



Committee Report

PURPOSE: Final Decision Report

KEY OR NON-KEY DECISION: Key decision over £500k

COMMITTEE: Economy and Skills Committee

DATE: 29 July 2024

TITLE: WE Work for Everyone Programme Phase 3 Extension

Ward(s): All Wards

Officer presenting the report: Jane Taylor

Job title: Head of Service - Employment, Skills and Lifelong Learning

Committee Chair: Councillor Andrew Brown

Executive Director lead: Hannah Woodhouse: Executive Director for Childrens and Education

Proposal origin: BCC Staff

Purpose of Report:

To seek approval to hold detailed bid negotiations to secure essential grant funding from the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) to extend and maintain our specialist employment support programme designed to improve employment outcomes for Disabled people with Learning Difficulties and Autism across the West of England region.

Evidence Base:

1. In 2019 Bristol City Council secured £2.4m external investment from the European Social Fund (ESF). £1.3m from the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) to lead and deliver the WE Work for Everyone specialist employment support programme for Disabled people with Learning Difficulties and/or Autism in Bristol and across the wider West of England.
2. The first phase of the programme completed in December 2023 and engaged 1457 participants, of which 707 live in Bristol. Despite the impact of the Covid pandemic, 334 (23%) participants secured paid employment with support from our team of navigators and specialist job coaches, including 164 living in Bristol (137% of target). As a result of this first phase, a high proportion of participants improved their basic skills (128% of target) and over 400 previously economically inactive participants have gone onto supported job searching on leaving the programme.
3. In October 2023 we received confirmation of a 1-year extension funding grant of £850,000 from WECA as part of the regional UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) allocation. We also secured a further £214,000 from the DfE Supported Internship Pilot Programme. From January 2024, WE

Work for Everyone Phase 2 has been working with 320 people with Learning Difficulties and/or Autism to support them into paid employment across the WECA region, including 160 participants living in Bristol.

4. Research identifies that many people with a learning difficulty can and do want to work but are often denied the opportunity because there are many barriers to finding meaningful paid work. Up to 10% of the population have a learning difficulty however the employment rate in the UK for people with learning difficulties is low at 5.7% with 71% of those working for less than 16 hours per week. This compares with an average UK employment rate of 75% (Nov 23 – Jan 24) and a Southwest employment rate of 77%.
5. The SEN and Disability Code of Practice (the Code) sets out how SEN support should include planning and preparation for the movement between phases of education and preparation for adult life, so young people go on to achieve the best outcomes in employment, independent living, health and community participation. Nationally this is becoming increasingly in focus due to poor employment outcomes for young people with SEND, including a Bristol City Council Scrutiny Commission into transition pathways and support in January and a House of Lords Committee into the transition from education to employment for young disabled people in February (see Appendix A for We Work for Everyone Case Study submitted as evidence).
6. The latest Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF) figures show the number of Disabled people with Learning Difficulties supported by Adult Social Care (ASC) who are reported to be in employment in the West of England:

Measures from the Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF), England 2022-23		Bristol	Bath & NE Somerset	S Gloucs
Number of working age (18-64) service users who received long-term support with a primary support reason of learning disability who are in paid employment	All	39	48	55
	Males	24	30	37
	Females	15	18	18
Number of working age (18-64) service users who received long-term support during the year with a primary support reason of learning disability support	All	1022	461	788
	Males	624	281	474
	Females	398	180	314
Percentage in paid employment	All	3.8%	10.4%	7.0%
	Males	3.8%	10.7%	7.8%
	Females	3.8%	10.0%	5.7%

It is important to note from our own research that there is some considerable variance between local authorities due to differences in the data collection and reporting regimes. Furthermore, this data excludes those people with Learning Difficulties who are *not* known to Adult Social Care who may well be supported by other agencies such as the Bristol Autism Spectrum Service (BASS). BASS is a multidisciplinary team providing a service for adults registered with a GP in Bristol, Bath & North East Somerset, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. In December 2023 alone, there were over 500 Adults in the WECA region who had been referred for an Autism assessment that hadn't had a contact appointment for over 13 weeks since their initial referral. This equates to a waiting list of 2-3 years, highlighting the need for us to offer support for those *without* a formal diagnosis.

7. In May 2024, Bristol City Council contributed to a WECA business case which proposed to extend WE WORK for Everyone for a further two years through their Skills Investment Fund. This

was approved and there is now an opportunity to draw down £1.7m of investment to enable us to work with 700 individuals with a Learning Difficulty and/or Autism across the West of England, (350 in Bristol). Underpinned by the principles of specialist employment support and supported internships from age 18+, 'WE Work for Everyone' can continue to improve employment outcomes through a dedicated individualised approach which will comprise intensive specialist support and an education and enterprise infrastructure, providing the depth and intensity of support many people with a Learning Difficulty need to help them work towards, find and retain paid employment.

8. It should also be noted that Bristol City Council and the Bristol North Somerset and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG) Integrated Care Partnership have also submitted a successful application to the DWP to become one of 15 Government flagship WorkWell Vanguard Partnerships. Generating a further £2.96m of investment over two years, this new programme will closely align with the objectives of WE WORK for Everyone. The aims of WorkWell are:
 - To help people with health conditions to obtain and maintain paid employment
 - To strategically join the areas of work and health across the region
 - To develop and learn from best practice through sharing with other Vanguard Partnerships.

Officer Recommendations:

That the Committee for Economy and Skills

1. Approves the proposal and authorises the Head of Service Employment, Skills and Lifelong Learning in consultation with the Committee Chair to negotiate with WECA and, if successful, to accept and spend funding of up to £1,835,500 (including procuring and awarding contracts) and lead on the regional implementation and delivery of the We Work for Everyone Phase 3 programme from January 2025 to March 2027.
2. Notes the Director of Adult Social Care and the Director of Education and Skills will support the implementation of the WE Work for Everyone Programme, in partnership with specialist providers and employers, to improve the employment outcomes of young people and adults with Learning Difficulties and Autism supported by the SEND and ASC teams.

Corporate Strategy alignment: Improving the employment of people with Learning Difficulties contributes to Bristol City Council's commitment to inclusive economic growth and social mobility. It also helps reduce the reliance of people with Learning Difficulties and Autism on public services and promotes their inclusion and citizenship, economic and social independence, health and wellbeing.

City Benefits: By implementing these recommendations, Bristol City Council can demonstrate proactive positive action to address the discrimination experienced by Disabled people, ensuring that our own workforce is reflective of the communities we serve. We can also work with other employers to improve their access to specialist support and resources so that they can fulfil their social value commitments, improve their workforce diversity and benefit from the employment of people with Learning Difficulties and Autism.

Consultation Details: Several consultation activities have taken place, including: a workshop with WECA and partner local authorities; discussions with our SEND Employer Forum and the SEND Parent Carer Forum; engagement with WE Work clients and Supported Interns; discussions with all local authority

Adult Social Care, Education and Skills Teams and Bristol Autism Spectrum Service; consultation with third sector specialist providers

Background Documents:

1. Cabinet Paper WE Work for Everyone Phase 2

[Final WE Work for Everyone Phase 2 Decision Pathway Report v1.docx](#)

2. Cabinet Paper WorkWell

[Work Well Partnership Decision Pathway Report RA edits 120224.docx](#)

Revenue Cost	£1, 835,500	Source of Revenue Funding	WECA Skills Investment Fund (£1,701,500) DFE LDD Employment Support Grant (£135, 000)
Capital Cost	£	Source of Capital Funding	N/A
One off cost <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ongoing cost <input type="checkbox"/>		Saving Proposal <input type="checkbox"/> If yes - existing or new saving? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OR Income generation proposal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Choose an item.

Professional comments section:

1. Finance Advice: This £1.7m WECA grant application will support the Service to deliver the Council’s commitment to inclusive economic growth and social mobility, will directly benefit people with learning needs and/or autism (circa 350) as well as providing support to employers facilitating workforce change. The financial commitment to Bristol is the £135K (or 8%) cash spending will be used as match funding from Learning Disability Support budget.

Finance Business Partner: Travis Young, Finance Business Partner, 15/05/2024

2. Legal Advice: The submission of bids for grant funding raises no particular legal issues. If successful, the procurement process must be conducted in line with the 2015 Procurement Regulations and the Councils own procurement rules. Legal services will advise and assist officers with regard to the conduct of the procurement process and the resulting contractual arrangements.

Legal Team Leader: Husinara Jones, Team Manager/Solicitor, 14th May 2024

3. Implications on IT: There are no implications for IT

IT Team Leader: Alex Simpson – Lead Architect, 15/05/2024

4. HR Advice: There are no significant HR issues arising from this report.

HR Partner: Lorna Laing – HR Business Partner, 15/05/2024

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Further essential background / detail on the proposal	YES
Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)	YES
Appendix C – Environmental Impact Assessment	YES
Appendix D – Risk assessment	YES
Appendix E – Exempt Information	NO
Appendix F – Details of consultation carried out - internal and external	NO
Appendix G – Options appraisal matrix	NO
Appendix H – Business case / financial analysis	NO