

Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 5 November 2020

Edinburgh Project SEARCH – Delivery and Future Development

Executive/routine	Routine
Wards	All
Council Commitments	7.31

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee is asked to:
 - 1.1.1. Note the temporary changes in delivery of the Edinburgh Project SEARCH programme for the academic year 2020/21 due to the Covid-19 pandemic;
 - 1.1.2. Note the plans to create more internship opportunities and develop progression routes into employment and Modern Apprenticeships within the Council for Project SEARCH interns; and
 - 1.1.3. Agree to receive a further report on future delivery options to ensure the continued success of the programme.

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Executive Director of Place

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Edinburgh Project SEARCH – Delivery and Future Development

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report explains the changes which have been made to the delivery of Edinburgh's Project SEARCH programme in 2020/21 in light of the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and sets out options for future development of the programme, including creating more internship opportunities and developing direct progression routes into council Modern Apprenticeships.

3. Background

- 3.1 DFN Project SEARCH is an international transition to work programmes which supports young people with learning disabilities and autism, providing key work experience before moving into mainstream employment. The City of Edinburgh Council began delivery of Edinburgh Project SEARCH under license from DFN in 2014.
- 3.2 Edinburgh Project SEARCH has been funded from a combination of sources since inception. From 2018 until present, it has been jointly funded by the Council and Lothians Health Foundation, with both organisations expecting to reclaim up to 40% of Job Coach staff costs from the European Social Fund (ESF).
- 3.3 Both the Council and NHS Lothian oversee the delivery of the programme and source placements within their organisations, with a joint steering group responsible for the management of the programme in line with the DFN Project SEARCH model.
- 3.4 The programme runs for a full academic year, from August to June. Normally, 26 spaces are provided, with 13 young people based as interns within the City of Edinburgh Council and NHS Lothian's Western General hospital respectively. Job Coaching support (usually two Full Time Equivalent (FTE) posts at each site) is provided by Into Work and Edinburgh College fund provide a full-time tutor at each site.
- 3.5 Prior to this year, the interns were based full time within the Council or NHS Lothian for three ten-week work placements. Each day started and ended (for a total of two

hours per day) within a designated training area where a Project SEARCH curriculum and the SQA employability award was completed. The remainder of the day was spent within a service area, with the intern learning on the job while being supported by staff. The job coach also visited daily to provide additional support.

4. Main report

Programme delivery 2020/21

- 4.1 Due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the subsequent changes in working conditions in both the Council and NHS Lothian, the joint steering group had to review the delivery model of Edinburgh's Project SEARCH for the academic year 2020/21.
- 4.2 It was agreed that, as the programme is extremely valuable, it should continue where possible, especially as the evidence suggests that those with a disability will be one of the main groups affected by the pandemic.
- 4.3 However, it was recognised that, due to buildings not being open, some placements may not be available in the short-term and that the existing model would not be sustainable while the majority of staff are working from home and therefore unable to support the interns in the same way as previous years.
- 4.4 In consultation with senior management in the Council, NHS Lothian and Edinburgh College, the steering group concluded that a temporary, alternative delivery model would be required. It was therefore agreed that the programme participants would complete all curriculum work during the first three months of the programme via a combination of online learning and college-based learning.
- 4.5 Due to the timetabling of the programme in line with the academic year, this year's programme is already underway with college learning beginning on 14 September 2020.
- 4.6 The steering group also agreed that a reduction in the number of interns would be appropriate. This means that 14 (seven at each site instead of normal 26) interns will be supported in this operational year, with the aim of returning to full capacity in August 2021.

Intern Placements and Job Coaching

- 4.7 In 2020/21, internships will not commence until January 2021 (Phase 2 of the programme) to allow the Council and NHS Lothian staff time to identify suitable supported and safe placements.
- 4.8 It is, however, sometimes challenging to secure appropriate work placements within Council services and it is expected that, due to the changes implemented in responses to Covid-19 this may prove even more challenging.

- 4.9 It is therefore intended to work closely with Senior Managers in the Council to identify services where appropriate placements can be delivered, with adequate support and supervision provided.
- 4.10 The reduction in the number of interns means that only two Job Coaches will be required in 2020/21. As a result of this a reduction in grant funding has been agreed with Into Work (who employ the Job Coaches).
- 4.11 As Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee was suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the award of funding for this year's delivery was approved by the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Convener and Vice Convener, under delegated authority.

Progression after programme

- 4.12 In total 154, interns have been enrolled in the Project SEARCH programme since inception. 83 of these have been in placement with the Council and 71 with NHS Lothian. Of this group, 78 have secured employment, with a total of 47 being employed by either NHS Lothian or the Council.
- 4.13 To improve the outcomes achieved by interns placed with the Council, the Business Growth and Inclusion team will work closely with Human Resources colleagues and with NHS Lothian to identify ways in which interns can be supported and developed to secure employment within the Council at the end of the programme.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The interim delivery model will be reviewed against the previous model (based on participant experience, development and satisfaction alongside model fidelity, progression and employment outcomes) at the end of the programme.
- 5.2 Options for job coach provision for the next year and beyond are currently being reviewed and three options are being explored as below:
 - 5.2.1 Incorporating the requirement for job coaching support into the new procurement specification for contracts of supported employment provision from 2021 onwards;
 - 5.2.2 Conducting open grants procurement specifically for the purpose of Edinburgh Project SEARCH; and
 - 5.2.3 Bringing the provision of job coaching support in house and employing the job coaching staff directly with the Council and NHS Lothian.
- 5.3 A report outlining the impact of each of these options with an officer recommendation on next steps will be prepared for Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee in January 2021.
- 5.4 Officers will work with Human Resources and NHS Lothian to investigate ways to improve employment outcomes within the Council.

- 5.5 Planning for the 2021/22 programme will begin later in 2020. It is intended that a full complement of young people with a disability will benefit from this programme in future years as this will be needed more than ever for this client group in the longer-term recovery of the city.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 Due to the reduced programme capacity and number of job coaches provided, the total cost of the programme for this year is projected to be reduced from c.£146,000 to c. £92,000
- 6.2 Grant funding for Into Work has been reduced from £125,611 to £71,154.60. 40% of this will be reclaimable through ESF, with the Council (Place revenue budget) and NHS Lothian jointly funding the balance.
- 6.3 Although this equates to a total saving of c. £21,000 to the Council, it is important to highlight that this saving is for one year only and the cost of the programme is expected to return to previous levels (although this is subject to review).

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 Places on the programme have been reduced by almost 40%. This will have an impact on the number of possible outcomes and the ongoing Scottish Government ambition of reducing the Disability Employment Gap.
- 7.2 Anyone who was unsuccessful in the recruitment process or who made an enquiry to the programme, has been referred to a supported employment providers and/or offered an alternative college course.
- 7.3 The delivery partners will adhere fully to any national, Scottish and Local Government guidance and/or regulations in relation to social distancing and the health and safety of participants.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 [Council Commitments – Delivering an Economy for All.](#)
- 8.2 [A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People Employment Action Plan - Progress Report.](#)
- 8.3 [Coronavirus and the social impacts on disabled people in Great Britain: May 2020.](#)
- 8.4 [Update on the Labour Market Status of Disabled People.](#)
- 8.5 [The effects of the coronavirus crisis on workers.](#)
- 8.6 [Housing and Economy Committee, Thursday, 30 August, 2018.](#)

9. Appendices

9.1 None.