



Subject:	Improving employability outcomes: focus on young people at risk
Date:	10 August 2022
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
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<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Update Members on development work undertaken on the Bridges to Progression initiative funded through the Belfast Labour Market Partnership</li><li>Note the agreed funding based on the outcome of the pre-agreed application process that existing contract holders can make on behalf of young people.</li></ul>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Note the development work on the Bridges to Progression initiative</li></ul>

- Note the proposal to manage the funding distribution in partnership with Skills for Life and Work providers through an agreed application process on behalf of those young people identified.

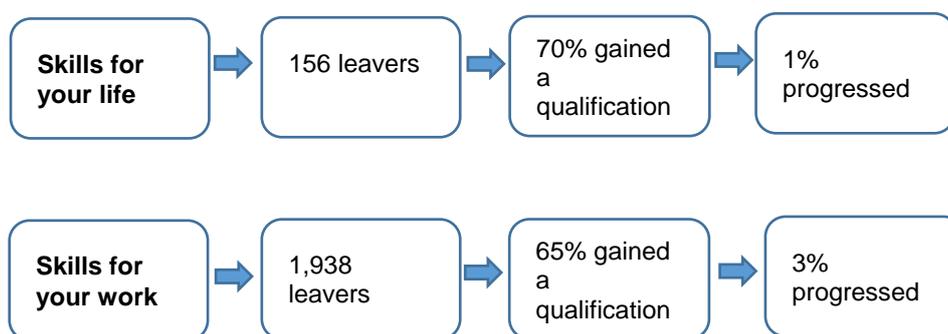
### 3.0 Main Report

#### 3.1 Key Issues

Members will be aware that the Labour Market Partnerships (LMPs) represent a cross-governmental approach to co-designing a sustainable future strategic employment offer. Belfast LMP is focused on four main strategic and cross-cutting themes: Quickly Back to Work; Increasing opportunities; No-one left Behind and Catching-up. Under the theme No-one Left Behind, officers have been exploring the potential for interventions to support the transition of young people in danger of becoming the next cohort of NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training) in the city.

3.2 The genesis of this interventions stemmed from analysis which identified that the positive outcomes for participants engaging in Training for Success/Skills for Life and Work programme (TfS/SfL&W) programmes in Belfast was less than 3% (see below). This meant that less than 1 in 30 of the young people engaging on those interventions was entering a positive destination (employment/further training) at the end of the programme. In order to understand the reasons behind this performance, officers have been engaging with providers across the city and have co-designed a bridging intervention that aims to increase the positive outcomes for young people.

#### Funding and Outcomes of Training for Success, DfE, December 2020



3.3 Skills for Life and Work is a training programme for young people who want to develop their skills and get ready for work. The programme is aimed at 16-17 year olds who have left school (extended up to 22 years for those with disability and 24 years for those who qualify under the

	<p>Children (Leaving Care) Act (NI) (2002)). As of January 2022, 1178 young people had signed up to Skills for Life and Work regionally with almost half (44%) within the Belfast area. Engagements rates consistently show a disproportionately higher level of participants coming from North and West Belfast which together account for 70% of all Belfast participants.</p>
3.4	<p>One of the key findings of our engagement was that, while the positive outcome rate for those who complete the programme is relatively high, there is a high drop-out rate within Skills for Life and Work and this accounts for the poor performance in the overall outcomes. Having identified this challenge, Bridges to Progression has been developed to work alongside the existing provision by providing extra support for those participants at risk of early exit from the programme in order to retain their engagement and enhance their prospects of a positive outcome.</p>
3.5	<p>The consultation with all Skills for Life and Work providers in the city identified that the young people on the programme are those already furthest removed from labour market and experiencing multiple barriers such as addiction, homelessness, familial problems and young parenthood. These are significant contributory factors to the high attrition levels. Our engagement work also identified the fact that these young people have been disproportionately negatively impacted during Covid-19 pandemic and are now exposed to the cost of living crisis which is placing additional pressures day to day pressures on them and potentially impacting their ability to positively engage in these and other employability interventions.</p>
3.6	<p>Having explored a range of potential approaches, it is proposed that an allocation of up to £90,000 from the Labour Market Partnership budget will be ringfenced for Belfast-based Skills for Life and Work providers. Officers will work with providers to identify those young people at highest risk of falling out of provision and will use the resources to provide the support that they need to encourage retention. This pilot programme will target at least 120 young people at risk, supporting them through at least 10 hours contact time. In addition, officers will explore how we can enhance the exposure of young people to the world of work by engaging with employers to provide access to work tasters and new entry pathways, in line with the areas of interest of those young people engaging in the programme.</p>
3.7	<p>The Skills for Life and Work providers that this support will specifically work with are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academy Hair &amp; Beauty Training School</li> <li>• Belfast Metropolitan College</li> <li>• Belfast Central Training</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bryson FutureSkills</li> <li>• Dairyfarm/People 1<sup>st</sup></li> <li>• Impact Training</li> <li>• Rutledge Training</li> <li>• Springboard Opportunities</li> <li>• Springvale Training</li> </ul>
3.8	<p>Given the complexity of participants' needs, flexibility is key to be able to provide an authentic person-centred approach. So, while the average cost is £750 per person given the level of resources available and the KPIs expected, in-built agility to pivot towards the needs of each young person may mean that more resources are required for one person and less for another. Activity can range from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental health support and counselling</li> <li>• One-to-one coaching</li> <li>• Housing support and advice</li> <li>• Team building</li> <li>• Self-esteem and confidence building</li> <li>• Childcare and parenting support</li> <li>• Travel</li> <li>• Breakfast and lunch clubs</li> <li>• Additional or flexible training approaches and learning support</li> <li>• Essential skills or ESOL</li> <li>• Addiction services – gambling, alcohol, drug use etc.</li> </ul>
3.9	<p>This is not an exhaustive list and actual activity and interventions will be agreed using a person-centred approach. Officers will manage this in partnership with Skills for Life and Work providers through an agreed application process on behalf of those young people identified. To ensure added value, Bridges to Progression funds will not be used for any delivery expected within the Skills for Life and Work contract that providers hold with DfE. Additionally, providers will only access Bridges to Progression funds for activities that cannot be sourced otherwise.</p>
3.10	<p>Subject to council endorsement, officers will undertake assessment of the applications for funding in line with the approach detailed in this report. A report will be presented at a future meeting of this committee outlining the outcomes and learning from this approach.</p>

3.11	<p><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>The Department for Communities will undertake equality screening of LMP interventions.</p>
3.12	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>It is proposed that a total of £90,000 funded through Labour Market Partnership is allocated to Bridges to Progression.</p>
4.0	<p><b>Appendices – Documents attached</b></p>
	<p>None</p>