



Subject:	Employability and Skills – Bridges to Progression
Date:	6 December 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
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Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number <input type="checkbox"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information relating to any individual2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
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"/>
Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the allocation of Bridges to Progression resources based on the outcome of the competitive application process undertaken.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the allocation of Labour Market Partnership (LMP) resources for Bridges to Progression and note the proposals to seek proposals from delivery partners to provide targeted support that can improve outcomes for participants.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p><u>Labour Market Partnership</u></p> <p>Members will be aware that the Labour Market Partnership is an intervention supported by DfC within all 11 council areas. Resources from the Labour Market Partnership enable the Council to increase the range and scope of employability and skills activity. The LMP also provides a platform for engagement with government departments, community partners and business organisations as a means of refocusing regional programmes more effectively within the Belfast area. The LMP action plan recognises that, while there are gaps that have been identified that will necessitate the creation of new interventions, not all activity need be new ‘provision’ or ‘programmes’; sometimes it is equally important to profile and/or promote existing interventions. One of these interventions is Bridges to Progression which officers have ensured operates as a ‘test and learn’ to inform any recommissioning of Skills for Life & Work DfE contracts.</p>
3.2	<p><u>Bridges to Progression</u></p> <p>Bridges to Progression is an intervention to support young people aged 16-17 years who are at risk of disengaging from Skills for Life & Work due to their personal circumstances. Participants can access intensive personal support to help them progress in and complete their formal training, with the ambition of improving the levels of progression into employment or further training. Previous analysis had flagged a very high level of drop out from these programmes, particularly in Belfast. It showed that the reasons behind participants no longer engaging with the programme related to wider social challenges – rather than the programme content itself.</p>

3.3 At the October 2023 meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, it was agreed that officers would seek expressions of interest from organisations delivering these programmes, outlining how they would use resources to add value to the core activity with the objective of improving outcomes for participants. It was also agreed that officers would undertake assessment of the applications for funding in line with the approach detailed in this report.

3.4 While all Training for Success/Skills for Life & Work providers were invited to submit applications for 2023/24 outlining how they would use the resources, seven applied and six met the quality threshold. Bridges to Progression offers an average of £750 per participant up to the maximum of £90,000 allocated from LMP Budget 2023/24:

Applicant	Activity proposed	Requested	Awarded
Springvale	Engage Programme: teambuilding, mentoring, mental health support, employer engagement & lifestyle support	£19,811	£15,113
People First	Employ a counsellor: 1-1 and group counselling sessions, crisis response service, behavioural support through CBT & staff support around boundaries, signposting and managing challenging behaviour	£20,000	£15,257
Springboard	HeadStart Programme: lifestyle support, employer engagement, training, team building and extra tutoring support for essential skills	£18,466	£14,087
Workforce	Jets Programme: personal and social development mentoring, employability coaching	£20,000	£15,257
Bryson	Well-Mind: mental health support through goal planning, conflict resolution, health and nutrition	£19,700	£15,028
Impact	LEAVE Programme: employability mentoring, mental health support, employer interfacing, training, workplace resilience, steps to overall participation	£20,000	£15,257

3.5 While the LMP budget has £90,000 allocated for Bridges to Progression, the total cost of applications above was £117,977. As outlined above, officers recommend to proportionally reduce each award to ensure that we keep within budget.

3.6 The key performance indicators are to engage with 120 young people at risk of disengaging from Skills for Life & Work for a minimum of 10 hours contact time. With the submissions and awards as detailed above we are confident we can deliver a quality and effective intervention to support those most at risk of disengagement supporting a minimum of 120 young people.

Officers are also engaging with the Department for the Economy to seek to incorporate the flexibility offered within Bridges to Progression with future iterations of Skills for Life & Work with the aim of improving employability outcomes. The Department are keen to ensure that

3.7	<p>the learning from Bridges to Progression are utilised as a ‘testbed’ for innovative approaches to keep young people engaged on and progressing from statutory programmes such as Skills for Life & Work. This engagement will therefore include establishing common measurement and evaluation tools and processes as well as convening targeted engagement with each provider and their participants to capture learning in real time.</p> <p><u>Finance and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The activities outlined in this report will be resourced from the agreed 2023/24 budget for the Belfast LMP Action Plan.</p>
3.8	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>The project referenced in this report is informed by statistical research, stakeholder engagement and complementary policies and strategies. New projects or service areas are equality screened and a rural needs assessment completed. Consideration is given to equality and good relation impacts at the initial stages of project development.</p>
4.0	Appendices
	None