

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

24 NOVEMBER 2015

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND TRANSFORMATION

INSPIRE 2 ACHIEVE & INSPIRE 2 WORK IS A JOINT OPERATION BETWEEN REGIONAL PARTNERS BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL (LEAD BENEFICIARY) AND BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL (JOINT BENEFICIARY) FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek approval from Cabinet to deliver a joint regional project with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council funded through the European Social Fund (ESF) under Priority 3 – Youth Employment and Attainment.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 The proposed Inspire operations contribute to the following corporate priorities of the council: -

- Working together to develop the local economy
- Working together to raise ambitions and drive up educational achievement
- Working with children and families to tackle problems early
- Working together to help vulnerable people to stay independent

3. Background

- 3.1 In December 2013, Cabinet authorised Council officers to continue working on collaborative proposals in more detail with a view to submitting project applications for European funding support under the 2014 – 2020 programmes.

- 3.2 In December 2014, Welsh Government published *ESF West Wales and the Valleys Operational Programme*, developed around three inter-related Priority Axes which will deliver complementary action in support of the overall aims and objectives of the ESF programmes in Wales, which are:

- Priority Axis 1 - Tackling Poverty through Sustainable Employment;
- Priority Axis 2 - Skills for Growth;
- Priority Axis 3 - Youth Employment and Attainment

- 3.3 In January 2015, Bridgend County Borough Council began preliminary discussions about a regional collaboration, initially through the Specialist European Team (SET) and later including the Engagement and Progression Coordinator and 14 – 19 Curriculum Coordinator. The aim of this collaboration was to develop a project to meet the specific objectives set out under ESF Priority 3 – Youth Employment and Attainment.

- 3.4 There are two strands to the proposal, Inspire 2 Achieve and Inspire 2 Work. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council is the Lead Beneficiary for both strands of the operation; however, due to the nature of the work being developed under each proposal, the joint beneficiaries differ, as illustrated by the table below:

Inspire 2 Achieve	
<i>Beneficiary Status</i>	<i>Name of Beneficiary</i>
Lead	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Joint	Bridgend County Borough Council
	Caerphilly County Borough Council
	Coleg y Cymoedd
	Coleg Gwent
	Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
	College Merthyr Tydfil
	Torfaen County Borough Council
	Careers Wales

Inspire 2 Work	
<i>Beneficiary Status</i>	<i>Name of Beneficiary</i>
Lead	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Joint	Bridgend County Borough Council
	Bridgend College
	Caerphilly County Borough Council
	Coleg y Cymoedd
	Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
	Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council
	Torfaen County Borough Council

- 3.5 Both Inspire operations have been developed to align with the work already implemented within each authority under the Welsh Government Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YE&PF), which supports the identification, tracking and mapping of services and outcomes for young people from education into employment. This alignment will ensure a consistent approach when supporting young people at risk of becoming Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET).

4. Current situation / proposal

Inspire 2 Achieve

- 4.1 The proposal for Inspire 2 Achieve (I2A) is to seek a three year operation, to contribute to ESF Priority 3 Youth Employment and Attainment; The specific objective is to reduce the number of young people aged 11- 24 at risk of becoming Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET).
- 4.2 Inspire 2 Achieve is designed to identify and address the needs of those most at risk of disengagement, and support them to reintegrate into mainstream education provision or alternative curriculum models. Throughout the course of the funding, the operation will target early intervention for those most at risk across the 11 – 24 year old age range and aim to work with a total of 1110 participants, broken down as follows:

- 11 – 16 year olds at most risk of becoming NEET (as identified through Vulnerability Assessment Profile (VAP) Early Identification process) (*660 young people*).
 - 16 – 18 year olds at most risk of becoming NEET (as identified through the Careers Wales 5 Tier Model of Engagement) (*400 young people*).
 - Vulnerable 19 – 24 year olds e.g. young parents, care leavers or young offenders (as identified through partnership forums made up of statutory, voluntary and third sector organisations) (*50 young people*).
- 4.3 As part of the I2A operation, the proposal is for a combined team of 5 full time staff to be employed solely through ESF grant funding. The team will be made up of:
- 1 x Finance, Quality and Performance Officer (split 50% between each Inspire operation)
 - 1 x Administrator (split 50% between each Inspire operation)
 - 1 x Senior Engagement Worker
 - 1 x Psychology Support Worker
 - 2 x Life Skills and Participation Worker
 - 1 x Senior Post-16 Lead Worker
 - 5 x Post-16 Lead Worker
- 4.4 The I2A operation has a clear focus on retention of those identified as ‘at risk’ within education, which is aligned to the successful work already being delivered by the authority under the Youth Engagement & Progression Framework. The inclusion of I2A staff will ensure interventions aimed at identifying individual barriers and supportive actions to reduce risk will continue into post-16 education, employment and training providers. There are a number of partners that will benefit from the Inspire projects and these include schools, FE colleges and Careers Wales.
- 4.5 As a joint beneficiary Bridgend County Borough Council through the I2A operation will contribute towards regional level common result indicators, which are:
- Participants at risk of becoming NEET (11 – 24) gaining qualifications upon leaving
 - Participants at risk of becoming NEET (11 – 24) in education or training upon leaving
 - Participants at risk of becoming NEET (11 – 24) at reduced risk of becoming NEET upon leaving
- 4.6 More recently, the I2A operation has agreed to include within its delivery plans the former Real Opportunities (young people identified as most at risk who have Additional Learning Needs and/or Autistic Spectrum Disorder) and Careers Wales ‘Activate your Potential’ (young people 11 – 16 years old requiring work related/focused activities) operations. It is not anticipated that a separate model of delivery will be adopted, although specialist support will now be provided where necessary. The integration of these two operations into I2A has enhanced the support available to participants, whilst removing duplication and competition between the three operations.

Inspire 2 Work

4.7 The proposal for Inspire 2 Work (I2W) is to seek a three year operation, to contribute to ESF Priority 3 Youth Employment and Attainment; The specific objective is to reduce the number of 16 – 24 year olds who are NEET.

4.8 I2W is designed to identify and address the needs of NEET 16 -24 year olds and bring about their sustainable integration into the labour market, thereby contributing to a reduction in youth unemployment. Over the course of the operation, the proposal is to work with a total of 375 participants, broken down as follows:

- 16 – 18 year olds who are NEET (as identified through the Careers Wales 5 Tier Model of Engagement) (150 young people)
- 19 – 24 year olds who are NEET – (225 young people)

4.9 As part of the I2W operation, the proposal is for a combined team of 5 full time staff to be employed solely through ESF grant funding. The team will be made up of:

- 1 x Finance, Quality and Performance Officer (split 50% between each Inspire operation)
- 1 x Administrator (split 50% between each Inspire operation)
- 1 x Work Experience Coordinator
- 1 x Basic Skills Officer
- 1 x Employment Liaison Officer

4.10 This operation will target unemployed and economically inactive young people from across Bridgend, offering a person-centred approach to determine barriers to sustained engagement in the labour market. The person-centred approach will allow individuals who are ready to work and those who are further away from the labour market to receive appropriate support.

4.11 As a joint beneficiary, Bridgend County Borough Council through the I2W project will contribute towards regional level common result indicators, which are:

- NEET Participants (16 - 24 years old) gaining qualifications upon leaving
- NEET Participants (16 - 24 years old) in education/training upon leaving
- NEET Participants (16 - 24 years old) in entering employment upon leaving

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

5.1 There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 No Equality Impact Assessment has been completed to date.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 Project costs for the additional staff detailed in sections 4.3 and 4.9 will be fully funded through the European Social Fund, however, there will also be contributions made to the salaries of a number of existing staff involved with the management of the two operations and associated staff, for the duration of the project. These will be:

- 50% contribution towards the annual salary of the Central Hub Manager
- 50% contribution towards the annual salary of the Engagement and Progression Coordinator (EPC)
- 25% contribution towards the annual salary of the Families First and ESF Finance Coordinator

7.2 The Central Hub Manager post and EPC role are integral to ongoing service delivery contributions, and therefore will not be put forward as savings for the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). As with previous EU funded programmes, there is a requirement for funding from Families First to match the funding from ESF monies. For the two delivery strands of the operation, this is sourced from:

Inspire 2 Achieve

	15/16 £	16/17 £	17/18 £	18/19 £	TOTAL £
Families First	36,106	86,654	-		122,760
Education Improvement Grant (EIG)	48,141	115,539	115,539	57,769	336,988
TOTAL MATCH CONTRIBUTION	84,247	202,193	115,539	57,769	459,748

The Welsh Government, Families First Grant is only approved currently until March 2016. However, there is a planned extension until March 2017. This will be confirmed later this year.

The Education Improvement Grant (EIG) is proposed to be delegated to schools from 2016/17 onwards; however Head teachers have pledged their support to continue the funding of the roles through the EIG as these roles have a critical role in reducing the number of NEETS in the borough.

Inspire 2 Work

	15/16 £	16/17 £	17/18 £	18/19 £	TOTAL £
Youth Strategy Grant	36,106	86,654	86,654	43,327	252,741

The Welsh Government Youth Work Support Grant is currently approved up to March 2016. However this grant is planned for an annual renewal for the duration of the Inspire 2 Work operation.

There is a risk to the authority that some of the match funding streams detailed above could be reduced or removed. Should this materialise, the directorate will consider alternative funding sources.

Families First staff included within the delivery model of Inspire 2 Work will transfer to the ESF project from April 2017.

7.3 Through the European Community's "Simplified Cost" model, the project will be able to claim up to 40% on its direct eligible staff costs to meet all other costs. This will provide the authority with additional funding to meet other Project related costs that occur outside of direct salary costs. However, fundamental to this ability to claim

40% overhead on the project will be meeting the staff budgeted costs throughout the project.

- 7.4 In line with other EU funded programmes, the statutory redundancy costs relating to the period during which staff are employed in the delivery of the project will be met from within project funds. Where contracts for the project extend beyond project delivery dates, any associated non-statutory redundancy/compensatory payments will have to be met from outside of the ESF allocated funds.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 Cabinet is recommended to authorise the Corporate Director, Education and Transformation to continue with the proposed delivery plan for the Inspire operations in Bridgend, and in consultation with the Corporate Director, Resources and the Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Regulatory Services, to enter into the necessary agreements with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (Lead Beneficiary) and Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) on behalf of the Council.

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Background documents:

ESF West Wales and the Valleys Operational Programme