



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Letter of Support for FIT4LIFE Project
Date:	4 December 2012
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
Contact Officer:	Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3459

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Charter NI is currently seeking support through the Department for Employment and Learning's (DEL) Collaboration and Innovation Fund to provide up to 550 young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) with the opportunity to engage and participate in an innovative programme to help build their confidence, self-esteem and motivation to want to develop their knowledge, skills and abilities to equip and prepare them for the world of work using technology skills.
1.2	The FIT4LIFE Project is supported by the FIT4LIFE Consortium – a new collaborative venture bringing together key strategic partners, each who excel in their own fields and together will create a positive synergy to ensure young people categorised as NEET regain hope and begin to start their journey along a path towards gaining employment.
1.3	Members are advised that the Council has received a formal request from Charter NI to provide a letter of support for the above-mentioned project to help ensure that young people will have an opportunity to access education, training or other preparation for employment.

2	Key Issues
2.1	As part of the FIT4LIFE project Charter NI, Falls Community Council and Employment Services Board will use their community links to recruit and engage NEET young people from specific disadvantaged communities across the city including East Belfast, West Belfast, Falls, Upper Springfield and Greater Shankhill.
2.2	In each of these communities a drop-in 'Digihub' facility will be created which will provide a warm, welcoming, safe environment for the young people. It will provide facilities for the young people to meet and discuss issues, build personal relationships, be mentored, understand what help they require, identify and assess their abilities, and develop personal action plans to enable the young person to move closer to the world of work.

2.3	<p>The 'Digihubs' will provide a centre of excellence in the community for experimenting and learning to use the latest state of the art technologies. Digiclubs will provide bespoke formal and informal 'learning by doing' opportunities in ICTs. The formal opportunities will use state of the art learning resources that FIT have developed with European partners and have already proved to be effective with NEET young people such as:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work Positive - a resource that uses learner engagement and collaboration pedagogy to facilitate participants to change their attitude to work versus welfare and to gain valuable knowledge and skills on how to successfully enter the workforce. It addresses confidence, motivation, self esteem, behaviour in the workplace, handling money, dress codes in work, diversity in the workplace, preparation of CVs, Interview skills. - eCert - a unique way of giving people the opportunity to gain practical knowledge and to achieve basic competency in the use of computers. The programme is designed to be delivered in a relaxed, informal and fun way. The programme has been successfully introduced to many hard-to-reach groups through a Train-the-Trainer and Peer-Tutor approach and has a related set of supporting resources. - My IT - gives learners an opportunity to develop their literacy, language and numeracy skills in a very practical manner e.g. filling in an online job application. Made up of seventeen exercises My IT! is designed as an interactive web-based environment through which the learner gains competency by doing ICT/ internet activities. - GAPCs - a dynamic programme which imparts ICT training while promoting involvement in outdoor education and addressing the basic fundamentals of literacy and numeracy. It builds confidence and motivation in young people by demonstrating their ability to become proficient in ICT, effective in teamwork and outdoor pursuits and thereafter demonstrating the potential of these skills to acquire knowledge and to access information, educational and entertainment resources through the medium ICT.
2.4	<p>During the FIT4LIFE programme each participant will undergo 'friendly' aptitude assessment, engage in career guidance and technology skills development programmes with the explicit goal of progression into further education or employment opportunities.</p>
2.5	<p>Members are asked to note that in supporting the implementation of the 'Pathways to Success' Strategy for young people who are not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), the Department for Employment and Learning recently invited applications to a new Collaboration and Innovation Fund.</p>
2.6	<p>'Pathways to Success' actions have a particular focus on helping young people who face barriers to participation and the Collaboration and Innovation Fund aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhance collaboration and sharing of good practice; - Improve signposting; - Better engage and involve young people in developments and initiatives; - More widespread use of mentoring; and - Support for innovation where there is a demonstrated need.
2.7	<p>Members are advised that Charter NI has submitted an application to this fund to help cover the costs associated with delivering this programme and therefore any</p>

	support to be offered via the Council will be non-financial.
2.8	Members are also reminded that the objectives of the FIT4LIFE programme closely link to the objectives of the Council's Super-connected Belfast initiative. Through this programme of work we aim to increase digital literacy levels of 5,000 citizens over the next three years by providing training and educational opportunities across all sections of society.

3	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
3.1	There is no specific equality or good relations implications to this report.

4	Recommendations
4.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Note the contents of this report and give their commitment to issue a Letter of Support to Charter NI in relation to the FIT4LIFE Project.

5	Decision Tracking
	There is no Decision Tracking attached to this report.

6	Key to Abbreviations
	DEL - Department for Employment and Learning ICT - Information and communications technology NEET – not in education, employment or training