

Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 27 August 2024

Network of Employability Support and Training

Executive/routine
Wards

Executive
All

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that Housing Homelessness and Fair Work Committee:
 - 1.1.1 Note the co-production exercise and review undertaken in order to update, develop and realign the specification for the Network of Employability Support and Training (NEST) in Edinburgh;
 - 1.1.2 Note that recommendations for funding a refreshed NEST small grants programme will be reported to Committee following completion of a grants commissioning process;
 - 1.1.3 Approve additional funding of £175,000 to Capital City Partnership (CCP) to provide a total of £425,000 for the NEST Vocational Training Framework delivery in 2024/25; and
 - 1.1.4 Approve an extension for a further year (2025/26) of the direct award of funding at the increased level to Capital City Partnership (CCP) for the NEST Vocational Training Framework, subject to continued Scottish Government funding being available.

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Network of Employability Support and Training

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report seeks approval to undertake a grants commissioning process for implementing a refreshed Network of Employability Support and Training (NEST) which will include grant funding for Parental Employability Support (PES).
- 2.2 Approval is also sought to increase the delivery of the successful NEST Vocational Training Framework (VTF) in 2024/25 and to extend the delivery for a further year for 2025/26, subject to the availability of funding from the Scottish Government.

3. Background

Network of Employability Support and Training

- 3.1 The Council currently funds, with Scottish Government [No One Left Behind](#) funding and under the banner of NEST, third party employability services to support Edinburgh citizens to access and progress along the Employability Strategic Skills Pipeline with the goal of securing, sustaining and progressing in training and employment.
- 3.2 On 20 January 2022, Committee approved the [grants](#) to the current NEST project delivery providers and the allocation of funding to Capital City Partnership for the procurement of a VTF for three years until 31 March 2025.
- 3.3 The current NEST programme funds grants' for 12 employability projects at a total cost of £857,227 per annum and a framework of vocational training provision at a cost of £250,000 per annum. On 9 March 2023, Committee [approved](#) an additional £75,000 of funding to be allocated to the Vocational Training Framework (VTF) in 2023/24, to add capacity specifically for young people to access sector specific training and qualifications

Parental Employability Support

- 3.4 Parental Employability Support (PES) funding is provided by the Scottish Government under the [Tackling Child Poverty strategy](#) to complement the [No One](#)

[Left Behind \(NOLB\) strategy](#), by delivering services specifically to support parents into, and to progress in, employment.

- 3.5 On [27 February 2024](#), Committee [approved](#) the delivery of 28 third party grants at a total cost of £1,084,058 for PES. These grant agreements are due to end on 31 March 2025.

4. Main report

- 4.1 A coproduction exercise has been undertaken by the Local Employability Partnership (LEP) for the refresh and review of the NEST and PES programmes. This has engaged with users, beneficiaries and other stakeholders to ensure that services funded in the future are fit for purpose, aligned to requirements, utilising current good practice and preventing duplication.
- 4.2 This follows on from multiple co-production processes over the last few years relating to Scottish Government funding for NOLB and PES.
- 4.3 The coproduction has also taken into consideration other employability services available in Edinburgh, including the [Edinburgh Blended Employability Services](#) that were approved by Finance and Resources Committee on 7 October 2021.
- 4.4 The coproduction has worked with stakeholders, service providers and citizens accessing services to consider the plans for the future of grant funding for employability in Edinburgh.

Stakeholders

- 4.5 Meetings were held with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to gain insight on issues facing citizens and hear advisors' thoughts on current employability provision.
- 4.6 The Youth Employment Partnership (YEP) and 16+ Schools network in Edinburgh were consulted on plans for co-production and support for young people, and will continue to be kept updated throughout the recommissioning process.
- 4.7 A call was made to members in the Lothian Association of Youth Clubs (LAYC) to hear about support for young people and the current provision available.
- 4.8 The New Scots Edinburgh group were consulted on the coproduction process and current provision, focusing on services delivering to ethnic minority clients, including New Scots.
- 4.9 Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations Council (EVOC) were consulted as the voice of the third sector in Edinburgh, including reaching out to hear from the small area networks of community-based organisations.

- 4.10 Scottish Government's Third Sector Interface Employability Lead was consulted on Edinburgh's approach to coproduction, which was held up as an example of best practice in Scotland for NOLB/Child Poverty funding.

Service Providers

- 4.11 A presentation was made to the Joined Up for Jobs Forum in May, outlining the coproduction process and allowing providers to ask questions and detailed how they could participate in the ongoing coproduction.
- 4.12 Multiple service provider sessions were held, where providers were updated on the coproduction process and had the opportunity to participate in workshops to discuss the services required for citizens in Edinburgh.
- 4.13 A specific session for organisations which are ethnically-led or whose aim is to support ethnic minority clients was held, which allowed organisations to discuss support for ethnic minority clients and the difficulties faced when making funding applications.

Citizens

- 4.14 A number of in-person sessions were held with people who are either currently engaging with employability services, or who may be interested in engaging with services in future. This included sessions with:
- 4.14.1 Jack Kane Centre;
 - 4.14.2 Goodtrees Neighbourhood Centre;
 - 4.14.3 Barnardo's;
 - 4.14.4 Making Work Work;
 - 4.14.5 Linknet;
 - 4.14.6 Access to Industry;
 - 4.14.7 Scottish Prison Service, engaging with current prisoners in HMP Edinburgh; and
 - 4.14.8 LAYC.
- 4.15 Stakeholder and citizen surveys were also circulated to gain written feedback. These surveys included similar questions to those asked during sessions with stakeholders/citizens. Over 100 responses were recorded from citizens providing valuable information for planning the allocation of future funding.
- 4.16 The intention is to align future grants with the priorities outlined in the recent LEP Strategy for 2024-26 and the Scottish Government priority groups for funding for Tackling Child Poverty. This identifies the priority groups as:
- 4.16.1 People who are experiencing health issues, and/or disabilities;

- 4.16.2 People who are experiencing in-work poverty;
 - 4.16.3 Ethnic minority groups;
 - 4.16.4 Those who are aged over 50 who are classed as being economically inactive;
 - 4.16.5 Lone Parents who are unemployed or experiencing in work poverty;
 - 4.16.6 Parents with a disability or families who are unemployed or experiencing in work poverty and have a disabled child;
 - 4.16.7 Parents who are unemployed or experiencing in work poverty and have three or more children;
 - 4.16.8 Parents from a minority ethnic background who are unemployed or experiencing in work poverty;
 - 4.16.9 Parents who are unemployed or experiencing in work poverty and have a youngest child under the age of one; and
 - 4.16.10 Parents who are aged under 25 who are unemployed or experiencing in work poverty
- 4.17 The coproduction has also identified the need for a streamlined grant process for employability under one funding stream and it is recommended to recommission the NEST and PESF grants programme under one bidding process. This will allow the opportunity to align the grant programmes and identify any savings and efficiencies that can be made from combining funding streams.

Vocational Training Framework

- 4.18 The VTF, which provides employability and vocational training linked to guaranteed interviews, has been hugely successful and ended 23/24 with a total of 26 courses completed, 321 learners enrolled, 91% completing and gaining certificates, and 137 gaining employment to date, with several clients continuing to receive post-course support and attending interviews. Jobs secured were across various sectors, including employers such as NHS, NatWest, Spring OSCARS, Call in Home Care, City of Edinburgh Council, and Edinburgh College.
- 4.19 The first quarter of 2024/25 currently has three courses underway in Early Learning and Childcare, Construction, and a Transferable Skills Academy with a focus on economically inactive individuals. In quarter 2, the courses include Business and Administration and Construction in May plus Health and Social Care, SIA Security and IT/Tech.
- 4.20 Given the success of the programme thus far, Committee is asked to approve additional funding of £175,000 to Capital City Partnership (CCP) to provide a total of £425,000 for VTF delivery in 2024/25.

- 4.21 The original procurement exercise included the possibility for an extension with the providers for another year and it is therefore recommended to agree a continuation of the programme for another year, pending Scottish Government funding. The level of funding will be based on likely need following the NEST grant process and funding level for 2025/26 will be recommended at the same time as the NEST grant recommendations.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 If Committee approves the recommendations of this report:
- 5.1.1 Service specifications for a replacement employability grants programme based on the priorities set out in 4.16 will be used for the commissioning of the replacement grants programme;
 - 5.1.2 This grants commissioning process will commence immediately. This will be led by a steering group made up of members of the LEP who have a strategic overview of employability delivery in the city;
 - 5.1.3 Funding information will be published on The Joined Up for Jobs Noticeboard and Public Contract Scotland, as appropriate;
 - 5.1.4 As part of the commissioning process, it is intended to allow applicants to submit draft proposals prior to final submission, in order for the assessors to provide comments and feedback on the strategic fit and appropriateness of the application; and
 - 5.1.5 Officers will liaise with CCP to increase the VTF delivery in 2024/25 and plan ahead for a further year of delivery until 31 March 2026, subject to the availability of Scottish Government funding.
 - 5.1.6 A further report will be presented to Committee outlining projects recommended for grant funding approval and the value of funding to be allocated to the VTF for 2025/26;
- 5.2 It is expected that all funded projects will be in place from 1 April 2025.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 If the Scottish Government employability funding allocation is continued as anticipated, there is no financial impact to the Council as all delivery costs for the projects funded would be met from the funding awarded.
- 6.2 The ongoing projects would be contract managed by CCP, under the existing Service Level Agreement (SLA).

7. Equality and Poverty Impact

- 7.1 The focus of the current services and the planned future services is on equality of opportunity, aiming to alleviate the disadvantage faced by those with barriers to employment.
- 7.2 A refreshed Integrated Impact Assessment and Data Protection Impact Assessment will be completed as part of the coproduction exercise to input into service specifications.
- 7.3 As with all strategic decisions, the aim is to ensure no-one is adversely affected by any proposal and/or programme and that all services are fully inclusive.

8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

- 8.1 There are no Climate and Nature Emergency implications arising directly because of this report.
- 8.2 There is a recognised need for green skills in order to support a just transition to a net zero economy, and it is anticipated that especially the VTF will be able to provide support in this area, but also that some of the projects offered under a new NEST programme will be focussing on green skills.

9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact

- 9.1 All grants were originally awarded using a co-production methodology. The review and subsequent commissioning and any replacement service specifications required will again be co-produced. This will be undertaken through a fully consultative process that includes and takes account of input from key stakeholders, service providers and service users.
- 9.2 Partnership working is at the heart of the development of all employability activities, both between Council departments and other partners and the planned grants process has been designed by the LEP to complement and enhance the current strategic skills pipeline.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 [No One Left Behind Delivery Plan](#)
- 10.2 [Tackling Child Poverty strategy](#)

11. Appendices

None.