

Committee(s): Education Board	Dated: 06/06/2022
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.

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). The original 18 month contract ended on 30 June 2023, but Central London Forward offered those boroughs with a salary underspend the opportunity to continue the programme until 30 September

2023. The City of London took this opportunity, and the programme will be staffed by 1 x Business Manager and 1 x Caseworker from 1 July – 30 September.

Programme Delivery Activities

3. During the 3 month extension, Central London Forward has asked that we concentrate on delivering support to NEETs aged 18-24. Participants are continuing the training on the following programmes:

- **Accountancy Training:** Caseworker Nisha Kaushal continues to lead on this initiative. Hays Finance has run two workshops for this cohort – the first around job opportunities in the sector and how best to present a strong CV when job-seeking, the second on how best to present themselves on social media (in particular LinkedIn). We commissioned a photographer to take head and shoulder images so that Participants had professional images for their profiles. The first person has now secured a full time role and we are progressing with active job-search and an ongoing programme of support for the remaining participants. The cohort on this programme tend to be aged 30+ with many 40+ seeking a career change or those having worked in finance but with no formal qualification.
- **Construction Programme:** 16 young people (NEETs) enrolled on this training programme, delivered by Cultiv8 in mid-April. All followed a programme of activities which culminated in them sitting the CITB CSCS Test. As of 31 May, 2 Participants had disengaged, leaving 14 of whom:
1 is in work – this young man was a care-leaver and is still living in supported accommodation. He is hugely motivated as he wants to save £8k to pay for his Electrician's course; **1 has a job offer** and as soon as his CSCS card arrives, he will be in work; **2 have interviews for a special demolition course.** Currently the company is saying that only 1 will be offered a place, but we are keeping our fingers crossed; **6 have passed the CSCS test; 5 are waiting to sit the CSCS test** in early June and **2 are waiting to re-sit the CSCS test and need more support.**
- **Security Industry Training.** 21 young people (NEETs) started 80 hours of training on this course on 22 May. As of 31 May, ALL had passed their Level 3 Award in Emergency First Aid at Work (RQF) and the ACT (anti-terrorism) training programme and are continuing their training with a mixture of classroom and self-learning modules. The next stage is to pass their SIA Certificate after which they will be able to apply for their SIA Badge. This takes at least 3 weeks as Police Checks are undertaken. Once they have passed the SIA Test, they will be actively job searching with a view to accepting work "on condition they receive their SIA badge."
- **Creative and Making Skills Programme.** We are currently in discussion with Cockpit Arts Limited (a registered charity with experience of delivering ESF training programmes) to deliver a Creative/Making Skills programme for young people. The course will enable Participants to meet successful creative makers at two Cockpit premises (Bloomsbury/Deptford) from which they make

and sell. It will also include training modules on how to take a product to market, visioning, and goal setting (business plan), registering for self-employment, selling on-line (including how to photograph items for maximum impact). We will be working with the Artisan Library where some of the training will be held and hope to stage an “open evening” where Participants can display and sell their products.

- **City of London Apprenticeship Scheme.** We plan to actively promote the City’s scheme for those young people with NO A-levels to local Job Centres and other youth referrers and to support these young people to complete their application forms and prepare for interview.

Unemployment and the current Economic Climate in the UK

4. The Institute for Employment Studies produces a monthly analysis of the employment market, and its latest report (released mid-May) sadly revealed a record for the number of people out of work due to long-term health conditions. At 2.55 million people, the number off work due to ill health has risen by 440 thousand since the start of the pandemic and by 85 thousand in the last quarter alone. At the same time, economic inactivity for every other reason is now falling – with particularly large falls in student numbers and those off for ‘other’ reasons.

5. This means that despite rises in long-term ill health, economic inactivity overall is down on the quarter and on the year; with this translating into rises in both employment and unemployment (as those previously economically inactive start to look for work).

6. Vacancies are also down on the quarter but remain above a million and may start to level off in the next month or two. Vacancies remain strongest in public services, professional services and administrative roles but have fallen further in hospitality and retail. This may point to fewer ‘entry level’ roles for those (re)joining the labour market, and potential risks around mismatches in people’s skills or where they live.

7. Overall, the IES’s view is that labour demand is continuing to hold up. However, with higher worklessness due to long-term ill health, rising long-term unemployment and widening employment ‘gaps’ for disabled people, older people, and young people outside of full-time education, it is hard to escape the conclusion that those who are more disadvantaged in the labour market are being increasingly left behind.

Inputs and Outcomes

8. In a verbal report to the Senior Leads of participating boroughs, Central London Forward reported that: “Although it has not been possible to reach all the ambitious targets set at the planning stage of the project, everyone has excelled within the current context. There are areas of good practice in every team. Half of the teams have also performed above the targets in one or more area.” The City of London team has exceeded its target for Training/Education by over 200%.

9. We shall prepare an Impact Report for the Education Board at its October meeting.

Options

Not applicable.

Proposals

Not applicable.

Key Data

Not applicable.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

10. 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

11. 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

12. 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.

13. 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

14. 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.

15. 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

16. 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

17. 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.

18. 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.

19. 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

20. There are no immediate Climate implications.

Security implications

21. There are no immediate Security implications.

Conclusion

22. 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

N/A

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