

Blackpool Town Deal Board meeting 18

Agenda Item 5

Report to: Blackpool Town Deal Board
Subject: UK Community Renewal Fund Update
Relevant Officer: Nick Gerrard, Growth and Prosperity Programme Director
Date of Meeting: 2 September 2022

1. Purpose of Report

To provide the Town Deal Board with an update on the UK Community Renewal Fund (CRF) Programme.

2. Recommendation

To note the progress with the four Blackpool CRF schemes.

3. Overarching Programme Position

All required returns to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) have been made and no issues are outstanding.

All 4 schemes continue to deliver activity until the end of September 2022.

Programme spend: a total of £763,370 CRF is available to the programme to the end of September 2022. A total of £117,997 has been paid out to projects to date.

Whilst this may seem a low figure, a programme RAG rating of green is proposed as other than the Inspira-led "Ready for Work" project, all schemes are anticipated to spend and deliver outputs to profile. The position with Inspira is covered in section 4.3.1 below.

Project activity summary is outlined in Annex A.

4. Programme management

4.1 Project Claim Process

The programme was delayed by late approvals by DLUHC; however it is now well into the delivery phase with all four projects in delivery since 3 November 2021 and all have opted to take advantage of a 3-month extension from the end of June 2022 to the end of September 2022. Each will now run for almost 11 months. This has necessitated the production of an agreement side letter and increases the monitoring process from three to four claim periods.

Projects are required to provide quarterly claims as follows:

Claim 1 covering the period 3/11/21 to 31/12/21 (submission deadline 21/1/22).

Claim 2 covering the period 1/1/22 to 31/3/22 (submission deadline 22/4/22).

Claim 3 covering the period 1/4/22 to 30/6/22 (submission deadline 22/7/22).

Claim 4 covering the period 1/7/22 to 30/9/22 (target submission deadline 21/10/22).

Each project team must also provide an independent evaluation report (all currently underway) that is to be submitted before the end of the year. As projects evolve, budgets and the achievement of milestones and outputs / outcomes will change. At each claim we are, therefore, asking the project teams to re-profile future spend, upcoming milestone dates and projected results achievement based upon what has happened during the claim period.

4.2 UK Community Renewal Fund reporting

Blackpool Council is the designated accountable body for the delivery of the CRF programme with the oversight from the Town Deal Board. The Council must comply with DLUHC mandatory financial and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) requirements. Payment of grant is dependent upon the receipt of satisfactory interim reports.

We have, so far, made returns to DLUHC as follows:

By 31/3/22 for the period to 28/2/22

- Programme & projects progress (including financials & achievements).
 - DLUHC made no requests or comments.

By 31/7/22 for the period to 30/6/22

- Programme & projects progress (including financials & achievements).
 - DLUHC have made no requests or comments as yet.

4.3 Project Progress Issues

4.3.1 Ready for Work Scheme (Inspira)

A discussion with DLUHC has been requested to understand its viewpoint regarding the low output achievement levels from this pilot scheme before we commit to further claim payments - the efforts of the project team are not being queried; however, a discussion with DLUHC must take place to ascertain what funding can be released. To date the PMO has only released £65,553 of the £125,628 available to the scheme.

In mitigation, when they originally bid, the guidance detail on outputs and outcomes was further updated which affected their delivery approach. The key issue has been around the “economically inactive” output definition, which includes “people who are not in employment and are not actively seeking employment”. These are by very nature a very difficult target group to identify and engage with as they are not naturally reaching out for support.

Working in the same geographic area as the Youth Hub / The Platform scheme it may have also had a greater detrimental affect than at first envisaged. It is understood that the DWP has referred fewer people than expected (none of whom match the 'economically inactive' definition), attendance rates for support / training sessions have been disappointing (very low compared to numbers signed-up). All these factors have contributed to a 'perfect storm' of issues preventing the achievement of outputs and therefore outcomes.

Inspira has revised its ways of working in the last two quarters with limited success. In its attempts to attract more beneficiaries, Inspira has almost entirely expended its CRF allocation in the periods to the end of June and will be using its own funds during the last period (in conjunction with some unused 'participant costs' we expect to vire into staffing budget lines) to ensure it helps those who have engaged successfully to progress into education, training or employment. Please also see Annex A for more performance detail.

4.3.2 Piloting Place-Based Innovation Catalysts

This scheme is only noted as a progress issue based on significant expenditure is expected in the final quarter - the project has operated in reverse to typical where a large cohort of beneficiaries is generated through mass marketing early on but the reporting of activity is largely only available towards the end. In the first quarter, the Project Manager worked on a part-time basis, there were delays in recruiting the rest of the team and non-staff related costs were very low. Activity has since ‘ramped up’ as companies have been recruited through existing networks; consequently, as more staff and consultants are involved costs increase. The symposium and the marketing needed to generate case studies, videos, etc. will also fall in the last quarter (15th September at the Winter Gardens) – it will be an intensive staff period and the team will be in full delivery mode until Friday 30th September.

5.2. CRF financial position

5.2.1 Expenditure

The current profiled CRF expenditure position is set out in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Current Forecast CRF funding position

Project	Approved total project funding (3 Nov 2021 – 30 Jun 2022)	Claim 1 (3 Nov - 31 Dec 2021 actual spend)	Claim 2 (1 Jan – 31 Mar 2022) actual spend	Claim 3 (1 Apr – 30 Jun 2022) actual spend	Claim 4 (1 Jul - 30 Sep 2022)
Ready for Work	£125,628.00	£22,921.19	£42,632.63	£42,100.51	£17,973.67
The Youth Hub	£443,824.00	£25,056.42	£66,905.65	£103,523.87	£248,338.06
Piloting Place-Based Innovation Catalysts	£180,579.00	£2,713.89	£24,339.68	£34,720.14	£118,805.29
The role of Digital Museums & Archives in culture-led regeneration	£13,339.00	£334.78	£4,396.01	£6,190.56	£2,417.65
Total	£763,370.00	£51,026.28	£138,273.97	£186,535.08	£387,534.67

5.2.2 Match funding financial position

The programme is funded by CRF with confirmed supporting match funding as set out in data table below. The public funds are provided by the Universities.

Funding sources (Expenditure by year)	2021/22	2022/23	Total
UKCRF total contributions	£372,681.85	£390,688.15	£763,370.00
Public match total contributions	£12,051.10	£13,931.57	£25,982.67
Total	£384,732.95	£404,619.72	£789,352.67

5.2.3. Income

CRF receipts so far are set out in Table 3 below. As these are 'pilot' projects, we expect the balance to be paid upon resolution of the Inspira Ready for Work project output performance query with DLUHC and successful completion of all the projects.

Table 3. CRF receipts

Tranches received	Total received
Pre-development expenditure [Nov 21]	£20,000.00
62.5% of revenue (& capital by mistake) [Dec 21]	£486,649.00
62.5% of capital [Dec 21]	£25,000.00
Total	£531,649.00

5.3. Inflation

As the majority of project costs are primarily staff related or, if not, have been defrayed already, we do not expect inflation to affect any of the projects significantly (contracted staff will not receive any increments at all or before the projects conclude). Minor price increases will be absorbed into the current budgets through the revision of requirements, specifications or quantities.

5.4. Contracts

Legal documents for all four schemes are fully engrossed and in place.

5.5. Project extensions

As a reminder, on the 23/3/22 the Council received a letter from the Government CRF Delivery team noting requests from Lead Authorities to extend CRF activity beyond the existing end date of 30/6/22 (related to delayed delivery due to the impact of COVID-19 and associated restrictions). To ensure CRF projects could deliver as contracted the Government agreed to extend activity up to 31/12/22. All four of Blackpool's CRF schemes requested an extension to the end of September 2022 to ensure all project spend and outcomes are achieved.

The granting of extensions requires a side letter to accompany the existing agreements, which in turn, requires re-profile data to be submitted by the project teams.

Annex A: Project Delivery Summary

1. Ready for Work (£125,628.00 UK CRF funding)

Ready for Work (delivered by Inspira Cumbria Ltd.) provides one-to-one and one-to-many support to 18 to 24 year-old economically inactive or unemployed persons through job searching and life skills support with the objectives of those supported gaining places in education, training or employment.

All 6 scheduled support courses have now been delivered (including in April, May & June). From the claim two report:

- January cohort (10 signed up; 4 turned up).
- February cohort (19 signed up; 8 turned up).
- March cohort (26 signed up; 12 turned up).

Engagement, retention and outcomes for those beneficiaries who commit to support is good. Barriers to engagement include social anxiety, child care difficulties and travel.

Outputs /Outcome Performance

Economically inactive people supported: 0 (versus the project target of 45) and no more projected / expected before the end of the scheme. No 'economically inactive' persons have been referred to the project by partners, nor have any 'economically inactive' 'walk-ups' occurred. Inspira has created & circulated a digital flyer (to over 100 local partners), collaborated with JC+, The Prince's Trust, PDP (transformational trainers), the Youth Hub, local 'people agency', SPARKS and has engaged in a Twitter campaign (seeing retweets from Scott Benton MP, amongst others) to promote awareness of Ready for Work and attract more economically inactive and other eligible beneficiaries. DWP has not referred any economically inactive clients and has made many less unemployed referrals than initially expected. To make matters worse, only around 50% of those who booked onto its support / training courses have actually attended (understood to be a UK-wide issue after the COVID-19 pandemic).

Unemployed people supported: 41 (versus the project target of 45) and no more projected / expected before the end of the scheme (scheduled workshops have been completed, so no more candidates are expected and remaining funds plus some provided by Inspira as new 'match' are to be used to support those currently receiving support).



People engaged in job-searching following support: 0 (versus the project target of 84) and no more projected / expected before the end of the scheme (to count, job-searchers must have been economically inactive, if eligibility for counting was widened to include those fitting the 'Unemployed' definition, the number engaged in job-searching would be 34).

People engaged in life skills support following support: 0 (versus the project target of 10) and no more projected / expected before the end of the scheme (to count, life skills 'engagers' must have been economically inactive - if eligibility for counting was widened to include those fitting the 'Unemployed' definition, the number engaged in job-searching would be 41).

People in education / training following support: 12 (versus the project target of 45) with 6 more projected / expected before the end of the scheme (This outcome is not affected by the definitions but has been affected by the low numbers of referrals and poor attendance rates. In addition to progressing people into education, the Ready for Work project has also helped 5 beneficiaries into paid work, whilst 4 have progressed into voluntary work).

The issues experienced by the project team stand in contrast to positive feedback received, e.g. this with this testimonial:

Hi,

All I can say is unbelievable and thank you so much, absolutely love the unique premises to deliver this and the passion you guys show..... Listening to the buzz of my Work Coach walking back whilst battling the wind and rain was brilliant. They are already having conversations with their customers and booking them in.

I can confirm availability for next Friday for you to come across and sit in Work Coach appointments which there will be about 20 and all dedicated to filling this fantastic opportunity.

Phil Gibson Work Coach Team Leader | North Central Work and Health Services Group – the Heart of The North

Newspaper article can be viewed on the [Blackpool Gazette](#) Website.

1.1. Results (formally reported)

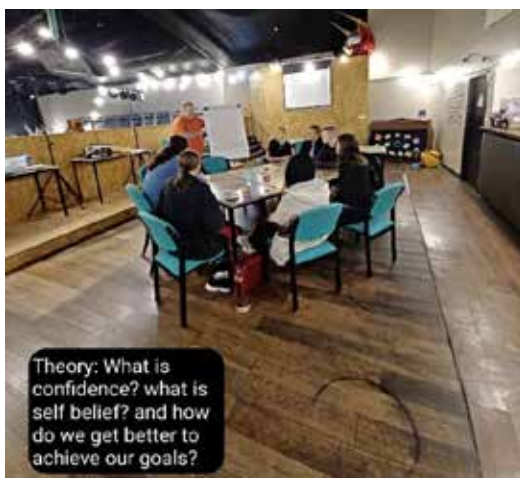
Result	Results achieved so far	Results yet to be achieved	Mitigating 'nearly' figures	Total to be achieved by project close
People engaged in job searching following support	0	0	34	84
People engaged in life skills support following interventions	10	0	41	10
People in education / training following support	12	6	0	45
Economically inactive people supported	0	0	0	45
Unemployed people supported	41	0	0	45

Below is a set of photos taken showing activity group sessions.

1. Debate Time:



2. Theory:



3. Minecraft:



4. Pairs:



2. The Youth Hub (t/a 'The Platform') (£443,824 UK CRF funding)

The Platform (delivered by Blackpool Council) is a physical space to support young people in the town to access jobs and training and to make the jump from school or unemployment into work smoother and easier - the project provides a 'one place base' providing quality advice for young jobseekers aged 16-24.

2.1. Progress

Project extension to the end of September confirmed:

- Contracts with Groundwork and The Blackpool FC Community Trust will extend to the end of August.

Facility is essentially complete and in full operation:

- New furniture is expected soon.
- External graphics are in place.
- One Employment Advisor to be re-recruited.

Over 215 (of the 300 CRF target) beneficiaries have now engaged with the Hub:

- 77 of those have enjoyed positive outcomes - 33 into paid employment and 44 into training / education.

Most beneficiaries are referred by DWP and of those:

- 65% are male.
- Most are 18 or under.
- 50% are FY1 residents.
- There is a circa 80% attendance rate.

Meetings have taken place with Blackpool & the Fylde College (B&FC) to explore how to work more collaboratively.

'Youtherapy' agreement has been put in place with the NHS 'Connect Young People's Service' to enable the offer of sessions to beneficiaries.

DWP staff caseloads are low, so referrals are similarly low. This results from apparent changes to how the department works with unemployed people brought about by the pandemic. The pool of potential beneficiaries is now different from when the CRF bid was first submitted (smaller).

The 'customer recording system' communication module has been enabled to send out texts and messages to beneficiaries.

Graham Construction (who are building the Houndshell extension) and other suppliers have been asked to attend The Platform to give advice and information to those seeking construction work.

2.2. Results (formally reported)

Result	Results achieved so far	Results yet to be achieved	Total to be achieved by project close
People in education / training following support	54	21	75
Unemployed people supported	245	55	300

Below is a set of photos showing the transformation of the vacant unit into the Youth Employment Hub, The Platform.

1. Vacant unit prior to The Platform scheme:



2. During The Platform scheme delivery:





3. Piloting Place-Based Innovation Catalysts (£180,579 UK CRF funding / £23,351 own match funding)

This project (delivered by Lancaster University) will improve economic growth & prosperity in Blackpool through high level & high impact innovation, talent & skills programmes - the scheme will work with business of all sizes, and public & voluntary sector organisations to provide 1-to-1 and 1-to-many support to local 'innovation driven businesses' resulting in the development of innovation plans and knowledge transfer activities.

3.1. Progress

Potential beneficiaries targeted:

- Potential delegates recruited to form the Taskforce.

Taskforce activated (with a 2 day residential event).

Taskforce has mapped out shared innovation challenges:

- Paths to solutions developed.

Website Links:

[Lancaster University's website.](#)

[Lancaster University's Piloting Place-Based Innovation Catalysts press release.](#)

3.2. Results (formally reported)

Result	Results achieved so far	Results yet to be achieved	Total to be achieved by project close
Innovation plans formed & enacted (commitment secured)	0	15	15
Organisations engaged in knowledge transfer activity following support	0	15	15
Small businesses engaged (0-49 employees)	2	5	7
Medium sized businesses engaged (50-249 employees)	0	3	3
Large businesses engaged (250+ employees)	1	1	2
Public organisations participating	2	0	2
Voluntary sector organisations participating	1	0	1

1. Welcoming the activation of the Innovation Catalyst Taskforce:



2. The Taskforce reflecting on their journey so far:



3. Figure 12. Planning the symposium



4. The role of Digital Museums and Archives in culture-led regeneration
(£13,339 UK CRF funding / £2,631.67 own match funding)

This project (delivered by the University of Central Lancashire) will generate tangible insights into how digital museums and archives affect local pride, can be exploited by local communities, improve social cohesion and strengthen collaboration & the collective value of the 'creative economy' through the creation of clusters, networks and virtual communities resulting in the development of innovation plans and knowledge transfer activities.

4.1. Progress

A delay in securing formal research ethics and governance approval (covering the formal on-site visits, in-person interviews and developmental engagements has slowed progress (actually granted in July).

'Museums' & 'Archives' (including galleries & libraries) case study sites determined:

- Including the Joe Longthorne Museum, Spitfire Visitor Centre, Showtown & the Arcade Club.

Exemplar Digital Service Providers register not yet completed.

Website Links:

[UCLan website](#)

4.2. Results (formally reported)

Result	Claim 2 results predicted	Claim 2 results achieved in period	Total to be achieved by project close
Innovation plans formed & enacted (commitment secured)	0	5	5
Organisations engaged in knowledge transfer activity following support	0	5	5
Small businesses engaged (0-49 employees)	1	4	5
Medium sized businesses engaged (50-249 employees)	2	1	3
Large businesses engaged (250+ employees)	1	1	2
Public organisations participating	2	3	5
Private organisations participating	1	2	3
Voluntary sector organisations participating	1	1	2
Permanent part-time jobs created in businesses as a result of support ¹	0	0	3

¹ Voluntary Result (not contracted)