



Education and Training
Inspectorate

European Social Fund provision in
The Appleby Trust

Employment Preparation Service

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



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1. Context

The Appleby Trust is a charitable organisation, limited by guarantee, and is contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the Employment Preparation Service (EPS) European Social Fund Project (ESF) project. The aim of the project is, over a three year period, to engage with individuals with a learning disability who will likely have had no experience of work or work training and who has been at home, in school or in day care or coming from a hospital setting and make them more employable through a combination of pre-vocational and access training. The Project will target 60 people with a clinical diagnosis of a learning disability aged 18-65 years from the Southern Health and Social Care Trust (SHSCT) area.

The Appleby Trust is managed by a project manager who also operationally manages the Employment Preparation Service. She is supported in her work by a voluntary board of directors and by two graphic designers, two support workers, and a job coach. At the time of the inspection 35 participants¹ were registered on the Employment Preparation Service project. The participants attend according to their individually assessed need: 15 of the participants are placed in a sheltered training Print It business (ten in Banbridge and five in Dungannon) and attend from between five to 25 hours each week. A further seventeen (85%) of the participants are in a suitable external supported employment placement and attend between three and 15 hours per week.

2. Views of participants

The inspection team met with a sample of participants and parents or carers across the two offices, individually and in small groups, as well as visits to three workplaces. All of the participants reported positively about their participation on the EPS project and stated that the support provided had been very helpful and that it had significantly improved their levels of confidence and self-esteem. Participants and their parents or carers commented on the high quality support provided by project staff. The parents/carers interviewed particularly valued the safe, secure and supportive training environment of Print It where their son or daughter could develop wider employability skills and gain experience through undertaking a range of work related tasks. The opportunity to develop social networks and friendships were also cited as strengths of the project.

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.

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

KEY FINDINGS

5. Outcomes for learners

The majority of participants demonstrate good standards of work and are making appropriate progress in their learning and are developing well their personal, social, and employability skills. The participants placed in Print It in Banbridge and Dungannon are gaining work-related skills including completing administrative tasks, and print related tasks such as folding, sorting, and using office equipment in order to meet deadlines for customers' print orders. The employers who provide external supported work-experience placements report that participants progressing into job roles have developed positive attitudes to work.

In the sheltered training programme provided in Print It Banbridge and Dungannon, as well as in external work-experience placements, the tasks undertaken by the participants are meaningful and relevant to the workplace and the participants are able to apply well the skills they have learned and can communicate effectively, in-line with their stage of training and their support and learning needs. There is a positive work-based ethos and the participants are being supported well to overcome their significant and diverse barriers to learning and employment.

The project promoter has developed effective relationships with the SHSCT to support recruitment from the target group. Recruitment has exceeded the target in both year 1 (44/32) and year 2 (21/16). The project is slightly behind track to meet its recruitment target in year 3 with seven participants currently recruited against a target of 12. Ongoing work with the Trust has indicated that in one of the geographical areas currently covered by the project there are very few remaining suitable candidates for the project. However, at the time of inspection the project has exceeded its overall target with 72 participants recruited against a target of 60. The retention rate has been outstanding to date in each year of the project. Over the same period, it is a strength that 18 of the 24 of the participants who have completed their programme have progressed into voluntary work, 58% of the overall target, with 35 participants remaining on the programme. All of the participants have demonstrated positive progression in the development of their soft skills between their baseline assessment and the end of their time on the project. In addition, in the first two years of the project a further two participants have been progressed into further education (FE) courses on completing their programme. While progression to FE was not a target for participants leaving the EPS project, this pathway was considered to be in the best interests and met the particular needs of the two participants.

The flexible and supportive one-to-one job coach system is a strength of the provision of supported employment and has been a key factor in improving the participants' confidence and self-esteem. In the three workplaces visited the employers' help participants make progress by ensuring that they work with an experienced workplace colleague in order to provide them with good quality on-the-job skills coaching.

6. Quality of provision

The EPS project delivers a training programme through an in-house placement in Print It in either Banbridge or Dungannon, and/or a supported work-experience placement with an employer which is tailored to meet the participant's individual interests and needs. It is good that participants can access supportive learning and training environments where they can develop a range of work-related skills including producing printed products for customers such as business cards, wedding stationary, or letterheads, business leaflets and promotional information, supported by a support worker who works with the participants in developing both their employability and social skills. A further strength of the project also is the option of Job Coach supported employment which is offered as an initial option for those participants who have higher ability or as a progression for those who have completed time in Print It.

During the first four weeks of engagement with the project the participants undertake an informal assessment of their personal, social and employability skills. This informal assessment is then appropriately supplemented by a more formal initial assessment using a bespoke assessment tool developed by project staff. The outcome from the initial assessment process is used well to devise an individual personal training plan and the completed documentation records the often intensive work which takes place in order to meet the individual participant's specific needs. The assessment outcomes are then revisited and reviewed every four months. The areas for development for each participant need to form a succinct plan with specific incremental actions which can be monitored and reviewed more easily in order to promote progression.

A strength of the provision is the high quality team work, and complementary skills sets between the support workers and job coach which allows for a seamless transition between placement in the Print It provision and an external supported work-experience placement.

The training sessions observed in Print It are planned well and provide good learning and development experiences for the participants. In the best practice there is a strong focus on practical tasks and skills development in an office environment, including active learning strategies which engage participants well in their learning and development. The sessions are enhanced by very good learning resources and professional office equipment. To improve the provision further there is a need to plan more specifically to meet the individual areas for development of each participant. The participants should also be encouraged to reflect on, and to take more responsibility as appropriate, for their own learning and development.

The work-experience placements visited in hospitality and in retail are well matched to the participant's interests and needs. At the start of the placement, for up to six weeks, it is good that participants are provided with daily on-the-job support which is gradually reduced as the participant becomes more independent. The participant is assessed, every four months, using the same assessment tool as in Print It but it is adapted to assess the skills required for their individual work-experience placement. As agreed with the employer, and in-line with their progress, the participant will receive regular monitoring visits from the job coach. While the employers are involved in the review process, a more streamlined process would be more helpful to them. All of the employers reported positively on the contact, communication and support provided by the project staff.

Care and welfare impacts positively on learning, teaching and outcomes for participants. All of the project staff are very caring, respectful and supportive. In particular, the support workers and job coach are skilled in building positive relationships with each participant and their families in order to address effectively their barriers to progression.

7. Leadership and management

The Appleby Trust management team have a clear vision for the continued development of the EPS project. There is participant focused strategic planning and a strong commitment to invest in staff, accommodation and resources. The project staff have very good links with the SHSCT, statutory agencies and with employers. All of the participants on the EPS project are referred to the Appleby Trust by the SHSCT, and project staff are very well informed about the participant's barriers and their prior education and training experiences. It is good that staff from the SHSCT maintain contact with individual participants and with the project, and are involved in the review process after six weeks participation and then on an annual basis.

Managers and staff are experienced and demonstrate high levels of commitment to engage and support participants, most of who present with a wide range of complex needs, to participate fully on the project. There is an appropriate programme of continuous professional development to ensure that staff have the appropriate knowledge and skills to work well and meet the participant's individual needs.

The project promoter has appropriately developed a bespoke assessment tool which can be tailored to experiences in Print It and to a variety of external work-experience placements. While the tool does measure the distance travelled and progression in soft skills which are the outcomes achieved by almost all of the participants on the EPS project, the outcomes could be presented visually to demonstrate more clearly the positive progression made by both individual participants and the overall project.

The project staff have recently introduced a user-friendly one-page profile for each participant who is leaving the project, which outlines clearly their personal skills, attributes and support needs in order to help them sustain current work placements and also to promote further progression.

There is an organisation wide self-evaluation process and quality cycle. The quality assurance processes still need to be formalised, refined and further embedded, in order to provide more evidence on the quality of the provision. The EPS team are however reflective and are aware that they need to continue to gather data in a format which demonstrates more clearly the impact of the project. In order to promote overall improvement in the provision and ensure targeted quality improvement, there is a need to develop a separate quality improvement plan, with more consistent use of prioritised measurable actions.

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

The Appleby Trust's Employment Preparation Service project demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the participants. There are areas for improvement that the project promoter has demonstrated the capacity to address. The areas for improvement are:

- to refine the assessment process to ensure that it identifies more clearly the key areas for development for each participant and informs better the incremental targets to promote progression; and

- to formalise and embed the quality assurance processes, and produce a separate quality improvement plan with more consistent use of prioritised measurable actions, to continue to promote improvement in the provision

The ETI will monitor how the project promoter sustains improvement.

A. Project registrations

Programme	Numbers of enrolments	% against target
European Social Fund Employment Preparation Service 2015/2016	44	138%
European Social Fund Employment Preparation Service 2016/2017	21	131%
European Social Fund Employment Preparation Service 2017/2018	7	58% to date

B. Inspection methodology and evidence base

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

Two ETI inspectors observed 16 participants in a range of settings including learning and development sessions, focus groups and work-experience placements. Discussions were held with the Appleby Trust's project manager, job coach, support workers and four parents, three employers in the workplace and three were contacted by telephone. The management information systems, including the tracking and monitoring systems, samples of the participants' work and personal training plans, and 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	
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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