



Subject:	Working and Learning: Programme of Work 2020/21
Date:	4th March, 2020
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Lisa Toland, Senior Manager - Economy

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"/>
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/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 2020/21 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 targeting interventions at our four inclusive growth cohorts, <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workless Residents• Residents with low skills levels• Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)• In work, low earning individuals.

	To address barriers to progression, educational underachievement and support residents to access employment and/or upskilling opportunities.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is requested to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. note the work undertaken in the financial year to date, as set out in sections 3.3-3.9; ii. approve the 2020/21 Work Plan and associated budget of £1,239,250 to support the delivery of the Working and Learning strands of the Belfast Agenda, as set out in sections 3.10-3.22; and iii. note the ongoing development work being undertaken with key partners through governance structures including; the Belfast Agenda Working & 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 meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 6th March 2019, 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	<p>By way of context, some of the specific areas of challenge that the work is trying to address include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic inactivity levels of around 32% in Belfast (regional figure is around 27%) • Educational attainment levels at GCSE lower in Belfast than in all other council areas: (79% achieve 5 GCSEs (A*-C) but only 62% achieve 5 GCSEs (A*-C) incl. English and Maths).
3.3	<p>Whilst work is ongoing to deliver the 2019/20 work plan, key achievements on track to be achieved include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • over 3,000 participants engaged in employability programmes. This includes around 2,400 participating on ESF match-funded programmes, with 580 expected to find employment (average 24% into-employment rate) and 530 participating in Employment Academies with 398 expected to get a job at the end of the programme (75% into-employment rate); • over 1,500 young people supported through youth initiatives including 200 receiving additional revision support at GCSE, 90 young people undertaking work placements, and 100 accessing 1-2-1 mentor support through our Youth Support Programme; and • almost 7500 participants engaged through career events and job fairs. <p>Some of the key activities undertaken include:</p> <p><u>Employment Academies</u></p>
3.4	<p>We have extended this employer-led initiative to include new sectors providing a broader spectrum of employment opportunities to local residents. Across the 2019/20 financial year, around 530 residents have participated or will participate in academies, and it is expected that at least 398 will progress into employment. Sectors currently engaged through these academies include hospitality and tourism, transportation, childcare, health and social care, leisure and construction</p>
3.5	<p>Although these academies are principally focused on helping the unemployed into work, 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</p>

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. An evaluation of this approach will inform future deliver in this and other sectors in the coming year

European Social Fund

- 3.6 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 2019, 2442 participants have been engaged with 985 accredited qualifications achieved and 580 expected to enter employment.

Youth Initiatives

- 3.7 Over the past year, a range of programmes have been delivered supporting young people in Year 12 who most "at risk" by providing them with the opportunities and supports to form a career pathway, progress into a positive destination and achieve their potential. We have also developed a dedicated programme for young people aged 14-24 years who are NEET or at high risk of becoming so. Through this programme, we are currently working with 160 young people from across the city. Early indications are that this intervention is exceeding its targets, particularly in terms of positive sustained outcomes (as measured by the participants moving into education, training or employment) – with 76% of those engaged making this progression. Given the challenges that these young people face, the 1-2-1 mentor support is a long-term relationship that lasts beyond their entry into a positive destination and this should help ensure more sustainable outcomes.

- 3.8 Given the significant challenges around educational achievement levels – particularly Maths and English GCSEs – we have also put in place a GCSE Maths and English Support Programme. This programme has been funded by the Department for Education for a number of years but ran in west Belfast only. We have used our resources to extend the programme citywide. During this academic year, at least 365 young people (who are projected to achieve a low Grade C or below) will receive targeted revision support during holiday times and in community settings, to give them the support needed to help them achieve at least GCSE Grade C in Maths and English resulting in young people having the best opportunities open to them to progress on their career journey. Other councils have

also recognised the value of this support and have bought into the service, with Ards and North Down Borough Council (ANBC) rolling it out in two of its secondary schools and other neighbouring councils considering doing the same in the coming academic year.

Strategic Partnership Activities

- 3.9 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. We have also been supporting the Planning team in the development of the Developer Contributions Framework and are actively engaged with a number of emerging development schemes to ensure that relevant employability and skills interventions are incorporated and that compliance is ensured.

Proposed Work Programme – 2020/21

- 3.10 The proposed work programme for the next financial year (2020/21) continues to align to Working and Learning pillar of the Belfast Agenda and delivers our 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.

- 3.11 Across this work programme, over 3,000 Belfast residents will be supported through a range of targeted employability and skills interventions with more than 1000 progressing into employment. Over 1,700 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). Taking account of the economic analysis, and building on the learning from previous work, we will focus our work under four key priorities, namely:

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supporting access to employment 2. Focus on young people 3. Strategic engagement 4. Policy influence and guidance <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Supporting access to employment</u>
3.12	<p>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 will be the successful Employment Academies approach. In the coming year, these will focus on both entry-level positions and upskilling employment opportunities, in line with the council's commitment to supporting inclusive economic growth. Taking an employer-led approach, we will continue to support key sectors including; tourism, hospitality and leisure, health and social care, construction and transport.</p>
3.13	<p>In 2020/21, we will also expand the programme into other key growth sectors including the financial and professional services. 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. In line with our Inclusive Growth Strategy we will explore the potential to deliver Employment Academies as part of relevant recruitment exercises within Belfast City Council and will engage with other public sector bodies and strategic employers (e.g. Belfast Harbour, Belfast Trust) to open new doors to create additional employment opportunities. We expect that the Employment Academies will involve around 450 participants and help create around 350 new jobs in the coming financial year. In order to improve the flexibility of our delivery, we will put in place a new contracting regime in the coming year which will enable us to be more responsive to the needs of employers. We will ensure that our interventions are open to all by putting in place measures to respond to specific barriers (e.g. interpretation/language support; childcare support).</p>
3.14	<p>To assist those furthest from the labour market, we will continue our support for the five ESF projects ((LEMIS+ consortium, Workforce Learning, USEL, Specialisterne and Springboard) in year three of a four year delivery plan. These projects are a critical element of the pipeline of support for the Employment Academies work. Funding levels allocated to each of the five supported projects will be maintained into year three of delivery with a total funding of £315,518 (£240,000 Belfast City Council and £75,518 Urban Villages funding (UV funding to</p>

Springboard, Workforce and LEMIS+ projects only)). The funding allocations from council as well as indicative participant numbers and job outcomes for the individual projects are detailed below:

Organisation	Overall budget 2020/21	Council financial allocation 2020/21	Participant nos (est.)	Job outcomes (est.)
Springboard	£340,983.10	£27,244.55	Engage with 130 participants	52 participants into employment
Workforce	£241,536.00	£54,699	Engage with 120 economically inactive and unemployed participants	26 participants progress into employment
USEL	£965,589.80	£50,000	Engage with 50 participants who are unemployed or economically inactive living with a disability	Support 15 participants to enter employment upon leaving the programme
Specialisterne	£74,188.75	£9,080	Engage with 7 participants who are unemployed /economically inactive and disabled (including autism)	Support 1 participant to enter employment upon leaving the programme
LEMIS+/Belfast Works	£3,070,421	£98,966	Engage with 2,375 participants	487 participants to enter employment per year

2. Focus on young people

3.15

The Belfast Skills Barometer shows that educational underachievement levels are lower in Belfast than in any other council area in Northern Ireland. The underachievement is most stark in particular areas of the city – including those where levels of disadvantage are also at its highest. Our youth interventions focus on supporting educational attainment at GCSE level – particularly focusing on English and Maths. They also include opportunities for work placements and mentoring support to help young people to achieve their potential. This will include working with those at risk of falling out of formal education or those already in alternative educational provision.

3.16	<p>In the coming academic year, our GCSE English and Maths revision programme will support engagement with 270 young people. Our Youth Support programme will engage with 120 young people aged 14-24 who are identified as “at risk”. We will work closely with partner organisations such as the Education Authority’s Educational Welfare Officers in order to ensure that we focus our efforts on those in most need of support and to lever resources from those other partners. Contracts for both initiatives are already in place with local delivery partners and this will ensure that delivery can be maximised for the coming year,</p>
3.17	<p style="text-align: center;">3. <u>Strategic Engagement</u></p> <p>One of the key strengths of the council is the ability to convene partners to focus on key issues impacting on the city. In the field of employability and skills, this presents particular opportunities in terms of both strategic employer engagement and stakeholder collaboration. On the employer side, we have built strong working relationships of with key employers based on our ability to deliver and to help them do business. There are opportunities to expand these relationships to bring on board new employers, particularly in growth sectors – many of which appear inaccessible to those with low skills. This is not just about addressing a CSR agenda but rather creating a pipeline of loyal talent that will help the business meet their growth ambitions. On the stakeholder engagement side, we have been working very closely with both the Department for Communities (DfC) and the Department for the Economy (DfE) and will continue to develop joint areas of working to facilitate better alignment between regional employment and skills programmes and the needs of the Belfast labour market. This will include the development of new “test and learn” pilots with the Department for Communities as they continue to shape their new intervention for the economically inactive “Employability NI”. One emerging area of collaboration is a new programme to support the economically inactive and long-term unemployed to start a business. This programme started in January 2020 and will run until July 2021. In the coming year, it is expected that we will engage 35 people in enterprise awareness training with 20 people progressing through a supported pathway to start a business leading to the creation of 20 new businesses by July 2021.</p>
3.18	<p>Another area of strategic engagement is considering how our employability interventions can be aligned to the major development schemes in the city. We have already developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Translink to support employment opportunities associated with the Weaver’s Cross development. We are also working with developers on schemes such as Waterside and Tribeca to support the delivery of employability</p>

	<p>interventions as part of the developer contributions. We also have an MoU with Belfast Harbour and we will work closely with them in the coming year to scope out opportunities for collaboration, taking account of the range of employers located on the Harbour Estate and in keeping with Belfast's Harbour's commitment to "responsible business".</p>
3.19	<p>In the coming year, the outline business cases for the key projects under the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) will be drafted. Consideration will be given in all of the business cases to the employability and skills implications of each of the projects, in order to ensure that there is a sufficient pipeline of skills to meet demand and maximise the benefits of investment. There will also be an employability and skills strand within the BRCD programme. This is likely to focus on both "skills for inclusion" – initiatives to upskill those with lower skills levels to help them move into employment and to progress in their career – and "skills for growth" – focusing on those areas that require graduate and post-graduate qualifications in key growth areas and which offer the greatest potential to enhance productivity levels in the city region area. This is a key objective of the BRCD programme and is a condition for the allocation of resources through the programme.</p>
3.20	<p>Another key platform for collaborative engagement will be through our participation in the Working and Learning group as part of the Community Planning activity. 2021 will mark the end of the first series of stretch goals that were established in 2017. There will therefore be an opportunity to reflect on whether the individual and collective deliverables have helped "move the dial" in addressing some of the specific employment and skills challenges. These include reducing the levels of economic inactivity (commitment to reduce to 23% from the current 28% average), reducing the proportion of working age population with no qualifications to less than 10% and increasing the proportion of the working age population with level 2 and above/level 4 and above qualifications. There are also commitments to increase the percentage of school leavers entering employment, education or training and reducing the gap in educational attainment.</p>
3.21	<p style="text-align: center;">4. <u>Policy Influence and Guidance</u></p> <p>In addition to direct delivery, we will also continue to work with internal and external partners to use all tools at our disposal to maintain a focus on the city's employability and skills challenges and to lever resources to support additional delivery, focusing on the council's inclusive growth ambitions. There are a number of key mechanisms through which this can be achieved:</p>

- **Developer Contributions:** the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approved the council's Developer Contributions Framework in December 2019. These contributions are a planning tool that can be used to mitigate or manage the impacts of new development. They may be used, for example, to ensure that new development is supported by the right infrastructure or to make sure that the environmental impacts of proposals are appropriately managed. When assessing development proposals that result in the loss of employment land or for larger developments where there would be a skills shortage, the council will consider the appropriate use of Developer Contributions. Officers have been working with individuals and organisations that are bringing forward a number of key development proposals for the city – such as Waterside and Tribeca. They are providing advice on employability-related Developer Contributions and also working with developers to provide solutions to help them meet their obligations. In some instances, this may involve the developers contributing to council employability initiatives such as the Employment Academies or Youth Support Programme. Officers have also agreed a protocol for early engagement with those bringing forward major development schemes in order to ensure foresight of key proposals emerging and to provide advice on possible solutions that can be delivered by the council and/or other partners
- **Social Value Procurement:** at the January 2020 meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, members agreed to take forward the development of a Social Value Procurement Framework. The purpose of this framework is to govern how social value can be incorporated into the council's procurement and contractual processes. The Committee agreed to establish a task and finish group of elected members which will advise on the content of the framework. Officers will support this work by looking at how procurement can be used to support local economic and social regeneration including helping small businesses to access public procurement and addressing environmental sustainability.
- **Strategic Site Assessment:** the council has a range of land and buildings assets. While many are already developed, there are opportunities to bring forward new development schemes, particularly on some of the land assets. One recent example is the Giant's Park development. In order to inform submissions, officers are exploring opportunities to incorporate employability and skills requirements as part of any future developer briefs. This ensures that these issues are considered as part of the assessment process and provide another mechanism through which to lever

additional investment to address inclusive growth opportunities. As additional development opportunities arise, officers will continue to inform the brief and work with developers to bring forward relevant schemes, in line with our inclusive growth priorities.

3.22 In order to ensure that our activity remains focused on areas of most need and to enable us to explore new and emerging areas of work, a research budget will be set aside as part of this financial allocation. This will include council support for Ulster University's Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC) (annual contribution is £40,000) as well as stand-alone research and insights work.

3.23 While the focus of our delivery interventions is generally on those who are furthest from the labour market, we continue to engage with partners to explore how we can take a collaborative approach to addressing the wider challenges in the Belfast labour market, namely:

- A significant gap in the supply of individuals with level 3/level 4 qualifications: these are largely the vocational skills areas that do not require graduate skills but do need more than the basic skills. There are challenges around pathways into these roles and the tendency of young people to either stop at level 2 or continue right through to graduate level. However there are also opportunities to develop new Higher Level Apprenticeships through which young people can earn and learn – and ultimately improve their employment prospects through positive career progression opportunities
- Challenges around graduate retention: currently, almost 30% of those who finish their A level studies in Northern Ireland take up a university place outside of Northern Ireland. Attracting those individuals back to the region once they have completed their studies presents challenges. Invest NI is working with the Department for the Economy on a new “Attract In and Attract Back” strategy to address skills shortages in key areas, particularly in jobs requiring a level of professional, post-qualification experience.

Finance and Resource Implications

3.24 The activities outlined in this report will be resourced from the 2020/21 budget for the Employability and Skills section and Business Research and Development section of the

3.25	<p>Place and Economy Departmental budget that was within the cash limit agreed for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee at its meeting on 15th January, 2020.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>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	Documents Attached
	N/A