



Subject:	Working and Learning: Programme of Work 2019/20
Date:	6 th March, 2019
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Restricted Reports	
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"/>
Some time 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 a programme of work to be delivered in the 2019/20 financial year under the Working and Learning pillar of the Belfast Agenda.
1.2	The proposed work programme supports the inclusive growth ambitions of the Council by addressing barriers to progression, focusing on educational underachievement and supporting residents to access employment and/or upskilling opportunities.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is requested to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. approve the 2019/20 Work Plan and associated budget of £1,280,491 to support the delivery of the Working and Learning strands of the Belfast Agenda, as summarised in section 3.5 and detailed in the attached appendix; and ii. note the ongoing development work being undertaken with key partners through governance structures including; the Belfast Agenda Working and Learning Board, BRCD Employability and Skills Steering Group and Employability NI Programme Board.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>Members will be aware that, at the Committee meeting on 11th April 2018, approval was given for a series of activities under the Working and Learning pillar of the Belfast Agenda. At that meeting, members agreed a number of guiding principles of the Council’s investment in this area of work including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employment-led: focusing upon identified employment opportunities and gaps in provision; - Needs-led: in order to deliver against the principles of Inclusive Growth, targeting interventions towards geographical areas and/or underrepresented groups while being accessible and open to all; - Ambitious: to increase visibility and awareness of Council’s role within the environment and strategically build our position in this area; - Intelligence-led and evidence based: ensuring that our investment in based on a sound rationale; - Adding value: ensuring we do not duplicate existing provision; - Flexible: allowing for interventions to be developed around emerging market needs/opportunities; and - Scalable: delivered seamlessly across the City, in line with need and opportunity – trying out new solutions on a pilot basis and increasing their coverage if they have a positive impact.

3.2 Whilst work is ongoing to deliver the 2018/19 work plan, key achievements on track to be achieved include:

- Over 2,750 participant engaged in employability programmes, with more than 800 expected to progress into employment this year
- Over 3,500 young people supported through youth initiatives
- Almost 7,500 participants engaged through career events and job fairs.

3.3 Some of the key activities undertaken include:

- **Employment Academies:** we have extended this employer-led initiative to include new sectors providing a broader spectrum of employment opportunities to local residents. Across the 18/19 financial year around 500 residents have or will participate in academies, and it is expected at least 350 will progress into employment. Sectors currently engaged through these academies include hospitality and tourism, transportation, childcare, health and social care and construction. Although these academies are principally focused on helping the unemployed into employment, officers have also been exploring how we can support upskilling into higher-level employment opportunities. As an example of this work, we have developed and delivered upskilling academies in the childcare sector. Through these interventions, over 30 Belfast residents will have secured employment in career progression roles whilst simultaneously completing a level 3-5 accredited qualification this year. This type of intervention is essential in order to address the challenge of low skills levels, particularly in some part of the city.
- **Youth Initiatives:** a key focus of the Belfast Agenda is to tackle educational inequalities and to provide coherent pathways of support to enable young people to positively progress. To support these ambitions, a range of activity has been undertaken to support young people to make informed career choices, support digital skills development, access work experience opportunities and support those at most risk of not achieving and/or being NEET (Not in Education, Employment and/or Training). Across these interventions over 3500 young people have been supported across the current financial year.
- **European Social Fund (ESF):** as part of the Council's efforts to support the long-term unemployed and economically inactive to enter the labour market, match funding was awarded to five European Social Fund (ESF) projects. Since 1 April 2018, 2442

participants have been engaged with 985 accredited qualifications achieved and 656 entering employment.

3.4 In addition to the delivery of these priority interventions, officers have also been working on a wider programme of engagement with public and private partners to develop new collaborative approaches to city skills and employability challenges. This includes engagement through relevant governance and partnerships (Belfast Agenda Working and Learning Board; Belfast City Region Deal Employability and Skills Group) as well as focusing on potential project ideas such as bringing forward proposals for a City Youth Pledge and exploring opportunities to deliver on the Belfast Agenda commitments to support inclusive growth.

3.5 The proposed work programme for the next financial year (19/20) continues to align to Working and Learning pillar of the Belfast Agenda and to support the inclusive growth ambitions by targeting barriers to progression, addressing educational underachievement and supporting residents to access employment and/or upskilling opportunities. It will also inform and shape the development work on the Belfast Region City Deal approach on employability and skills, which will be a focal point for activity in the coming year. Across this work programme, over 3000 Belfast residents will be supported through a range of targeted employability and skills interventions with nearly 1000 progressing into employment. Over 1700 young people will be engaged through targeted youth activities, with 495 receiving intensive support to address educational underachievement and/or support them into positive outcomes (employment, education and/or training). A summary of the proposed projects and financial implications is contained within the attached appendix. Key areas of work are outlined below:

- **Access to employment:** we will continue to support Belfast residents to enter the labour market and to progress and advance in employment. The principal instrument for delivery of this commitment is through the successful Employment Academies approach. In the coming year, these will focus on both entry-level positions and upskilling employment opportunities. Pilots will also be undertaken specifically aimed at supporting young people (aged 16+) to access part-time employment opportunities in key sectors. Taking an employer-led approach, we will continue to support key sectors including; tourism, hospitality and leisure, health and social care, construction and transport industries. In this year, we will also expand the programme into other key growth sectors including the financial services and creative and digital industries. New delivery models,

incorporating employer incentives will be trialled. We will work in partnership with the Department for the Economy and Department for Communities to deliver joint academy models when appropriate, in order to maximise the scale and impact of Council investment.

To support those furthest from the labour market, we will continue our support for the five ESF projects ((LEMIS+ consortium, Workforce Learning, USEL, Specialisterne and Springboard) year two delivery. Funding levels allocated to each of the five supported projects will be maintained into year two delivery with a total funding of £315,518 (£240,000 Belfast City Council and £75,518 Urban Villages funding).

- **Focus on young people:** one of the commitments as part of the Belfast Agenda included the development of a City Youth Pledge. The ambition was to create a coherent progression pathway for young people to enable them to progress into employment, further education and training. To inform the development of the Youth Pledge and wider youth provision, officers have undertaken a range of research pieces and the headline outcomes were presented at the September 2018 meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee. Engagement with key stakeholders including government departments, City Youth Forum etc. has identified the need for long-term investment with a partnership approach, incorporating private sector employers. Key initiatives for the coming financial year will include a dedicated programme of support targeting young people (14-24 year olds) at risk of becoming NEET and further development work on the City Youth Pledge through the Working & Learning Board to secure partner and employer commitment to its establishment and delivery.

One of the key issues identified in the Belfast Skills Barometer was the low levels of educational attainment, particularly in some parts of the city. In order to address this problem, officers have engaged with partners across the city and are proposing the extension of an initiative that currently operates in east and west Belfast and that has been shown to have some considerable success. The “Easter School” and intensive revision support programmes will provide additional support for young people to help them achieve Grades A-C in key subjects – particularly English and Maths.

- **Strategic Engagement:** working in partnership with government departments we will continue to develop joint areas of working to facilitate better alignment between regional employment and skills programme and the needs of the Belfast labour market. This will

	<p>include the development of new “test and learn” pilots with the Department for Communities. At present, details of potential pilots are being finalised but they are likely to include targeted initiatives to help the unemployed/economically inactive to start a business, as well as developing new ways of working to enhance employer engagement. These projects will involve Belfast-specific activities as well as initiatives that cover the Belfast City Region area, as part of the City Deal work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inclusive Growth: we will continue to focus on maximising the economic and social impact of the Council’s spending and investment in the local area by re-focusing our work on social clauses. We will also look at other mechanisms such as developer contributions and development briefs to secure employability and skills benefits for the city and, in particular, those neighbourhoods where the skills challenges are most significant. - Citizen Basic Income Scheme: Officers will continue to investigate the feasibility of a citizen basic income scheme, in response to the notice of motion brought to the Council in October 2017. This will include reviewing the outcomes of an existing feasibility studies and development of pilot models being undertaken by the Scottish Government and a similar pilot recently concluded in Finland. <p><u>Finance and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>3.6 The activities outlined in this report will be resourced from the 2019/20 budget for the Employability & Skills section of Economic Development Department budget. Detailed budget breakdowns are included in the appendix to this report.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>3.7 Each of the proposed projects 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. Considerations given to equality and good relation impacts at the initial stages of project development. Officers will work closely with the Equality and Good Relations Team on this activity.</p>
4.0	Document Attached
	Appendix - Working & Learning Project Summary – 2019/20