

Decision Pathway – Report



PURPOSE: Key decision

MEETING: Cabinet

DATE: 05 March 2024

TITLE	Employment, Skills and Lifelong Learning (ESL) Plan	
Ward(s)	All	
Author: Jane Taylor	Job title: Head of Service (Employment, Skills and Learning)	
Cabinet lead: Deputy Mayor Cllr Asher Craig, Cabinet Member, Children’s Services, Education and Equalities	Executive Director lead: Hannah Woodhouse, Executive Director Children & Education	
Proposal origin: BCC Staff		
Decision maker: Cabinet Member Decision forum: Cabinet		
Purpose of Report: To seek approval for the Employment, Skills and Lifelong Learning Plan (‘the ESL Plan’) from 2024 to 2030.		
Evidence Base:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bristol Employment, Skills and Lifelong Learning (‘ESL’) is a nationally recognised service which brings together a range of different functions: pre-16 careers and experience of work, post 16 tracking and career coaching for NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training’) young people; employment support for people who are unemployed or on low pay, apprenticeship brokerage with local employers, and adult and community learning services. 2. ESL makes a significant contribution to the Council’s corporate strategic priorities by enabling over 10,000 residents most excluded from education and employment opportunities to improve their confidence, skills and employment prospects. Our work is essential for increasing prosperity, enabling local businesses to thrive, building connections between people and communities, and making sure that no-one’s life chances are limited by their background. 3. The ESL service provides strong system leadership through our proactive co-ordination and co-production with wider council teams, developers and employers, education and training providers, employment support agencies, public sector bodies, and community and voluntary organisations. We also work bottom up with local communities, helping us find innovative solutions and develop responsive services together. 4. The ESL service has developed a very successful business model which is resourced through mixed funding. In 2023/24 the total service budget is £8.6 million of which £7.6m has been generated from a range of external funding sources. ESL uses a small, critical General Funding allocation and some core annual contracts to identify new business opportunities that help meet critical local gaps and needs. Over 20 years, the service has grown and developed, and despite the fixed term nature of most contracts, there have been zero redundancies. 5. The Head of Service (ESL) has worked closely with other Council teams on the ESL plan development – including representatives from the Policy Team, Economic Development, Housing, Performance and Intelligence, Equalities, Sustainability and Climate Change, Neighbourhoods and Communities, Adults and Communities, 		

Children and Education, Learning and Development, and Public Health. Intensive research, strategy/policy review and consultation has taken place to inform the plan. The data and intelligence collected has been used to produce two technical appendix documents (attached).

6. The ESL plan will enable the Council to fulfil Ofsted and funder requirements by providing a clear strategic direction for the Council's directly managed and commissioned services. This plan sets out a clear road map so that the ESL service can continue to make a significant contribution to Bristol City Council and WECA priorities for inclusive growth, sustainability, education and health equality. This document also provides a clear evidence base and business case to attract critical resources so we can continue to improve our employment and skills services and outcomes.
7. The ESL Plan outlines key Bristol challenges, assets, feedback, and ESL priorities for the next four years, including:
 - Connecting better to fix the system and tackle employment inequality and poverty together
 - Achieving better career outcomes for young people and families being left behind
 - Driving employment and skills targets into all major developments and contracts
 - Preparing local communities for a just shift to a carbon neutral and digital future
 - Helping employers recruit diverse talent and plug skills gaps in essential job roles
 - Supporting Disabled people and those with health conditions to achieve paid work
 - Enabling migrants and refugees to build on their skills to settle and thrive in Bristol
 - Boosting lifelong learning for work, life, citizenship and well being
8. Bristol City Council strategic leaders can help accelerate skills and employment outcomes by supporting the ESL service and taking action in the following areas:
 - Prioritising employment, skills and lifelong learning in corporate strategies and governance arrangements
 - Ensuring all managed developments and commissioned contracts link with ESL early so they embed employment and skills targets which are achieved with support from the team
 - Encouraging all Council run and procured services that work directly with residents to link up with ESL to generate more effective referral processes which are monitored for impact
 - Championing a diverse recruitment pilot, led by HR and ESL, so the City Council can address the under-representation of young people facing the greatest barriers in its own workforce
 - Using leverage with employers to pledge their support with experience of work, supported internships, apprenticeships, pre-recruitment training, diverse recruitment and donation of laptops and other digital devices
 - Ensuring that employment, skills and lifelong learning monitoring and reporting is fully embedded into the Council's governance and accountability system, including the new Committee system.

Officer Recommendations:

That Cabinet:

1. Approve the Employment, Skills and Lifelong Learning Plan 2024-30.
2. Authorise the Head of Service Education Skills and Learning in consultation with the Cabinet Member Children's Services, Education and Equalities to take all steps required to implement the ESL plan.
3. Note the consultation responses at appendix B.

Corporate Strategy alignment:

The ESL service provides a golden thread that runs through the Council's Corporate Strategy 2022-27. The ESL team brings substantial investment to the City and adds significant value to a range of corporate priorities, including: improving equity in education through young careers and experience of work for young people, post 16 youth engagement and advice and second chance adult skills provision; supporting Disabled people to achieve independence through provision of supported internships and specialist employment support; supporting regeneration and access to employment through our Building Bristol partnership with major developers, through On Site construction apprenticeships, and through extensive employment support and digital inclusion programmes; improving health and wellbeing by supporting people out of poverty and supporting their mental health resilience

and recovery through integrated advice, community learning and employment support.

City Benefits:

We believe that the work of the ESL service is life changing. These services give people living in our ‘under-served’ communities a chance to improve their skills, find decent paid employment, increase their household income and improve their health and wellbeing. ESL services helps connect local businesses to the diverse talent they need and enables them to meet their social value commitments. By supporting people out of poverty and providing them with accessible lifelong learning opportunities, ESL helps build stronger communities and makes a significant contribution to health equality.

Consultation Details:

To inform this plan, the ESL service has undertaken an intensive process of consultation with residents from our priority communities; young people; parents/carers of young people with SEND; employers large and small; partner providers – including schools, further education and higher education providers; community and voluntary sector; employment support and advice agencies; local DWP, BCC leaders and managers. The draft plan is also being presented for verification at Council Executive Board Meetings. A detailed consultation appendix document is attached, and the main consultation themes are also summarised in the main plan document.

Background Documents:

- a) [WECA Employment and Skills Plan 2023](#) covers the West of England Combined Authority area strategic priorities for employment and skills
- b) [The West of England Local Skills Improvement Plan 2023](#) was produced by Business West and approved by the Secretary of State in line with [the Skills and Post 16 Education Act 2022](#)
- c) The [One City ‘Economic Recovery and Renewal Strategy’](#) was produced in 2020/21 in response to Covid 19. This is being updated and the evidence and priorities in the ESL Plan are being used to inform the Bristol Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth Plan to be produced later in 2024.

Revenue Cost	£8.29m total revenue cost in 2023/24	Source of Revenue Funding	Employment, Skills and Learning Service, is funded through a combination of 830K General Funding and £7.4m external funding from a wide range of funders - including WECA, DfE, DLUHC, DWP, NHS, CEC, Section 106 plus traded income through learner fees and developer levy funding.
Capital Cost	£0	Source of Capital Funding	N/A
One off cost <input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing cost <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Saving Proposal <input type="checkbox"/> Income generation proposal <input type="checkbox"/>	

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

1. Finance Advice:

The Employment, Skills and Learning Service (ESL) is currently funded (2023/24) from a combination of around 25 different sources including the local authority general fund, partner contributions, ring-fenced grants and trading income. Some of these sources of funding have specific terms and conditions to which the local authority will need to ensure it adheres.

A number of the sources of funding are time limited in their nature and it will be necessary to reapply for these or seek alternative funding in future if the level of services envisioned within the plan is to be maintained.

Historically, the service has been very successful in maintaining its overall income which gives assurance that the ESL Plan should be deliverable over the plan period 2024 to 2030.

There is a small risk that when a funding source ceases, cessation costs including redundancy payments may be incurred although previous experience has shown that this risk can be fully mitigated through planning and redeployment.

Finance Business Partner: Guy Marshall, Finance Business Partner 19 January 2024

2. Legal Advice: This report seeks approval for the implementation of the Employment, Skills and Lifelong Learning

Plan to 2030.

The consultation responses must be conscientiously taken into account in finalising the decision. The leading cases on consultation provide that consultation should occur when proposals are at a formative stage, should give sufficient reasons for any proposal to permit intelligent consideration and should allow adequate time for consideration and response. There must be clear evidence that the decision maker has considered the consultation responses, or a summary of them, before taking its decision.

The Public Sector Equality duty requires the decision maker to consider the need to promote equality for persons with “protected characteristics” and to have due regard to the need to i) eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation; ii) advance equality of opportunity; and iii) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

The Equalities Impact Assessment is designed to assess whether there are any barriers in place that may prevent people with a protected characteristic using a service or benefiting from a policy. The decision maker must take into consideration the information in the assessment before taking the decision.

Legal Team Leader: Husinara Jones, Team Manager/Solicitor 12 February 2024

3. Implications on IT: I can see no implications on IT in regard to this activity

IT Team Leader: Alex Simpson, Lead Enterprise Architect 19 December 2023

4. HR Advice: The report is seeking approval for the Employment, Skills and Lifelong Learning Plan to 2030. The request to approve the plan does not have any direct HR implications arising for Bristol City Council employees.

HR Partner: Lorna Laing, HR Business Partner (Adults & Communities, Children's & Education) 18 December 2023

EDM Sign-off	Reena Bhogal-Welsh, Director of Education and Skills	17 January 2024
Cabinet Member sign-off	Cllr Asher Craig Cabinet Member Children’s Services, Education and Equalities	23 January 2024
For Key Decisions - Mayor’s Office sign-off	Mayor’s Office	5 February 2024

Appendix A – Further essential background / detail on the proposal A1. Bristol ESL Plan A2. Strategy and Policy Review January 2024	YES
Appendix B – Details of consultation carried out - internal and external	YES
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	YES
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