

<b>Committee(s):</b> Education Board	<b>Dated:</b> 02/12/2022
<b>Subject:</b> Connecting Communities Update	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	3,5, 7, 8, 10
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	N
<b>If so, how much?</b>	
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	N/A
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Community and Children's Services	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> 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.

### 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 a Business Manager, an Employment Engagement Officer, three Caseworkers and one Administrator.

### **3. Communication and outreach activities**

Since the last Education Board meeting, the Business Manager has met with Chandni Tanna, Media Officer and a promotional programme, which will include traditional and social media campaigns will be implemented in the period January – March/April 2023 to “re-launch” the programme and maximise its reach.

#### **3.1. In recent weeks we**

3.1.1 have developed a very productive relationship with Hoxton Job Centre and are visiting their premises one day a week, giving two Information Sessions to groups of potential Participants. This is bringing an average 10 new participants onto the programme each week.

3.1.4 have organised a second employment event in December 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 responded to those City of London residents who received one of the 5,500 Cost of Living Support leaflets and asked us for support.

3.1.6 have placed Connecting Community banners in each of the City of London’s three libraries.

3.1.7 have placed a Connecting Community banner in the Golden Lane Community Centre and visited the Centre to inform attendees of the support offered by Connecting Communities.

3.1.8 have reached out to the Portsoken Community Centre and St Katherine Cree church, which is running its own ESOL courses, in the hope that we can develop a cross-referral partnership.

3.1.9 are planning an evening event in February in partnership with Women in Business and Finance introducing participants to support jobs in Financial Services (note: this is not limited to females).

3.1.10 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 The disparity between vacancies and available jobseekers continues. The Commission on the Future of Employment Support, launched on 10 November, reports that the UK will be the only big economy in which employment will be lower than before the pandemic, because so many people have left the labour market. There are some 600,000 more economically inactive (not working but not claiming benefits) who have left the workforce since 2019, many because of long-term sickness.

4.2 Although much emphasis has been given to the number of people in the 50+ age range who are no longer in work, ONS analysis shows that the biggest increase in inactivity because of long-term sickness is among younger people with a 42% increase in the 25-34 age group and 29% for the 16-24 year old group. Worryingly, poor mental health is cited as a primary cause of long-term ill-health for two-thirds of young people.

## **5. Outcomes**

5.1 In the past two months (October and November) our performance has met the new targets we agreed for the number of participants enrolled, accessing training and education, and getting into work.

5.2 We also achieved our first self-employed outcome in November with one of the participants who attended the Construction Academy successfully setting up his own business and securing an initial three-month sub-contract. This is a first across the 12 participating boroughs.

5.3 We are delighted to report that in November we achieved our first 6-month “sustainment” outcome – that is the first person we supported into work has completed six months in employment. We are working hard to ensure that participants remain employed and from now on, we expect to have many more participants reaching this milestone every month.

5.4 Connecting Communities programme has successfully secured employment for participants in organisations that provide them with sustainable jobs and opportunities for advancement. These organisations include Walt Disney, Lacoste, M&S, Hilton Group of Hotels, NHS, Firmdale Hotels, The Tate, City of London Corporation and Haringey Council.

## **6. Contractual Reviews**

6.1 Central London Forward, the main contract holders, review each borough’s progress against monthly targets. Connecting Communities, like all ESF-funded contracts, requires accurate data entry supported by the provision of specific evidence which shows proof of Participants reaching certain targets. In recent compliance audits the City of London’s programme has been 100% compliant. The City of London’s Connecting Communities programme produces monthly financial claims which are prepared on time and are consistently accepted without the need for revision.

### **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 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”<sup>1</sup> 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 outlined by the European Social Fund contract with Central London Forward regarding 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 continues to impact the lives of those it supports into training, education, and work. We are now supporting a number of Ukrainian refugees, most of whom have left successful jobs in their native country to start a new life in the UK. As well as supporting young graduates whose lives have been severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic to gain confidence,

acquire work-related skills, and secure employment, we are also helping a number of individuals aged 50+ to make career changes which fit with their current needs.

### **Appendices**

None.

### **Background Papers**

None.

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