

Committee(s): Education Board	Dated: 20/10/2022
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 Decision
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 and requests that a decision be made in respect of the Board authorising the City of London's Media Team to support the programme so that it can more effectively and efficiently reach potential participants.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report
- Agree to authorise the City of London's Media Team to support the programme

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. Since the last report to the Board one Caseworker has recently left the team and the Connecting Communities Team now consists of: 1 x Business Manager, 1 x

Employment Engagement Officer, 3 x Caseworkers and 1 x Administrator. It has been decided due to time constraints not to recruit a direct replacement.

3. Communication and outreach activities

The biggest challenge for the team is external communication and outreach. Reaching potential participants (people seeking further education and employment) is difficult and yet potential jobs and educational and training opportunities are plentiful.

3.1. In particular we

3.1.1 have recently developed relationships with a number of Social Prescribers in adjoining boroughs and are receiving referrals

3.1.2 were introduced by Alderman Bronek Masojada to a community group (SPLASH) in Poplar with which we hope to build a long-term relationship to support their residents into work

3.1.3 are supporting some of the City of London's care leavers

3.1.4 have organised an employment event on 28 September 2022 at the Canopy London City, the new Hilton Hotel in Aldgate. This provides an opportunity to place existing participants in jobs and attract new ones

3.1.5 have added information about support from Connecting Communities to a leaflet about help available for residents experiencing economic hardship which will be distributed in mid-October to each household in the Corporation's City-based housing estates

3.1.6 have developed a relationship with Heart of the City in order to reach the City's SMEs

3.1.7 are featured in a new page on the City of London's website designed to support residents through the economic crisis
<https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/services/getting-help-with-the-cost-of-living>

3.1.8 are planning a 2-week Construction Academy in October in partnership with the Paviours' Company at the London Construction Academy in Canada Water

3.1.9 are building a strong partnership with the City of London's HR Team to support anyone who is applying for an apprenticeship in the City (and is eligible for Connecting Communities support) to be registered with the programme prior to completing an application form so that we can support them through the process. We can also offer support to those who apply for (and are eligible for the Connecting Communities programme) jobs with the Corporation but are not successful and have asked that our details be passed to unsuccessful candidate as a source of ongoing help

3.1.10 distributed our information at the Election of the Lord Mayor on 29 September

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

4. Unemployment and the current Economic Climate in the UK

4.1 When Central London Forward negotiated the Connecting Communities contract there was an expectation that there would be high post-pandemic unemployment. This has not been the case. There are jobs available but also an increasing number of people opting out of economic activity and employment (economically inactive).

4.2 Education Board Members will be aware that the latest ONS figures released in mid-September indicated that unemployment was at a 50 year low. Although the number of economically inactive (i.e. not in work and not claiming Universal Credit (UC)) was high. Some of the economically inactive people were inactive due to long-term health issues or caring responsibilities.

4.3 The Government's latest announcement that from January 2023 stated that those claiming UC will be required to work 15 (rather than 12) hours a week otherwise their UC will be impacted. This may result in some people seeking work with more hours.

4.4 The increasing cost of energy may encourage more people into the labour market. This may especially be the case for the so-called 'Covid Graduates,' those who have recently graduated and who have suffered from a lack of in-person work experiences, have low confidence and few work-related skills, including inter-personal verbal communication. Connecting Communities can support these young people.

5. Outcomes

5.1 Achieving the full contractual outcomes will be particularly challenging for the City of London Connecting Communities programme. Our Inputs and Outputs are exactly the same as those for the other 11 boroughs, most of which have resident populations in the region of 200-360k compared with 8,600 for the City of London. (2021 Census population figures)

5.1 Although a cross-borough contract, the performance of each borough's Connecting Communities team is pitched competitively against that of other boroughs. This puts the City's team at a significant disadvantage. For example other boroughs:

5.1.1 Have established referral agencies within their boroughs (e.g. Job Centres).

5.1.2 Have existing employability programmes and teams and have, in some instances, switched participants from an existing programme to their Connecting Communities programme.

5.1.3 Produce regular newsletters/magazines delivered through residents' letter boxes promoting Connecting Communities.

5.1.4 More local media channels.

5.1.5 Strong links with community influencers.

5.2 CLF has recently asked all participating boroughs to re-forecast its contractual outcomes. Connecting Communities in the City of London has forecast achieving the number as originally proposed less 10 percent. This minimises our contractual risk, whilst still be stretching targets for the City. Although we have fewer residents from which to directly recruit participants, the demand for a skilled workforce in the City is high hence our emphasis on outreach and marketing/communication actions to reach a wider pan-London population group.

6. **Contractual Reviews**

6.1 Central London Forward, the main contract holders, review each borough's progress against targets on a monthly basis. In the last three months a number of compliance audits have been undertaken and the City of London's programme has scored well. Connecting Communities, like all ESF-funded contracts, requires accurate data entry supported by the provision of specific evidence. The City of London's Connecting Communities project produces monthly financial claims which are prepared on time and have been accepted without need for revision.

Options

Not applicable.

Proposals

Connecting Communities' biggest challenge is reaching potential participants. Currently the City of London Corporation's Media Team is not able to provide support or agree to our issuing press releases because there is no Committee/Board Minute authorising it to do so.

The Board is therefore formally requested to give its consent to Connecting Communities receiving support from the Corporation's Media Team in order that it can issue press releases and other information that highlights;

- success stories
 - employer/employability events
 - our service to employers and unemployed people
- and
- information about and comment on employment statistics and trends affecting employment and employability

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 decent 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 collaborate 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 outlines 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 decent 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. The City of London's Connecting Communities team has made an impact to the lives of many of the Afghan Guests resident in the City up to the summer of 2022 and is now supporting a number of Ukrainian refugees. We are also supporting young graduates whose lives have been severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic to gain confidence, acquire work-related skills and secure employment.

Appendices

None.

Background Papers

None.

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