Appendix 1

Evaluation Report

Development and Delivery of a Health and Social Care/Classroom Assistant Academy 2023-24

1. **Introduction and Strategic Context**
2. **Programme Delivery**
3. **Performance Outcomes**
4. **Sustainability of Employment**
5. **Participant Evaluation**
6. **Participant Feedback/Testimonials**
7. **Case Studies**
8. **Lessons Learnt & Recommendations**

Appendix 1

1. INTRODUCTION AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Introduction

This evaluation report has been compiled by Network Personnel following the completion of its delivery of the Health and Social Care/Classroom Assistant Academy in the Mid Ulster District Council area.

In October 2023 Mid Ulster District Council, on behalf of the Mid Ulster Labour Market Partnership (LMP), sought quotations from suitably experienced organisations to develop the Academy. Network Personnel successfully tendered for the contract.

Delivery of the initiative commenced at the end of November 2023 with all key aspects of it scheduled to be completed by the end of March 2024. This deadline was subsequently extended by the LMP, to the end of June 2024 because of challenges associated with implementing the programme over such a short timeframe.

This evaluation focusses on the extent to which outcomes have been achieved. It also incorporates qualitative feedback from those who engaged in the programme and includes recommendations which are potentially beneficial for future initiatives.

Strategic context

The Mid Ulster Labour Market Partnership (LMP) was established as part of the Department for Communities' (DfC) Employability NI programme, which aims to design, procure and implement a fresh suite of employability initiatives to support people into meaningful employment. They aim to:

- Reduce the number of job claimants and improve economic activity
- Reduce the disability employment gap
- Improve the female economic activity rate.

The LMP also aims to support local employers by providing:

- Free support and training to assist with employment matters.
- Signposting and advice.
- Access to a labour pipeline via programmes and academies.

Through consultation with industry stakeholders in Mid Ulster a need was identified for a Health and Social Care/Classroom Assistant Academy to support the industry. The project targeted Mid Ulster residents who were over 18 and:

- unemployed, long term unemployed, under-employed, or at risk of
- redundancy; or
- seeking career progression through upskilling or reskilling; or
- had been economically inactive for any reason (including due to long
- term ill-health or disability, caring commitments, early retired, or health reasons.

The key aims were to:

- Recruit at least 20 Academy participants and achieve a success rate of 75% (15 participants) completing it and gaining an accredited qualification.
- Engage with employers in order to identify job opportunities within the Mid Ulster Council area.
- Achieve a minimum of 12 participants (80%) who complete gaining employment.
- Achieve a minimum of 8 remaining in employment post 6 months as a result of the initiative.
- 12 participants (80%) who complete the Academy to report satisfaction with the programme.

2. PROGRAMME DELIVERY

Stage 1- Marketing and recruitment

Network Personnel used its considerable expertise and knowledge of the local area to successfully create awareness of the programme both amongst local companies and potential participants. Measures included:

- A programme launch with photo opportunities.
- Production of branded promotional flyers.
- A social media campaign.
- Linking in with relevant community groups, schools, care homes and the wider business community.
- Promotion via the 3 Jobs & Benefits Offices in Mid Ulster.

The marketing campaign was sustained until the targeted number of participants was exceeded.

Stage 2 - Mentoring

Experienced staff worked to build rapport between themselves and the participants encouraging open and supportive relationships.

Over a series of meetings, calls and emails, individually tailored SMART Action Plans were developed. When required, Network Personnel signposted participants to specialist support.

Stage 3 - Vocational training and personal development

A wide range of workshops and certificated courses were made available to participants (remotely and centre based) including Manual Handling, Safeguarding, First Aid and Food Hygiene. Moreover, non-vocational training to develop soft skills was also made available.

Appendix 1

Stage 4 - Employment brokerage

Employment brokerage was undertaken alongside training and mentoring and was based upon the participants' Action Plans. It included CV building; job search activities; advocacy with employers; work trials and work placements.

Through extensive employer contact and job search activities, employment was sourced for 12 participants. Whilst the majority were in the care and childcare sector, in some instances, participants opted for other careers after a period of mentoring and reflection. The following are some of the organisations who recruited participants:

Company	Location	Sector
Extra Care	Across Mid Ulster	Domiciliary care
Womans Aid	Cookstown	Womans refuge centre
Fairfields Care Centre (2 jobs)	Cookstown	Care Home
Cookstown PS (2 jobs)	Cookstown	Primary School
Meteor	Cookstown	Electrical
Cromar Properties	Aughnacloy	Building
Circet	Lisburn	Telecoms
Uform	Toomebridge	Manufacturing
St John Bosco (PS)	Portglenone (MUC area)	Primary School
Kids Lodge	Magherafelt	Creche

Management

The management of the Academy was a very smooth process. The Managers met with the delivery team on a weekly basis to review milestones and provide support.

Appendix 1

PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

As a result of the activities and interventions carried out by Network Personnel, the following outcomes were achieved against target:

TARGETS		**%**	
Target	**Outcome**	**Target**	**Outcome**
Enrol 20 participants and provide support with work readiness training	A total of **25** participants were registered on the Academy and availed of a range of employability support measures.	**100%**	125%
Minimum of 15 participants (75%) to complete the programme	**21** participants completed the programme.	**75%**	105%
12 participants (80%) who complete the programme to gain employment	**12** participants gained employment.	**80%**	80%
8 participants placed into work to have remained in work 6 months post-employment	**9** participants sustained jobs for 6 months.	**67%**	75%
12 participants (80%) who complete to report satisfaction with the programme	**100%** of participants who completed reported they were satisfied or very satisfied with the level of support provided.	**80%**	100%

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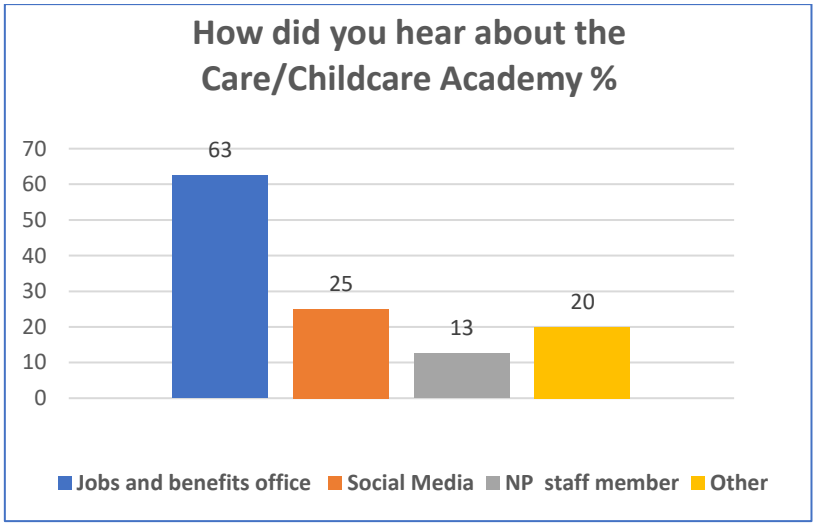
SUSTAINMENT OF EMPLOYMENT

In order to enhance the prospects of job sustainment, mentors maintained regular contact with participants checking on their progress and helping resolve issues which might lead to them leaving their jobs. Contact was either in person or via telephone or online communication (to suit participants working hours).

In total 9 participants sustained employment throughout a 6 month period against a target of 8. This is testament to the skills of the mentors and the quality of the matching process between participants and jobs.

PARTICIPANT EVALUATION

Network Personnel designed an online anonymous survey to obtain feedback from participants and gauge their level of satisfaction with the Health and Social Care/Childcare Academy. Responses were as follows:



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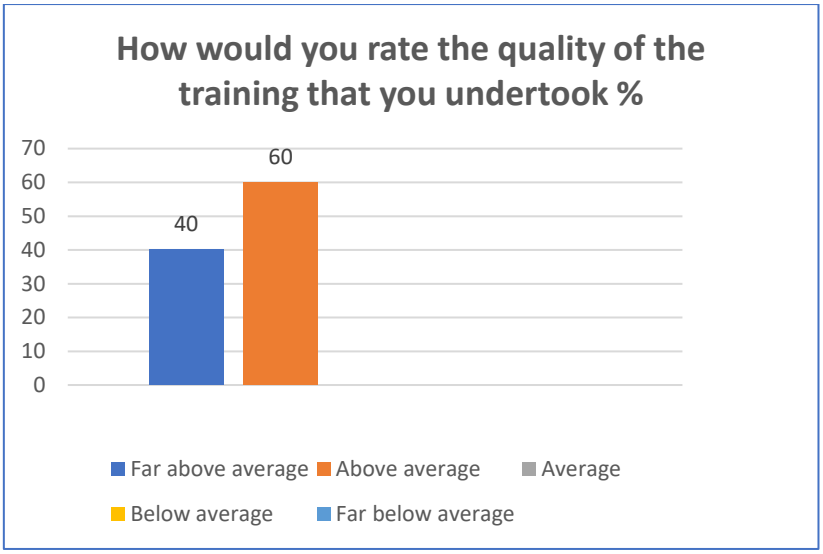
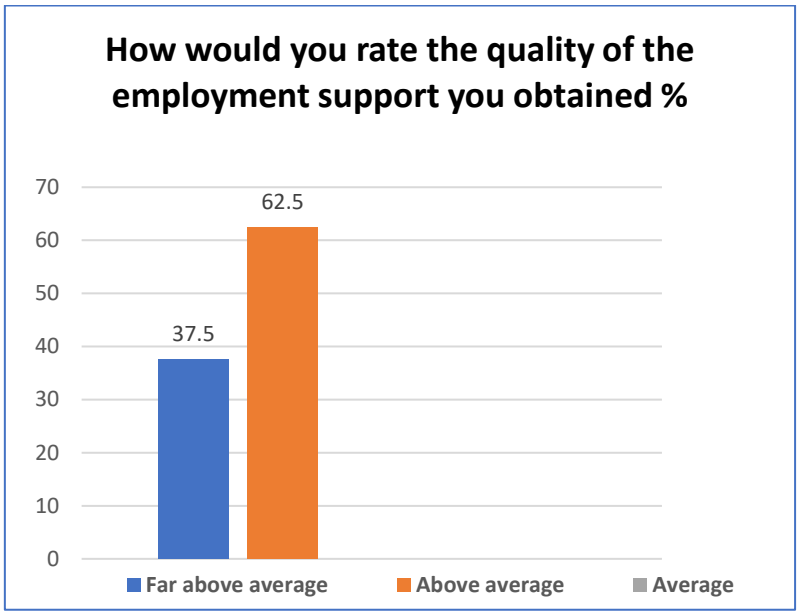
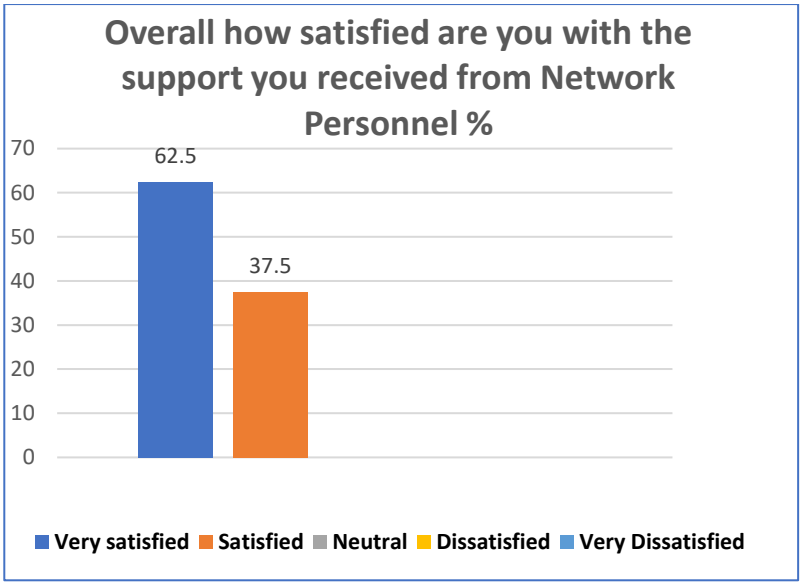

How would you rate the quality of the training that you undertook %
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
60
40
Far above average
Above average
Average
Below average
Far below average


How would you rate the quality of the employment support you obtained %
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
62.5
37.5
Far above average
Above average
Average

Appendix 1



FEEDBACK/TESTIMONIALS

Survey respondants were asked to comment on the programme delivery and the following responses were illicited:

'I received such great help from the Network Personnel employees - they were very kind with all information that was needed. They all are fantastic and understanding towards our circumstances.'

'Thank you for all your help.'

'I really enjoyed doing the short courses.'

'Everyone was helpful and patient.'

'I was guided and advised with confidence.'

'I appreciate your help to get me a job.'

CASE STUDIES

Case Study 1

Initial involvement

This participant had been out of the workforce for 10+ years as she had been bringing up her family. As they were now grown up she had decided that she wanted to return to the workforce. Understandably she was lacking in confidence and moreover, needed help to build her skills and identify suitable jobs.

She heard of the Academy through a Network Personnel staff member. It appealed to her as she was interested in working in the care sector either with adults or children.

Activities
The participant undertook qualifications relevant to the sector including 'Medication Awareness (Care)' and 'Children with Asthma'. She also completed a personal development qualification. She availed of various employability supports including CV building, help with application forms and extensive job prospecting. In addition, her mentor provided extensive guidance and encouragement.

Outcome
The participant had a number of interviews for Care Assistant positions and was offered 2 jobs including one in the Mid Ulster Hospital. However, she opted for a job as a Care Assistant in Fairfields Nursing Home. Network Personnel continued to keep in touch with her for a further six months after she started the job and she has remained in employment in the nursing home enjoying the role.

Case Study 2

Initial Involvement
This participant was referred by her work coach to discuss employment options as she was very unsure of a career direction. Her previous work history had been in retail where she had been promoted to a senior level but she didn't want to return to this type of work. In addition, she also wanted a job that would enable her to drop off and collect her school age children thus avoiding additional childcare costs.

Activities
Following advisory sessions with the Network Personnel Mentor, the participant decided she would like to pursue a career as a classroom assistant. The Mentor helped her update and tailor her CV, maximising and drawing upon transferable skills from her previous jobs. The Mentor then approached a number of local schools to see if they had vacancies that the participant could be put forward for. One of the schools did have a vacancy and a visit was arranged for the participant to see around the school, meet the Principal and find out more about the role. She enjoyed the visit and felt that the job would suit her.

Outcome
The participant started working in the school and has continued there on a temporary contract. She has discussed with the mentor the possibility of doing the Level 2 Childcare Learning & Development qualification. This would enable her to apply for permanent roles within the school.

Appendix 1

LESSONS LEARNT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Success factors:

- Network Personnel is embedded in the Mid Ulster area and is well known by local businesses who often contact the organisation as part of their recruitment process. Moreover, there are extensive linkages with schools and the social care sector. This local knowledge and extensive network was key to the job matching process and the overall success of the Academy.

- The Managers and Mentors who delivered the Academy were highly experienced, motivated and skilled in fulfilling their roles.

- Network Personnel has strong, established working relationships with the 3 Jobs and Benefits offices in Mid Ulster as well as with a range of other statutory and voluntary organisations. Such links were essential for promoting the Academy.

- Network Personnel has a comprehensive suite of online and centre-based training courses that participants were able to avail of beyond that which was required in the Tender specification.

- Strong working relationships were developed with Mid Ulster Council staff which facilitated a smooth delivery of the programme.

Challenges:

- Many classroom assistant jobs are temporary with contracts running from September to June. Moreover, a significant number of those in this sector don't get paid over the summer. This is a difficulty for those who are economically inactive and who would be giving up their benefits and thus be entirely dependent on their earnings.

- It was challenging to match participants to jobs within the timeframe allocated (see recommendations).

Recommendations:

Based on the experience of delivering this Academy the following recommendations for future initiatives have been identified:

- Many of those seeking a career as a Classroom Assistant or in childcare would be very interested in undertaking the Level 3 qualification in Children's Care, Learning and Development. This qualification is an essential criteria on

job descriptions for permanent roles but costs to undertake the course are in excess of £1,000. Funding for this qualification would have been very useful for addressing this skills shortage area in the local workforce.

- A generic employability programme may be more advantageous than sector specific initiatives: Those who are unemployed for a period of time may not be fully aware of what various jobs entail. As such they often join initiatives such as this but after a period of mentoring and reflection decide it isn't the career for them. With a wider scope, a higher number of participants within the target group can be supported.

- Consider offering recognition of outcomes in addition to employment: For many participants, undertaking volunteering, achieving a qualification or addressing health problems can be a very positive step towards securing employment.

- Consider extending the timeframe of any future initiatives: - A significant percentage of those eligible to participate in programmes such as this have numerous barriers to employment which take considerable time to address e.g. high benefit dependency, childcare needs, low confidence levels, health issues. It is exceedingly challenging to address these barriers in a meaningful way within a 4-month period especially when Christmas falls within that period.

Appendix 2

Evaluation Report

Development and Delivery of a Tourism and Hospitality Academy 2023-24

1. **Introduction and Strategic Context**
2. **Programme Delivery**
3. **Performance Outcomes**
4. **Sustainability of Employment**
5. **Participant Evaluation**
6. **Participant Feedback/Testimonials**
7. **Case Studies**
8. **Lessons Learnt & Recommendations**

Appendix 2

1. INTRODUCTION AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Introduction

This evaluation report has been carried out by Network Personnel following the completion of its delivery of the Tourism and Hospitality Academy in the Mid Ulster District Council area.

In October 2023 Mid Ulster District Council, on behalf of the Mid Ulster Labour Market Partnership (LMP), sought quotations from suitably experienced organisations to develop and deliver a Tourism and Hospitality Academy. Network Personnel successfully tendered for the contract. Delivery of the programme commenced late November 2023 with key aspects of the programme scheduled to be completed by the end of March 2024.

This deadline was subsequently extended by the LMP, to the end of June 2024 because of challenges associated with implementing the programme over such a short timeframe.

This evaluation focusses on the extent to which outcomes have been achieved. It also incorporates qualitative feedback from those who engaged in the programme and includes lessons learnt which are potentially beneficial for future initiatives.

Strategic Context

The Mid Ulster Labour Market Partnership (LMP) was established as part of the Department for Communities' (DfC) Employability NI programme, which aims to design, procure and implement a fresh suite of employability initiatives to support people into meaningful employment. They aim to:

- Reduce the number of job claimants and improve economic activity.
- Reduce the disability employment gap.
- Improve the female economic activity rate.

The LMP also aims to support local employers by providing:

- Free support and training to assist with employment matters.
- Signposting and advice.
- Access to a labour pipeline via programmes and academies.

Through consultation with industry stakeholders in Mid Ulster, a need was identified for a Tourism and Hospitality Academy to support the industry. The project targeted Mid Ulster residents who were over 18 and:

- unemployed, long term unemployed, under-employed, or at risk of redundancy; or
- seeking career progression through upskilling or reskilling; or
- have been economically inactive for any reason (including due to long
- term ill-health or disability, caring commitments, early retired, or health reasons.

The key aims were to:

- Recruit 20 participants with 15 (75%) completing the programme and gaining an accredited qualification.
- Engage with employers to develop work placement/experience opportunities.
- Secure work for 12 participants (80%) who complete the programme with 8 sustaining jobs for a 6 month period.
- Deliver a level 2 Tour Guiding qualification to a minimum of 5 participants
- At least 12 participants (80%) of those who complete to report satisfaction with the programme.

2. PROGRAMME DELIVERY

Stage 1- Marketing and recruitment

Network Personnel used its considerable expertise, and knowledge of the local area, to successfully create awareness of the programme both amongst local companies and potential participants. Measures included:

- A programme launch with photo opportunity.
- Production of branded promotional flyers.
- Social media campaign.
- Linking in with relevant community groups and employers.
- Promotion via the 3 Jobs & Benefits Offices in Mid Ulster.

The marketing campaign was sustained until the targeted number of participants was exceeded.

Stage 2 - Mentoring

Experienced staff worked to build rapport between themselves and the participant encouraging open and supportive relationships.

Over a series of meetings, calls and emails, individually tailored SMART Action Plans were developed. When required, Network Personnel signposted participants to specialist support.

Stage 3 - Vocational training and personal development

A wide range of workshops and certificated courses were made available to participants (remotely and centre based) including Customer Service, Manual Handling, First Aid and Food Hygiene. Moreover, non-vocational training to develop soft skills was also made available.

The Academy also incorporated the delivery of the 5 days Certified Tour Guiding qualification (Level 2). The course had a locally focused approach with each

participant leading a tour of a key site in Mid Ulster area thus providing them with hands on experience.

Stage 4 - Employment brokerage

Employment brokerage was undertaken alongside training and mentoring and was based upon the participants' Action Plans. It included CV building; job search activities; advocacy with employers; work trials and work placements.

As part of this process a taster day was organised with the Glenavon Hotel for participants to find out about potential roles and what they entailed. 5 participants registered for the visit but for various reasons, only one was able to attend. This participant was subsequently successful in securing a job with the Hotel.

Through extensive employer contact and job search activities employment was sourced in a wide cross section of companies across the Mid Ulster Area including:

Company	Location	Sector
Blend and Brew	Magherafelt	Hospitality
Glenavon House Hotel	Cookstown	Hospitality
Poundland	Magherafelt	Retail
Dale Farm	Cookstown	Food Production
Trade Mouldings	Cookstown	Manufacturing
CDM Transport	Cookstown	Transport
Cathcarts	Dungannon	Retail
DAERA	Magherafelt	Agriculture
Moy Park	Cookstown	Food Production
Sperrin Integrated School	Magherafelt	Education
Fairfields Care Centre	Cookstown	Care
Cheeky Spoon	Cookstown	Hospitality

Management

The management of the Academy was a very smooth process. The managers met with the delivery team on a weekly basis to review milestones and provide support.

Appendix 2

PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

As a result of the activities and interventions carried out by Network Personnel the following outcomes were achieved

TARGETS		**%**	
Target	**Outcome**	**Target**	**Outcome**
Enrol 20 participants and provide support with work readiness training	A total of **24** participants engaged on the programme and availed of a range of employability support measures.	**100%**	120%
5 participants to complete the Tour Guiding Level 2 qualification	**2** participants completed the Level 2 in Tour Guiding and a further **4** non- participants who are Mid Ulster residents completed it.	**25%**	10%
Minimum of 75% (15) participants to complete the programme	**15** participants completed the programme.	**75%**	75%
12 completers to gain employment (80%)	**6** participants had obtained employment by June 2024 and a further **6** had secured employment by December 2024.	**80%**	80% achieved Dec 2024
8 participants placed into work to have remained in work 6 months post-employment	**6** participants had sustained work by December 2024 and a further **3** were still in employment at December 2024 who just hadn't reached 6 month post employment stage yet.	**67%**	50% achieved at December 2024 Potential achievement 75%
80% (12) of participants who complete to report satisfaction with the project	100% of participants who completed reported they were satisfied or very satisfied with the level of support provided.	**80%**	100%

Appendix 2

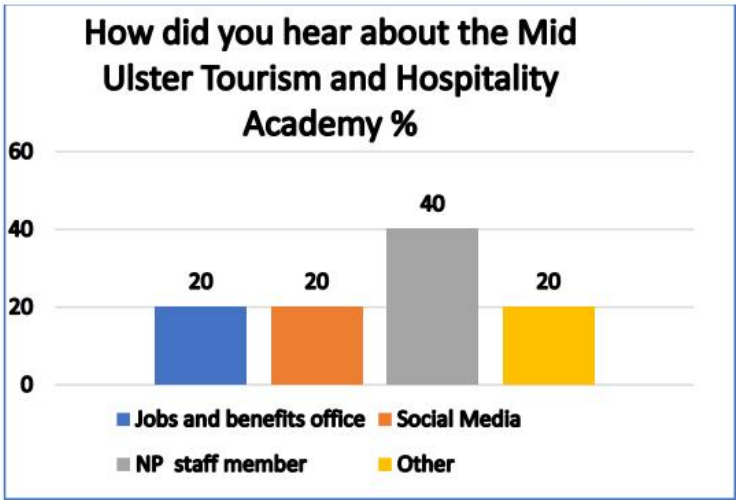
EMPLOYMENT SUSTAINABILITY

In order to enhance the prospects of job sustainment, mentors maintained regular contact with participants checking on their progress and helping resolve issues which might lead to them leaving their jobs. Where necessary they also liaised with employers to resolve any issues.

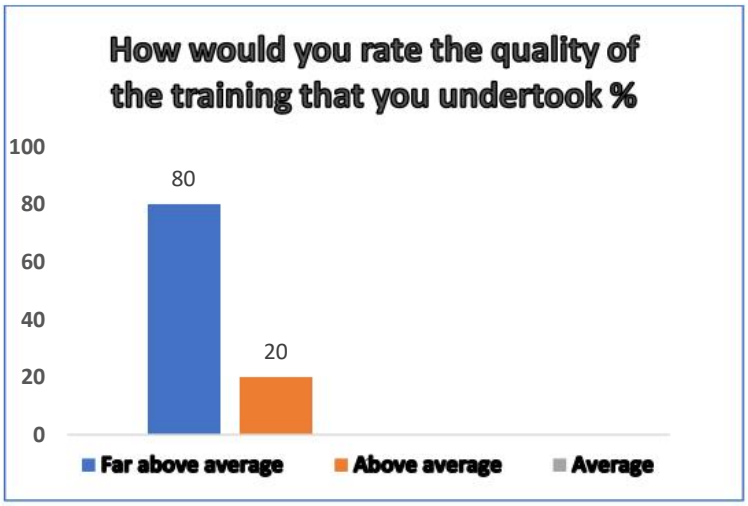
Because of the tight time frame for programme delivery just 6 participants had obtained employment by June 2024. However, a further 6 moved into employment by December 2024 bringing the total into employment to 12. Consequently 6 had sustained six months in work by December 2024 (the end date for the initiative) with a further 3 still in employment who had not reached the 6 month post employment stage yet.

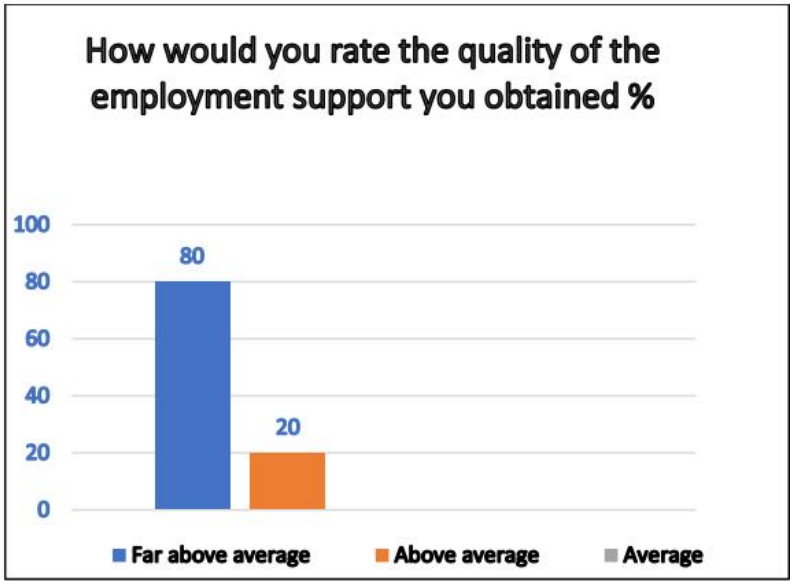
PARTICIPANT EVALUATION

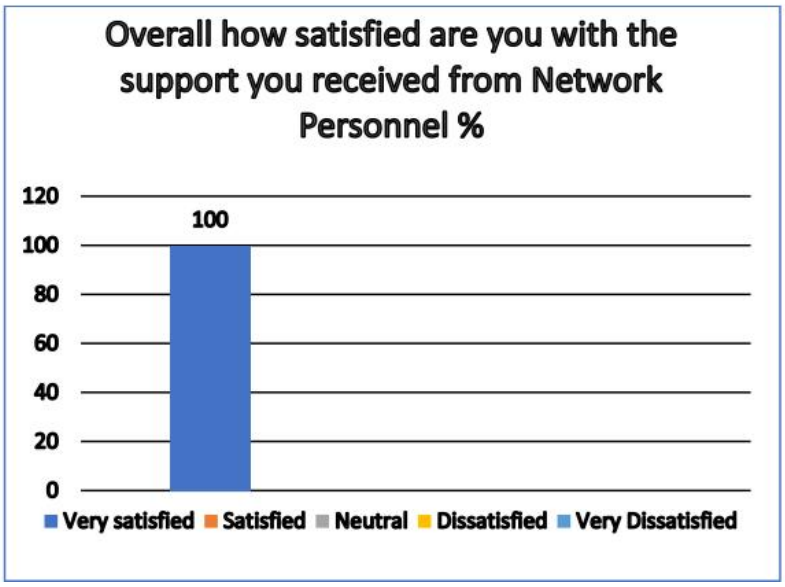
Network Personnel designed an online anonymous survey to obtain feedback from participants and gauge their level of satisfaction with the Tourism and Hospitality Academy. Responses were as follows:



Appendix 2


How would you rate the quality of the training that you undertook %
100
80
60
40
20
0
80
20
Far above average
Above average
Average


How would you rate the quality of the employment support you obtained %
100
80
60
40
20
0
80
20
Far above average
Above average
Average


Overall how satisfied are you with the support you received from Network Personnel %
120
100
80
60
40
20
0
100
Very satisfied
Satisfied
Neutral
Dissatisfied
Very Dissatisfied

Appendix 2

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK/TESTIMONIALS

Survey respondants were asked to comment on the programme delivery and the following responses were illicited:

'Excellent, the staff were amazing and helped me to get back into employment after many years, with lots of encouragement and support - would totally recommend and have done so.'

*'****has been very encouraging and helpful. I am currently not working at present however I still have managed to pick up temporary jobs.'*

*"**** was very encouraging and help me gain the confidence to get back to work. I have recently been out of employment however I still manage to get a job. I currently link in with Network Personnel still and couldn't recommend enough.'*

Network Personnel experienced difficulty attracting participants to the Level 2 Tour Guiding course despite extensive marketing. Regardless of these challenges, feedback was exceedingly positive with one participant commenting:

'I found the course so rewarding and stimulating making me research and investigate the local area. I found a piece of history hidden in my local countryside that I hadn't previously visited – it was a great experience.'

CASE STUDIES

Case Study 1

Initial involvement

This participant was aged 28 years old when she joined the Academy. She had been out of work for 1 year and had been involved in other government programmes which hadn't materialised into employment. She had previously worked in care and childcare but was interested in a new career direction.

She had a good educational background and had a steady job history up to 2023 albeit with a range of different employers. The participant heard of the Academy through previous engagement with Network Personnel and was keen for further support.

Activities

She had up to date qualifications and as such joined the Academy to help source suitable employment. Her mentor worked extensively with her to update her CV (tailoring it to meet essential criteria for various roles); completing application forms; doing mock interviews and trawling job sites for suitable vacancies.

Outcome
As a result of this activity, the participant found work with Blend and Brew Coffee Shop which she really enjoyed. She later transferred to a job in a hotel, local to where she lives, and has remained in employment there.

Case Study 2

Initial involvement
This participant was aged 55 when he joined the Academy. He had a steady work history with a number of roles in the public sector. However, he was keen for a complete change of direction. He heard about the programme through a Network Personnel staff member and decided to join the Tourism and Hospitality Academy. He was particularly interested in self-employment as a Tour Guide offering walking tours of a local site of interest.

He undertook the Level 2 qualification in Tour Guiding and found it both interesting and useful. In particular, he found delivering the 'practice tour' a very good learning experience for him as he was able to avail of constructive feedback from it.
The participant realised that it would take time to develop his tourism product and as such his Mentor continued to work alongside him to identify other job opportunities.

Outcome
As a result of this job search activity, he has found 2 part time jobs: the first is with DAERA doing soil sampling and the second is with NISRA doing surveys. In the meantime, he is continuing further research on his business idea and seeking further support on self-employment.

LESSONS LEARNT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Success factors

- Network Personnel is embedded in the Mid Ulster area and is well known by local businesses who often contact the organisation as part of their recruitment process. This local knowledge and extensive network was key to the job matching process.

- There are strong established working relationships with the 3 Jobs and Benefits offices in Mid Ulster as well as with a range of other statutory and voluntary organisations. Such links were essential for promoting the programme.

- The Organisation has extensive experience of delivering employability programmes and as such the Academy could be 'ramped up' quickly.

- The Managers and Mentors who delivered the Academy were highly experienced, motivated and skilled in fulfilling their roles.

- Network Personnel has an extensive suite of online and centre-based training courses that participants were able to avail of beyond that which was required in the specification.

- Strong working relationships were developed with Mid Ulster Council staff which facilitated a smooth delivery of the programme.

Challenges

- It was difficult to recruit for the Tour Guiding qualification as potential participants didn't see a link to existing job opportunities - in Mid Ulster only 6% of the workforce are employed in the tourism sector with the majority of those jobs in Food and Drink service.

- It was challenging to match participants to jobs within the timeframe allocated (see recommendations) although the job target was achieved within the 6 month sustainment period.

Recommendations

Based on the experience of delivering this Academy the following recommendations for future initiatives have been identified:

- Consider extending the timeframe of any future initiatives: - A significant percentage of those eligible to participate in programmes such as this have numerous barriers to employment which take considerable time to address e.g. high benefit dependency, childcare needs, low confidence levels, health issues. It is exceedingly challenging to address these barriers in a meaningful way within a 4 month period especially when Christmas falls within the period.

- A generic employability programme may be more successful than sector specific initiatives: Those who are unemployed for a period of time may not be fully aware of what various jobs entail. As such they often join initiatives such as this but after a period of mentoring and reflection decide it isn't the career for them. With a wider scope, a higher number of participants within the target group can be supported.

- Consider offering recognition of outcomes in addition to employment: For many participants, undertaking volunteering, achieving a qualification or addressing health problems can be a very positive step towards securing employment.

- In some instances, ‘hard to fill’ vacancies are a result of a lack of interest in particular roles as opposed to an actual *‘skills shortage’*. It may be important to consider targeting those hard to fill vacancies in sectors/roles requiring essential vocational qualifications that are not accessible in the local area or are too expensive for those who are unemployed to undertake.

Appendix 3

Evaluation Report

Employer Led Disability Inclusion Programme 2023-24

1. Introduction and Strategic Context
2. Programme Delivery
3. Performance Outcomes
4. Sustainability of Employment
5. Participant Evaluation
6. Participant Feedback/Testimonials
7. Case Studies
8. Lessons Learnt & Recommendations

Appendix 3

1. INTRODUCTION AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Introduction

This evaluation report has been carried out by Network Personnel following the completion of its delivery of the Employer Led Disability Inclusion Programme in the Mid Ulster District Council area.

In October 2023 Mid Ulster District Council, on behalf of the Mid Ulster Labour Market Partnership (the LMP), sought quotations from suitably experienced organisations to develop and deliver this initiative. Network Personnel successfully tendered for the contract.

Delivery of the programme commenced late November 2023 with key aspects of the programme scheduled to be completed by the end of March 2024. This deadline was subsequently extended by the LMP, to the end of June 2024 because of challenges associated with implementing the programme over such a short timeframe.

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- Reduce the number of job claimants and improve economic activity.
- Reduce the disability employment gap.
- Improve the female economic activity rate.

The LMP also aims to support local employers by providing:

- Free support and training to assist with employment matters.
- Signposting and advice.
- Access to a labour pipeline via programmes and academies.

Within its 2023/24 Action Plan, the Mid Ulster LMP had prioritised disability inclusion and decided to undertake an Employer-led Disability Inclusion Programme that aimed to:

- Recruit 20 prominent local employers to a disability inclusion programme addressing their knowledge gaps.
- Support employers in the creation of job opportunities that are innovative in approach to address skills shortages by making jobs more accessible to those with a disability or health issue.
- Enrol 20 Mid Ulster participants on to the programme and support with work readiness training.

- A minimum of 16 participants (80%) to complete the programme and 10 (62.5%) of the completers to gain employment as a result of the programme.
- 15 (75%) of participants and employers to report satisfaction with the project.
- Verify that participants placed into work have remained in work 6 months post-employment providing continued mentor support as necessary to maximise employment sustainability.
- Develop case studies that can be used to educate other employers on disability employment issues.

2. PROGRAMME DELIVERY

Stage 1- Marketing and recruitment

Network Personnel used its considerable expertise, and knowledge of the local area, to successfully create awareness of the programme both amongst local companies and potential participants. Measures included:

- Using established links with local companies and reaching out to new employers.
- A programme launch with photo opportunities.
- Production of branded promotional flyers.
- Social media campaign.
- Linking in with relevant community groups and the statutory sector.
- Promotion via the 3 Jobs & Benefits Offices in Mid Ulster.

Stage 2 – Employer Engagement

In order to address employer knowledge gaps and promote the inclusion of those with a disability in the workplace, Network Personnel organised and delivered a Disability Awareness seminar in February 2024. In addition, 1-1 support and guidance was also offered to companies who employed participants from the programme.

Employers who engaged included:

EMPLOYER	SECTOR
P Keenan Quarries	Quarrying
CFM	Facilities Management
J&K Coaches	Coach hire
Bloc Blinds	Manufacturing
Mount Charles	Catering
4 Dee's	Engineering
McDonalds	Hospitality – Fast Food
KDM Plant Hire	Machinery hire

St Mary's	Grammar School
Firesafe	Fire prevention service
H&A	Plumbing contractors
Apparo	Restaurant
Spectrum	Paediatric service
Stone Solutions	Manufacturing
Nellies Day Care	Childcare
Bidvest Noonan	Cleaning
Newell Stores	Retail
Fairfields Care Home	Care
Cloonen Group	Workwear supply & embroidery
Extra Care	Care
Milesian Manor	Care
McAleer Concrete	Construction
BMI Trailers	Haulage
NMK Steele	Manufacturing
Metro CCTV	Security
KFC	Hospitality – Fast Food
Dominoes	Hospitality – Fast Food

Stage 3 - Mentoring

Experienced staff worked to build rapport between themselves and the participant encouraging open and supportive relationships.

Over a series of meetings, calls and emails, individually tailored SMART Action Plans were developed with each participant. In addition, when required, Network Personnel signposted participants to specialist support.

Stage 4 - Vocational training and personal development

A wide range of workshops and certificated courses were made available to participants (remotely and centre based) including Manual Handling, First Aid, Confidence Building and Food Hygiene.

Stage 5 - Employment brokerage

Employment brokerage was undertaken alongside training and mentoring and was based upon the participants' Action Plans. It included CV building; job search activities; advocacy with employers; work trials and work placements. In many instances Mentors encouraged employers to consider modifying their job criteria to enable participants to apply for roles with their organisation.

Stage 6 - Sustaining employment

In order to enhance the prospects of job sustainment, companies who employed a participant were provided with 1-1 support with respect to disability awareness in the workplace as well as information on other support available for e.g. Workable and Access to Work programmes. Moreover, mentors maintained regular contact with participants checking on their progress and helping resolve issues which might lead to them leaving their jobs.

Management

The management of the programme was a very smooth process. The Managers met with the delivery team on a weekly basis to review milestones and provide support.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

- Through intensive marketing via a range of methods a total 22 participants joined the programme.
- Over 20 prominent companies availed of support to address their disability knowledge gaps. This included 18 attendees who participated in the Employer Disability Awareness seminar from across a range of sectors.
- 17 participants completed the programme.
- 11 participants secured employment.

As a result of the activities and interventions carried out by Network Personnel the following outcomes were achieved against targets:

TARGETS		**%**	
Target	**Outcome**	**Target**	**Outcome**
Engage 20 Employers in a disability inclusion programme addressing their knowledge gaps	Over **20** employers engaged with the programme to improve their awareness of disability in the workplace.	**100%**	135%

Enrol 20 participants and provide support with work readiness training	**22** participants enrolled on the programme and availed of a range of employability support measures.	**100%**	110%
Minimum of 80% (16) participants to complete the programme	**17** participants completed the programme.	**80%**	85%
10 (62.5%) of completers to gain employment	**11** participants obtained employment.	**62.5%**	69%
Verify that 6 participants placed into work have remained in work 6 months post-employment	**10** participants who found work were still in employment at December 2024.	**60%**	91%
75% (15) of participants & employers to report satisfaction with the project	**100%** of participants confirmed they were satisfied or very satisfied with the level of support provided.	**75%**	100%
75% (15) of employer to report satisfaction with the project	**16** employers reported satisfaction with the support provided through the project.	**75%**	92%

SUSTAINABILITY OF OUTCOMES

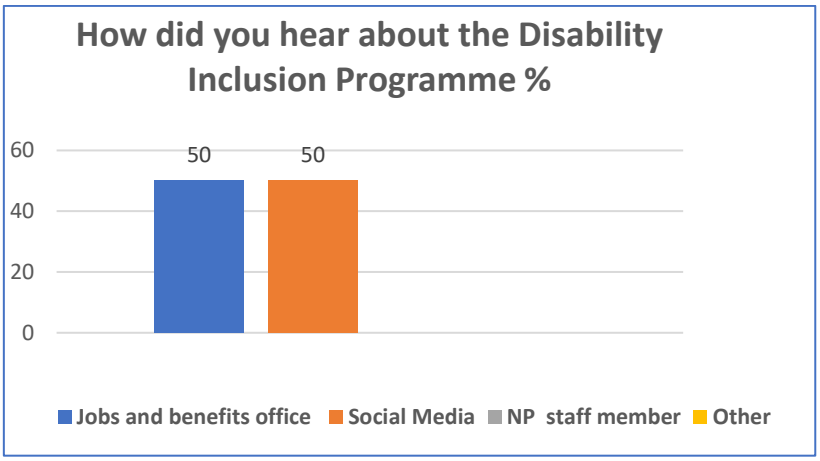
In order to enhance the prospects of job sustainment, mentors maintained regular contact with participants checking on their progress and helping resolve issues which might lead to them leaving their jobs. Contact was either in person or via telephone or

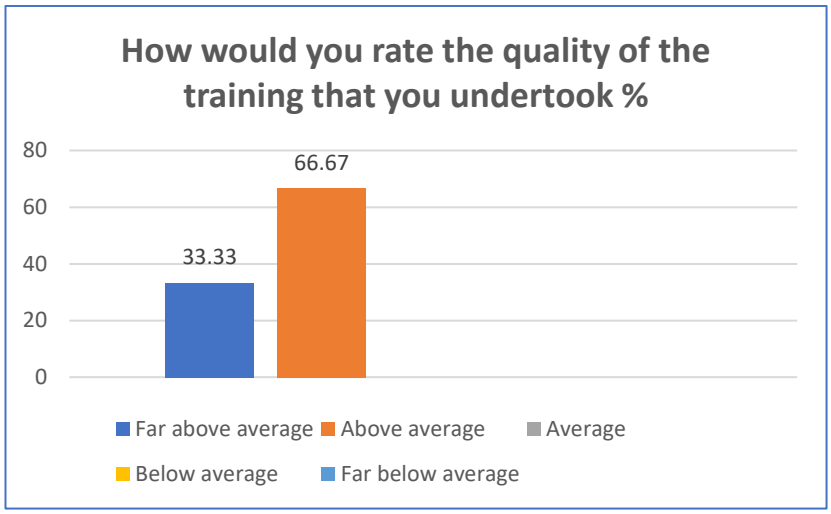
online communication (to suit participants working hours). Moreover, employers were provided with support regarding any issues that arose.

In total 91% of participants sustained employment throughout a 6 month period. This is testament to the skills of the mentors and the quality of the matching process between participant and jobs.

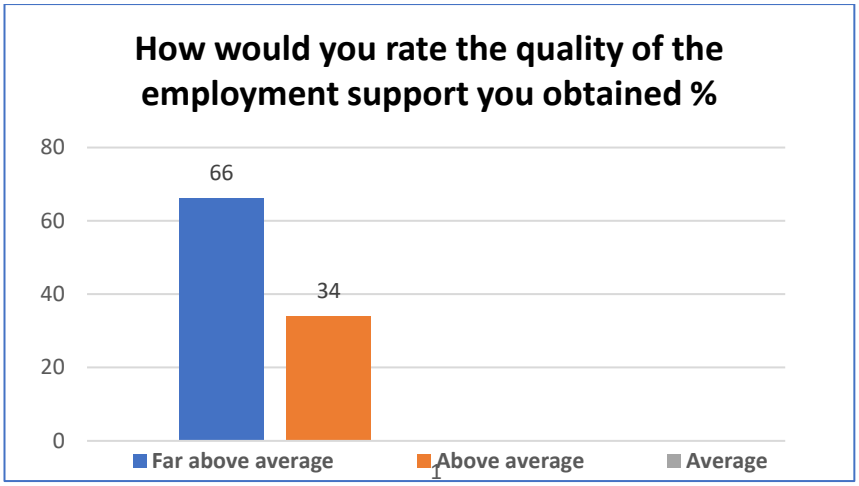
PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK AND TESTIMONIALS

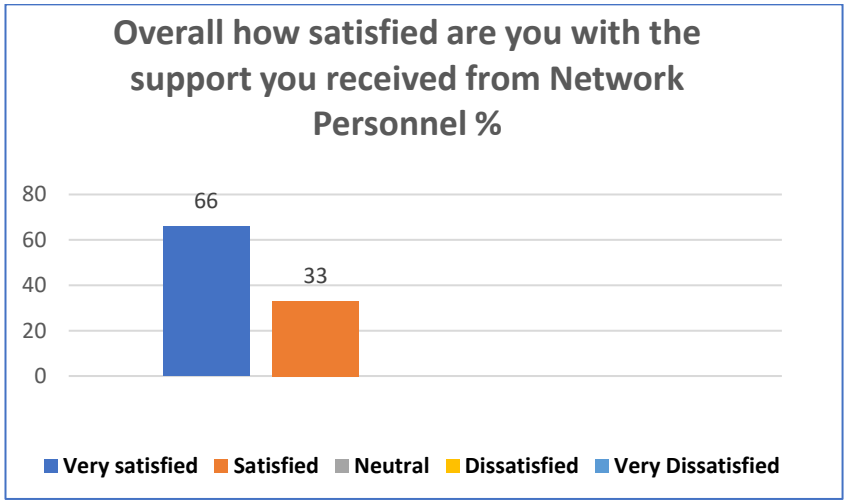
Network Personnel designed an online anonymous survey to obtain feedback from participants and gauge their level of satisfaction with the Disability Inclusion initiative. Responses are as follows:





Appendix 3





EMPLOYER FEEDBACK

An evaluation was carried out with employers who participated in the Employers Disability Awareness Seminar. It elicited very positive comments such as:

'Fantastic session'
"very informative'
'great workshop'
'great course – well delivered'
'keep up the good work'

When asked about the most useful aspects of the seminar comments included:

- *Access to Work scheme*
- *Importance of language*
- *Reasonable adjustments*
- *Help available to employers*

- *Disability shouldn't be seen as a problem*

All participants reported that the level and duration of the session was about right and 92% of those who attended rated the trainer as excellent.

Participant's observations were also sought as part of the evaluation process and the following comments were made

'It has been great to get back to work again'

'Thank you for all your help'

*'**** has been really helpful to me – thank you very much'*

CASE STUDIES

Case Study 1

Initial involvement
This participant had seen the social media post for the LMP programmes and contacted Network Personnel directly. During the initial meeting she said that she didn't enjoy school and, even though she had achieved good grades in her GCSE's, she didn't want to continue to A-level stage.

The participant decided to attend the local college instead. This proved to be a difficult decision for her and she decided to leave her course due to ill health. The Mentor felt that the Employer Led Disability Inclusion Programme would be a good option for her. She had always wanted to get into politics but knew University was not for her. The Mentor suggested that she consider administration work within a local constituency office which she agreed to.

Activities
The participant started a 4 week work placement with a local constituency office in April 2024. She then progressed to paid employment via the Job Start Programme. As a result of the programme, she gained essential skills and also experience to take her further in her career in politics. She has also commenced a course in politics. Throughout this time the participant's mental health has remained stable. This has enabled her to continue in work whilst also doing part-time study.

Outcome
At the end of the Job Start programme the participant gained part-time employment with another local company as an Administrator and will continue her studies and interest in politics.

Case Study 2

Initial Involvement
The participant had been referred to the Employer Led Disability programme (ELDIP) by her Work Coach in the Jobcentre. She has a health condition which

prevents her from working full-time. Moreover, due to this condition she prefered to work in the evening as she is very tired in the morning.

Activities
She met with her Mentor in Network Personnel who completed a comprehensive Action Plan with her and discussed job options taking into account her health situation and the fact that she was unable to drive. She had an interest in employment as a cleaner and, to help her on this journey, completed Health & Safety and Manual Handling training.

Her Mentor contacted local companies to see if they had vacancies for a cleaning position and if so, were they able to tailor working hours to match, not only their needs, but also the participant's.

Outcome
The Mentor was able to secure a suitable position which met all of the participant's needs. She was supported for her first 6 months in employment with regular phone calls and texts ensuring she had settled into the job. She is currently enjoying her work and is able to cope with it alongside her health condition.

LESSONS LEARNT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Success factors

- Network Personnel is embedded in the Mid Ulster area and is well known by local businesses who often contact the organisation as part of their recruitment process. This local knowledge and extensive network of connections was key to the success of the initiative.

- The Managers and Mentors who delivered the programme were highly experienced, motivated and skilled in fulfilling their roles

- There are strong established working relationships with the 3 Jobs and Benefits Offices in Mid Ulster as well as with a range of other statutory and voluntary organisations. Such links were essential for promoting the programme.

- The Organisation has extensive experience of delivering employability programmes and as such the programme could be 'ramped up' quickly. Moreover, already established processes and procedures were tailored to deliver a professional service to participants and employers.

- Network Personnel has an extensive suite of online and centre-based training courses that participants were able to avail of beyond that which was required in the specification.

- Strong working relationships were developed with Mid Ulster Council staff which facilitated a smooth delivery of the programme.

Recommendations

Based on the experience of delivering this programme, the following recommendations for future initiatives have been identified:

- Consider extending the timeframe of any future initiatives: - A significant percentage of those eligible to participate in programmes such as this have numerous barriers to employment which take considerable time to address e.g. high benefit dependency, childcare needs, low confidence, health issues. It is exceedingly challenging to address these barriers in a meaningful way within a 4 month period especially when Christmas falls within the period.

- It may be important to give recognition to outcomes in addition to employment: For many participants, particularly those with a disability of health issue, undertaking volunteering or achieving a qualification can be a very positive step towards securing employment. Network Personnel already have processes and procedures in place to measure ‘distance travelled’ which can provide evidence of participants having moved closer to being ‘job ready’.

Appendix 4

From the Office of the Minister
CONOR MURPHY MLA

Department for the Economy
An Roinn Geilleagair
www.economy-ni.gov.uk

Adelaide House
39-49 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT2 8FD
02890 529333
Private.Office@economy-ni.gov.uk

Adrian McCreesh
Mid Ulster Council
Adrian.McCreesh@midulstercouncil.org

Our ref: SUB-0038-2025

Date: 27 January 2025

Adrian, a chara

£45m Regional Balance Fund – Funding Formula

When I took up the position as Minister for the Economy, I announced that one of my four priorities was Regional Balance. One part of my work on this is Local Economic Partnerships and an associated fund. The purpose of these is both to bring forward projects that will improve the local economy and to help inform future government spending on economic priorities for the local area. I appreciate the work of councils in progressing these at speed. As you know I was considering a framework for funding allocation across all LEPs, and I have now made a decision on this.

Having considered council and other stakeholder views, I have decided on the following formula to distribute funding to councils in respect of the 11 Local Economic Partnerships:

- 30% - allocated equally to all councils
- 30% - based on productivity performance measured by output per job.
- 40% - based on peripherality, based on small area classifications as per the OECD's Regional Typology methods.

This would provide councils with the following allocations in respect of their LEP:

	Base 30% (£000)	Productivity 30% (£000)	Peripherality 40% (£000)	Total 1 Year* (£000)	Total 3 Year (£000)
Antrim and Newtownabbey	409	214	333	956	2,868
Belfast	409	214	333	956	2,868
Lisburn and Castlereagh	409	428	333	1,170	3,510
Mid Ulster	409	214	666	1,289	3,867
Ards and North Down	409	642	333	1,384	4,152
Mid and East Antrim	409	428	666	1,503	4,509
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	409	428	666	1,503	4,509
Fermanagh and Omagh	409	428	666	1,503	4,509
Newry, Mourne and Down	409	428	666	1,503	4,509
Causeway Coast & Glens	409	428	666	1,503	4,509
Derry City and Strabane	409	642	666	1,717	5,151

*if funding was split in equal amounts across 3 years – note engagement ongoing on deliverable spend profile across the three year period

In making this decision, I recognise that there were varied views from councils and that there is likely no perfect formula. However, I am satisfied that the above formula represents the best balance of different elements.

The productivity element of the formula is calculated based on output per job, the most recent figures of which are from 2022. This is split three ways: those above the NI average, those between the average and 10% below, and those 10% below.

The peripherality measure is a contextual rather than performance measure. This measure is based on the OECD Regional Typology and councils are separated into two groups: peripheral and non-peripheral.

The rationale for each element is as follows:

- **Base amount divided equally** – there is recognition that there is a level of work that all Partnerships will need to do and a common need across all council areas. The options of a 15% base or 30% base were tested with councils. No one option was more popular than the other. I decided on the 30% option to ensure that every Partnership would have the basic resources they need. It will be for the

Partnerships to use this funding, and although an element of this could be used to fund staff in councils to support the Partnership, this does not indicate that the Department expects councils to spend 30% on administration costs. Rather this seeks to encourage councils to build ongoing capacity and capability to support the advancement of local economic projects and engagement with NI Departments and other economic stakeholders going forward.

- **Productivity** – productivity performance has a pervasive positive impact on a range of other indicators including employment rate and median wages. The relationship of other important indicators to one another is not as straightforward, for example increasing median wages would not necessarily increase the employment rate and vice versa. As such, productivity performance is identified as an important measure for inclusion which will contribute strongly towards the objectives set out in the Sub-Regional Economic Plan.
- **Peripherality** – a contextual measure is required to provide some additional information around the challenges facing different areas. These include lack of access to peer or knowledge networks as well as distance from markets. People-centred interventions such as Labour Market Partnerships tend to use population as a contextual measure. For this place-centred initiative, the spatial context of economic development is an important context for future performance. The OECD Regional Typology classification systems provides two ways of looking at this, a degree of urbanisation within an area and one based on metropolitan / remote area status. These have been used in tandem to produce a composite measure of council area peripherality.

I know some councils were concerned that productivity performance in particular could change a lot as the post-Covid impacts unwind. I have asked my officials to keep this framework under-review and in particular to provide advice following the release of new productivity statistics. I have also asked officials to undertake further research on peripherality.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your engagement so far, particularly over the past few months to set-up the LEPs within the challenging timelines. My officials will continue to engage around the forecasting of the fund as well as governance arrangements and I appreciate council involvement via Solace NI representatives on the Project Board for this work.

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CONOR MURPHY MLA
Minister for the Economy

Appendix 5

Mid Ulster Local Economic Partnership

Terms of Reference

March 2025

MID ULSTER LOCAL ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP (LEP)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Introduction and Context

On 1st October 2024, the Department for the Economy (DfE) launched its Sub-Regional Economic Plan, a new strategic approach to economic development. The Plan outlined how the department will work with Invest NI, Councils, the business community, colleges, and other key stakeholders to establish Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs) to deliver regional balance and create improved economic prosperity at a local level.

With support from DfE and INI, the LEP will work to identify suitable local projects with proposals being made to access dedicated funding.

These Terms of Reference (ToR) set out the 'modus operandi' for the LEP. The Council's Development Committee must approve changes to the ToR. The Council's Chief Executive can approve minor modifications.

Functions

The main functions of Mid Ulster LEP include:

- Bringing together local economic stakeholders to reflect local needs and strengths, promoting collaborative working, and driving greater integration between local and central government economic initiatives.

- Identifying the main barriers to economic development and the priority interventions that will build the region's value proposition.

- Developing actions and projects that align with the Sub-Regional Economic Plan, Council's Economic Development Strategies and Invest NI Business Strategy. These will be developed with advice from DfE and Invest NI. They will be appraised and scored/ ranked (where relevant) using an agreed and consistent and transparent methodology.

- Undertaking research to facilitate economic initiatives and related policy developments.

- Implementing effective monitoring and evaluation which will be agreed dependent on the nature of the projects.

Membership and Attendance

Membership of Mid Ulster LEP is comprised of the following:

Industry/Business Representatives	Representatives from Mid Ulster's key sectors including:- Engineering, Manufacturing, Agri-Food, Construction. Workspace Enterprises (LEA.) Mid Ulster Tourism Development Group Dungannon & South Tyrone Chamber of Commerce & Industry
Colleges	South West College (SWC), Northern Regional College (NRC) College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE)
Department for Economy	DfE Strategic Advisor
Invest NI	Invest NI Regional Office
Trade Union	The Partnership shall have Trade union representation.
Council	The Partnership's Council representation shall comprise of 5 members drawn from the Councillor membership of the Mid Ulster Labour Market Partnership (LMP). Should any Member not be able to attend, they may nominate another representative from their party.
Community Sector	Mid Ulster Community Planning Partnership

Membership will be kept under review and the LEP will have the power to co-opt other members as appropriate based on the economic priorities for intervention. Other potential representation such as from new/emerging sectors, universities or other public bodies could be utilised as appropriate based on the economic priorities for intervention.

Attendance is important, but in exceptional circumstances substitutes nominated by the representative body may attend. Substitutes should have the full delegated authority to make decisions and approve documentation on behalf of the appropriate member. All members and substitutes should ensure that they are sufficiently briefed to provide accurate and timely information to the LEP.

Chair and Vice Chair

The Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson shall be elected to serve for a period of two years and the positions will rotate on an annual basis. There will be no extension or re-nomination to their previous position unless the circumstance arises that no other nominations to these positions are received.

Governance and Reporting

All activities of the LEP shall be subject to Mid Ulster Council Governance and Financial Framework, and best practice arrangements. This will include adherence to the Nolan Principles; selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honest and leadership.

Administrative Support

Mid Ulster District Council will provide the secretariat to the LEP and consequently provide administrative support. Council officers will be responsible for facilitating the Mid

Ulster LEP to develop, manage, implement, and monitor Action Plans. The lead senior officer on the LEP shall be the Assistant Director of Economy, Tourism, and Strategic Programmes.

Budget
The allocated budget shall be performed under Council's financial arrangements, including audits.

Agenda and Papers
The Council (as Secretariat) will be responsible for circulating the agenda and relevant papers in advance of meetings. Standing agenda items will include:

- Conflicts of Interest and Apologies
- Confirmation and consideration of Minutes
- Action points from previous meeting
- Local Economic Partnership Updates (including Deliverables, Risks and Issues Management) and Reports
- Invest NI Briefing

Meetings and Quorum
Meetings of the Mid Ulster LEP shall be scheduled during Council business hours and held on a bi-monthly basis in an agreed format as required. A quorum will consist of no less than Five (5) of the appointed members present. When a quorum is not present, the meeting should be adjourned to another time.

Decisions Making
The partnership should strive to reach decisions by consensus. If a matter cannot be agreed by consensus, the LEP should agree a process for handling i.e. decision by a majority of votes. In the event of a tie, the Invest NI Regional Manager will have the deciding vote. Officers of the Council cannot vote at meetings. Minutes/reports of decisions will be completed for each meeting and will be subject to scrutiny.

Reporting Responsibilities
The Mid Ulster LEP is connected to the Mid Ulster Labour Market Partnership (LMP). Mid Ulster LEP will keep the Mid Ulster LMP informed of its activities and report directly to the Council's Development Committee, where recommendations shall be considered and subsequently passed to Council for formal approval e.g. project proposals, recommendations and Action Plans. In addition, the LEP will provide advice and reports to the Department for the Economy and other departments and funding agencies as required. The governance structure is at Appendix 1.

Task Groups
The Mid Ulster LEP will be able to establish appropriate task and finish groups to address focus areas or other tasks.

Voluntary Attendance and Participation
Third parties may be invited to attend meetings in a voluntary capacity with the consent of the Chairman and DfE Strategic Advisor, subject to their participation being relevant to the matters being considered.

Conflict of Interest

Each member should take personal responsibility to proactively declare any potential conflict of interest arising on the LEP agenda or from relevant changes in the member's personal circumstances. The Chair should then determine an appropriate course of action with the member bearing in mind the Council's governance arrangements.

Appendix 1

Governance Model