



Education and Training
Inspectorate

European Social Fund provision in
Workforce Training Services

Get Connected

Report of an Inspection in
March 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

Workforce Training Services (Workforce) is a charitable organisation and is contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the Get Connected European Social Fund Project (ESF). The main aims of the project are to engage with people from the most disadvantaged areas of Belfast, aged 16-24 years, who are the most marginalised and at risk of social exclusion so that they are empowered to access sustainable education, employment and training opportunities. The project includes individual mentoring sessions, personal development and employability enhancement classes, essential skills support, healthy living sports sessions, health awareness sessions, weekly recreational activities and work-experience opportunities. A core component of the Get Connected project is to provide job sampling in a range of vocational areas that help participants to progress into vocational training.

Workforce is led by a General Manager and a voluntary board of trustees. The project is managed on an operational basis by a co-ordinator who is supported by two youth mentors who provide the day-to-day group training and one-to-one support for the participants. At the time of the inspection five participants¹ were registered on the core first six months of the project, attending between 10 and 20 hours per week depending on their individual needs; one of the five participants is in a suitable work-experience placement. Mentoring support is provided to a further 57 participants; 51 of whom have progressed to the Training for Success programme.

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.

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

¹ 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

Recruitment to the project in both 2015/16 and 2016/17 has exceeded the target set for Get Connected with 77 and 76 participants recruited to date against the target of 75. The target of 22 of the participants entering training programmes on completion of their programme has also been exceeded in each year, with 56 and 40 participants respectively progressing to Training for Success programmes. While the number of participants progressing to employment or to further education has not been reached in either year of the project to date, this has been caused by more of the participants appropriately moving into further training. Of the 56 participants in 2015/16 and 40 participants in 2016/17 who progressed to the mainstream training provision within Workforce, 46 (82%) and 40 (100%) respectively have been retained. The number of participants leaving the core first six months of the project with relevant personal development and employability qualifications is in line with the targets set.

The majority of the participants are making good progress in developing further their confidence and self-esteem, their work readiness skills and in addressing their barriers to progression through engaging in the project's in-house training and individual mentoring support. During the inspection while only one of the five participants on the core programme was engaging in a work-experience placement, it was evident that the other four participants were making appropriate progress but not yet ready to be placed with an employer. The employer interviewed reported the significant development of confidence and self-esteem in the participant placed with him, including the development of appropriate work skills.

Most of the participants are progressing well in their learning and skills development. The project promoter uses well the opportunity for participants to sample their internal training provision across eight professional and technical areas and has developed a wide range of appropriate external work-experience placement opportunities that are used effectively to support the improvement in the confidence and skills of the participants. These are used particularly well for those participants who have progressed from the project to a strand of the Training for Success programme. Retention on the project is good in 2016/17 62% of the participants retained and very good in 2016/17 with 75% retained. In addition, a further 11 (14%) participants in the current year of the project have transferred early to Training for Success prior to achieving all the targets set in their individual learning plans.

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 support and recreational activities offered. The participants who have engaged in personal development and employability training reported the positive impact on their motivation, confidence and self-esteem in addition to their ability to devise their own curriculum vitae, apply for jobs and interview more confidently. The participants on the core programme and those receiving mentoring support only 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. Participants who have progressed from the project to the Training for Success programme report that they could not have engaged effectively or remained in their training programme without the development and ongoing support they received through the Get Connected project.

5. Quality of provision

The overall provision and curriculum within Get Connected 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: personal development and employability skills training, essential skills support, health awareness and health promotion as well as work based short courses such as basic food hygiene, construction skills register training and first aid.

All participants receive an assessment on entry to the project through engagement with a youth mentor. The initial assessment identifies each of the participant's range of barriers to progression; however, the outcomes from the high quality engagement are not used well enough to inform participants' individual learning plans and to capture all of the barriers to progression in their learning. The participants engage well in devising their individual learning plans however they require support to enable them to set short-term milestones to promote progression towards their overall goals. The engagement between the participants and the youth mentors is used well to plan individualised programmes for the participants which meet well their needs and interests.

The quality of the directed training and mentoring sessions observed ranges from good to very good but is mostly good. 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 while the review processes are effective they would benefit from the development of more short-term targets in the individual learning plans against which progress could be measured more effectively. Almost all of the participants engaged well in the training and development activities.

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 and aspirations for the participants and celebration events are held to recognise achievements. The staff provide holistic care and welfare for the participants and address effectively a range of additional barriers to progression including signposting to a range of external support agencies, practical support for travel, and support for workplace applications and interviews. There is also good signposting and use of the range of internal training provision to support progression opportunities for almost all of the participants.

6. Leadership and management

The General Manager of Workforce and the board of trustees support well the objectives of the Get Connected project through significant investment in accommodation, staffing and resources. The project is strategically aligned to Workforces' other training provision and there is effective planning for its ongoing review and development. The project has effective working partnerships in place with a range of referral agencies who report positively on the commitment of the staff in the organisation and in particular of the youth mentors in meeting the needs of disadvantaged young people and to improving their life chances.

Feedback from key stakeholders who refer participants to the programme or those which provide recreational activities to support the delivery of the programme is positive. Referral agencies such as the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, The Education Welfare Service and the Youth Justice Agency report positively on the responsiveness of the staff to all referrals, the commitment to meeting individual participant needs and the fact that staff demonstrate high levels of perseverance with those young people who require higher levels

of support. The referral agencies also commented that the Get Connected project provided an important outlet for young people who would not attend mainstream provision. Representatives from local Boxing and Jujitsu clubs are keen partners in the delivery of the recreational aspects of the programme and share Workforce's commitment to improving the social inclusion of the young people in the area. In addition, external support agencies comment positively on the high levels of commitment demonstrated by the project staff in helping young people to address their personal, social and emotional barriers to progression.

At an operational level, the project is managed effectively by a co-ordinator who is supported well by two youth mentors. There is a regular scheduled cycle of team meetings, on the delivery of the project and on progress towards targets.

The quality of the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes is good and there is a clear focus on continuous improvement. The quality assurance of teaching, training and learning through regular observations is embedded and has a positive impact across the project. The wider processes used for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning, however, need to be developed further to take more account of: feedback from the engagement with key external stakeholders, including referral agencies, recreational delivery partners and employers; and to enhance further the capacity and understanding of all staff to engage more fully in the processes.

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:

- review and update its Safeguarding policy and procedures, including the code of conduct for staff.

7. Overall effectiveness

Workforce Training Services 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:

- develop further the participants' individual learning plans to capture better the range of barriers to progression, against which short-term targets can be set and progress measured more effectively.

The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.

A. Project registrations

Programme	Numbers of enrolments	% against target
European Social Fund Get Connected 2015/2016	77	103%
European Social Fund Get Connected 2016/2017	76	101%

B. Inspection methodology and evidence base

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

One ETI inspector and an associate assessor engaged with 26 participants (four participants on the core programme and 22 participants receiving mentoring support in the second six month period) in a range of settings including mentoring and learning and development sessions, focus groups and work-placements. Discussions were held with Workforce's management team, partner organisation, co-ordinator, youth mentors, and key stakeholders. The tracking and monitoring systems, samples of the participants' work and individual learning plans, and the youth mentors' planning documents were examined. The project promoter's self-evaluation report 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.

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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