



Education and Training
Inspectorate

European Social Fund provision in
The Prince's Trust

Exploring Enterprise

Report of an Inspection in
February 2018

eti

The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments

CUSTOMER
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EXCELLENCE



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1. Context

The Prince's Trust is a charitable project promoter contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the Exploring Enterprise European Social Fund Project (ESF). The main aim of the project is to support unemployed and economically inactive 18-30 year olds at risk of social exclusion to move towards self-employment or employment. The project provides participants with access to a flexible menu of employability, self-employment courses, training and one-to-one business mentoring.

The Exploring Enterprise Programme is delivered across Northern Ireland in the Prince's Trust headquarters in Belfast, premises in the North West Regional College in Derry/Londonderry and the Portadown and Omagh libraries. Additional programmes are delivered in other locations where and when required.

The Prince's Trust is managed by a director (Northern Ireland) who is supported by a board of trustees (Council), a senior management team and a range of programme teams. The Exploring Enterprise Programme is managed by the senior head of programmes, the enterprise manager and delivered operationally by a team of four enterprise executives. The work is also supported by a volunteers' team consisting of a manager and one volunteer executive. The education manager provides the quality support for the project and up to a further 27 of the Prince's Trust staff can be involved with the delivery of the programme.

At the time of the inspection, a total of 351 participants¹ were registered on the Exploring Enterprise Programme; 160 of these participants are fully engaged in the programme, while a further 191 have some level of contact with programme staff. Of the 160 fully active participants: 22 have just completed their four-day course; 50 are exploring their progression options; 10 are at business launch stage; and 100 are receiving ongoing business mentoring support. Of the 100 participants in receipt of ongoing business mentoring support, some are in the process of completing additional training or doing market research towards their business idea. The project reports that, based upon past experience, on average 20% of these participants will progress to starting a business and the other 80% will be supported into other positive outcomes.

2. Views of participants

The inspection team met with a sample of individual participants across two sites. Almost all of the participants reported that they valued highly the help, guidance and support provided by the Prince's Trust staff and, where appropriate, by their business mentors during, and after, their involvement in the programme.

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

KEY FINDINGS

5. Outcomes for learners

The Prince's Trust has developed effective relationships with a wide range of referral agencies to support recruitment from the target group. Recruitment to the project is in line with the overall recruitment target, with 984 (83%) of participants currently recruited. The retention rate in each year of the project has been outstanding (100%). Over the same period, it is a significant strength that 193 (81% of the target set) of the participants have progressed into self-employment, exceeding well the initial (60%) target. In addition, a further 109 (46% of the target set) of the participants have been supported into employment. One hundred and sixty-three participants (54% of the target set) have achieved a level 1 accredited qualification in Exploring Enterprise. While recruitment to the programme is slightly below the overall target set, and the number of accredited qualifications achieved to date is also below the target, the project staff have brought these specific difficulties to the attention of the Department and the associated targets are under review. Programme staff have also appropriately identified and prioritised these as areas for improvement and continue to work closely with the marketing manager to develop strategies to increase recruitment.

The high numbers of participants progressing into self-employment and employment has impacted on the proportion of participants progressing into education or training which, at 34% and 53% respectively, are below the overall targets set.

For the cohort of participants (113), completing their programme between July 2016 and December 2017, the Prince's Trust has collated to good effect the outcomes from the measurement of soft skills development at three stages of the participant's engagement in the programme. This demonstrates that 84% of them improved in at least one of the six Trust-wide skill areas. For example, 51% of them improved their ability to work with others, 54% reported improved confidence and 65% improved their communication skills. An important strength of the programme is the high levels of support, including tailored mentoring provision provided for the participants which builds effectively their self-confidence and personal capabilities and ultimately their employability.

Over the last two years of the programme, 53 of the participants have engaged with the Prince's Trust programme Get Hired. This has resulted in 21 of them securing sustained employment and a further small number progressing to relevant training programmes.

Through engagement with the Explore Enterprise programme, most of the participants increase their understanding of enterprise and business. They develop a sound understanding of business processes, marketing strategies and the legislative framework for starting a business or becoming self-employed. In particular, a significant minority are able to clarify and refine their business ideas, extend their skills and confidence to develop business start-up plans and progress to business launch panels. Most of the participants are supported well to pursue other positive outcomes in employment, education or training opportunities.

6. Quality of provision

The Exploring Enterprise programme provides participants with an opportunity to explore self-employment and business start-up through a four-stage process comprising: an information session (Inspire); a four-day enterprise course (Explore); the launch of their business with the ongoing support of an enterprise executive (Launch); followed by ongoing support through monthly meetings with a business mentor for up to two years. For those participants who progress to employment, education or training, six months of progression mentoring can be provided. The participants can also complete an accredited level 1 qualification in exploring enterprise during the four-day course. In the last year, the project promoter has been invited to deliver the programme to small groups of young men nearing the end of their sentences in Maghaberry and Magilligan prisons. While this provision is at an early stage of development, there is a need for the staff to adapt the programme further to more effectively meet the specific needs of these participants.

The overall planning for the delivery of the programme is mostly effective. Clear and well-documented Toolkit guidance and minimum standards are in place to ensure good structure and consistency in the delivery of the programme. The programme staff have developed effective working relationships with local enterprise providers, employers and training provider organisations to enhance the opportunities for the participants to engage in enrichment activities such as guest speakers and attending specialist training and events.

In the sample of learning and development sessions observed, the quality of the sessions ranged from very good to having important areas for improvement, but were mostly good overall. The best practice was characterised by, good quality planning in advance of the session by both the participant and enterprise executive, resources and research were appropriate to the needs and interests of the participants, the work was engaging and resulted in agreed actions for progression. In the less effective practice, the planning for learning and progression was underdeveloped, the range of training and learning strategies was overly narrow to support more fully the diverse needs of the participants and the quality of the resources used required improvement.

In all of the sessions observed, relationships between the tutor and the participants were professional and mutually respectful. Participants are supported well to produce good quality business plans which are then subject to appropriate challenge, and support, through the business launch panels, comprised appropriately of two experienced business professionals.

The careers education, information, advice and guidance is mostly effective. In the best practice the guidance and support provided is bespoke to the needs and interests of the participants, provides appropriate practical support, identifies well the next steps and informs to good effect the personal action planning process. There is a good range of signposting, both internally to the organisation's outreach and outcomes team but also to a range of relevant external organisations to support well the addressing of participants' skills gaps, acquisition of wider skills, and their personal development needs. In the less effective practice, there is a need to better reflect and provide information on the range of appropriate progression pathways available to the participants.

The care and welfare provided for the participants impacts positively on their learning, progression and personal development. Since April 2017, the cohort of participants recruited to the programme has displayed a wide range of needs: 26% have presented with mental health issues; 20% with a disability; 18% as ex-offenders; and 13% are lone parents. The enterprise team work hard at providing individualised care, guidance and appropriate support, while also signposting the participants to a range of external specialist agencies to

help them overcome the significant barriers to progression. All of the participants interviewed report that the Prince's Trust provides an inclusive, positive and supportive environment. The enterprise executives are skilled in building positive working relationships with the participants and building their confidence to explore a range of self-employment or business start-up ideas, or to conclude decisively and constructively for themselves that employment, further education or training is the most appropriate option for them. Through effective one-to-one mentoring, the business mentors also provide high quality, timely advice, support, guidance along with appropriate challenge, to develop the participants' confidence and competence in exploring and testing business ventures. The participants value the allocation of 'Will it Work' internal grants from the Prince's Trust which allow them to test trade their business idea, and similarly the support provided to apply for start-up business loans.

7. Leadership and management

The Prince's Trust has a strong values-based approach and a clear vision to help address youth unemployment and social exclusion, which is shared by the staff at all levels. The Explore Enterprise programme is delivered across all four regions in the United Kingdom and staff from the local programme contribute to, and benefit from, the sharing and development of best practice across the regions. Consequently, a majority of the participants progress into self-employment or to further education and/or training. The project promoter is fully committed to the success of the programme and the Explore Enterprise team members work hard, and to good effect, to meet the wide range of personal support needs of the participants, as well as their training and development needs.

There is evidence of an increasing and effective use of other Prince's Trust programmes to complement the programme to the benefit of the participants. The integration of the work of the outreach, outcome and volunteer teams, for example, impact positively on the work of the Explore Enterprise programme. A recently appointed marketing manager provides the enterprise team with effective specialist support in a range of areas, such as help with targeted recruitment, the development of bespoke marketing materials and, importantly, digital strategies to promote the programme more strategically.

A bespoke and well-considered management information system is currently being installed which will enable key information to be entered more easily by all staff and volunteers, and collated, tracked and monitored centrally by managers. Regular review meetings, with individual enterprise executives and with the team, ensure that the quality of the provision and progression outcomes for individual participants are monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis and that any good practice is appropriately shared.

The Prince's Trust has a pool of nearly 400 volunteer mentors, who are subject to a rigorous application and selection process. A particular strength of the programme is the allocation to individual participants of a well-matched experienced, professional business mentor, which is valued by them. In addition, participants can benefit from specialist help and support from mentors, and business launch panel members, who provide support and/or challenge as appropriate, at the business launch stage. The participants can avail of the support and guidance from their business mentor for a period of up to two years after their business launch. The volunteer mentors and business launch panel members interviewed are fully committed to supporting young people and providing them with access to their high levels of business experience and expertise, which underpins the strong outcomes

The Prince's Trust also demonstrate a commitment to the well-being of the programme staff, through monthly check-in meetings, ongoing review of their caseloads and provision of staff training so that they can best meet the needs of the participants. For example, face-to-face safeguarding training from the head of health and safety and safeguarding is tailored to meet regional needs and they also benefit from risk assessment training and mental health first aid. There is need, however, to continue to build staff capacity in relation to developing and enhancing further their knowledge and understanding of other government programmes and the wider range of careers pathways to support more fully the participants' career decisions.

The project promoter has demonstrated a commitment to ongoing quality improvement and has introduced an appropriate quality improvement cycle which includes participant feedback questionnaires, focus groups and peer observations. There is a need to enhance further the quality improvement activities through observations of sessions by delivery mentors and specialists, and review of the range of programme documentation to ensure it is of sufficient and consistent quality. There is also a need to use the wide range of information collated, including programme-specific performance data on recruitment, outcomes and progression, soft skill development, and feedback from all key stakeholders to better evidence the key strengths and areas for improvement in the overall self-evaluation process and associated report. The programme staff need to ensure a more consistent use of measurable targets, and the identification of more specific actions to effect improvement in the quality improvement plan in order to reflect better the impact of their work.

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 Prince's Trust Exploring Enterprise programme demonstrates a high level of capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interests of all the participants. The project promoter needs to:

- improve the overall quality of provision by developing further the planning for learning and the range of learning, teaching and training strategies used to meet better the needs of all of the participants.

A. Project registrations

| Programme | Numbers of enrolments | % against target |
|---|-----------------------|------------------|
| European Social Fund Exploring Enterprise 2015/2016 | 368 | 96% |
| European Social Fund Exploring Enterprise 2016/2017 | 304 | 76% |
| European Social Fund Exploring Enterprise 2017/2018 | 312 | 78% |

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 10 participants in a range of settings, including mentoring and learning and development sessions. Discussions were held with The Prince's Trust management team, the programme manager and co-ordinator, the four enterprise executives, seven mentors and one external partner, and two past participants with active and growing businesses. The management information system, including the tracking and monitoring systems, samples of the participants' work and personal action plans, and planning documentation 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 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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