



Education and Training
Inspectorate

European Social Fund provision in
Workforce Training Services

Path 2 Employment (P2E)

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 Path 2 Employment European Social Fund Project (ESF). The main aim of the project is to motivate and train economically inactive participants, in the Greater Belfast area, by equipping them with transferable skills to secure permanent employment. The project also aims to develop a network of socially responsible businesses to provide work experience and internship opportunities for the participants. All participants are assigned a personal mentor for the duration of the project and have access to one-to-one mentoring support, job search and work-experience placements. They also have the opportunity to undertake accredited qualifications, including level 1 qualifications in employability and personal development and accredited and non-accredited short courses including: the construction skills register (CSR); paediatric first aid training and basic food hygiene training.

The Path 2 Employment project operates out of a new premise in Belfast and is managed by a general manager who is supported by a board of trustees, a project coordinator, a marketing officer, an administrator and two mentors. At the time of the inspection, 15 participants^[1] were registered on the Path 2 Employment project. The participants attend for a minimum of six hours each week, up to a maximum of a year. The interventions and provision offered are tailored to meet the individual needs of the participants. Four of the participants, currently enrolled (27%), 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 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

Workforce is effective in recruiting participants to the project. The recruitment target in 2015/16 was exceeded with 110 participants recruited, against the target of 105, and in 2016/17, 91 have been recruited to date out of a target of 105 participants. While the target for the numbers achieving level 1 qualifications was met in 2015/16, it is an area for improvement in 2016/17 at 52% of the target set. A key consistent strength of the project is the outstanding progression outcomes into employment, exceeding the targets set to date. In 2015/16, 38 participants progressed into employment, exceeding the target of 21; and in 2016/17 to date 29 participants have progressed into employment against the target of 21. The progression into training outcome was also outstanding in 2015/16 with 33 participants against a target of 14, and 11 against a target of 14 in the current year to date. It is also notable that, in 2015/16, most (88%) of the participants progressed to higher level training programmes and of these 59% progressed to full-time and part-time employment. While the target for progression into further education programmes was below target in year 1, it was largely a consequence of the high rate of progression to employment and training programmes, which is a positive outcome. The significant minority (27%) of the participants in a work-experience placement are developing well their team-working skills and relevant work-related skills, where appropriate.

The tailored project activities and career plans reflect clearly the participants' career aspirations and address well their individual barriers to learning and progression. The well-planned activities ensure that all of the participants are supported effectively to recognise and build on their prior experience and to develop their personal, social, and employability skills. Those participants with fewer barriers to employment are supported to access quickly work-experience placements and employment opportunities in their preferred career pathway. While the retention rate was very good in year 1 at 73%, it has decreased in year 2 to good at 67%, and the project promoter needs to review the provision to effect improvement in the retention rate.

All the participants interviewed report that participation on the project has helped them to overcome their barriers to education, training and employment, including supporting them to overcome feelings of social exclusion and isolation and to build support networks. They also value the advice and guidance to support their progress and development and reported increased confidence, self-esteem and motivation for work as a result of the individual mentoring sessions and their overall participation on the project.

5. Quality of provision

There is an appropriate curriculum which mostly matches the needs of the participants entering the project. It is notable that the entry profile of the participants has changed significantly with an increasing proportion of participants registering whose first language is not English, up from 14% of participants in 2015/16 to 27% in 2016/17. The need for improved signposting to English language courses has been identified by the project promoter and it is appropriate that a review of the curriculum to meet this changing entry profile of participants is ongoing.

There is a well-planned induction process which includes the completion of good quality individual career pathway plans and initial self-assessments to measure the distance travelled by the participant in their personal, social and employability skills. In the most effective practice the initial interviews and pathway plans capture well the participants' barriers to employment, prior qualifications on entry and signposting to education and training programmes, including essential skills training, where appropriate. There are regular reviews which record well the progress the participants are making in developing a range of transferable skills. There is, however, a need to develop an overall tracking system to record more effectively the interventions to support the participants and to measure better their impact on the personal, social and employability skills development of the participants.

Overall, the quality of the provision for learning and development, including the initial interview, one to one mentoring sessions and directed training is good or better. The initial interviews were effective in developing a trusting relationship between the participant and the mentor and in gaining key information on the participants' prior experience, qualifications and career aspirations. In the most effective one-to-one and learning and development practice, the sessions were characterised by effective planning and questioning strategies, the very good rapport between staff and participants, and high levels of engagement and motivation of the majority of participants. There is, however, a need to provide more stretch and challenge for the more-able participants to develop their extended writing skills. The participants' views on the quality of the training sessions are sought but could be used more effectively to inform improvement planning.

The care and welfare provided for the participants impacts positively on their development. The provision is participant-centred and flexible to suit the individual circumstances of the participants, for example, the one to one mentoring sessions are scheduled around childcare or family commitments. The project team provide strong holistic care and welfare for the participants and help them to address a wide range of additional barriers to progression, including practical support for travel, clothing and food. There is also effective signposting to external services to support the participants' needs, for example, to housing services, hostels, jobs and benefits offices, and suicide awareness support providers.

6. Leadership and management

The senior management team have a clear vision for the development of the project with a strong focus on securing employment opportunities for the participants. Roles and responsibilities for staff are well defined and effective working relationships have been established between management, staff and participants. The project benefits from the use of a well developed management information system which records and tracks well the project's progress against performance targets including the destination of the participants on leaving the project. While there is a system for measuring the distance-travelled in the participants' personal and social skills, the project promoter recognises the need to use this system more effectively to demonstrate better the impact the project is having on the participants' lives.

Workforce has effective links with agencies, for example local jobs and benefit offices, which refer participants to the project. Effective relations with a wide range of employers are also used to very good effect to provide work-experience placements and employment opportunities for the participants. There are effective channels of communication between the employers and the project promoter to monitor the progress of the participants and to inform the development of the project. Employers report that they value the partnerships with the project promoter, particularly the efforts the mentors make to match the participants to the job role and the employer. The project promoter has also developed strong, purposeful links and partnerships with its match funder, Belfast City Council, which provides good opportunities for work experience and employment. The match funder also supports

an annual job fair that is effective in signposting participants to the project. Workforce continues to build on existing effective relationships with employers to support the project and has developed a corporate social responsibility approach to the mutual benefit of the employer and the participants. To date, the project promoter has successfully partnered with 21 employers, against its target of 24.

The quality of the accommodation and physical resources to support delivery is very good. Workforce is committed to making the provision available across the community and has invested significantly in a new premise which is more easily accessible to all members of the community. Additional investment has also been secured for information and technology equipment to further support the work of the project.

The project promoter demonstrates a strong commitment to quality improvement and has developed effective quality assurance processes, which include a cycle of tutor observations to promote improvement in the quality of the training provision. The regular weekly and monthly project team meetings provide clear channels of communication between all staff and support well the on-going development of the provision. While the processes used for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning are well developed, there is a need to develop the feedback processes for all other key stakeholders, including employers. Particularly the use of feedback to demonstrate better the impact the project is having on the participants' progress and development and to identify the reasons for the low uptake on the accredited qualifications. There is also a need for more consistent use of measurable actions in the quality improvement plan to monitor, track and report on progress.

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

- review and update the safeguarding policy and procedures, including the code of conduct for staff to ensure they reflect current best practice.

7. Overall effectiveness

Workforce 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:

- review the curriculum offer to reflect better the needs of the changing entry profile of the participants; and
- develop further the self-evaluation processes to include greater staff involvement, the better use of feedback from all stakeholders, and the better identification of the actions necessary to progress participants' to employment.

The ETI will monitor how the project promoter sustains improvement.

A. Project registrations

Programme	Numbers of enrolments	% against target
European Social Fund Path 2 Employment 2015/2016	110	105%
European Social Fund Path 2 Employment 2016/2017	91	87%

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 19 participants, seven of which were past participants, in a range of settings including three initial interviews, one mentoring and one employability session, one focus group meeting and one work-experience placement. Discussions were held with the Path 2 Employment's management team, two mentors, five employers, a referral agency, an external agency, and one match funder. The management information system, including the tracking and monitoring systems, career plans, progress reviews, 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.

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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