



Education and Training
Inspectorate

European Social Fund provision in
YouthAction Northern Ireland

GET SET for Work

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

YouthAction Northern Ireland (YouthAction) is a charitable organisation contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the GET SET for Work European Social Fund Project (ESF). GET SET for Work is a regional youth work employability project working in partnership with local businesses and communities. The main aims of the project are to help young people achieve skills for living through tackling personal barriers, building resilience and motivation; skills for learning by achieving practical, industry relevant qualifications; and skills for work gained through engagement and structured work experience placements with local businesses and volunteering in local communities.

YouthAction is led by a Chief Executive and a board of directors who inform and influence the strategic direction of the organisation. The project is managed on an operational basis by a manager and seven youth workers who provide personal development activities, training, qualifications and work skills activities for the participants. Each participant has individually tailored provision linked to their personal action plan (PAP). Attendance varies from one to 10 hours per week, for approximately eight to twelve weeks, depending on their individual needs with up to six-month post programme support also included.

At the time of the inspection the 123 participants¹ on the programme were engaged in a range of activities: 51 of them in personal development activities; 27 receiving mentoring support; 24 benefitting from a range of work skills activities including two accessing an internship work opportunity within YouthAction; and a further 21 participants accessing youth leadership and volunteering placements.

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	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Outcomes for learners	Good
Quality of provision	Very 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, a breakdown of the provision is provided in the appendix of this report.

KEY FINDINGS

4. Outcomes for learners

Recruitment to the project is an area for improvement. In 2015/16 67% of the 246 target was achieved and in 2016/17 71% of the 282 participants have been recruited to date. To address the low recruitment the project promoter plans to extend the provision, from April 2017, to include the North West area. In the first year of the project the target of 29 of the participants entering employment on completion of their programme was exceeded, with 51 (176%) gaining employment. In the second year of the project the target of 34 participants entering employment has not been met with 24 (71%) of participants gaining employment to date. The overall oral communication skills of the participants are good and while a significant minority of them are reluctant communicators the model of delivery encourages the development of the participants' oracy skills.

The proportion of participants retained on the programme is outstanding and has increased from 86% in 2015/2016 to 96% in 2016/2017. The number of participants progressing to further education or training has not been reached in either year of the project to date nor has the number of participants leaving the project with relevant personal development and employability qualifications. The lower progression rates to further education and training has been caused by more participants in year one progressing into paid employment and structured volunteering. While the project has made progress in developing working relationships with three of the regional colleges these need to be strengthened and replicated across all of the regions to ensure and facilitate a wider range of progression routes for all of the participants in all regions.

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 and reduction in social isolation through the one-to-one mentoring support and community based activities offered. Almost all of the participants who remain on the programme make good progress in developing their skills for living. The participants who have engaged in employability provision reported the positive impact on their motivation, confidence and self-esteem through engagement in taster days, site visits and work experience placements as well as the ability to apply for jobs and interview more confidently. A significant minority of the participants reported clearly that without engagement with project staff that they would have found it very difficult and in some cases impossible to talk to other adults and discuss their experiences.

While the project measures and collates the development of distance travelled and the improvement in soft skills, it needs to use this information more effectively to demonstrate more clearly the overall and holistic impact of the project on the individual participants' lives and life chances.

5. Quality of provision

The overall provision and curriculum within GET SET to Work is relevant and matches well the needs of almost all of the participants and provides them with well constructed progression opportunities. Participants can engage with the programme at different levels to meet their individual needs, for example: GET Started which provides a flexible programme of personal development activities; GET Mentored one-to-one meetings for personal support to plan for the future; GET SET for Moving On a tailored programme for young mothers to build confidence, qualifications, employment experiences and opportunities and to enter the world of work; and Get Involved in volunteering. There is a voluntary residential aspect to the programme which has been effective in introducing participants to new experiences

including cross-community. The participants can access a range of good quality accredited training opportunities to enhance the quality of their lives and their employability skills such as: youth leadership, football coaching (IFA), construction skills register training, health and safety, manual handling and first aid at work. Non-accredited training in child protection, safeguarding and mental health is also available. In the work skills provision participants can engage in bespoke GET SET programmes, for example, in coaching, construction or farming. In addition the youth workers provide good quality support to individual participants who wish to undertake job search and apply for jobs.

All participants receive an assessment on entry to the project through engagement with a youth worker. 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 the participants' personal action plans and to capture all of the barriers to progression in their life, learning and work. The participants engage well in devising their personal action plans, however they require support to enable them to set more effective short-term milestones and prioritised actions to promote progression towards their overall goals. At present it is difficult to get a clear picture of an individual participant's overall goals and their involvement and progress through their programme as information is held in and across a range of sources. Overall, the engagement between the participants and the youth workers is highly effective and builds positive working relationships in both the one-to-one and group work sessions.

The quality of the directed training and mentoring sessions observed was good to very good and is particularly strong in the one-to-one sessions. In the most effective practice, sessions are well planned and structured, have a clear focus on reviewing the participant's progress since the last session, supports them well to reflect on their experiences and to recognise and build upon their strengths and to identify personal areas for further development. The project staff meet regularly with participants, and where appropriate with employers. While the review processes are mostly effective they would benefit from the development of more short-term targets against which participant progress could be measured more effectively. Almost all of the participants observed engaged well in the training and development activities.

The provision for the care and welfare of the participants impacts positively on learning, training and development, and contributes to successful outcomes. A four-P-model of participant support: personal, practical, pastoral and post-programme is well-embedded and an important element of the provision which ensures holistic support is provided across all elements of the programme. For example the practical support includes: reasonable adjustments for participants with disabilities, housing benefits, financial support with travel and lunch and childcare costs to help them engage in the programmes. The personal support is ongoing and includes one-to-one sessions, and the post-programme support helps the participants remain on track after the end of the programme.

6. Leadership and management

The GET SET to Work project is supported effectively by a committed board of directors who are well informed about the overall work of YouthAction and in particular about the impact and outcomes of the youth employability project. YouthAction are effectively engaged and influential in the strategic forum for the development of provision for young people in need of education, employment or training. The ESF project has been designed to focus on youth unemployment and to align and complement strategically the overall work within YouthAction. Since 2015 the project has been YouthAction's first project focused on young people's unemployment and employability across the region and since then they have been successful in the ongoing development of working partnerships with a range of referral agencies such as the Jobs and Benefits Offices and the Health and Social Services Trusts.

Effective employer partnerships in key employment areas are in place. For example work with GRAHAM Construction (through GRAHAM-BAM Healthcare Partnership) provides high quality experiences, including work-experience placements, to help develop the participants' work skills in a wide range of roles within the construction industry. YouthAction also have a well-established relationship and strong engagement with the Rotary Club of Belfast which focuses on using the skills of employers to support the young people to reflect on and recognise their existing skills and attributes and to support them to develop key employability skills such as interview and presentation skills. Members of the Rotary club and other employers such as Translink, Bank of Ireland, Phoenix Natural Gas, Down Royal Racecourse and Park Inn by Radisson Blu Hotels participate in the Get Set to Go Skills Days where the employers lead practical skills based workshops on goal setting, career pathways and preparation for interviews. The group report on the strong interworking between them and the Youth Workers and the training on participative approaches that they practice.

The quality of the accommodation in YouthAction's main premises in Belfast is outstanding and provides opportunities for participants interested in drama to engage in a range of activities through YouthAction's Rainbow Factory, School of Performing Arts and for others to develop their interests in youth work training.

Roles and responsibilities of the project staff are clearly defined and there is a strong team approach to the work. The staff at all levels are highly committed to meeting the individual needs of the participants through their person-centred youth work approaches and methodologies. There are good opportunities to undertake relevant continuing professional development including an important and appropriate emphasis on developing the youth workers' knowledge and understanding of learning, teaching, and training.

There is a regular scheduled cycle of individual and team meetings which focus on the review of the progress of individual participants and GET SET groups, on the delivery of the project and also on sharing effective practice. The staff ensure that participants are involved in commenting regularly on the life and work of the project which is effective in informing self-evaluation. A renewed focus is required at team level on progress towards the project's targets for recruitment, achievement of qualifications and progression to employment, further education and training

The project's self-evaluation processes are effective and there is a clear focus on continuous improvement in the quality of the provision. There are very clear systems and processes in place and a well-embedded cycle of activities. However the processes for quality improvement and action planning need to be developed further to take more account of feedback from the engagement with key partner organisations and to enhance further the capacity of staff at all levels to use the data collated more effectively to clearly identify the areas for improvement.

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding participants reflect the guidance issued by the Department.

7. Overall effectiveness

YouthAction demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the participants. There are areas for improvement that the project promoter has demonstrated the capacity to address.

The areas for improvement are to:

- address the shortfall in recruitment, achievements and progression in-line with the project's targets; and
- develop further the quality improvement planning processes to ensure that key actions are taken to promote improvement.

The ETI will monitor how the project promoter sustains improvement.

A. Project registrations

Programme	Numbers of enrolments	% against target
European Social Fund GET SET for Work 2015/2016	246	67%
European Social Fund GET SET for Work 2016/2017	282	71%

At the time of the inspection 123 participants were registered on the project: Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon District Council 33 participants; Greater Belfast 75 participants; Fermanagh and Omagh District Council 11 participants; and Newry, Mourne and Down 4 participants. Plans are well developed for the commencement of the GET SET for Work project in the North West from April 2017.

B. Inspection methodology and evidence base

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

Three ETI inspectors observed and met with 27 participants in a range of settings including learning and development sessions, one-one sessions and two focus group meetings. Discussions were held with the project management team, six members of YouthAction's board of directors, five youth workers, a group of six members of the Rotary club, two business partners, two community partners, a strategic partner, a university placement student and one parent. The management information system, including the tracking and monitoring systems, samples of the participants' work and personal action plans, and the youth workers' 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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