

## EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND CALL 2 VISIT

### European Social Fund provision in Network Personnel

### Community Family Support Programme - Antrim and Newtownabbey, Fermanagh and Omagh, Mid and East Antrim and Mid Ulster

### Report of a Call 2 Visit in March 2022



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## Contents

Context .....	2
Views of participants .....	2
Focus of the Call 2 Visit .....	2
Key Findings .....	3
Safeguarding .....	4
Overall outcome .....	4
APPENDIX .....	5
A. Call 2 Performance Data .....	5
B. Methodology and evidence base .....	5
C. Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate .....	5

## Context

Network Personnel is contracted by the Department for the Economy (DfE) to deliver the Community Family Support Programme (CFSP) European Social Fund (ESF) project. The project is delivered by Network Personnel in Antrim and Newtownabbey, Mid and East Antrim and Mid Ulster. In Fermanagh and Omagh, the project is delivered by its delivery partner, Twenty One Training. This project is part funded through the Northern Ireland European Social Fund Programme 2014-2020 and DfE. The strategic aim of the Programme is to: combat poverty and enhance social inclusion by reducing economic inactivity; and to increase the skills base of those currently in work and future potential participants in the workforce. It is aligned to the European Union 2020 Strategy for Jobs and Growth.

In March 2022, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a Call 2 visit to Network Personnel on behalf of DfE to evaluate the capacity of the project promoter to identify and bring about improvement in the quality of the provision. The Call 2 visit was informed by the quality improvement plan which has been scrutinised by ETI.

## Views of participants

At the time of the Call 2 visit, 118 participants<sup>1</sup> were registered on the project.

Seventy-one percent of the participants completed the online questionnaire. Almost all of the respondents indicated that the programme is well managed and that they find it both interesting and challenging. ETI also met and spoke with a sample of participants during their learning and development sessions, in focus groups and through one-to-one telephone conversations. They spoke about the sensitive support they received from the very start of their engagement with the programme. All of the participants talked positively about the emotional health and wellbeing support they receive; in particular, they highlighted how staff had helped them to quickly access health and social services when they were most in need. Additionally, they recognised and valued the family and practical support which they received; for example, with their children who have additional learning needs.

## Focus of the Call 2 Visit

The Call 2 visit focused on evaluating the extent to which the project promoter is able to demonstrate its capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the quality of provision for the CFSP - Mid-Ulster, Mid and East Antrim, Antrim and Newtownabbey ESF project.

The arrangements for safeguarding were also included.

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

Two of the key areas which the organisation has prioritised for improvement through its self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes are to:

- improve the opportunities for participants to undertake work placements and volunteering; and
- review and develop further the effective approaches to learning, teaching and assessment in relation to blended learning.

## Key Findings

The Call 2 visit identified the following key findings.

- The curriculum provided to the participants is very good and well matched to meeting their emotional, health and learning needs. There is a variety of individual workshops and longer courses, most of which have been delivered online since the start of the pandemic, with the programme moving very quickly to engage participants through online learning and support sessions. The staff reported that participants with complex personal, family and social needs have found it particularly difficult to overcome the anxiety associated with starting a new work or volunteering experience. At present, while most programmes are delivered online, the staff are reviewing their delivery and intend to return to more face-to-face learning experiences, and where appropriate maintain the most effective elements of the blended learning introduced during lockdown. The barriers to learning and social engagement are complex for these participants and their families. A key focus of the staff is to empower the participants to deal more confidently with the issues they face, so that they can avail of employment, education or training opportunities. The participants receive highly effective support through their mentoring, careers and progression sessions.
- The staff use the detailed tracking of progress, along with their extensive knowledge of services and excellent interpersonal skills to support the participants in sourcing the assistance they and their families need to cope with a range of social and personal barriers. A key feature of this programme is the range of well-researched and advantageous links and partnerships which the staff have with external agencies, employers and community partners. The high levels of practical and emotional support which participants receive include: sensory packs for parents and workshops to demonstrate how the resources are used; the loan of computer tablets; and family music therapy sessions. The programme staff have good working relationships with other local charities; for example, the mutually beneficial partnership with the Families With Autism Coming Together (FACT) organisation, which provides support to families and children with Autism.

- The Participant Information Management System (PIMS)<sup>2</sup> is very effective in providing a clear overview of all aspects of the participants' engagement in the project. Additionally, it informs both curriculum planning and the ongoing evaluation of outcomes. The initial assessment process is focused appropriately on the participants' needs through the needs analysis and barriers assessment section of the PIMS. The assessment identifies participants' barriers and informs their individual action-planning and progress reviews. In addition, this process may also highlight the need for participants to be directed to external support and signposting.
- All of the outcomes on the project are very positive and over the four year period, to date, the targets set for recruitment have been met. The targets for progression to further education or training, and into employment have been exceeded. Almost all of the participants have been retained on the programme. The participants have also made significant progress in the achievement of level one qualifications and benefitted from participating in a high number of non-accredited workshops and short courses.
- The highly effective leadership and management has a sound understanding of the needs of the participants. They have taken appropriate actions to address the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection<sup>3</sup>. The quality improvement plan identifies correctly the need to examine further the benefits of blended learning and to facilitate more of the participants into work placements and volunteering opportunities. They have used the challenges of the pandemic to explore new delivery methods and to source new links and partnerships to benefit their participants and their families. The project promoter has continued to deliver provision in a most challenging operating environment. The project works closely with its delivery partner Twenty One Training who deliver the programme in Fermanagh and Omagh. In working together, the leadership of both are focused on delivering consistent, high quality provision for participants across the district councils. Staff from the two organisations meet regularly to share practice and learn from each other.

## Safeguarding

Based on the evidence available at the time of the Call 2 visit, the arrangements for safeguarding the participants of the CFSP - Mid-Ulster, Mid and East Antrim, Antrim and Newtownabbey ESF project reflect current legislation and practice.

## Overall outcome

At the time of the Call 2 visit, and in the areas evaluated, Network Personnel demonstrates a high level of capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the quality of provision for the CFSP - Mid-Ulster, Mid and East Antrim, Antrim and Newtownabbey ESF project.

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<sup>2</sup> The zones within PIMS are based on a Life Zones model developed by [GEMS NI](#).

<sup>3</sup> [European Social Fund provision in Network Personnel - Community and Family Support Programme \(etini.gov.uk\)](#)

# APPENDIX

## A. Call 2 Performance Data

European Social Fund – CFSP	Over the four-year period <sup>4</sup>
Numbers of enrolments and % against target	1340 (99.7%)
Numbers of participants into employment upon leaving and % against target	361 (250.6%)
Numbers of participants into education and/or training upon leaving and % against target	436 (151.4%)
Retention - Numbers and % against target	1250 (93%)

## B. Methodology and evidence base

The arrangements for this face-to-face visit included: the observation of 5 sessions of practice; speaking with a sample of participants (12) in focus group meetings and through one-to-one telephone conversations; discussions with key staff (including the quality improvement and safeguarding arrangements); and, the opportunity for participants to complete a confidential questionnaire. Inspectors also scrutinised relevant data and documentation provided by the ESF project promoter.

ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework is available on the [ETI website](#).

## 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%

<sup>4</sup> From April 2018 to December 2021.

## Overall outcome

ETI use one of the following outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the project promoter:

At the time of the Call 2 visit, and in the areas evaluated, xxxx demonstrates a high level of capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the quality of the provision for xx ESF project.

At the time of the Call 2 visit, and in the areas evaluated, xxxx demonstrates capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the quality of provision for xx ESF project.

At the time of the Call 2 visit, and in the areas evaluated, xxxx has not demonstrated sufficient capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the quality of the provision for xx ESF project. ETI will continue to monitor how the project promoter brings about improvement and the Department may consider further action.

## Safeguarding outcome

ETI use one of the following outcomes when evaluating the project promoter's arrangements for safeguarding the participants:

Based on the evidence available at the time of the Call 2 visit, the arrangements for safeguarding the participants of the for xx ESF project reflect current legislation and practice.

Based on the evidence available at the time of the Call 2 visit, the arrangements for safeguarding the participants of the for xx ESF project reflect broadly current legislation and practice.

The project promoter, however, needs to: ....

Based on the evidence available at the time of the Call 2 visit, the arrangements for safeguarding the participants of the for xx ESF project are unsatisfactory. <DN insert detail>.

ETI will return to the provider within six working weeks to monitor progress in addressing the unsatisfactory arrangements for safeguarding.

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