



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	The Health Employment Partnership Employability Model
Date:	21 January 2011
Reporting Officer:	Jill Minne Head of Human Resources
Contact Officer:	Catherine Christy, Principal HR Advisor, ext 3226

Purpose of report:

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an overview of the West Belfast and Greater Shankill Health Employment Partnership and examine the possibility of developing a similar employment partnership scheme for the council.

Relevant background information:

At its meeting on 1 December 2010 the council acknowledged the work of the West Belfast and Greater Shankill Health Employment Partnership. It noted the provision of pre-employment training and support to 300 long term unemployed and that 143 of these long term unemployed people secured employment in Belfast HSC Trust. It was agreed that this matter be referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources to examine the possibility of developing a similar employment partnership scheme for the council.

The Health Employment Partnership.

The Health Employment Partnership (HEP) was developed as an output of the work of the West Belfast and Greater Shankill Task Forces and is a unique partnership involving Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, UNISON and the community. HEP is a regeneration initiative that has sought to target the most disadvantaged areas in West Belfast and Greater Shankill, its aim being to demonstrate that the health and social services sector can make a substantial contribution towards regeneration by addressing worklessness and poor job progression. The project is focussed upon two core areas of work:

- Pre-employment support - targeted at the unemployed and economically inactive, by providing training relevant to jobs in the health sector as well as general job search support and personal skill development.
- Job progression - targeted at staff already in entry level positions in the health sector, providing training and development to assist with career progression.

An independent evaluation of the West Belfast and Greater Shankill Health Employment Partnership concluded that the Partnership's employment programme has

been very impressive and value-for-money, with a job conversion rate of 47% and a cost per job outcome that compares very favourably with other DEL employability initiatives and a boost to the local economy of around £1 million each year. Through the programme, 143 people got jobs with the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. In addition, over 300 staff in the Trust received training to help them develop their careers, and 36 entry-grade staff have already obtained promotion.

The initial feasibility study was funded by DEL and the project was then funded by the Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety, under the Renewing Communities Programme. While £1million was initially allocated to the HEP, the total project cost was £670 000 spent over the three years of the project which ran between 2007 and 2009.

Funding has now ceased for the HEP and future funding opportunities are currently being explored with DHSSPS, DEL and DSD.

Existing employability initiatives in Belfast City Council

Young Persons Employment Initiative

The council has recently worked in partnership with DEL and North City Training - Bryson Charitable Group's Training and Employment Unit on a pilot of the Young Person Employment Initiative (YPEI). The programme provided young people (aged 18-24), who had been unemployed for more than one year, temporary waged work experience over a 26 week period. The council facilitated 36 placement opportunities, five of which were graduate opportunities. The young people worked on a range of projects which are of value to the ratepayers of Belfast. They carried out a range of work in recycling and cleansing services and worked in various locations across the city such as Musgrave Park, Belfast Castle and Connswater Community Greenway.

The aim of the programme was to potentially provide a pathway into the labour market by offering paid work experience, employability training and personal development. To date, 16 (44%) of the young people have moved into employment.

An application has been made by North City Training, Bryson Charitable Group's Training and Employment Unit for European Social Fund (ESF) assistance to further develop the YPEI pilot. If successful, the council has committed to facilitating further placements for long term unemployed young people.

Public Employment Partnership (PEP)

For the past two years the council has engaged with the Citywide Employability Consortium (CEC) to develop a pre-employment training programme for the long term unemployed¹. North Belfast Partnership Board (NBPB) which works in partnership with the CEC project manages the programme. Other public sector partners working on the programme are the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

The aim of the programme is to assist the long term unemployed gain the necessary skills and experience to support them in gaining employment. As part of the programme the council facilitates site visits, work experience placements and mock interview sessions. To date the council has facilitated 19 placements across various disciplines e.g. refuse collection, street sweeping, gardening, cleaning, community services and administration. Of the 19 placement participants, 7 (36.8%) have gained employment.

Eleven site visits and 3 mock interview sessions have also taken place.

Provision of external funding for other employability projects.

The Development Committee has in recent years provided match funding for a number of employability projects. One of the most successful employability projects, the HARTE (Hospitality and Retail Training for Employment) has to date assisted almost 80 long term unemployed people to secure employment while an additional 30 have gone on to further training and education. An application has been made to develop and expand the HARTE programme under the new round of ESF. The proposed project will engage over 200 long term unemployed with a view to helping them find jobs in the tourism, hospitality and wider service industry. It is also being supported by Lisburn City Council and will run in the Belfast and Lisburn areas. A decision around future funding of the HARTE project is yet to be taken by the Development Committee.

Overall the council has set aside £100,000 to support employability initiatives in the current estimates under the Economic Development budget. However, no budgetary approval for individual projects has yet been granted. A report outlining match funding requests for a range of ESF projects will be discussed by the Development Committee in February 2011. The department may also consider a wider range of employability initiatives in conjunction with DEL and other statutory and community partners although the details of these have not yet been finalised. Any financial commitment would have to be found within the agreed Development budget for 2011/2012.

Key Issues:

The HEP model has proved very successful and clearly there is potential to bring the learning from the project into the council's employability initiatives. Since the inception of the HEP project however, circumstances which could impact on the success of such a project have changed both inside and outside the council. The following issues need to be considered when assessing the feasibility of the council delivering a scheme of similar nature and size:

- The HEP project has received funding over a period of 3 years of nearly £670 000. The future of the HEP will depend on securing funding.
- When the HEP project started the health sector was experiencing difficulty filling certain types of posts. Unemployment was generally low and the hospitals had a number of "hard to fill" vacancies. However, the volume of basic entry recruitment in the council has decreased steadily in recent years, (from 52 basic grade appointees in 2008 to 3 in 2010.) More detail is provided in Appendix 1. There are a number of reasons for this decrease, including the economic climate, the efficiency agenda, increased emphasis on the monitoring and control of employee costs and more stringent vacancy control procedures. Appendix 1 also provides information on the workforce turnover figures for staff in basic entry posts which has also declined in recent years.
- In addition to the current council employment initiatives detailed above we also provide training and development for existing basic entry staff to seek to help with job progression. Appendix 1 provides information on the number of basic entry staff who have availed of the council's essential skills and development programmes since 2005 and outlines the number of people who have been promoted since participating in those programmes.

Notwithstanding the above issues there are clearly elements of the HEP model that could be investigated further and incorporated into the council's employability outreach activity.

Resource Implications:

As outlined above, part of the HEP project's success has been attributable to a substantial budget which would need to be externally sourced.

Recommendations:

The research carried out to date on the HEP employability model would indicate that the council's employability initiatives could benefit from the learning derived from the project, including the success of the equal partnership between employers, trade unions and the community. It is therefore recommended that:

- the council invites the Health Employment Partnership to disseminate the best practice of the HEP model at an event with Belfast City Council, trade unions and other relevant stakeholders.
- the council's Community Outreach team further examines the Health Employment Partnership model and integrates any feasible best practice elements of the programme into our existing and proposed employability initiatives
- HR establishes contact with the Job Assist Centres to discuss how the long term unemployed could be better facilitated in their preparation for applying for jobs within the council
- the council continues to be represented at a senior level on the Employers' Forum, to ensure the council's influence, civic leadership and contribution to employability initiatives along with other leading employers in the city.
- HR will work with the Development Department to explore any future funding opportunities that could assist the council's employability outreach activities.

HR will continue to update the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on a regular basis on progress with the council's employability initiatives.

Decisions required:

Members are asked to agree the recommendations in this report.

Key to Abbreviations

HEP – Health Employment Partnership
PEP – Public Employment Partnership
CEC – Citywide Employability Consortium
NBPB – North Belfast Partnership Board
YPEI – Young Persons employment Initiative
ESF – European Social Fund
HARTE – Hospitality and Retail Training for Employment

Appendix 1

1. Recent basic entry grade recruitment activity

	Number of recruitment campaigns	Number of people recruited into F/T and P/T posts
2008	23	52
2009	13	39
2010	4	3

2. Basic grade turnover for permanent full time and part time posts

2007	2008	2009	2010
51	38	39	26

3. Provision of learning and development for basic entry grade staff

Step up to Learn (Literacy and numeracy)

Year	Numbers attended
2005	27
2006	35
2007	18
2008	9
2009	8
2010	14
Totals	111

Frontline Development Programme

Year	Numbers attended
2006	33
2007	74
2008	70
2009	52
2010	63
Total	292

4. Basic grade staff promoted after training & development

Year	Numbers promoted after training & development activity	Training & Development Activity
2008	9	Front Line Development Programme
	2	Step up to learn
	2	Front Line Development Programme & Step up to learn
	1	First Line Supervisory Development Programme
2009	3	Front Line Development Programme
2010	3	Front Line Development Programme
		Step up to Learn