

Committee(s): Education Board	Dated: 23/06/2022
Subject: Connecting Communities Update	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	3,5, 7, 8, 10
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	£0
What is the source of Funding?	
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of: Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information
Report author: Gwen Rhys, Business Manager, Connecting Communities, Department for Community & Children's Services	

Summary

This report updates Members on the progress of the Connecting Communities programme in its first months of operation.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The Report to the Education Board dated 3 December 2021 gave a detailed overview of Connecting Communities, an £18 million programme funded by the Greater London Council (GLA) and the European Social Fund (ESF) of which the Education Strategic Unit (ESU) will receive £ £669,000 to deliver the programme's outcomes and impacts over the next 18 months.

Current Position

2. The Connecting Communities Team consists of: 1 x Business Manager, 1 x Employment Engagement Officer, 4 x Caseworkers and 1 x Administrator, all of whom have been in place since early February.

Communication and outreach activities

3. Building on the awareness raising activities mentioned in our last Report, have had our social media request approved, commissioned a graphic designer to produce an impactful brand image for Connecting Communities, have produced pull-up banners and a printed leaflet which folds into the size of a business card is currently in production.

3.1. In particular we

3.1.1 have developed a relationship with the City's Library Services and are trialling attending specific events over the summer months in order to reach potential Participants, in particular single parents who may be seeking to return to full-time work in the Autumn.

3.1.2 have further developed our partnership with Job Centres in south London with the specific intention of supporting clients who are (1) job ready and (2) wish to work, or return to work, in the City. Four Job Centres will be visited each week. We will monitor the effectiveness and review our involvement at the end of July.

3.1.3 have developed a partnership with the employment team from L&Q Housing Group and are supporting its residents in other participating boroughs into work in the City. In return, they are sharing their job vacancies with us in sectors (such as warehousing) where there are not opportunities in the Square Mile. We are seeking similar partnerships with other housing providers.

3.1.4 plan to have a presence at the various summer events being held in Guildhall Yard over the summer months, including the London Careers Festival.

3.1.5 have been invited to support parents of students at Galleywall Primary School and have our first meeting later in June.

3.1.6 will have a presence at the Aldgate Festival in Aldgate Square on 22 July. This is part of the new Community Sewing, Fashion and Design initiative.

3.1.7 continue to be featured in the DCSS's internal newsletter The Buzz and Connecting Communities was recently featured in the Barbican residents' newsletter.

3.1.8 launched our Twitter account (@bridgetosucces5) on 10 June. We are currently following just over 300 relevant accounts and have over 20 followers.

3.1.9 plan to work with healthcare providers in the City and neighbouring boroughs and the Business Manager has a meeting with University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust in South London in mid-July to discuss how we can support individuals with specific healthcare needs

3.1.10 continue to take every opportunity to meet with influencers, partners and stakeholders from within and beyond the Corporation.

3.2 The Business Manager has been invited to be an Associate of the Skills for a Sustainable Skyline Taskforce which will give an opportunity to connect with industry leaders.

4. Unemployment in the UK

4.1 Recent press coverage has focused on the number of economically inactive people in the UK which currently stands at 9 million - higher than pre-Pandemic levels. The latest ONS figures reveal that 522k are aged 50 plus. Although many report having dropped-out of the labour market due to ill health or caring responsibilities, up to 221K have done so because of retirement. However, the current economic climate may mean that some will need to return to work. ONS data suggest that this cohort is likely to be men and educated to degree level. Working with the 50+ age group is part of our contractual requirement and we are actively seeking to engage with 50+ potential Participants.

4.2 At a recent employability conference, the Business Manager connected with an employee from Ageing Better and hopes to build a positive relationship with this organisation which has developed best practice guidelines for employers.

5. Outcomes

5.1 We have supported some of the City's Afghan guests since early March. This work has been challenging but we have now secured some full-time employment outcomes, there are several participants who have job interviews lined-up and a group of participants have been enrolled on a basic skills course.

5.2 Our caseworker, Dan Estrada has been particularly active with this group of participants, has successfully developed rapport with them and has their trust. Recognising that ESOL courses were not giving all participants sufficient opportunity to develop their everyday conversational language, he has developed Friday afternoon conversation classes.

5.3 Caseworker, Nisha Kaushal, has secured training (including pre-apprenticeship accountancy courses) outcomes for participants she is supporting.

6. **Contractual Reviews.** Central London Forward, the main contract holders, review each borough's progress on a monthly basis. Both our Input and Output statistics are considerably lower than those boroughs with established employability programmes, but we compare well against other boroughs especially when their resident populations and potential referring organisations are taken into account.

Options

Not applicable.

Proposals

Not applicable.

Key Data

Not applicable.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

7. This initiative has the potential to make a significant contribution to a flourishing society by giving people an equal opportunity to enrich their lives and reach their full potential. Moreover, it supports a thriving economy by enabling industries to access to the skills and talent they need and ensuring that more individuals can reach their potential and secure good work. It shows that collaborative working can make the core city institutions even better connected and responsive to changed needs. It builds individual and systemic resilience by enabling structures which can be mobilised in the shorter-term but are able to continue in a sustainable manner for the longer term.

Financial and resource implications

8. A total budget of £18 million has been secured for Connecting Communities of which the ESU will receive £ £669,000 to deliver the programmes outcomes and impacts over the next 18 months. The proposal does not seek additional funds or resources from the City Corporation at this stage. Connecting Communities also aims to support the Livery Companies to make better, more joined-up use of the existing £7.9 million currently dedicated on an annual basis to skills development work. There is also the potential to work more closely with business partners and the Liveries to gain access to wider funding opportunities possible through the recently released government white paper "Skills for Jobs"¹ which focusses on post-16 education reform.

9. There are some officer resource implications in terms of management and implementation time.

Legal implications

10. Connecting Communities is being managed through Central London Forward. Central London Forward (CLF) is a partnership of the 12 central London local authorities. They work together with their member authorities and with other stakeholders to support inclusive and sustainable growth in central London; so that our economy thrives, and our residents benefit from the opportunities this creates. CLF deliver large scale employment and skills programmes across central London.

11. The governance of the Livery Skills Initiative is with the Livery Committee. The collaboration partners, including the Livery are separate legal entities with their own decision-making processes.

Risk implications

12. There are risk implications of not completing the important and urgent recommended actions, and people failing to secure the skills they need to secure good jobs.

13. There are contractual risk implications associated with not meeting the targets outlined by the European Social Fund contract with Central London Forward in regard to Connecting Communities.

Equalities implications

14. Not every young person has access to a breadth of developmental relationships and life experiences, which facilitate and broker routes into employment. The least advantaged tend to not have access to networks, mentors, advocates, work experience opportunities, careers advice, and family support in the same way as their more advantaged peers. For example, only 46% of young people from low-income families take part in extracurricular activities, compared with 66% from higher income families and young people who attend private schools are twice as likely to get internships in London compared to state educated children. They are not supported to access potential pathways or understand how to reach their goals. There is a disconnect between what they learn in school and their aspirations and opportunities later in life. For example, in 1997, 42 per cent of 16-17 year old students were studying and working. By 2014 this figure had declined to 18 per cent.

15. A more equitable society is based on realising the potential of all people. This requires strong networks of support and trust. The Liveries could leverage that trusted network. They could use their connections to boost opportunities for structured work experience, internships, and employment. Young adults who have 'four or more employer contacts' are five times more likely to be in employment or training than those who have little or no contact with employers.

16. An equitable society is one where all people have access to meaningful and valued pathways, and opportunities to flourish and achieve success. There should be multiple pathways and routes in and out of learning throughout life, which is of benefit to us all.

17. This initiative has the potential to make a significant contribution to a flourishing society giving people an equal opportunity to enrich their lives and reach their full potential. Moreover, it supports a thriving economy by enabling industries to access to the skills and talent they need and ensuring the more individuals can reach their potential and secure good work. It shows that collaborative working can make the core city institutions even better connected and responsive to changed needs. It builds individual and systemic resilience by enabling structures which can be mobilised in the shorter-term but are able to continue in a sustainable manner for the longer term.

Climate implications

18. There are no immediate Climate implications.

Security implications

19. There are no immediate Security implications.

Conclusion

20. Within its first months of operation, the City of London's Connecting Communities team is making good progress in raising awareness of the programme within the City and supporting participants.

Appendices

None.

Background Papers

None.

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