

Committee: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**
 Date of meeting: **15th March 2022**
 Report Subject: **Inspire 2 Achieve and Work Performance Report January – December 2021**
 Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Jo Collins, Executive Member for Education**
 Report Submitted by: **Joanne Sims, Service Manager – Young People and Partnerships**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
22/02/21	24/02/21	02.03.22			15/3/21			

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with an opportunity to scrutinise the local Inspire 2 Achieve and Inspire 2 Work projects funded by the European Social Fund (ESF). These projects are part of the Youth Service’s approach to reducing the numbers of young people becoming Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET).

2. Scope and Background

2.1 In 2013, Blaenau Gwent Youth Service led on the development of two ESF operations across West Wales and the Valleys (10 Local Authorities and 4 FE Colleges) called Inspire 2 Achieve (11-24 at risk of NEET young people) and Inspire 2 Work (16-24 NEET young people). In July 2015, the lead was transitioned to Environment and Regeneration, whilst the local delivery projects are managed by the Youth Service within the Education Directorate.

2.2 The ESF Inspire 2 Achieve project was approved by WEFO in February 2016, with Inspire 2 Work being approved in November 2016, both approved until 2022 with a recent agreed final extension until April 2023. The Youth Service had established both teams by 2017, with additional posts for 6 to 7 transition, emotional and mental health and health and fitness recruited later. These projects have ensured continued support for young people both at risk of becoming and currently NEET for the past 5 years.

2.3 The Inspire projects are underpinned by the Welsh Government’s Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF), which outlines 6 key areas which Councils are required to have in place, to support young people who are at risk or who are currently NEET. The Inspire projects are how the Council provides the brokerage/lead worker role for young people.

2.4 The two Inspire projects have ensured that as a Council we deliver the requirements of the YEPF and that the numbers of young people becoming NEET continue to reduce. The additional posts address the emerging themes identified since the onset of the project, which are contributory risk factors, which include transition from year 6 to 7 and additional support for young people pre and post 16 around emotional and mental health needs.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 It is recommended that Members scrutinise the current performance of the two projects and consider the following options:

3.1.1 Option 1 – Members are asked to scrutinise the information detailed within the report and accept the report.

3.1.2 Option 2 – Members do not accept the report and contribute by making appropriate recommendations to the Executive Committee.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

4.1 The Inspire programmes contribute to all areas of the Blaenau Gwent Wellbeing Plan through supporting young people to overcome barriers in their life enabling them to become positive members of the community. The programmes also contribute to key objectives within the Corporate Plan, provide support to some of the most vulnerable young people in Blaenau Gwent, supporting them to overcome significant barriers to their learning, training and/or employment.

4.2 This work also ensures that the Welsh Government's Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF) 6 key areas are fully met.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 Impact on Budget:

The two programmes are externally funded by ESF and so have no impact on core budget. Although, there is an amount of match funding required, this is minimal and is provided by some officer in-kind time from the Service Manager – Young People and Partnerships, one Youth Service Team Manager and then other externally funded posts.

The financial profiles for the two Inspire programmes for 2016 - 2023 are overleaf:

I2W

Total Project Costs - £2,440,445

ESF Grant receivable - £2,148,723

Match Funding identified - £310,874

I2A

Total Project Costs - £3,787,353

ESF Grant Receivable - £3,325,260

Match Funding Identified - £470,026

Redundancy costs are built into the lifetime of the programme.

5.2 Risk Including Mitigating Actions:

There is positive news in that securing ESF monies until 2023 has provided some stability for targeted services for the past 5 years. However, plans need to be put in place prior to this end date to secure support for young people beyond this date. If the entire project support ends in 2022, this will have a detrimental impact on managing the NEET agenda. This has been flagged up as a risk and is considered in the Education Directorate risk planning arrangements this year as well as the Corporate Risk Register (CRR). The Service Manager now attends the Regional Skills Partnership Cluster group which is preparing for future funding from UK Government which is expected to support previously funded ESF programmes. However, all guidance released from UK Government implies that future funding will be focussed on Adult Employability programmes, and not young people. This issue is now being escalated across key departments in Welsh Government and with the Regional Skills Partnership.

5.3 Legal:

There are no legal implications for this report.

5.4 Human Resources:

There are no immediate implications for Human Resources. However, as the end date of 2023 approaches, all staff within the two projects will need to be put on notice.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 Performance Information and Data:

Although support is provided to young people up to the age of 25, Local Authorities are measured and compared nationally against the recorded numbers of young people leaving school each year at the end of Year 11 and then becoming NEET. Since 2010, Blaenau Gwent has seen a steady reduction in the numbers of young people leaving in Year 11 becoming NEET from 8.7% (74 young people) in 2009/10 to 1.5% (9 young people) in 2020/21. This is the same as the previous year, and is in line with the lowest figure ever achieved. The national comparative report is published later this year.

6.1.1 Considering the context of the past two years, it is extremely positive that so many young people transitioned successfully and maintained their post 16 placement. This reduction is attributed to improved partnership working

but also due to the focussed efforts of the Youth Service using ESF funded programmes, initially Prevent 14-19 and now Inspire.

6.1.2 **Post Covid/Responding to Poverty Agenda**

Since March 2020, the Youth Service has supported the response to COVID-19 and Inspire have been part of that response. Youth workers are back in schools and youth centres and support has moved from dealing with essentials to supporting wellbeing. This support is provided through one to one and group work, with a growing increase in requests for detached youth work. A full summer and winter programme was provided as part of the Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing. All opportunities provided by the Youth Service are free, food and transport provided. Recent examples are a residential to Jamie's Farm, a reward trip to Cardiff City Stadium and a Christmas trip to Winter Wonderland. The service works with partners to address identified need, examples include providing clothing for work/sports/proms, free gym passes to encourage healthy living and wellbeing. As part of period poverty, sanitary products are available for free in all youth service settings with this widened to include other personal hygiene items such as toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap and deodorants. The service has partnered again this year to provide Christmas Hampers to those in need. Inspire works closely with the Youth Homelessness team to ensure that appropriate referrals are made and that young people are completing necessary paperwork to secure shelter. If accommodation is offered the Youth Service supports young people to ensure they are in receipt of the correct benefits, support with budgeting plans and access funds for furniture and appliances where needed. All projects assist young people with managing their finances, responsibilities and budget when the need is identified. Where issues of poverty arise, staff are able to identify this and suggest referrals to Safeguarding or Families First for wider family support

6.1.3 Inspire 2 Achieve (11-16)

The Youth Service Team Manager: Education, Employment and Training oversees both the Inspire programmes.

6.1.4 There are 12 members of staff in the Inspire 2 Achieve (I2A) team. This includes 1 x Team Lead, 4 x School Based Youth Workers, 4 x Transition Youth Workers (2 x Yr 6/7, 2 x Yr 11 including year 11 Electively Home Educated young people), 1 x Alternative Education youth worker, 1 x Group Delivery Youth worker and 1 x Emotional and Mental Health youth worker. Usual support includes one to one support and group programmes depending on the needs of the individual in an out of school.

6.1.5 The projected outcomes (targets) for the lifetime of the project and progress for Inspire 2 Achieve (aged 11-16) are set out below:

- Total number of young people supported: 1196 (699 males, 497 females)
- 7% to gain qualifications (84 young people),
- 20% to enter into further learning when leaving school (239 young people)

- 50% to be at reduced risk of becoming NEET (598 young people)
- 6.1.6 Since 2016 (when team was established):
- 1005 young people (out of 1196) have been supported, (501 males, 503 females), with one young person identifying as Non-Binary.
- 6.1.7 Of the 470 officially closed, the following outcomes are recorded:
- 19% (90 young people) have gained qualifications. This is 8% against overall target, exceeding the original target.
 - 42% (196 young people) have made successful transition in to posts 16 Education, Training and Employment (ETE). This is 16% against overall target, we are expecting to easily exceed the target of 20%.
 - 51% (240 young people) have reduced their risk of becoming NEET. We expect this percentage to be increased and exceeded by April 2022.
 - 93% of participants have improved their 'soft' skills.
- 6.1.8 For the period of January to December 2021, 96 new young people were supported (33 males, 63 female). It is important to note that due to the Covid 19 pandemic and subsequent issues this raised, I2A staff extended support to an additional 300 young people. The outcomes for these young people are still being collated. However, a cohort of these young people made successful transitions in to post 16 ETE or have developed the skills to function and have been closed (2022). This has enabled staff to offer support to new referrals across all school and alternative education sites.
- 6.1.9 Inspire 2 Work (16-24)
The team has reduced from 6.5 to 4.5 this year as two members of staff have moved to the youth homelessness work in the Youth Service. The team, managed by the Youth Service Team Manager, includes 3 x core I2W youth workers (Education, Employment and Training), 1 x Health and Fitness youth worker and 0.5 emotional and mental health youth worker. This project also funds one day a week counselling for 16-24 year olds and part funds a psychologist for the service.
- 6.1.10 Inspire support for young people aged 16-24 is provided on a one to one and group basis, delivering projects such as gym, fitness, training, enterprise and wellbeing and plays a pivotal role in supporting young people on Tiers 1,2 and 3 of the Careers Wales 5 Tier Model. Support is also offered to young people linked to the DWP, Housing associations, Social Services and other agencies. I2W can only support any young person who is NEET, and not living in a Communities First area, as Communities 4 Work is based in those areas. The reality is that the majority of young people coming through to the team often need long term intensive support, addressing issues such mental health, low self-esteem and housing. Therefore, the team work closely with other Youth Service colleagues and other partners, and small steps are seen as a big success.
- 6.1.11

The Communities 4 Work (C4W) Triage partnership work is pivotal. Each I2W Youth Worker acts as a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for each C4W cluster area. All referrals for young people who live in Communities First post code areas must go to the Triage post in Communities 4 Work (C4F) before agreed to refer to Inspire. This ultimately means that Inspire has limited control over how many young people can access the project.

6.1.12

The projected outcomes (targets) for the lifetime of the project and progress for Inspire 2 Work (16-24) are set out below:

- Total number of young people supported: 780 (438 males, 342 females)
- 50% to gain qualifications (390 young people),
- 20% to enter into further learning when leaving school (156 young people)
- 20% to gain employment NEET (156 young people)

6.1.13

Since 2017 (when team was established) 315 young people have been supported (186 males, 129 females). Of the 265 closed, the following outcomes are recorded:

- 57 achieved a qualification (22%)
- 71 supported into further learning (27%)
- 76 supported into employment (28%)
- 99 still NEET but improved 'soft' skills (37%)

6.1.15

Of the 265 closed, 202 (96%) improved their wellbeing support scores, meaning that their overall awareness and understanding of themselves and the wider world has significantly improved.

6.1.16

For the period of January to December 2021, 152 new young people were referred, with only 59 eligible through the Triage process and enrolled (38 males, 21 females). Out of the 59, 21 have now moved onto further learning and employment, with 28 continuing with support into 2022.

6.1.17

It is clear to see that the sharing of participants between the Inspire 2 Work programme and C4W programme (C4W is an all Wales programme, run by Welsh Government, funded by ESF) has made meeting and/or exceeding targets difficult. This has been the same experience across the region where Local Authorities have a higher percentage of prior Communities First areas. WEFO and the lead team are aware of this situation as all ESF programmes for this age group are facing a similar situation. Despite this, the numbers of young people being supported are good, with positive achievements being made by all young people. Nevertheless, future funding developments needs to take this into consideration, as more young people could be supported if the tight geographical restrictions on where they live could be removed.

6.2

Expected outcome for the public:

Through the delivery of these programmes, young people will be supported at the times when they most need it and are more likely to achieve better outcomes in school, training and employment. The by-

product of this enhanced support should lead to more economically active young people, more young people reaching their potential in secondary education and further learning/training and less mental health barriers hindering the development of young people.

- 6.3 Involvement (Consultation, engagement, participation):
From the outset, young people, schools and partner organisations influenced the design of the programmes.
- 6.4 Thinking for the long term:
The support provided is expected to better prepare young people for their future and beyond the lifetime of the programmes.
- 6.5 Preventative Focus:
Both Inspire programmes are preventative in their approach. Inspire 2 Achieve exist to help 'prevent' young people from becoming NEET. Inspire 2 Work exists to 'prevent' young people from developing ingrained negative behaviours and lifestyles into their future.
- 6.6 Collaboration/Partnership Working:
The programmes are collaborative in their nature as they are a regionally planned programme, locally delivered. The local Raising Aspirations Group holds the Youth Service to account for achieving the outcomes in both Inspire programmes.
- 6.7 Integration:
These programmes impact upon key objectives for both Education and Environment and Regeneration Directorates, including educational attainment, attendance and behaviour and addressing skills and employment for 11-24 year olds.
- 6.8 EgIA:
N/A as this programme will not have any negative impact on protected characteristics, only positive.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

- 7.1 The Raising Aspirations Group monitors the progress of the local delivery of the two Inspire programmes. A performance monitoring report is presented annually to Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise the local delivery. Annual reports and evaluation reports are also provided to Education Directorate Management Team (DMT).

Background Documents / Electronic Links

None