



Education and Training
Inspectorate

European Social Fund provision in
Stepping Stones NI

Stepping Stones to Employment

Report of a Quality Improvement
Planning Inspection in
September 2018



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments



Introduction

In September 2018, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a quality improvement planning inspection of Stepping Stones NI. The purpose of the inspection was to evaluate the effectiveness of the project promoter's self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes in the Stepping Stones to Employment project. At the last inspection in April 2017, the project promoter demonstrated its capacity to identify and bring about improvement. The project promoter has recently undergone substantive staffing changes, including at management level.

Focus of the quality improvement planning inspection

The quality improvement planning inspection focused on the following key areas which the organisation had prioritised for improvement through its self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes:

- the quality of planning to meet the individual needs of the participants; and
- the arrangements for safeguarding. (While the arrangements for safeguarding are normally evaluated in addition to the two priority areas for focus as part of a quality improvement planning inspection, they were chosen by the organisation and agreed with the Reporting Inspector as the second main priority area for focus in this quality improvement planning inspection.)

Key findings

The inspection identified the following key findings:

- there are important areas for improvement in the quality of the planning. While work has begun to address these, it is at an early stage. The planning is characterised by: too little use of the outcomes from initial and ongoing assessments to plan coherently to identify and meet the individual needs of the participants; insufficient detail about how the project promoter intends to address the needs of each participant; and a lack of adequate short, medium and long-term targets for the participants against which progress can be measured. Consequently, there is insufficient demonstration of the impact of the project promoter's work and the interventions undertaken with each participant.

Safeguarding

Based on the evidence available at the time of the quality improvement planning inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding participants reflect broadly the guidance from the Department for the Economy (Department). However, the project promoter needs to:

- embed the recently introduced changes to reporting and recording arrangements for safeguarding in order to promote consistency in practice across the organisation;

- ensure the provision of clear and accessible information to participants and their parents/carers on the safeguarding arrangements, and the complaints procedure, within the project; and
- develop further the safeguarding and positive behaviour management policies and procedures, along with the code of conduct for staff, to ensure that they are more accessible, and provide clearer guidance to support staff members in their work with participants and their interaction with parents/carers.

Overall Outcome

At the time of the quality improvement planning inspection visit, and in the areas evaluated, Stepping Stones NI has not demonstrated sufficient capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the quality of the provision. The ETI will continue to monitor how the project promoter brings about improvement and the Department may consider further action.

The outcome from this inspection will inform the next steps for the project promoter with regard to the inspection cycle.

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