

Name of Committee:	Cabinet
Date of Meeting:	18/03/2019
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Learning and Culture
Report Title:	External Funding: Inspire2Achieve and Inspire2Work ESF Grants
Purpose of Report:	To update Cabinet on progress of both Inspire projects and to enable the Council to extend access to this additional funding
Report Owner:	Cabinet Member for Learning and Culture
Responsible Officer:	Paula Ham, Director of Learning and Skills
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	<p>David Davies, Head of ALN and Wellbeing</p> <p>Carolyn Michael, Operational Manager Accountancy</p> <p>Mike Walsh, Principle Lawyer, Legal Services</p> <p>Corporate Management Team</p> <p>Andy Borsden, Lead Officer Youth & Community Learning</p> <p>Wendy Bell, Finance Officer</p> <p>Rachel Evans, Head of Children and Young People Services (views)</p>
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for Executive decision by the Cabinet
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This report seeks Cabinet approval to continue in a relationship agreement with regional partners for the local delivery of 2 European Social Fund programmes (Inspire to Achieve and Inspire to Work). The lead partner, Newport City Council has successfully secured an extension of both projects until December 2022. • The report seeks to highlight the positive work and current position of both projects both locally and regionally in supporting, reducing and engaging young people who are risk or are not in education, employment or training (NEET). • The Inspire to Achieve project aims to support young people in school who are deemed at high risk of becoming NEET upon leaving education. This project is or has worked with 336 pupils, 191 of these pupils have so far gained an additional qualification, 131 have evidenced a reduced risk of future risk of being NEET and of those who have left year 11, 30 have progressed into positive education, training or employment opportunities. 	

- Inspire to Work is working with or has engaged 84 NEET young people (aged 16-25), through the project 40 of the young people have gained an additional qualification, one has returned to education and 33 have entered employment.
- The total funding utilised as of Quarter 10 (Started April 2016) Inspire2Achieve project is £498,781, this is made up from £213,062 in European Structural Funding, with £298,239 match funding.

1. Recommendations

- 1.1** That Cabinet note the good work being undertaken and accept the grants and associated conditions.
- 1.2** That Cabinet delegate authority to extend existing contracts, service level agreements and the relationship agreement for the delivery of both the Inspire2Achieve and Inspire2Work grants to the Monitoring Officer/Head of Legal Services in consultation with the Director of Learning and Skills, the Leader and Cabinet Member for Learning and Culture.
- 1.3** To approve the extension of current posts in the Youth Service Team within the Learning and Skills Directorate.

2. Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1** To maximise the European Structural Funding (ESF) to be granted to support the delivery of two projects that complement existing provisions to support young people delivered as part of the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework.
- 2.2** To gain Cabinet approval for entry into contractual arrangements to support the proposed developments taking account of ESF funded services and to authorise the Monitoring Officer/Head of Legal Services to execute the contractual documentation.
- 2.3** To maintain current staffing arrangements to deliver both the Inspire2Achieve and Inspire2Work grants programmes.

3. Background

- 3.1** Authorisation by Cabinet on 29th June 2015 (Cabinet Minute C2823) ensured that two European Structural Funded (ESF) projects could be secured and the Vale of Glamorgan Council would accept the grants and their associated conditions. This involved the employment of staff and the entering into legal agreements.

- 3.2** Both the Inspire2Achieve and the Inspire2Work projects are funded under European Structural Funding (ESF) and form part of a Competitiveness Regional bid for South East Wales. The projects reflect Strategic Objective 1, to reduce the number of 16-24 year olds who are Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) and Strategic Objective 2, to reduce the number of those at risk of becoming NEET amongst 11-24 year olds; under Priority Axis 3 Youth Employment, of the ESF East Wales Operational Programme.
- 3.3** Similar projects operate in the four authorities in the South East Wales Convergence Region in relation to both grants, with Newport City Council acting as the Central Lead Team (CLT) working across beneficiaries and with the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO). Partners in the project include the City of Cardiff Council, Monmouthshire County Council, Cardiff and Vale College, Coleg Gwent, Careers Wales and Llamau Housing Limited. These partners and the Vale of Glamorgan Council have entered into a relationship agreement as referred to in recommendation 2 above.
- 3.4** At a local level regular updates are given to the Head of Achievement for All and the Engagement and Progression Framework Strategic group, which oversees the projects to ensure progress is monitored.
- 3.5** The Inspire2Achieve programme started in April 2016 and the Inspire2Work in February 2017. Each of the programmes is measured on their joint achievement by its identified partners and it is not uncommon that partners may have higher or lower reported levels of achievement against their set profile. It is the overall cumulative total that is received by WEFO which determines the success of the programme.

4. Key Issues for Consideration

Inspire2Achieve

- 4.1** The total funding utilised as of Quarter 10 (Started April 2016) Inspire2Achieve project is £498,781, this is made up from £213,062 in European Structural Funding, with £298,239 match funding. An element of redundancy costs are built in to these figures to ensure that funding is available if, at the end of the project, there is a need to make posts redundant. For the purpose of these projects, match funding is sourced from the Youth Service Strategy Grant. This is an annual grant that is targeted at specific priorities directed by Welsh Government and focussed by the Youth Service in response to local need and from existing youth service revenue funding. Services currently being funded from these sources will continue to be provided.
- 4.2** Inspire2Achieve is a school based intervention focused on reducing and supporting those young people at risk of disengagement under the age of 16. It aims to provide a structured alternative learning environment in schools, where young people can engage in life style activities that aim to improve simple skills such as time keeping, literacy, revision techniques and providing specialist

support such as language or mental health assistance. The intention of the project is that these skills will support young people to re-engage with educational activities and maintain their learning through Key Stage 4 into Key Stage 5.

- 4.3** The current participant outcomes/targets for Inspire2Achieve are agreed by the Welsh European Funding office (WEFO). The intervention the young people receive during the life of the project should impact on key risk indicators such as attendance, achievement and behaviour. This will contribute to a reduction in numbers identified as high risk through the Local Authority's Vulnerable Assessment Profile of NEETs, also known as the Early Identification Tool, under the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework.
- 4.4** Inspire2Achieve's four targets include 'engagement of participants', 'gaining a qualification', 'remaining in education or training' (post-16 opportunities) and 'at reduced risk of NEET upon leaving the programme'. These figures are measured on a cumulative basis starting from April 2016.
- 4.5** The overall operation target for 'Engagement of participants' was 2189 individual participants with an actual achievement of 2109 or 96% achievement. This is deemed acceptable within the normal WEFO tolerances. For the Vale this was 407 individuals with an achievement of 336.
- 4.6** As an operation the target for participants 'gaining a qualification' was 332 and the actual is 191 or 58% achieved. This reflects the difficulty in either gaining a relevant qualification or the delay in receiving the evidence to support this achievement across the whole programme. For the Vale this is set at 120 and 39 have been achieved. The Vale has implemented some remedial measures to ensure progress is achieved in future.
- 4.7** As a region despite significant variation in partners' outcomes for those who would be 'in education or training upon leaving' school (this refers to school pupils worked with in year 11 who go into Further Education); the target was 229 and the actual was 311 or 136% against profile. At local level a target of 28 was set with an actual of 30, an increase of 2.
- 4.8** The final target is those who as a result of the programme had 'a reduced risk of NEET upon leaving'. This is a complex calculation as it involves identifying and evidencing at least 2 measures from 4:

 - evidence of improved attendance in school (taken from school attendance records);
 - a letter of support from the school about improved behaviour;
 - evidence of attainment having improved or actually achieved a qualification; and/or
 - an improvement in wellbeing using the soft Outcome Star tool.
- 4.9** As a region the actual is 913 against a target of 1047 or 87% again this is well within the WEFO tolerances. WEFO tolerance is set at 15% above or below the set percentage target for any outcome The Vale has achieved 131 against a target of 224 which reflects a shortfall of 93.

- 4.10** Quarterly Health checks are carried out by the Newport Central Lead Team with each beneficiary. Progress is discussed and areas of concern are escalated to the ESF strategic group who also meet quarterly. Both meetings seek to discuss and challenge the current achievements of all beneficiaries against their profile. If beneficiaries are failing to achieve against targets and/or failing to make improvements against profile, specific sanctions can be imposed on a beneficiary, no such sanctions have been imposed on the Vale.
- 4.11** The Vale Management Team created an action plan in October 2017 to help improve project outcomes, this was shared with the ESF Strategic group and accepted as good practice. As a consequence of the action plan significant progress has been made to meet project outcomes.

Inspire2Work

- 4.12** The total funding utilised as of Quarter 7 (started February 2017) Inspire2Work project is £132,566, made up of £60,536 European Structural Funding, with £72,030 in match funding. ESF match funding is sourced from similar projects to reflect the contribution of an applying beneficiary, for the purpose of this project, match funding is sourced from existing Youth Service revenue funding.
- 4.13** Inspire2Work focusses on post 16 NEETs, with the Vale of Glamorgan plan concentrating on 18-24 year olds who are deemed the biggest area of concern given limited local provision. The scheme is a person centred project that aims to engage, support and enable young people who are NEET to gain a range of skills, qualifications and meaningful work placements, and to feel confident and motivated to enter into sustainable employment or further learning. The project seeks to provide the flexibility necessary for NEET young people to overcome the barriers preventing them from entering employment or further learning.
- 4.14** The Inspire2Work project works in tandem with Inspire2Achieve to provide a progression route to those pre 16 year olds who become NEET and require further interventions.
- 4.15** The current participant outcomes for Inspire2Work from WEFO are around 40 young people per year receiving an intervention, with a total of 273 young people receiving support during the life of the project with 14% of NEET participants gaining a qualification upon leaving, 7% in education or training upon leaving and 27% entering employment upon leaving.
- 4.16** Inspire2Work is a smaller operation than the Inspire to Achieve and the Vale's quarter 7 report shows the Vale overachieving on 3 of its 4 targets in line with the whole regional programme.
- 4.17** The 'Engagement of participants' target for the Vale was 81 with an achievement of 84; this demonstrates an overachievement of 3 individual participants. The overall operation target was 435 individual participants with an actual achievement of 392 or 90% achievement. This is well within the WEFO tolerances.

- 4.18** Target for participants 'gaining a qualification' for the Vale is set at 20 and 40 have been achieved. As an operation the target was 65 and the actual is 102 or 157% achieved.
- 4.19** A target of 3 was set for those who as a result of the project would be 'in education or training upon leaving'; the actual was 1. As a region the target was 46 and the actual was 24 or 52% against profile. This has proven really difficult as the criteria for what could be counted was changed by WEFO after the operation went live removing youth training and engagement provisions as an outcome. This continues to be challenged by the Central Lead Team.
- 4.20** The target for entering employment upon leaving was set at 21 and the Vale has achieved 33. As a region, partners have achieved 93 against a target of 92 or 101%
- 4.21** A health check of the project is carried out each quarter by the Central Lead Team and the ESF strategic group meet quarterly (involves senior leads from each beneficiary) to discuss and challenge all beneficiaries current achievements against their profile. It is noted that the Vale is achieving very well on Inspire2Work.
- 4.22** Both Inspire2Achieve and Inspire2Work are making a significant contribution to the ESF programmes.

5. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 5.1** Both the Inspire2Achieve and Inspire2Work projects will work to support the Corporate Plan, Well-being Outcome 3: An Aspirational and Culturally Vibrant Vale. Secure improved outcomes for groups of learners at risk of underachievement, such as those entitled to free school meals. Increase the learning opportunities for disadvantaged individuals and vulnerable families. Reduce the number of young people not in education, employment and training.
- 5.2** This report also supports the Council's Wellbeing Objective 3: Give children the best start in life. By developing a strategic and innovative approach to improve the way in which children have the best start in life, we understand people's holistic needs and adapt provision accordingly to take a more preventative approach and make improvements in emotional and mental well-being for children and young people. Wellbeing Objective 2: Reduce poverty and tackle inequalities linked to deprivation. The projects build on the foundations created by Communities First and work undertaken through programmes such as Flying Start, Families First and Supporting People to develop a more coordinated approach to tackling poverty across the Vale. We work together as local employers and education and training providers to develop new opportunities for work experience, placements and apprenticeships and develop skills aligned to future job opportunities in conjunction with the Capital City Region.

- 5.3** Both projects will work in tandem to tackle child poverty, support children in need and their families to engage positively with schools and to encourage partners to develop appropriate strategies for engaging with young people and reducing NEETs. Further, both Inspire2Achieve and Inspire2Work will underline several actions in the LSB's Delivery Plan aimed at reducing young people who are NEET, progressed through the 'Helping People into Work' work stream.
- 5.4** The work of the Inspire2Achieve and Inspire2Work project will ensure that those young people who are NEET, or who are most at risk of becoming NEET are given an opportunity to remain in education, training or progress to employment.
- 5.5** The Council has to satisfy its public sector duties and obligations under the Equality Act 2010.
- 5.6** In accordance with the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language standards, the Council also has to consider the impact upon the Welsh language of any decision that it makes and in accordance with the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan, the Council must consider how it can promote Welsh medium education. The I2A project is supported by the Urdd to deliver Agored Cymru units through the medium of Welsh within Ysgol Bro Morgannwg.
- 5.7** The Inspire2Achieve and Inspire2 Work projects work to reduce crime and disorder by tackling the underlying causes of deprivation; targeting young people most at risk of becoming NEET and providing opportunities to stay in education and training.

6. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 6.1** External funding is required to supplement youth support provision to better address the needs of those who are, or are at risk of becoming, NEET. As noted in the original cabinet report the opportunity of an extension to the ESF is an option.
- 6.2** On behalf of the Strategic ESF Partnership Newport City Council S (regional lead) made a formal request in June 2018 to WEFO seeking to extend the current life of both programmes until December 2022. This would secure in some cases additional funds and give staff some employment security. A business case to extend both Inspire 2Achieve and Inspire2Work projects was submitted and approved by WEFO.
- 6.3** New budget figures were supplied to Newport City Council as lead organisation and WEFO received the business plan based on these figures and have given approval to proceed, a confirmation letter confirming the budget is to follow. The total funding for both projects was originally £963,915 over the 3 years, 2016 to 2019; this includes ESF grant funding and match funding, but not the Central Lead Team.

Agenda Item: 16

- 6.4** The projected funding until December 2022 ESF grant and match funding is £1,671,743 (not including the Central Lead Team). The ESF funding element is £716,513.
- 6.5** It is proposed that the Inspire2Achieve and Inspire2Work projects will continue to fund 4 ESF project posts (3.288 FTE) and a part time (0.2162FTE) administration role at an estimated cost of £532,792 over the life of the project. These will continue to mirror existing posts employed through the Vale of Glamorgan which will be used as part of the match funding requirement estimated to be in the region of £661,156. The remainder of the match funding is earmarked within the Youth Service budget.
- 6.6** A risk of claw back of funds exists and would only be sought by WEFO should the grant not be administered appropriately and in accordance with the grant conditions.

Employment

- 6.7** Within the funding arrangements for ESF projects, operating costs including redundancy costs, can be pulled down through each claim. A reserve fund has been established to support the projects and to ensure that when the projects cease that full redundancy costs can be covered with no direct burden to the Council.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 6.8** It will be necessary for the contractual agreement to be finalised and subsequently executed by the Monitoring Officer/Head of Legal Services.

7. Background Papers

OTNone.