



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

European Social Fund provision in  
START360

Switch Onto Employment (SOE)

Report of an Inspection in  
November 2016



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



CSE



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:

<b>Overall effectiveness outcome</b>
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	
<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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## **1. Inspection method and evidence base**

Two ETI inspectors met with a total of seven participants in two learning and development sessions, one focus group meeting and one external visit to a local gym. Discussions were held with the management and project team and one trainer who supports the participants in the extra-curricular health and fitness sessions. The management information systems, including the tracking and monitoring systems and samples of the participants' work, individual action plans, personal learning plans, reviews of progress, programmes of work, session plans and the project promoter's self-evaluation report were 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**

START360 is contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the European Social Fund project, Switch onto Employment (SOE). The project targets young people aged 16-24 years who are furthest from the labour market, economically inactive and not in education, employment or training (NEET), in the Greater Belfast area, to develop their personal, social and employability skills and support them to make the transition towards employment. The participants have the opportunity to undertake a range of level one employability focused qualifications which include essential skills in literacy and numeracy, a diploma in vocational skills, information communication and technology, community independence and health and safety in the workplace.

The project is managed by the assistant manager, and supported by a team of five staff which comprises an employability placement officer, a key worker, two essential skills tutors and an administrative support officer. The project operates from its headquarters in Belfast's city centre.

At the time of inspection 39 participants<sup>1</sup> were registered on the project. Whilst a work-experience placement is not a requirement of the project, five of the participants have engaged in a work-sampling activity to enhance their progression opportunities.

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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

Overall effectiveness	High level capacity for sustained improvement
Outcomes for participants	Good
Provision for learning and development	Very good
Leadership and management	Very good

#### 5. Outcomes for participants

The outcomes for participants are good or better. The majority of them are demonstrating good or very good standards of work and are progressing well in their learning and in the development of their personal, social and employability skills. Almost all of them report high levels of satisfaction with the project and they are enthusiastic and able to demonstrate how the project has improved their lives and positively impacted on their life chances and employment opportunities.

Recruitment to the project, to date, is in line with the targets set. In year one of the project, the retention rate was very good at 70% and a significant minority achieved a full level one qualification. The project exceeded the targets set for personal and social skills development in year one, with almost all of the participants reporting positive changes in their lives and an increase in their confidence levels. All of them reported an improvement in their employability skills as a result of engaging in the project.

#### 6. Provision for learning and development

The quality of the provision for learning and development is very good. There is a broad and appropriate curriculum which includes the essential skills of literacy and numeracy up to and including level one, short vocational and information communication and technology qualifications and a wide range of enhancement and enrichment activities. For example, participants have the opportunity to gain health and safety and first aid qualifications, engage in health and fitness sessions and complimentary therapy activities. The participants also engage in enterprise and employability events, including a fashion show (the Souk) and arts and crafts activities such as jewellery making. The health and fitness programme is of a very good quality and 64% of the participants have engaged in this opportunity to develop further their social and team working skills through health and fitness activities. It is a strength of the project that the participants have the opportunity to attend an annual residential which focuses on developing their creative writing and literacy skills.

The learning and development in the small number of sessions observed are very good and the programmes are well planned, participant-centred, and match the range of activities outlined in the project bid. There is a very good range of learning and teaching resources and strategies which are used to good effect within the learning, including the effective use of information learning technology. Very effective links and partnerships have been established with a wide variety of voluntary and statutory organisations to support the delivery of the provision. Positive working relationships exist between the project management, staff and participants.

All of the participants have access to work enhancement activities and these are well matched to their individual goals and aspirations. A good feature of the project is that participants attend open days and job fairs and good quality work enhancement visits are arranged through the placement officer and linked to participants' individual goals and aspirations.

The quality of the care and welfare provided for the participants is outstanding. The staff at all levels demonstrate a high level of commitment to meeting the pastoral care and welfare needs of all of the participants. Supportive one-to-one mentoring provision is a strength of the project and highly valued by all of the participants.

Effective induction, sign-posting and referral processes are in place to meet the personal support needs of the participants. The project team maintain regular contact with all of the participants to help them overcome any barriers to their learning and bi-annual celebration events are held to recognise their achievements.

The quality of the participants' individual action plans are very good with a clear emphasis on goal setting, monitoring and review which effectively supports the participants' achievements and progress throughout the duration of the project. Separate personal learning plans for the essential skills, further strengthen the monitoring and tracking of the participants' progress.

## **7. Leadership and management**

The quality of the leadership and management is very good. There is a high level of commitment by the management and project team to supporting the participants to develop their personal and social skills. The organisation responded well to their previous baseline and scrutiny inspection findings; this has included an appropriate focus on the development of the data analysis and the wider stakeholder feedback to inform improvements in the project. There is an inclusive and highly supportive learning environment, and there has been a high level of investment in information and learning technology to support learning. The overall quality of the accommodation in the city centre office is good and provides a safe and welcoming environment for the participants.

The project management team have well-established strategic links and partnerships in the wider voluntary sector. They are actively involved in shaping and informing policy through their participation in the NEET Advisory Steering Group and regional forum stakeholder meetings. The team is also represented on a range of boards and forums across Health, Justice and Employability, ensuring participant need is advocated both strategically and operationally.

The project benefits from comprehensive management information and tracking systems which effectively record and measure the participants' progress towards targets. The project effectively uses the reporting facilities, available in these systems, to improve and inform the quality of provision.

The roles and responsibilities of staff are clearly defined and the organisation has a commitment to developing effective processes to quality assure the provision for learning and development. The self-evaluation processes have been developed to include some wider stakeholder feedback but the quality improvement plan would benefit from the use of measurable targets to better monitor and evaluate the progress and improvements in the quality of the provision.

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

## **8. Overall effectiveness**

START360 demonstrates a high level of capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the participants. To improve the provision further, START360 need to:

- refine further the quality improvement plan to incorporate more specific and measurable targets to support improvement, especially in relation to achievements and outcomes.

## APPENDIX

### Current registrations by programme

Programme	Numbers of enrolments	% against target
European Social Fund SOE 2015/2016	69	63%
European Social Fund SOE 2016/2017	39	35%



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