

Committee(s): Education Board	Dated: 24/04/2022
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.

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, 3 x Caseworkers)

3. Programme Delivery Activities

The team attends local Job Centres (Hoxton and the young person's Job Centre in Settles Street) on a weekly basis and has continued its relationships with Job Centres in South London and with Social Prescribers.

3.1. In addition we have sought other ways to increase the number of people, and in particular 18-24 year olds, enrolling on the programme. In particular

3.1.1 Accountancy Training: We promoted, through social media and email, 10 fully-funded Accountancy Courses in partnership with Osborne Training, a specialist accountancy training provider. Of those who responded, 15 were ineligible and 15 were invited to attend a special Introduction Event attended by a representative from Osborne Training. Ten people responded and 6 were enrolled onto Connecting Communities. Since then we have enrolled a further 4 giving us a cohort of 10. All are progressing with various on-line accredited Accountancy Courses. Caseworker Nisha Kaushal has led on this initiative and has invited a representative from Hays Finance in to speak to the group about job opportunities in the sector and how best to present a strong CV when job-seeking.

3.1.2. Earn While you Learn: Apprentices in the City of London. We are planning, in partnership with Melody Thornton, Apprenticeship Manager an event to encourage 18-24 year olds (NEETS with NO degrees or A levels) to (1) discover more about the City's apprenticeship opportunities (2) learn how to complete the City's application form and, subject to eligibility, (3) enrol on Connecting Communities. This is a pilot event which, like the construction initiative, we may be able to repeat

3.1.3 Construction Programme. We have contracted with Cultiv8, a specialist training provider to engage with and train 15, 18-24 year old (NEETS). The training programme will provide these young people with general life/fusion skills (teamwork, communication skills, money management, careers advice and guidance, preparation for work placement) and all will sit Level 1 Health & Safety in Construction and the examination for their CSCS card. We are working closely with colleagues in Innovation & Growth (Employability, Sustainable Skyline) to secure work placement/experience/jobs in the City's construction sites so that there is a seamless transition for these young people from training. If the programme is successful CLF may agree to us enrolling another cohort in order to support the 18-24 (NEETS) London-wide targets.

4. Unemployment and the current Economic Climate in the UK

The Institute for Employment Studies produces a monthly analysis of the employment market and its latest report (released mid-March) showed that employment is continuing to creep up and economic inactivity is edging down. Unemployment is also broadly flat, and remains close to its lowest in 50 years. More particularly:

4.1 The number of people economically inactive due to long-term ill health has risen again after a couple of months of falls. This is now up by half a million in four years, to just over 2.5 million people – the highest level since comparable records began in 1992.

4.2 The employment recovery for older people has been very weak, especially for those aged 50-64. Employment fell over the last quarter for this group (again after an apparent recent improvement). Recent falls are being driven by fewer older men in work, but the longer-term picture is of flat or falling employment rates for both men and women aged 50-64, after decades of employment growth pre-pandemic (especially for women).

4.4 The number of young people outside of education or employment is rising. This is being fuelled in particular by large falls in the number of young people in full-time education, with March seeing the largest quarterly fall on record (down by 150 thousand). Employment for young people outside of education is up slightly, but not by nearly enough to offset this decline. It is not clear what is driving this, but separate 'NEET' data suggests that it may be a combination of fewer young people aged 18-20 entering education, while those aged 21-22 are finding it harder to get jobs when they leave.

5. Inputs and Outcomes

Across the 12 Boroughs, the Connecting Communities programme has, at end of March, supported a total of 5000 unemployed/economically inactive individuals of whom 1500 have gone on to secure employment. Of these, 300 people have reached a further outcome by remaining in employment for a total of 6 months. This is known as “a sustainment”. In addition, 1300 people have received education/training provision and 250 people have enrolled on basic skills (English/Maths/ESOL) courses.

5.1 It was always going to be a challenge for the City of London to meet its contractual targets which are the same as the other 11 boroughs all of which have a considerably larger population (on average 26 times the number of residents) and therefore larger numbers of unemployed/economically inactive people from which to draw their caseload. If the City's programme had relied on the City's residents alone, it would have been impossible to support the contacted input of 600 people when there are fewer than 300 City residents registered as unemployed (not all of whom will be able to work) and no more than 1000 economically inactive (many not wishing/needing to work or with other responsibilities making employment impossible). Most of the other boroughs had long-established employability programmes and simply switched some people from their own internal scheme to the Connecting Communities programme.

5.2 Across the whole programme, contractual targets are likely to be met. The targets for 18-24 year olds who are “close to market” have already been achieved. The targets for people attending and completing Basic Skills courses is low across all boroughs and CLF is encouraging all boroughs to bring people onto the programme who need basic English/Maths/ESOL. Those needing basic Digital Skills

are not counted as outcomes. In the City, most of those on our caseload have basic skills. Many have degrees, masters degrees and two have had doctorates. However, we have exceeded our target for Training/Education by over 200%.

5.2 As at 5 April, the City of London's programme has secured 33 jobs. Only 2 Participants have left their jobs within 6 months and one is about to re-enter employment. Nine have sustained employment for 6 months (or longer) and further sustainments (counted at the 6 month employment stage) are due in the months ahead. No record is kept of the ratio of jobs secured to jobs sustained across the programme, but we believe that our ratio of job:sustainment is excellent and that we have made a considerable difference to the lives of those people we have supported.

6. End of Programme Procedure

6.1 The programme ends on 30 June 2023 and Central London Forward, the main contract holders, wish to have a controlled "end" to the programme and has advised all 12 delivery partners to

- 6.1.1 cease enrolling new Participants on the programme from 30 April
- 6.1.2 close the accounts of those Participants who have reached the end of the programme's purpose (ie those who have been in work for 6 months)
- 6.1.3 end our support for those participants who are no longer engaging and fully committed to the programme's main aim – employment.

6.2 These measures will give the Connecting Communities Team two months to concentrate on ensuring that those remaining on the programme at 30 April are actively supported towards and into work.

7. Skills Conference – 18 May, Guildhall

I have been asked to report on this Conference organised by Prof Anne Bamford OBE. A copy of the Conference outline is attached.

7.1 Connecting Communities is involved in the first Panel Session together with three other participants. We are inviting an employer and three participants, representative of the cohort of Participants we have supported to share with us their experiences of the Connecting Communities programme.

7.2 The Corporation's Adult Skills and Education Service (ASES) has been asked to conclude the Conference with a final 20 minute slot that will include presentations from ASES Team members together with learners.

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 had been secured for Connecting Communities of which the ESU received £669,000 to deliver the programmes outcomes and impacts over the previous 18 months. The proposal did not seek additional funds or resources from the City Corporation. 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.

Legal implications

9. 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.

10. 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

11. 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.

12. There are contractual risk implications associated with not meeting the targets outlines by the European Social Fund contract with Central London Forward regarding Connecting Communities.

Equalities implications

13. 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 6 per cent of young people from low-income families take part in extracurricular activities, compared with 6 per cent 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 country of origin 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

(1) Overview of the Skills Conference to be held on 18 May 2023.

Background Papers

None.

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