



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

European Social Fund provision in  
The Cedar Foundation

Inclusion Works

Report of an Inspection in  
February 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



## Contents

Section	Page
1. Context	1
2. Focus of the inspection	1
3. Overall findings of the inspection	2
4. Outcomes for learners	2
5. Quality of provision	3
6. Leadership and management	4
7. Overall effectiveness	5

### Appendix

- A. Project registrations
- B. Inspection methodology and evidence base
- C. Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

## **1. Context**

The Cedar Foundation (Cedar) is a charitable organisation, limited by guarantee and is contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the Inclusion Works European Social Fund Project (ESF). The main aims of the project are to deliver specialist services, across Northern Ireland, to improve the employability of people with disabilities by securing inclusive and sustainable outcomes. It is a flexible, person-centred service for those furthest from the labour market.

The project focuses on supporting people with complex disabilities, including congenital and acquired disabilities, brain injury, learning disabilities, and individuals with a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or a long-term health condition. The participants are referred by a range of agencies for example: the five Health and Social Care trusts; The Adult Autism Advice Service; the Community Brain Injury Team; the regional Jobs and Benefits offices; the Stroke Association; and the Multiple Sclerosis Society.

Inclusion Works is led by a Chief Executive and an executive committee who inform and influence the strategic direction of the organisation. The project is managed by a Head of Service and supported by five regional service managers and a service manager for the newly introduced learning disability strand of the project. Forty two case managers and eight training officers work directly with participants across the five health and social service trust areas. At the time of the inspection 420 participants<sup>1</sup> were registered on Inclusion Works and each has an individually tailored programme linked to their personal action plan (PAP). The PAP sets out the programme activities that a participant will engage in and on average participants have 10 hours of activity per week across two to three days. Typically participants will be on the project for between 18 and 24 months; this varies widely as it is dependent on the level of engagement that they can sustain due to the impact of their disability. At the time of the inspection 301 of the 420 participants on the programme were engaged in a range of community based activities: 168 of them in external training, education or social activities; and 133 in paid or voluntary work placements. A further 62 participants are currently engaged in Cedar's in-house training provision, while the remainder are benefitting from one-to-one mentoring support from their case officer.

## **2. 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;
- 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.

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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.

### 3. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Outcomes for learners	Very good
Quality of provision	Good
Leadership and management	Very good

### KEY FINDINGS

#### 4. Outcomes for learners

Recruitment to the project in year one was broadly in line with the target set by Inclusion Works, with 577 of participants recruited against the target of 591. In year two to date, recruitment is also on target with 164 participants enrolled on the project, against the target set of 178. The target achievement rate of 10%, or 23 participants, entering paid employment has been exceeded in both year 1 and year 2 with 48 and 29 participants respectively securing jobs to date. While the targets for participants leaving the programme and entering further education and training have not been met this has been caused by more of the participants moving into paid employment which is a positive outcome. In addition, 36 of participants in year 1, and 29 in year 2, against a target in each year of 31 engaged in voluntary work (9% of the overall leavers). The number of participants leaving the project with a relevant qualification is in line with the targets set. Overall since the start of the project 312 participants have completed, and 263 of them have successfully achieved all of their planned personal, employability and inclusion goals at the end of their time on the programme, which is above the target set of 248 leavers. Through engaging with Cedar's case and training officers and subsequently in the range of activities on offer, most of the participants gain the skills and knowledge necessary to develop strategies for the management of their conditions, to develop further their confidence and self-esteem including their wider employability skills.

The majority of the participants are making good progress in addressing effectively their assessed barriers to progression through, for example, engaging in Cedar's in-house training programmes and developing their levels of self-confidence and motivation. In discussions with the inspection team, they provided very positive feedback about their experiences on the project to date, in particular the appropriateness of the individually tailored provision, and on the good progress they had made in developing their personal, social and where appropriate their employability skills. All of the employers interviewed report the significant development of confidence and self-esteem in the participants placed with them, and through time the development of appropriate work skills. The project promoter has developed a wide range of external work-experience placement opportunities and volunteer opportunities that are used effectively to support the improvement in the confidence and skills of the participants. Retention on the project is outstanding with 96% and 90% of the participants retained in year 1 and 2 of the programme respectively.

The participants interviewed by the inspection team were very positive about their experiences on the project to date and the high levels of individualised support provided by the staff. In particular, participants commented on their improved mental health and well-being through the social inclusion activities offered and their ability to plan for the future despite their complex disabilities or health conditions. The participants who have engaged in IT and employability training reported the positive impact of gaining or enhancing their computer skills and building their social connections through the use of social media, as well as their employability skills.

## **5. Quality of provision**

The overall provision and curriculum within Inclusion Works is relevant and matches well the needs of almost all of the participants and provides them with appropriate progression opportunities. The participants can access a range of good quality accredited and non-accredited training opportunities to enhance the quality of their lives and their employability skills such as: employability skills training which includes information technology training, independent travel training, essential skills support, and brain injury and autistic spectrum disorder rehabilitation.

All participants receive an assessment on entry to the project through engagement with a designated case officer. The initial assessment identifies each of the participant's barriers to progression such as: personal barriers to employment, personal and social circumstances, vocational skills and support needs. The outcomes are used well to inform participants' action plans through recording clearly all of the barriers to progression and employment, and to set individual goals to meet their needs and aspirations. The plans are used well to plan individualised programmes for the development and removal of the barriers. This includes regular mentoring support, access to an appropriate range of training opportunities within the project, signposting and referral to further education and training, work-experience and volunteering opportunities, sustainable community based social activities, and where appropriate, essential skills support, personal development, and employability enhancements. The project demonstrates effectively the distance travelled by each participant in developing their softer skills through the use of a soft outcome tool, and the use of specific measurable targets for each participant. The participants value highly the ongoing support and contact with the project which in many cases provides an important structure to their week and external contact to address social isolation.

The quality of the directed training and mentoring sessions observed is mostly good and provision is planned well and helps the participants recognise and build upon their strengths. The project staff meet regularly with participants and where appropriate with employers, and the review processes are effective in setting specific targets against which progress can be measured. The majority of the sessions are well planned and the participants engaged well in the training and development activities. However, a significant minority of sessions are overly tutor-led, use too narrow a range of teaching approaches, do not engage the participants sufficiently in active learning, and lack differentiation to meet the needs of all of the participants.

The provision for the care and welfare of the participants impacts positively on learning and teaching, and contributes to successful outcomes. There is an inclusive, caring ethos demonstrated by the organisation with respectful, positive working relationships evident between the participants and staff at all levels. There are high but realistic expectations for the progression of the participants and regular celebration events to recognise achievement. The staff provide holistic care and welfare for the participants and address effectively a range of additional barriers to progression including practical support for travel, support for interviews and attendance at external training providers, and advocacy with employers. There is also good signposting and use of services from a range of in-house and external agencies to support progression opportunities for almost all of the participants.

## **6. Leadership and management**

The Chief Executive of the Cedar Foundation and the executive committee, including a designated sub-committee for Inclusion Works, support well the objectives of the Inclusion Works project through significant investment in accommodation, staffing and resources. The Inclusion Works project is strategically aligned to other related projects and there is effective planning for its ongoing development. The project has effective working partnerships in place with a wide range of referral agencies.

The project has undergone a series of changes in structure and operational delivery which have been managed well through effective communication with staff and clear, shared target setting. The views of staff at all levels have been sought and acted upon as part of the change management process. Roles and responsibilities of the project staff are clearly defined and there is a strong team approach to the work. The staff at all levels are highly committed to meeting the individual needs of the participants and are matched well to their job roles. There are good opportunities to undertake relevant continuing professional development including an important and appropriate emphasis on developing the training officer's knowledge and understanding of learning, teaching, and training. To date, four members of staff have completed the certificate in teaching with, a further four staff currently undertaking the programme; it is planned for a further three to undertake the programme in the next academic year.

At an operational level, the project is managed very effectively by a head of service who is supported well in the operational delivery by a team of service managers and case and training officers. There is a regular scheduled cycle of team meetings and case conferencing focused on the planning and review of the progress of individual participants, on the delivery of the project, on progress towards targets and also the provision of workshops for sharing effective practice.

Feedback from employers who provide work-experience placements and/or volunteering opportunities is positive: in particular the preparation of the participants for the placements: the high quality information sharing, the ongoing communication; the ongoing support provided and the professional review processes. A significant number of participants felt that an important aspect of the project's work is their advocacy role with employers when seeking placement and volunteering opportunities.

The newly introduced pilot programme to develop a consistent approach to quality assuring all aspects of the provision, including observations of teaching, training and learning has already had a positive impact across the project. While still at an early stage of development the pilot has identified examples of good or better practice as well as less effective practice, and has been instrumental in providing workshops to improve practice for all staff. Plans are well developed to embed the quality assurance processes across all of the regions.

The quality of the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes is good and there is a clear focus on continuous improvement. Staff ensure that participants are involved in commenting regularly on the life and work of the project and have established a formal service user forum in each of the five regions, which is active and effective in informing self-evaluation. The processes used for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning need to be developed further to take more account of: feedback from the engagement with key partner organisations, including employers; to enhance further the capacity and understanding of all staff to engage more fully in the processes; and to use the data collated more effectively in order to inform improvement planning.

The project promoter is responsive to internal and external feedback, and there is clear evidence of action taken to address areas for improvement from previous ETI visits and activities.

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

## **7. Overall effectiveness**

The Cedar Foundation demonstrates a high level of capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interests of all the participants. To improve the provision further the project promoter needs to:

- embed the quality assurance processes across all of the regions and ensure the consistency in the quality of the delivery of the provision.

The ETI will monitor how the project promoter sustains improvement.

**A. Project registrations**

Programme	Numbers of enrolments	% against target
Inclusion Works ESF project 2015/2016	577	98%
Inclusion Works ESF project 2016/2017	164	92%

**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).

Three ETI inspectors observed 29 participants in a range of learning and development activities including directed training, mentoring sessions and focus group meetings. Discussions were held with the project promoter's: chief executive, head of service, six service managers, case and training officers. Contact was also made with key partner organisations in addition to four employer visits and three employer telephone interviews. The management information system, including the tracking and monitoring systems, samples of the participants' work, personal action plans and planning documents 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 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	
<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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