



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

European Social Fund provision in  
The Royal National Institute for Blind  
People

Eye Work Too project

Report of an Inspection in  
January 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



CSE



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## 1. Context

The Royal National Institute for Blind People (RNIB) is a charitable organisation, contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the Eye Work Too European Social Fund Project (ESF). The main aims of the project are to support unemployed/economically inactive blind, and partially sighted people, across Northern Ireland (NI) to enhance their employability and inclusion. The project also aims to engage employers by increasing their confidence in employing someone with sight loss or sight impairment.

The project promoter is led by a manager and supported by a project co-ordinator. There are also three employment officers, to fulfil the employment element of the project, and two technology officers. The project operates out of two office locations one in Belfast and one in Derry.

At the time of the inspection 39 participants<sup>1</sup> were registered on the Eye Work Too project. They have the opportunity to avail of a range of training and support opportunities including: a pre-employment programme; training in the use of assistive technology; accredited training in Information Technology (IT); access to a work-experience placement and access to a range of modules in personal and social development. The participants' attendance requirements vary and are based on their level of need; all participants attend for a minimum period of six to eight weeks and can attend for up to one year. Regular training sessions are two hours a week and the duration of the training depends on initial assessment outcomes linked to an Action Plan to address individual need. To date, 47% of participants have either completed, or are in, a suitable work-experience placement.

## 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:

- 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. Overall findings of the inspection

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Good
<b>Quality of provision</b>	Very Good
<b>Leadership and management</b>	Very Good

<sup>1</sup> All performance data in this report was provided by the ESF project promoter at the time of the inspection.

## KEY FINDINGS

### 4. Outcomes for learners

At the time of the inspection, the project was ahead of its recruitment targets with 18 participants recruited in 2015/16 which exceeded the target of 14 for that year. This success has continued in the current year with 21 participants recruited to date, exceeding the target of 20. Whilst in year one there were good opportunities for all of the participants to avail of high quality work-experience placements tailored to their needs and interests; the placement rate, to date, for year two at 58% requires ongoing review and improvement. The organisation has, however, exceeded the target set for delivering Visual Awareness Training to employers (100 employers against a target of 66) in year one. RNIB appropriately continues to identify progression into employment or self-employment as an area for improvement, the current rate of employment is 60% in year one and 63% in year two. The achievement rate for the IT users qualification (ITQ) is good, with all who start achieving a qualification, so far 63% have achieved in year 1 and 40% in year 2. Overall, the standards achieved by most of the participants on the project are good.

The positive progression rate is good with those participants having fewer barriers on entry progressing more quickly to employment. The participants' regular four to six week reviews, and individual case studies, capture well the progress they have made in personal development and in employability. In addition to the evidence in the reviews, all of the participants interviewed provided positive feedback about their experiences on the project to date and could identify the progress they had made and the range of tailored and individualised support they had received. In the first year of the programme, retention was outstanding at 94%, to date in year two it remains outstanding at 100%.

Almost all of the participants demonstrate high levels of commitment to overcoming their often significant personal challenges. They are motivated to progress in their learning, and to achieve employment. The development of the participants' wider skills and dispositions through the project included, for example; increased self-esteem, an improved sense of personal well-being, greater confidence, improved communication skills, improved employability skills and access to relevant assistive technology.

### 5. Quality of provision

The quality of the provision for learning, training and development is matched well to the needs of the participants who engage enthusiastically in the learning programmes. The technology and employment officers use a broad range of strategies to progress the participants' learning and to develop their personal capabilities.

The guidance and support provided to each participant address well their barriers to progression. The Eye Work Too project model is flexible and identifies and supports each individual participant to progress at their own pace. The guidance and support offered are informed effectively by a detailed initial assessment process, including the use of an individualised Employment Assessment Tool. This is linked appropriately to a detailed Action Plan which is reviewed and updated regularly. The model of programme delivery, which results from these processes answers well the individualised needs of each participant, including those who are furthest from the workplace. All participants can avail of regular guidance and support sessions, access an employment related qualification and work-experience opportunities. Where appropriate, signposting is provided to external essential skills provision. The regular review and support sessions have a strong focus on progressing participants towards employment and include a range of work preparation support.

The quality of the directed training, and employment preparation and review sessions, is mostly very good. The planning is effective and supports the participants to build on their existing knowledge and strengths. Communication between staff, participants and employers is effective and informs well the learning and review process and builds on the appropriately holistic support provided by the organisation.

The care and welfare provided for the participants impacts positively on their learning and development and there is a strong emphasis on individualised support. RNIB has established links with a good range of employers and they are well informed about the needs of the participants. It is a strength that employers can access training on issues of sight impairment through bespoke staff development provided by RNIB.

## **6. Leadership and management**

Strategic links and partnerships are very good for example, there are links with the Supported Employment Service (SES) to extend the range of placement opportunities, and there is also a range of paid placements of 12 weeks duration offered across a range of vocational areas. In addition, the wider services provided by RNIB, such as community support and youth services, have been accessed by 65% of participants to date.

The RNIB provide good quality physical accommodation, and a variety of learning and training resources, including access to a system of on loan assistive technology to support the delivery of the project.

The leadership and management roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and all of the project staff are committed fully to addressing the wide range of support, learning and employability needs of the participants. A particular strength of project is the understanding that each staff member has of the specific challenges facing the individual participants.

At an operational level, the project is managed effectively by a Manager, assisted by a project co-ordinator and delivered by a team of employment and technology officers. There is a structure in place for regular team meetings, a formal review processes and the sharing of best practice strategies across the work of the project.

The RNIB continues to take account of feedback from previous ETI visits to bring about improvements. For example, self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes continue to develop well and now include an effective focus on and use of key performance data and feedback from all of the key stakeholders. The monitoring and tracking systems have been strengthened and now record appropriately progress against the projects targets. The quality improvement plan, however, needs to be strengthened further to include more specific target setting against which progress can be measured more systematically.

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding participants reflect broadly the guidance from the Department. However, the organisation needs to:

- ensure that the safeguarding pro-forma is signed by the appropriate person and that the management committee are provided with the necessary evidence to assure themselves that safeguarding arrangements are reviewed regularly for the duration of the Eye Work Too project.

## **7. Overall effectiveness**

The RNIB demonstrates a high level of capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interests of all the participants.

**A. Project registrations**

Programme	Numbers of enrolments	% against target
Eye Work Too ESF project 2015/2016	18	128% (target 14)
Eye Work Too ESF project 2016/2017	21	100% (target 21)

**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).

Two ETI inspectors observed thirteen participants in a range of settings including focus groups, directed training and work experience placements. Discussions were held with the Royal National Institute for Blind People's (RNIB): management team and employment and technology officers. The management information systems, including the tracking and monitoring systems, samples of the participants' work, 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 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.

<b>Key Performance Indicators and Definitions</b>	
<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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