

## BARNSELEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

This matter is a Key Decision within the Council's definition and has been included in the relevant Forward Plan

### REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PLACE TO CABINET, 9 March 2022

Public or private: Public

#### ESF Pathways to Success and Pathways to Progression (Ambition)

#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the successful application to extend the European Social Fund (ESF) grants of two employment support projects, "**Pathways to Success**" and "**Pathways to Progression (Ambition)**". The extension of these projects will allow the continued delivery of integrated employment support for young people and adults with complex and/or multiple barriers to work, including intensive support for Barnsley's most vulnerable workless residents.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To agree to accept the extension of the ESF grants for the PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS and PATHWAYS TO PROGRESSION (Ambition) projects and contribute the required match funding.
- 2.2 To continue contracting with Sheffield City Council and undertake the responsibilities of project delivery partner.
- 2.3 To approve the changes to staffing required to ensure successful delivery of both projects

#### 3. INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 The ESF Projects Pathway's to Success and Pathway's to Progression (Ambition) were originally reported to Cabinet in 2019 (Cab.6.2.2019/14) where a decision was made to:
- Agree to accept the ESF grants for both projects and contribute the required match funding.
  - To contract with Sheffield City Council and undertake the responsibilities of project delivery partner.
  - To approve the minor restructure to ensure successful delivery of both projects.
- 3.2 Since 2019 staff within the adult employability teams of the BMBC Employment and Skills service and the Employment and Volunteering service within the Adults and Communities Directorate have delivered employability support to adults through both the Pathways to Success and Pathways to

Progression (Ambition) programs. The Young Peoples Targeted Information Advice and Guidance service (TIAG) have delivered employability support for young people aged 15-18 years through the young person's strand of Pathways to Progression (Ambition).

- 3.3 Pathways to Success provided support for unemployed and economically inactive residents furthest away from the labour market, often with complex, multiple barriers requiring intensive and integrated support to enable them to progress towards, or into the labour market.
- 3.4 Pathways to Progression (Ambition) supported both young people (youth strand) and adults who have barriers to the labour market, but which are not as difficult and complex as the target groups in Pathways to Success
- 3.5 All of these projects have been delivered across the Borough and have provided support to over 567 adults and 293 young people to date. Of these 211 adults and young people have entered employment and 95 adults have accessed education or training, with a further 22 young people gaining basic skills qualifications.
- 3.6 The emergent Covid 19 pandemic in 2020 resulted in significant changes to the delivery of the program, with face-to-face meetings with IAG advisors being quickly replaced by telephone and digital meetings. Daily emails from staff highlighted employment opportunities available both locally and regionally as well as opportunities to access online training in a range of disciplines.
- 3.7 The pandemic resulted in the claimant count for Barnsley reaching 6.6% in April 2021, the highest rate for 25 years. Since then, the count has reduced to 5% in October 2021 but remains higher than the national average of 4.8% (NOMIS Local Authority profile, November 2021)
- 3.5 Since the ending of the main lock down restrictions, employment opportunities throughout the SYMCA have risen, with many employers struggling to recruit staff due to an exodus of overseas staff caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit (SYMCA report 19 November 2021).
- 3.6 Several new employment programs have been implemented since the start of the Pandemic, including the Government's 'Restart' program. This programme, however, provides support for people who have been on Universal Credit for at least 12 months so there remains a need to support people who are recently unemployed, or who are economically inactive, i.e., not claiming benefits etc. This support can be provided through the ESF program – Pathway to Success.
- 3.7 Specific support for unemployed young people has been provided by the DWP through the establishment of Youth Hubs, including the one located on Floor 2 of Wellington House. This provision is for young people aged from 18- 24 years of age and does not specifically support young people at RISK of becoming NEET, or who are economically inactive. This support can be provided through the youth strand of the ESF Programme- Pathways to Progression (Ambition).

## **4. PROPOSAL AND JUSTIFICATION**

- 4.1 At the start of the Covid- 19 pandemic the ESF Managing Authority recognised that ESF projects already commissioned could not operate as normal, resulting in reduced participant figures and significant underspend of allocated budgets. To enable support to be continued, and to mitigate the potential underspend, projects were asked to submit requests to extend projects until the 31 December 2023, with up to 50% of the original contract value being available for this extension.
- 4.2 As a result BMBC were asked by Sheffield Council to submit extension requests to provide continued support to vulnerable adult residents through Pathways to Success and Pathways to Progression (Ambition) and young people through the youth strand of Pathways to Progression (Ambition).
- 4.3 As BMBC Employment and Skills had already been notified of successful ESF funded bids to support unemployed and economically inactive adults into education, employment or training from October 2021 (e.g., ESF Sector Routeways), a decision was made to avoid requesting extension funding to support unemployed adults which replicated ESF provision already approved. As such requests were only made to extend funding to support young people through the youth strand of Pathways to Progression (Ambition) and vulnerable adults through Pathways to Success.
- 4.4 The project extension for both Pathways to Success and Pathway's to Progression (Ambition) builds on the work already being undertaken to support support some of our most vulnerable residents including young people at risk of becoming NEET, care-leavers and people with learning disabilities and difficulties. Support for the program is predominantly through staff within the Employment + Skills IAG team, with a reduction in support from the Employment and Volunteering team of the Able Service from 5 days per week to 1.5 days per week to reflect the smaller number of customers being referred by this route. The additional 3.5 days per week funding for the role to be retained will be provided by the Able team but will not form part of this programme. Community Development Officer roles are also included in the Pathways to Success bid to identify and provide additional support to vulnerable residents identified within our local communities
- 4.5 Sheffield City Council has now been offered the extension ESF funding for both Pathways to Success and the youth strand of Pathways to Progression (Ambition) with BMBC being identified as a delivery partner.

## **5. CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES**

- 5.1 Reject the extension funding

Operating any ESF project includes complex claiming processes and includes risks of project non-compliance with grant claw-back. Projects therefore require dedicated resources, which could be argued can be better deployed elsewhere. It could also be argued that with the recent launches of several

ESF programs to support the unemployed by IAG advisors from the ASCL Service, ie Sector Routeways as well as the Government backed Restart program, in response to the projected high unemployment levels as a result of Covid 19 pandemic, that there is no need for further support

5.1.2 Whilst new programmes supporting unemployed residents to progress are welcome additions to Barnsley, the recent pandemic has also increased the number of economically inactive residents due to young people staying in education or older residents retiring from work due to either ill health, caring responsibilities, or because of the Covid-19 pandemic (SYMCA, 15/10/21). Support to enable this group back into employment can be provided through programmes such as Pathways to Success and/or Pathways to Progression (Ambition).

5.1.2 Rejecting the extension to Funding for both projects would deprive the borough of additional resources to support these groups and enabling residents to progress towards a positive outcome, whether that be education, employment, or training.

## **6. IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL PEOPLE/SERVICE USERS**

6.1 **Pathways to Success** will support the employability of local people and it targets those who experience complex barriers and are more vulnerable in the labour market. Inclusion of support from the Communities Directorate will enable vulnerable clients within the Ward Alliances to be identified. The project will provide an integrated and intensive support package to enable these individuals to access and sustain employment.

6.2 **Pathways to Progression (Ambition)** – the project will support the employability of young people. It will specifically target young people at risk of becoming NEET and support them to progress in education, employment or training. Additional support will also be provided to those who are care experienced or have an Education or Health Care Plan (EHP) to enable them to move into a positive destination.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 Consultations have taken place with representatives of the Service Director – Finance (S151 Officer).

7.2 The report is notifying Cabinet of ESF's approval to extend the Pathways to Success and Pathways to Progression schemes from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2023 and seeking approval to accept this extension and to provide the match funding required to deliver the programmes.

7.3 Delivery of the Pathways to Success will cost Barnsley £1.739m over the period 2019/20 to 2023/24, which is an increase of £0.407m on the previously approved project budget reported to Cabinet on 6 February 2019.

7.4 This will be funded by:

- ESF Grant of £0.965m (increase of £0.226m on the previously approved budget).
- BMBC Match Funding of £0.774m (increase of £0.181m on the previously approved budget). However, due to slippage of the programme, the match funding required in 2022 – 2024 is £0.292m.

7.5 Delivery of the Pathways to Progression (Ambition) will cost Barnsley £0.771m over the period 2019/20 to 2023/24, which is an increase of £0.256m on the previously approved project budget reported to Cabinet on 6 February 2019.

7.6 This will be funded by:

- ESF Grant of £0.424m (increase of £0.141m on the previously approved budget).
- BMBC Match Funding of £0.347m (increase of £0.115m on the previously approved budget).

7.7 All BMBC match funding will come from existing staffing and resource budgets therefore no additional resources are being requested.

7.8 If the Council chose to terminate the funding agreement within the contract period it could do so without any clawback of previously paid grant, although, it would suffer reputational damage from this course of action.

7.9 The financial implications for each project are summarised on the attached Appendix A.

## **8. EMPLOYEE IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 The project will safeguard employees who would otherwise be at risk of redundancy. A full breakdown of the grant funded posts is shown in Appendix B. The able team post is retained as a full-time post, but the additional costs will be met by the service.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Service Level Agreements: Service level agreements will be submitted to partners to ensure they also follow the funders requirements. Our Legal team have been consulted upon and agreed both the terms of the funders' contract and our partner's service level agreements.

9.2 GDPR: As the project will hold personal and sensitive information a DPIA has been undertaken and a project privacy statement created for participants, which has been reviewed and improved by Information Governance.

## **10. CUSTOMER AND DIGITAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 Both projects will support local unemployed or economically inactive residents to access support to help them progress towards, or into education,

employment, or training. Advice will be provided to understand the benefits of developing digital skills including the ability to access online services.

## **11. COMMUNICATIONS IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 The project will require local communications, and these will use our existing outlets for TIAG and ACSL, both of which have their own social media sites and the Council's corporate communications. Sheffield City Council will support marketing and communications by designing and developing branding guidelines and through central procurement of project wide marketing

## **12. CONSULTATIONS**

12.1 Consultations have been undertaken with staff from the following Directorates:

- Stronger + Healthier Communities in the Communities Directorate,
- Employment and Volunteering in the People Directorate
- Finance, Governance, Legal Services and Human Resources in the Core Directorate.

## **13. EQUALITY IMPACT**

13.1 Full Equality Impact Assessment completed

13.2 Both projects proposed aim to address challenges and promote equality, diversity, and social inclusion. Each project has its own Equality and Diversity Plan which will be monitored on a quarterly basis. They will have a positive impact on people with protected characteristics. Results from the projects so far indicate that support is being provided to participants within different groups, with both disabled and participants from an ethnic minority background moving into employment.

13.3 Both projects contribute to poverty reduction by supporting people into sustained employment and promoting in work progression. Support for budgeting and debt advice is available within both projects.

13.4 Pathways to Success includes specific provision to support those with health barriers, notably LLDD to gain employment. Both projects contribute to the More and Better Jobs priorities of Getting Ready for Work, Getting Into Work and Getting On (and Staying In) Work which are strongly aligned to supporting health and wellbeing. Both programs support outcomes aligned to the Healthy Barnsley, Learning Barnsley and Growing Barnsley priorities of the Council Plan 2021-24

## **14. THE CORPORATE PLAN AND THE COUNCIL'S PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK**

14.1 The project supports the following priorities – Learning Barnsley. Healthy Barnsley and Growing Barnsley

## **15. TACKLING THE IMPACT OF POVERTY**

- 15.1 The project aim is to provide personalised and integrated employment support that enables participants to secure sustained employment. Although the prevalence of in work poverty is increasing, work remains the best route out of poverty and the ethos of personalisation requires that the projects work to secure appropriate employment rather than any employment.

## **16. TACKLING HEALTH INEQUALITIES**

- 16.1 Employment has been shown to be good for health and to reduce health inequalities. PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS is particularly targeted at individuals with multiple barriers and many of these will have a health dimension. Integration of support from mainstream services and the employment support is core to the Pathways to Success model to promote delivery of the right support at the right time.

## **17. REDUCTION OF CRIME AND DISORDER**

- 17.1 “The relationship between crime and unemployment is ambiguous and difficult to measure with conflicting results and no complete consensus” (Ha, 2019).

As such it is impossible to ascertain whether this program will reduce crime and disorder in the Borough.

## **18. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

- 18.1 The project has a full risk register which will be reviewed at quarterly meetings. In relation to the specific risk issues for the authority, the risk of grant claw-back is the greatest. A copy of this can be found in Appendix C

## **19. HEALTH, SAFETY AND EMERGENCY RESILIENCE ISSUES**

- 19.1 NONE

## **20. COMPATIBILITY WITH THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

- 20.1 NONE

## **21. CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY**

- 21.1 NONE

## **22. GLOSSARY**

- ESF – European Social Fund
- IAG – Information Advice and Guidance
- TIAG – Targeted Information Advice and Guidance
- ASCL – Adult Skills and Community Learning
- NEET – Young people not in education, employment or training

- LLDD- Learner with Learning Difficulties or Disabilities
- SYMCA- South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority

### 23. LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendices A:	Financial implications. Pathways to Success and Pathways to Progression (Ambition)
Appendix B:	Human Resource implications
Appendices C:	Risk Registers Pathways to Success and Pathways to Progression
Appendix D:	Equalities Impact Assessment
Appendix E:	DWP- Outcome Notification Letter

### 24. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Project Applications
- Project Monitoring Data November 2021
- More and Better Jobs Plan
- Local Integration Board Framework
- NOMIS Local Authority Data November 2021
- South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority Data
- Analyse the relationship between Unemployment and Crime- , Kimberley HA, 2012

If you would like to inspect background papers for this report, please email [governance@barnsley.gov.uk](mailto:governance@barnsley.gov.uk) so that appropriate arrangements can be made

**Report author:** Dr Carol Booth

Financial Implications/Consultation

.....  
*(To be signed by senior Financial Services officer  
 where no financial implications)*