



Subject:	Addressing Inequalities through Lifelong Learning – Belfast Strategic Partnership Application to UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (BSP)
Date:	18 August 2017
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Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Update members on work undertaken to date to support the development of Belfast as a Learning City;- Provide background information on the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities; and- Seek endorsement to submit a proposal, for Belfast to join the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities, as part of the city's efforts to grow the economy, reduce inequalities and create opportunities for all.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Note the information provided; and

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree to Belfast joining the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities. An application to join the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities will require the signature of the Lord Mayor.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>Across the city health, education and economic inequalities continue to impact and restrict the potential of many people and communities. Notably this is most evident in life expectancy levels with those who are most deprived expected to have a lower life expectancy of up to 10 years. Action to address such inequalities requires collaborative approaches across a range of determinants including education, employment, community living and access to services and opportunities.</p>
3.2	<p>The Belfast Agenda recognises that ‘working and <i>learning</i>’ is vital to economic, social and environmental well-being by supporting the economy, building good relations, empowering people to reach their potential and developing a more inclusive society. The principles of learning are fundamental to tackling some of Belfast’s persistent societal-inequalities such as health, educational attainment and well-being. The inclusive growth focus of the Belfast Agenda is about improving the economy and ensuring the benefits of this are felt by everyone across the city, leaving no one behind. To tackle inequalities and ensure individuals can reap the benefits of economic growth, a joined up approach will be required across a range of stakeholders. Learning is one mechanism through which inequalities can be addressed and individual’s life prospects can be improved. It can help improve well-being by developing emotional resilience, create access to more and better jobs through skills development and support educational attainment across all ages. Reflecting the importance of learning it has a key role in the four priority themes of the Belfast Agenda: Growing the Economy, Living Here, Working & Learning and City Development. Targets and key work streams focused upon the importance of learning have been reflected across the Belfast Agenda.</p>
3.3	<p>Belfast Strategic Partnership (BSP) have identified Lifelong Learning as one of its five strategic priorities to address life inequalities, recognising the connection between educational attainment, learning opportunities and life inequalities, and the extent to which family, community and environmental influences impact learning opportunities, particularly within population groups facing the highest level of deprivation.</p>
3.4	<p>To take this strategic priority forward, BSP established a Lifelong Learning group, which includes representation from a range of statutory and community stakeholders including Council, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, Education Authority, Catholic Controlled Maintained Schools, Queen’s University Belfast, Ashton Community Trust, Belfast</p>

Metropolitan College, GEMS NI, Department for the Economy and Department for Communities. The focus for this group is to:

- advocate for strategic approaches which maximise the role and potential of lifelong learning in addressing life inequalities in Belfast;
- encourage innovation in lifelong learning practice through developing flagship examples and using BSP to influence change.

3.5 In February 2015, BSP launched the 'Belfast a Learning City' strategic document, including a Learning Charter for Belfast, (see appendix 1) which sets out a vision of Belfast where learning is used as a positive force to expand and enhance life chances for all citizens in Belfast. The aim of the publication was to ensure that all Belfast citizens have equal access to learning opportunities, creating conditions for a better quality of life for everyone in the city.

3.6 'Belfast a Learning City' is based on the EU definition of learning, recognising the breadth of learning activity across personal, social, civic and employment related reasons for learning. The Lifelong Learning Group also developed the following four key messages to promote a broader understanding and awareness of the wider benefits of learning:

- Learning through education: Learning is the foundation for life. Education and training give us opportunities to shape our future.
- Learning for and in work: Learning creates routes to work. It generates opportunities, develops our careers and strengthens our communities and city.
- Learning for life: Learning changes our lives for the better. Everyday there is the chance to learn something new.
- Learning to live together: Learning brings us together. It develops respect and understanding about and within our communities.

3.7 The BSP has identified an opportunity to further the work of the Life Long Learning Group and to develop Belfast's status as a Learning City by becoming a member of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC). UIL is a non-profit international institute, it undertakes research, capacity building, networking and publication of lifelong learning with a focus on adult and continuing education, literacy and non formal basic education.

3.8 Developed to promote lifelong learning in urban communities UIL sets out six areas of focus which reflect the major building blocks of a learning city. It includes key features for each of these areas and possible indicators on progress. The six areas of focus are:

- Inclusive learning in the education system;
- Revitalised learning in families and communities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Effective learning for and in the workplace - Extended use of modern learning technologies - Enhances quality and excellence in learning - A vibrant culture of learning throughout life
3.9	<p>The benefits associated with being a member of the GNLC include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Being part of a dynamic network</i> - Connecting with other learning cities with common interests, tackling similar issues and envisioning similar development agendas and links to a network of experts and professionals specializing in the field of lifelong learning for sustainable development; - <i>Receiving guidance and support</i> - Accessing tools and strategies for developing learning cities, insights into best practice from the latest research and practice; - <i>City recognition</i> – Belfast would enjoy global recognition of its efforts to create a learning city and showcase the good practice that exists in the city. In addition Belfast would have the opportunity to apply for the biennial UNESCO Learning City Award in 2018.
3.10	<p>Cities which have embraced the concept of <i>Lifelong Learning for All</i> have seen significant improvements in terms of public health, economic growth, reduction in crime and increases in democratic participation. Current membership includes only 2 cities in Great Britain (Bristol and Swansea) and 2 in Republic of Ireland (Cork and Limerick); therefore Belfast would be the first city in the region to become a member.</p>
3.11	<p>An application to join the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) cannot proceed without the support of Council. Once the Council confirms its support for the application, the following steps will be undertaken by BSP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete the application form for submission to Council to be signed by the Lord Mayor; (appendix 2) - Join the UNESCO GNLC; there are no fees for joining nor obligations on length of membership. - Refocus the role and remit of the Lifelong Learning Group in the context of a revised action plan for developing a learning city; - Develop a Learning City Plan to create a framework for collective action incorporating existing initiatives and key actions to use learning to address inequalities.
3.12	<p>It is a requirement of UNESCO that the Learning City Plan must align to the following themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual empowerment and social cohesion - Economic development and cultural prosperity

	<p>- Sustainable development</p> <p>Currently many organisations in the city contribute to these outcomes, it is therefore expected that rather than create a suite of new initiatives the plan will encompass existing activity of BSP co-sponsors and its stakeholders. The creation of a Learning City Plan will provide a means through which to better connect this work up and facilitate more collaboration and cooperation in the city. The Learning City Plan will also align to the outcomes of the Belfast Agenda and key city priorities, including employment, inclusive growth and enhanced collaborative synergies across partners, including links to 'Making Life Better – 10 year Public Health Strategy' and the new Draft Programme for Government.</p>
3.13	<p>The BSP through its relevant structures including the Executive Programme Group (EPG) and the Lifelong Learning Group will lead the completion of the UNESCO application, development of the Learning City Plan and its management. BSP's co-sponsors Belfast City Council, Public Health Agency (PHA) and Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) will be required to contribute towards the development of the Learning City Plan through existing activities. Examples of the work currently being undertaken by BSP's co-sponsors to be featured in the Learning Plan are included within Appendix 3.</p>
3.14	<p>All partners within BSP's Lifelong Learning group have indicated their willingness to contribute relevant organisational actions to the Learning City Plan. An example of this is the Department of the Economy's development of the Unique Learner Number which will allow tracking of learners across different providers and across their lifespan.</p>
3.15	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no financial or resource implications attached to this report. The application process, development of the Learning City Plan including its management will be led by staff within the Belfast Health Development Unit. Under current working arrangements for BSP, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust continue to provide staff resource (1 FTE Project Development Officer) which currently supports this area of work. Further support is also provided by the PHA to support the activities of the Lifelong Learning Group.</p>
3.16	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>There are no equality or good relations implications attached to this report. Any future Learning City Plan would be developed in consultation with the Equality & Diversity Officers.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1: Belfast a Learning City (BSP)</p> <p>Appendix 2: UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities application form</p> <p>Appendix 3: BSP Co-sponsors examples of existing activity</p>

