



Subject:	Jobs and Skills update
Date:	8 December 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
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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
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update members on a number of existing and planned interventions to improve skills and help people find a new or better job, focusing on key target groups and those furthest from the labour market.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Note the range of existing and planned interventions to improve skills and help people find a new or better job, focusing on key target groups and those furthest from the labour market

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the job outcomes delivered by some of the key interventions • Note the planned developments and activity for the coming months, including the development activity in new areas of work.
3.0	Main report
3.1	Members will be aware that the pandemic has had a significant impact on the economy of the city with labour market volatility where demand hugely outstripping supply in a number of sectors (tech and digital; logistics and health and social care) while other sectors are much more vulnerable (hospitality; retail).
3.2	Despite the volatility, council officers have been working closely with our stakeholder partners and with employers in key sectors to support the delivery of a range of interventions to help those furthest from the labour market to find sustainable employment in those sectors where demand has remained strong or is beginning to recover. This work has meant that, from April-September 2021, we have been able to bring 427 people on to our Employment Academy programmes across a range of sectors, with 202 currently on the waiting list for upcoming programmes. This level of demand – both from employers as well as those looking for a job or a better job – represents a significant increase on figures from previous years, as previously flagged at the October meeting of this committee.
3.3	Of those who started an Employment Academy since April 2021, 176 people have completed and 132 have secured employment so far. This represents an into-work rate of 75%. Of the 251 people still going through a programme, 92 are already in work and are receiving support, qualifications or licences needed to access a better job. These include Level 3-5 qualifications (e.g. in childcare sector, allowing staff to move to supervisory roles) and specific vehicle licences to help existing drivers progress to better-paid driving roles, including those within public sector organisations such as Belfast City Council.
3.4	The 'Take the Next Step' event in St George's Market on 9 November attracted over 450 people and gave residents a chance to find out more about the upcoming employment academies and to register interest to participate as well being able to apply directly for vacancies. A full breakdown of exhibitors can be found in Appendix 1. Employers across a range of sectors were in attendance, and feedback has been very positive, with 90% reporting that they were very satisfied and 10% reporting that they were satisfied. While the full job outcomes as a result of this event are yet to be completed, we have already had confirmation of 20 people that have started a new job following the event while 202 people

have been referred to a future employment academy programme. The breakdown of interest is detailed below:

Employment Academy	Interested as of 11th Nov
Construction	10
Business	16
Haulage/Bus Driving	112
Taxi driving	30
Leisure	15
Childcare/Playwork	19
TOTALS	202

3.5 A further 'Take the Next Step' event is being planned for the New Year (restrictions permitting). This is likely to feature planned programmes including:

- Construction Employment Academies for the Belfast Transport Hub
- Business Services Employment Academy
- Fibre Splicing Employment Academy
- Social Care Employment Academies
- Transport Employment Academies

3.6

Green Economy

While the Academies represent short, employer-focused, into-employment interventions, the team has also been engaged in a wider range of jobs and skills-related activities – always with the aim of supporting inclusive growth. One of the emerging areas of work is in the retrofit sector. We have recently been successful in a bid to the Community Renewal Fund to establish a vocational curriculum offer as there is currently no skills provision in this field. Work is at an advanced stage to develop a retrofitting qualification from level 2 through to level 5, with local training organisations and Belfast Met working together to support programme delivery in the city.

3.7	<p>Once the skills infrastructure is established, this will offer opportunities for new entrants to access opportunities in a future growth area. It will also present significant re-skilling opportunities for companies in the construction sector, helping them to future-proof their business and look towards new opportunities for future growth.</p>
3.8	<p><u>Fibre Splicing Programme</u></p> <p>Another emerging area of work is in utilities – particularly given the exponential demand for broadband as a result of Covid-19 as well as significant public investment in new infrastructure. Using the Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) mechanism within our new procurement framework, we have recently appointed an operator to deliver a highly specialist intervention in early 2022 as a pilot exercise to test the potential in this new field. Once participants complete the programme, they will have an opportunity to find employment with companies that are currently offering salary levels in the range of £25,000-£35,000 pa. Updates on this programme will be brought back to a future meeting of the committee.</p>
3.8	<p><u>Supporting BCC as an Employer</u></p> <p>In addition to working with private sector businesses across the city, officers have also been working closely with colleagues in the HR team to support people into new jobs or better jobs within Council. Some examples of this activity include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery underway for 20 Council staff to gain their Category C lorry licence. This will open up a pathway to a better job in the council. This is planned to be open again in the New Year for a further cohort • Planning for Jobstart jobs for 10 young people across Council such as Zoo Crew and Business Support, with a bespoke Employment Academy designed to target and engage people, provide pre-recruitment support, in-work upskilling and personal mentoring as well as agreeing and implementing a career progression pathway for each young person.
3.9	<p><u>Financial and resource implications</u></p> <p>The activities set out within this report are being funded through the Employability and Skills budget previously agreed as part of the estimates process.</p>
3.10	<p><u>Equality implications or Good Relations implications/Rural needs assessment</u></p> <p>One of the key advantages of this approach is that it will enable us to target resources on specific groups, including those with particular access issues and barriers that currently prevent them from accessing training and employment opportunities. Our participation data</p>

	is regularly reviewed to ensure that we are making a positive impact on key target groups and the CRM system can provide real-time data to ensure effective targeting of resources.
4	Appendices
	Appendix 1: Employers who attended Jobsfair in St. George's Market