



Decision Pathway – Report

PURPOSE: Key decision

MEETING: Cabinet

DATE: 07 March 2023

TITLE	Bristol One Front Door Service – Extension Funding Opportunity			
Ward(s)	City Wide – with emphasis on wards with the highest levels of unemployment			
Author: Jane Taylor	Job title: Head of Employment, Skills and Learning			
Cabinet lead: Cllr Asher Craig Cabinet Member for Children's, Education and Equalities	Executive Director lead: Agi Gbago Executive Director Children and Education			
Proposal origin: BCC Staff				
Decision maker: Cabinet Member				
Decision forum: Cabinet				
Purpose of Report				
To obtain Cabinet approval to take up a WECA Skills Connect grant to the value of £695,500. This funding will enable us to extend our successful One Front Door job matching service which connects job seekers with recruiting employers, employment support and wraparound service providers.				
Evidence Base:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The Council's One Front Door ('OFD') service was initially funded during the first phase of the Covid 19 pandemic through a Department for Work and Pensions ('DWP') Flexible Support Fund grant. Through this investment, we have successfully strengthened our network of employers and created a comprehensive multi-provider service offer which 'joins the system' and acts as a single-entry employment support service. There is strong evidence that our OFD service has plugged a critical gap in employment support in Bristol:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a) The total number of participants who signed up to our service, each receiving a OFD coach offering intensive bespoke support, a personalised action plan and multiple follow up calls was 662 people. The 'into work' rate achieved was 24% with many other clients achieving other positive progression outcomes such as training, education and volunteering.b) The OFD service has successfully engaged and supported many people from priority groups: people from Black and Minoritised Communities (205); people struggling with mental health issues (147); Care Leavers (11); homeless people (37); young people aged 18-24 (88); those aged over 50 (132).c) The OFD has an accessible website which has consistently attracted many visits each month. Since the website was launched on 10th June 2021 the site has had 95,301 views.d) The OFD team have organised and hosted 28 job fairs and attended a further 53 events. Based on employer feedback, we have calculated that these events have resulted in 1,405 interviews and 670 jobs fillede) Our Ways2Work network has sent out 988 vacancies to a network with over 300 people receiving the daily emails, hosted regular multi-agency network meetings and promoted over 700 vacancies on our OFD website.f) 3 short employability courses have been developed as part of the OFD programme: Employment Skills and Confidence Course (Community Learning Team - 71 attendees and ongoing), CV workshops (Princes Trust), 'Time for Change' (CC Bed). Quote from learner on the course: 'This course has equipped me with the tools I need to face the next chapter of my life.'				

- g) The OFD team have coordinated the **distribution of 85 laptops** to participants to support them to access training and apply for jobs. A **further 20+ laptops** have been provided to participants who attended the community learning employment course.
- h) We have recently introduced **dedicated employment support for refugees**, initially Ukrainian focussed. Since October 2 OFD coaches have registered and offered bespoke support to **68 Ukrainian refugees**, **with 23% 'into work'**. 1 OFD coach also supports rough sleepers through the **Move In, Move On, Move Up programme**.
- i) The OFD service is included in the Council's **formal partnership agreement with the DWP** and performance has been regularly monitored through a joint DWP/BCC governance group that involves other key commissioners and strategic partners
- j) Having an established employment support infrastructure represented through our One Front Door has enabled the City Council to **leverage an additional £2.27m** of external funding for employment support programmes since the start of the original OFD programme.
2. Whilst unemployment has fallen in Bristol (3.4% to November 2022), it still hasn't returned to pre pandemic levels (2.6% March 2020). In some areas, unemployment is significantly higher than that of the average across Bristol (Lawrence Hill – 7.5%, Easton 5.9%, Hartcliffe and Withywood – 5.9%). In our employment support programmes we are seeing a rise in complex issues facing our participants including mental health, housing, debt and long-term sickness and have an increase in safeguarding issues, particularly related to mental health (26% of current programme participants declare a mental health condition). Signs that the impact of the cost-of-living crisis is impacting people and communities across the city is growing. We are working actively with the One Council Team on this, but as the winter bites and the impact of the crisis deepens for individuals and the many SMEs across the City, we envisage a rise in unemployment, the complexity of our caseload and the small business failure rate.
3. WECA funding will enable our service to further develop as part of a city region Skills Connect model. Bristol City Council can utilise this critical resource to continue to assist employers, individuals and support agencies to match vacancies with jobseekers living in Bristol's most deprived communities and also signpost them to wraparound support using a variety of digital and physical channels.
4. The new grant and programme will:
- Support a minimum of 1326 Bristol job seekers and enable them to enhance their skills and abilities and knowledge of the labour market and vacancies, whilst building confidence, assertiveness and a positive self-image, enhanced through 375 individuals having a detailed needs assessment and action plan.
 - Give claimants living in the most deprived communities in Bristol the opportunity to be matched to immediate and emerging vacancies, being actively encouraged and enabled to apply for them.
 - Engage with employers with hard to fill immediate and potential vacancies and find innovative new ways of matching deprived communities to hear of them and to apply for them, for example through supported work trials, volunteering, support for employers to access shared levy funding and new digital accounts for apprenticeships.
 - Run a minimum of 20 jobs fairs in targeted communities across the City. All jobs fairs will be inclusive and accessible for all equality groups.
 - Enable claimants to learn new and update existing skills and experience including digital and work readiness as well as building content for CVs.
 - Deliver a service that is a catalyst for positive change for people living within Bristol's most deprived communities and also a light touch support service for those newly unemployed – this includes many parents and carers struggling with low incomes and other challenges (e.g. cost of childcare; transport costs; low qualifications)
 - Identify priorities by setting practical stretching goals that are personalised with each job seeker.
 - Give opportunity to increase knowledge and confidence to become self-sufficient by enhancing participants' life and work readiness skills.

5. There is a specialist staff team with essential IT equipment already in place. If we are able to accept the funding, all contracts will be extended for the duration of the grant agreement from 1 April 2023 to the end of September 2025.
6. 100% of OFD management, delivery and administration costs will be covered by the WECA grant, including a contribution to City Council overhead costs such as HR and IT. All finance audit, legal and marketing costs will be covered. We will be working closely with WECA and the DWP to secure continuation funding. In the event of no follow-on funding in place by contract end, staff redundancy costs will be factored into the project budget as part of our exit profile.

Cabinet Member / Officer Recommendations:

That Cabinet:

1. Authorise the Executive Director, Children and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Equalities, to take all steps required to accept and spend the WECA Grant of £695,500 as outlined in this report.
2. Notes that the Employment, Skills and Learning Team will develop and manage the programme and fulfil all funding monitoring and reporting requirements.

Corporate Strategy alignment:

This project contributes to the Mayor's commitment to create a city of opportunity where no one is left behind and inclusive economic growth. It also helps tackle poverty by connecting people to jobs and opportunities in their local community.

City Benefits:

By developing a multi-agency partnership and approach, Bristol City Council can use this funding to improve employment and skills outcomes for Bristol most disadvantaged individuals and communities. This service will also improve their access to specialist support and resources so that wider benefits are achieved, e.g. secure housing, improved financial resilience, improved health and well-being, improved social and community support.

Consultation Details:

In preparing the draft Skills Connect business case and offer, WECA worked closely with local authority skills officers and then widely consulted about the proposed model with employers, training providers, voluntary and community sector organisations, and other key stakeholders through surveys, interviews and meetings.

Background Documents:

[Corporate Strategy 2022-27 \(bristol.gov.uk\);](#)

[West-of-England-Employment-and-Skills-Plan-July-FINAL.pdf \(westofengland-ca.gov.uk\)](#)

Revenue Cost	£695,000	Source of Revenue Funding	WECA Investment Fund
Capital Cost	£0	Source of Capital Funding	N/A
One off cost <input type="checkbox"/>	Ongoing cost <input type="checkbox"/>	Saving Proposal <input type="checkbox"/>	Income generation proposal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Required information to be completed by Financial/Legal/ICT/ HR partners:

1. Finance Advice: The report seeks authorisation for the Executive Director for Children and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet member for Children's Services to accept and take steps to spend the grant of £695,000 as detailed in the report.

The planned costs associated with the programme includes a provision for exit costs at the end of the programme and should be fully covered by the grant value.

Finance Business Partner: Andrew Osei, Finance Business Partner, 30 January 2023		
2. Legal Advice: There are no specific legal implications arising from this report. Legal services will advise and assist officers with regard to the grant agreement.		
Legal Team Leader: Husinara Jones, Team Manager/Solicitor 6 January 2023		
3. Implications on IT: Although there is an IT element, this is part of daily IT activity. I can see no implications on IT in regard to this activity.		
IT Team Leader: Alex Simpson – Senior Solution Architect 10 January 2023		
4. HR Advice: There is a team of specialist staff who are employed by Bristol City Council on fixed term contracts and paid for by this funding. The extension of the FTC's will give some of the employees employment rights as they will have been on an FTC for in excess of two years. This means that if there is no follow on funding then they may be entitled to redeployment or, if unsuccessful in securing a new role, a redundancy payment. The appropriate policies will apply to these employees in these circumstance. Provision has been made to fund any redundancy payments through the grant funding.		
HR Partner: Lorna Laing, 13 January 2023		
EDM Sign-off	Abi Gbago	1 February 2023
Cabinet Member sign-off	Cllr Asher Craig	6 February 2023
For Key Decisions - Mayor's Office sign-off	Mayor's Office	6 February 2023
Appendix A – Further essential background / detail on the proposal	NO	
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Appendix B – Details of consultation carried out - internal and external	NO	
Appendix C – Summary of any engagement with scrutiny	NO	
Appendix D – Risk assessment	NO	
Appendix E – Equalities screening / impact assessment of proposal	YES	
Appendix F – Eco-impact screening/ impact assessment of proposal	NO	
Appendix G – Financial Advice	NO	
Appendix H – Legal Advice	NO	
Appendix I – Exempt Information	NO	
Appendix J – HR advice	NO	
Appendix K – ICT	NO	
Appendix L – Procurement	NO	