



<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Achieve: Belfast Bursary Award update and request for funding
<b>Date:</b>	15 April 2014
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
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<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	Members will be aware that Belfast City Council made funding available through the Investment Programme for the Achieve: Belfast Bursary Fund. The Fund is administered through Belfast Metropolitan College (Belfast Met) and the Prince's Trust. Hundreds of young people are supported in the city to take part in further education and training and to improve their employment prospects.
1.2	The Prince's Trust bursary (with funding allocated through the charity's Development Awards programme) is open to young people aged 16-25 residing in the city who are not in education, training or employment. The scheme aims to help recipients overcome barriers which may prevent them from undertaking training and education or moving into employment. The fund is in the second year of operation.
1.3	At Belfast Met, full-time students who began their first year of study, who are resident in the Belfast City Council area, aged between 16-24 years and whose annual household income is £23,820 or less were eligible to apply for grants of up to £500. This fund applies to students on recognised courses at levels 2-5 in future growth sectors including IT, multimedia, renewable energies, science, tourism and hospitality.

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	<p><u>Prince's Trust Development Awards – progress report</u>            The Prince's Trust provided an update on the bursary fund supported in the second year of the programme (2013-14):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 232 young people aged 16-25 years were supported against the original target of 202 - 15% higher than the original target</li> <li>- The majority of bursary fund recipients were aged 17-21 years old</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 93% of young people achieve a positive outcome against a target of 80%, including moving into employment (39%), education or training (69%). The average award was £171</li> <li>- 165 awards (71%) were provided to young people in the Belfast City Council area who live in the top 10% of most deprived wards</li> <li>- 193 awards (83%) were provided to young people living in the top 25% of most deprived wards in Northern Ireland</li> <li>- The highest percentage of bursary fund recipients (68%) used the fund to pay for equipment for construction-related skills, cookery, hairdressing and mechanics, followed by 23% who used the fund to pay for course fees.</li> </ul>
2.2	<p>The Prince's Trust's experience in running the Development Awards shows that support is needed most by young people up to age of 25 to help them achieve a positive outcome. The fund continues to support young people who are not in education, employment or training, typically working towards level 1 or 2 qualifications. As well as being a priority group in the Council's Investment programme, young people aged 16-24 continue to be a key priority of the Department of Employment and Learning (DEL). The most recent claimant count statistics issued by the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment (DETI) show that almost 25% of those claiming unemployment benefits are aged 18-24.</p>
2.3	<p>In the coming year, the Prince's Trust aims to deliver 313 Development Awards in the Belfast City Council area - 12% higher than the number of awards provided in 2013-14. Based on this year's figures, these awards could help 122 young people to find employment as well as supporting 216 bursary recipients to undertake education or training that will improve their chances of finding a job. The budget for the awards will be £50,000. Prince's Trust have again asked if the Council will consider a contribution towards the organisational resource required to promote and manage this scheme: as with the contribution last year, they have asked for an amount of £9,484 towards programme administration.</p>
2.4	<p><u>Belfast Metropolitan College – progress report</u>  In the 13/14 academic year, Belfast Met reported that 64 students availed of the bursary. Spend on the awards amounted to £32,000 (£500 per bursary). A total of 120 students applied for the scheme, of whom 64 were successful and 56 failed to meet one or more of the eligibility criteria set.</p>
2.5	<p>Of the successful students, over a third of Achieve awards (24) have been provided to young people in Belfast City Council area who live in the top 10% of most deprived wards in Northern Ireland while over half of the 64 Achieve awards have been provided to young people in Belfast City Council area who live in the top 25% most deprived wards.</p>
2.6	<p>One of the most significant challenges has been to predict the number of students who will apply for and be eligible to take up the BMC bursary, given that this programme is targeted at first year students on approved courses. While there is a pool of over 800 students undertaking the priority courses agreed by Members, only around 8% of those met all the scheme's eligibility criteria.</p>
2.7	<p>At the December 2013 meeting of the Development Committee, Members were advised of the number of applicants for the BMC bursary and they considered how the original targets might be met, while maintaining the focus of the bursary.</p>

	Following that meeting, it was agreed that a report would be brought back to a future meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to consider implications of changing the scheme criteria, for example lifting the age limit or amending target courses.
2.8	<p>In anticipation of the Committee's decision on the criteria, and in order to increase awareness of the scheme among the target audience, a detailed engagement plan has been developed to promote the scheme. This includes promoting the scheme to the following key conduits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Welfare rights advisors in advice sector to ensure those who need help the most have an opportunity to apply</li> <li>- Targeted engagement through existing community networks and outlets</li> <li>- Organisations on the Council's Section 75 consultee list. This is particularly important in widening participation among younger people's groups and disability specialist groups</li> <li>- Targeted use of both the Council's and on Belfast Met's website (including on the online prospectus and at open days and via media)</li> <li>- Schools' career advisers in order to ensure that young people are aware of the financial incentive when making their choice of course.</li> </ul>

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	The financial resource required to deliver 313 bursaries through the Prince's Trust in the coming financial year will be £50,000. In addition, the organisation is seeking a contribution of £9,484 towards the management and administration resources associated with the scheme.
3.2	The future report to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee will identify the resources required for the Belfast Met scheme, subject to the implications of changing the eligibility criteria.

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
4.1	There are no specific equality and good relations considerations at this stage.

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Note the progress in the Achieve bursary, administered by both Belfast Met and Prince's Trust</li> <li>- Note the request from Prince's Trust for £50,000 to deliver 313 awards in the coming financial year, as well as a request for £9,484 towards scheme management and administration</li> <li>- Note the intention to take a report to the future meeting of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to consider potential amendments to the guidelines for the scheme managed by Belfast Met.</li> </ul>

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
An update on the proposals for year 3 of the programme will be brought back to Committee at a later date.	

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**Key to Abbreviations**

Belfast Met - Belfast Metropolitan College

DEL – Department for Employment and Learning

DETI – Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment