the clearer identification of key strengths and areas for improvement and the actions needed to address these, and a more effective evaluation of the impact the project is having on the development of the participants' personal, social and employability skills and the standards they attain. In addition, the process should be better aligned to the Education and Training Inspectorate's inspection and self-evaluation framework.

## **8. Safeguarding**

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding participants reflect broadly current legislation and practice. However, the project promoter needs to:

- ensure that specified training for deputy designated officers is carried out as soon as possible; and
- standardise the processes used for reporting and recording incidents or disclosures across the partner organisations.

## **9. Overall effectiveness**

Roe Valley Community Education Forum 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.

**A. Project registrations**

| Programme   | Numbers of enrolments | % against target |
|---|-----------------------|------------------|
| European Social Fund Causeway Learn to Earn 2018/19 | 130                   | 100%             |
| European Social Fund Causeway Learn to Earn 2019/20 | 117                   | 90%*             |

\* Recruitment to year 2 continues until end of March 2020.

**B. Inspection methodology and evidence base**

The ETI’s Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework is available on the [ETI website](#).

Three ETI inspectors observed 31 participants in seven learning and development sessions and spoke with 16 participants in focus groups. Discussions were also held with the programme managers, project administration staff, mentors, tutors, external workshop facilitators and employers. The management information system, including the tracking and monitoring system, samples of the participants’ work, individual learning plans, review documents and programmes of work were examined. The project promoter’s self-evaluation report, quality improvement plan and other relevant documentation were also 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 participants, 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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