



Education and Training
Inspectorate

European Social Fund provision in
Women's Tec

Supporting People – Empowering
Communities (SPEC) Project.

Report of an Inspection
in November 2016



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



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 Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels when reporting on outcomes for participants, on provision for learning and development, on leadership and management, and on the overall quality of the provision.

Current performance level
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:

Overall effectiveness outcome
The organisation has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the participants. The ETI will monitor the organisation's progress in addressing any area(s) for improvement through its annual scrutiny inspection.
The organisation demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the participants. The ETI will monitor the organisation's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement through its annual scrutiny inspection.
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, which includes the need to produce an improvement plan, which will be the basis for 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, which includes the need to produce an improvement plan, which will be the basis for 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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1. Inspection method and evidence base

Two ETI inspectors observed five participants in one learning and development session; and interviewed seven participants in a focus group meeting. Discussions were held with the chief executive officer, the project manager, the quality assurance and monitoring officer, and the workshop manager. Samples of the participants' work and personal development plans, individual learning plans and trainers' programmes of work and session plans were examined; and the project promoter's self-evaluation report and other relevant documentation were scrutinised.

2. Focus of the inspection

The inspection focused on:

- 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. Context

Women's Tec is a registered charity that provides training for women in non-traditional skills operating from a recently acquired training centre in Belfast. The project promoter is contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the European Social Fund project, Supporting People – Empowering Communities (SPEC) project. Started in April 2015, the project aims to address key policy areas such as combating poverty and enhancing social inclusion by reducing economic inactivity of women. The project provides skills and employability training to women aged 16 plus who are furthest removed from the labour market to support them to return to employment in the construction industries. The programme focuses on providing accredited training in the areas of electrics, horticulture, information technology, joinery, painting and decorating, plumbing and tiling. It also aims to develop the participants' personal development, confidence building and employability skills.

The project is managed by the chief executive officer, supported by a team of eight staff and a group of part-time tutors who are deployed when required. The chief executive officer is further supported by a voluntary board of directors who inform and influence the strategic direction of the centre. At the time of the inspection 47 participants¹ were registered on the project, and a further 37 were registered for upcoming programmes. They were either attending trades courses, one of which was delivered at Claffrey Hill's community hub, a personal development programme or taking part in a two-hour DIY sampling session.

¹ All performance data in this report was provided by the ESF project promoter at the time of the inspection.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Outcomes for participants	Good
Provision for learning and development	Good
Leadership and management	Good

5. Outcomes for participants

The outcomes for participants are good. They display high levels of enthusiasm and motivation for their programme and engage well in their learning and development activities. The overall standard of the participants' work is mostly good; they are developing their occupational skills at an appropriate pace and most make good progress in the achievement of their targeted qualifications.

The participants report that they are making very good progress in the development of their confidence, self-esteem and personal effectiveness through their participation on the project and, in particular, the support they receive from the personal development programme. Almost all of them report that the programme has helped them to overcome their barriers to education, training and employment, for example in helping them to address social isolation and loneliness, depression and other mental health issues.

The standard of the participants' written work is variable; there is evidence of the development of their numeracy and ICT skills but overall there is limited evidence of extended writing and the development of their broader literacy skills. The organisation needs to develop further opportunities to support the development of the participants' essential skills.

The average recruitment, retention and achievement rates on the project in year 1 are good. The project almost met (96%) its recruitment target in year 1 of the programme and is making good progress (53%) in meeting its year 2 target. The average retention on accredited and non-accredited programmes is outstanding (88%) and the achievement rate is also outstanding (99%). The targets set for progression to further education, and training programmes have not been achieved and the organisation needs to continue to develop its careers education, information, advice and guidance programme and its links and partnerships with education and training organisations to better facilitate the participants' transition to level 2 education and training programmes.

6. Provision for learning and development

The quality of the provision for learning and development is good. The organisation, in partnership with Clanmil Housing Association, has introduced taster courses in the participants' community setting to encourage them to progress to accredited training programmes and to make informed decisions of their preferred construction pathway. As a result, the proportion of participants moving from initial engagement to participation in an accredited programme has increased from 16% to 46.5%.

There is a broad curriculum on offer to the participants which includes a range of construction programmes in joinery, painting and decorating, and plumbing. The organisation also provides an extensive range of short courses and personal development programmes that progress well the participants' employability skills. The relationships between the participants and the staff of the organisation are mutually respectful and effectively support the development of the participants' confidence and self-esteem.

The overall quality of the provision for learning and development is good in the sessions observed, and was characterised by a positive and inclusive learning environment, the good level of engagement of the participants, and the effective use of questioning to extend learning. The planning documents for the sessions, however, lack sufficient detail and need to be reviewed and the use of information learning technologies to enhance learning is underdeveloped.

The quality of the care and welfare provided for the participants is good. The organisation provides a supportive and inclusive environment in which the participants can overcome their reticence to re-engage in education and training. The participants report that the staff encourage and support them and work tirelessly to improve their lives, particularly those that are socially isolated and disadvantaged. The organisation has links with a range of referral agencies and signposts the participants to the appropriate organisation as required. The organisation provides childcare facilities which are an essential support for the participants with very young children to access their training programmes. In addition, there is a purposeful programme of industry visits in place to widen the participants' experience and understanding of the industry.

The quality of the personal development plans is an important area for improvement. The barriers to learning and intervention strategies that are used to support the participants' learning and training are not fully captured within the personal development planning processes. The organisation has implemented a distance travelled toolkit to measure the progress the participants' are making in the development of their personal, social and employability skills. This needs to be linked more effectively to the personal development planning process.

7. Leadership and management

The quality of the leadership and management is good. There are effective lines of communication between the staff and management and roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. The management team have a high level of commitment to supporting women to develop their occupational and personal and social skills. The organisation has taken appropriate steps to address the areas for improvement identified in the baseline visit to the organisation.

Strategic links and partnerships are very good. The organisation has developed highly productive relationships with its partner organisations; in particular, there have very productive links with Clanmil Housing Association and Belfast City Council which are used well to deliver taster sessions and to support the development of the participants' employability skills. A good feature of the provision is that Women's Tec celebrate the achievement of the participants in its annual awards ceremony, supported by their partner organisations.

A good start has been made to developing links with further education colleges, universities and training organisations to develop and deliver progression pathways to higher level courses. These links need to be extended further to provide a wider range of appropriate progression opportunities for participants beyond the life of the project.

The quality of the accommodation in the training centre is good. The quality and range of the equipment is good and supports well the delivery of practical construction training. There is, however, a lack of facilities for the delivery of information communication technology programmes.

The self-evaluation process and quality improvement planning processes need to be strengthened further to use more effectively key performance data, and the use of feedback from all key stakeholders, including the participants and partner organisations, to more robustly evaluate the quality of the provision. Staff development planning needs to be better informed by the self-evaluation process, and while there are some examples of progression of tutors to a teacher training programme, the sharing of good practice and wider experiences could be exploited more fully.

On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, Women's Tec has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding young people and adults at risk. However the project promoter needs to:

update the antibullying policy to identify the procedures to be taken in the event of a report of an allegation of bullying.

8. Overall effectiveness

Women's TEC has the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interests of all the participants. In order to improve the provision further, the project needs to:

- strengthen further the self-evaluation process to use more effectively key performance data, and feedback from all key stakeholders, to evaluate the quality of the provision;
- increase the proportion of participants progressing to further education and training; and
- strengthen the personal development plans to identify more clearly the participants' barriers to learning and the effectiveness of the intervention strategies put in place to support them.

APPENDIX

Current registrations by programme

Programme	Numbers of enrolments	% against target
Supporting People – Empowering Communities Year 1	136	96%
Year 2	95	53%

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