

The Highland Council

Education, Children and Adult Services Committee – 21 May 2014

Agenda Item	15.
Report No	ECA/12/14

Family Firm

Report by Director of Care and Learning

Summary

This report provides an update on the work progressing as part of the Corporate Parenting responsibilities of the council for Looked After children through the Family Firm scheme.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Family Firm scheme was set up by Highland Council as the largest employer in the Highlands, to provide workplace experiences for looked after children.
- 1.2 The concept of councils and partner agencies as 'Family Firms' which has been developing in Scotland, seeks to respond to the needs of looked after children and young people as they move towards the end of their schooling and beyond, in much the same way as a parent owning their own business might for their own children. In particular it seeks to ensure that the considerable resources of the council and its partners provide a positive learning environment for the transition to employment.
- 1.3 Family Firm placements are intended to be supportive, flexible and of longer duration than traditional work experience. The young people who will benefit include many who experience difficulties in formal settings and with building trusting relationships. Service staff work with a young person in a mentoring role, and will themselves require training and ongoing support to maximise the potential benefits of the scheme. There is close liaison with the young person's Lead Professional, to ensure any issues are responded to and addressed at an early stage.
- 1.4 The placements may be short term, of one or two weeks. However they are more likely to be over a longer period, and whilst some may be for only a half day per week, they can be as much as three to four full days a week. The length and structure of the placement will be discussed and agreed with the Service Lead in advance, and may be subject to amendment to better meet the young person's needs.
- 1.5 The placements are reviewed regularly, and the review will focus on building on the experience, for example extending or enhancing the placement wherever possible.
- 1.6 Young people also have the opportunity on placement to apply for vacancies, participate in staff training opportunities, and take part and take examinations in practical skills course - e.g. Health & Safety and Food Hygiene.
- 1.7 A case study is attached as **Appendix 1**

1.8 A consultation with young people has been conducted, resulting in the development of a Family Firm Pathway (**Appendices 2 and 3.**)

2. Family Firm Update to April 2014

2.1 The following provides details of the referrals and placements we have had for family firm until April 2014.

- Total Referrals: 39
- Currently on placement (with Highland Council) – 1
- Currently on placement (external employer) – 1
- Ongoing (progressing to work placements) – 3
- Referrals on hold - 5
- Referrals closed – 29

2.2 Breakdown per School

School/Unit Attached To	Nos
Alness	1
Charleston	1
Culloden	2
Dingwall	2
Inverness High/The Bridge	1
IRA	1
Left School	5
Lochaber High School/An Cala	11
Millburn/The Bridge	2
Nairn	2
Plockton	1
Portree	1
The Good Shepherd Secure Unit	1
Tain	1
Thurso	3
Wick	3
Other	1

2.3 Highland Council departments and the external employers involved continue to be very supportive when approached for opportunities. The following Council Services and other employers have been involved, and 26 placements have been offered since the start of the scheme. The summary below takes into account both current and previous placements, as some of the young people have had more than one placement.

Highland Council	No of Placements	External Employers	No of Placements
H&P (Construction), Inverness	3	Garage, Inverness (Mechanic role) (only 1 role taken up)	2
H&P (Construction), Fort William	2	Hotel, Inverness (Kitchen role)	1
P&D (Rangers), Fort Augustus	1	Hotel, Fort William (Reception role) (role not taken up)	1
TECS (Gardening), Fort William	1	Hotel, Portree (Kitchen role)	1

TECS (Dog Warden), Wick	1	Estate work, Newtonmore (Estate role)	1
ECS (Care), Thurso	1	Hairdresser, Wick (Hairdressing role)	1
ECS (Care), Inverness	1	Stonemason, Newtonmore	1
ECS (Primary), Nairn	1	Estate work, Dundonnel	1
TECS (Gardening), Inverness	3		
ECS, (Janitorial), Inverness	1		
H&P (Construction), Alness	1		
ECS (Secondary), Dingwall	1		

- 2.4 Regarding the referrals on hold or closed, 21 young people were offered a work placement. Where placements are on hold or closed, these can be due to various aspects, such as the young person not being ready for placement, or starting a course at college, or being offered a placement but not accepting the offer.
- 2.5 Three new referrals have been received in the last month. In two cases, young people are being considered for possible placements within Highland Council, and one young person is due to start a placement in a Primary School this week.
- 2.6 Many young people report positive outcomes from the scheme, for example as illustrated by a young person who applied for a full time course with North Highland College and along with his long term placement with SNH, has now undertaken a placement with a private estate to gain "Hatchery" experience where he released salmon into the river and planted trees on river banks. This placement was very successful, with the employer providing him a reference to pass onto the College to support his application. A further offer of work experience has been offered, should the young person wish to uptake and subject to being able to travel to the Estate.
- 2.7 The preventative spend funding has contributed funding to the Face to Face and Barnardos Works initiatives, to increase the preparation for work skills for looked after young people.
- 2.8 Face to Face is a collaboration involving the third sector and employers, working with young people in Throughcare & Aftercare and young offenders to ensure they are ready for work. It is a year long programme that supports Family Firm to provide work experience and support young people into employment.
- 2.9 Barnardos Works is also working with Miller Construction to implement aspects of their contract with the council for a new school, to providing local employment and apprenticeships for looked after children.
- 2.10 All apprentices currently working have had to come through the college route and this presented problems for some looked after young people, who may not have the qualifications to gain access to the college course. Barnardos Works have set up a course to allow young people the opportunity to become ready for the college course and gain work experience on building sites.
- 2.11 Miller Construction has agreed to fund all the personal protection equipment required for the young people to participate in this course.
- 2.12 Funding has also been provided to Day 1 mentoring, to increase the mentoring provision to looked after children in education, to help make them more prepared

for further education and employment. Day 1 have increased the number of schools that they provide a mentoring service to, and they presently have 29 young people on the programme, of which 7 (around 25%) are looked after.

- 2.13 Other partners who have become significantly involved in the scheme include the Employability Team in Highland Council, Activity Agreement Co-ordinators, Go 4 it!, Calman Trust and Highlife Highland. This helps to ensure there is a comprehensive provision.

3. Implications

- 3.1 The Highland Council has provided the mainstream and additional resources required to progress the Family Firm.
- 3.2 There are no legal, equality, risk, climate change/carbon clever or Gaelic implications.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 The Committee is invited to note the progress being made regarding Family Firm placements.

Designation: Director of Care and Learning

Date: 12 May 2014

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Background Papers:

'Our Family Firm', A Working Framework for Community Planning Partners and Employers: Supporting Looked After Young People and Care Leavers into positive and sustained destinations
Scottish Government, January 2011

Learning Teaching Scotland

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/supportinglearners/choicesandchanges/16pluslearnchoices/about16plus/index.asp>

<http://www.employersandyoungpeople.org/Home>

Employer Recruitment Incentive, Information for Corporate Parents
Skills Development Scotland, June 2010

Family Firm Case Study

Scope

The aim of the case study was to gain perspective on “Family Firm”, to identify what worked well or any aspects that required addressing and importantly for the young person and employer to have a voice on what they were gaining from the experience. Set questions were asked of the young person and employer and the meetings were held independently to allow frank responses and confidentiality if any negatives areas were raised.

The young person who agreed to take part was referred through the Family Firm referral process in August 2012 to undertake outdoor work and working with animals. At the initial referral an employer had been approached and agreed in principal to assist with a placement.

Young Person

How is the work placement going?

Good as learning new things. Like watching R cutting up deer. I have skinned a deer and really enjoyed it.

What do you like best and what do you like least?

Best - enjoying being outside and the hands on work. College course good and I'm enjoying it. Learning about fencing, forestry, dry stone walling and estate management. Looking forward to going to Ardnamurchan for game keeping maintenance.

Worst – nothing really bad. Some parts don't like so much such as picking up mole hills – not very enjoyable. College course and work experience is making me think I want to go to the game keeping course in Thurso, but want to think more about what to do.

What have you gained so far from your work experience placement?

Gaining employability skills, working with other people, not getting into arguments with other people and I'm not moaning about not want to do things - I just want to get stuck in. I like being asked to do things rather than being told or moaned at to do. Feel I am mature at work rather than at College.

Do you feel part of a team?

Feel part of the team. Get along with people here and like working with them. I have a laugh/joke with the guys. Very good craic and I can be myself. I am coming out of my shell a bit more. At first no craic but now I get it – different craic from when I am with my pals in College.

Do you think Family Firm is beneficial and were you well prepared for your placement?

Not really explained about it other than it gets you experience. Felt partially prepared for placement but interview with SNH helped.

Would you recommend Family Firm to others?

I would recommend as better than having nothing. If I had nothing I would just stay at home or go on dole.

What advice would you give another young person about Family Firm and a work placement?

Try everything. I am doing game keeping and even farming. Conservation is not for me but would do this just for experience.

Is there anything you would change about Family Firm and why?

Wouldn't change anything major but maybe prefer starting later. When asked why said “just so I could stay in bed slightly later”. Further help identified at the close of the meeting with the young person related to applying for jobs, writing a CV and get more details about the college courses on offer (*these actions are being taken forward*).

Employer

How is the work placement going?

Placement going well as he is really keen and very punctual. Works well on tasks and now starting to work more, becoming independent and using his initiative. He is working on maintenance, fencing and with equipment but seems to prefer more manual, hands on work. Conservation work coming up but not sure he is interested but will offer him to try for one day even if for just experience. Traditional side of skills being lost and dying art in some areas (e.g. drystone wall dyking) and has assisted J and if he wants to learn more we will set up this experience during his current placement. We are discussing with him how volunteering can open doors, the various careers in this industry and given him websites to look at for jobs etc.

How is the young person fitting into the team?

Dealing with lots of characters and nationalities. He can be very quiet at times but works well with the team, and it comes across he enjoys the team work side of things.

What advice would you give to another young person looking for a work placement with your company?

Young person must be keen. We would always want to meet them first to discuss the work involved but also to help the young person decide if a placement with us is right for them.

Having supported offering a work placement through Family Firm would you recommend to other employers?

We are more than happy to support the Highland Council offering placements through Family Firm. We think it is a good scheme to help young people and gives them a chance to see different roles so they can make decisions about their future. Support from the Work Experience Co-ordinator is important when we are putting together the work package and the structure of regular review meetings. Where extra opportunities may arise and would benefit the young person being able to contact the Work Experience Co-ordinator for advice and guidance is valuable. We would have no reservation in recommending other employers to support Family Firm.

Summary

Certificates gained for the operation of vehicles (e.g. Quad's, ATV's etc) through work and Chainsaw Licence at College with further work experience opportunities with a Dry Stone Dyking Employer and a Private Estate. He was successful at his College interview and interviews by prospective employers to gain a work placement for his course are in the pipeline.

The placement has been successful for both the young person and the employer. Matching the right employer to work with the young person is crucial in making the experience not only enjoyable but a valuable learning package.

Whilst taking the young person out of his comfort zone at times, the support from the three employers has been invaluable and has seen his confidence and skills base continually grow. We believe the skills and experience he has acquired on his placement should make him very employable and an asset to any company. They are happy to continue supporting him with his ongoing work experience placement and reaching his career goals.

Family Firm Focus Group Questions

1. Has anyone heard of Family Firm?
 - If they have, ask for a wee description of what they have heard.
 - **Then give a brief and factual resume of what Family Firm is.**
2. How should this information be presented in the future?
 - Leaflet/ Poster
 - Other means
3. Would a follow up group session be helpful to answer any questions arising from reading the leaflets and posters be helpful?
4. At your child's plan meeting when you are talking about career options what sort of things do you want to:
 - talk about?
 - have information about?
5. What would stop or make it difficult for you to discuss your career options?
Prompt if needed e.g....lack of preparation....wrong people at the meeting.....too many people.....talking about issue past.....lack of support.....not being heard or listened to.....fear of not being taken seriously-----feeling you don't have a partner to see your wishes through
6. If you are ready to be offered a Family Firm place what do you feel would be the best preparation?
Use some of these as a prompt if needed
 - Being able to talk to someone who is part of the team you are to have the placement
 - Talk to the boss
 - Go for a visit for the day
 - Find out exactly what you will be doing and how you will progress in the role
 - Having something written down to reflect on
 - Having to get up at a certain time each day before the placement begins
 - Planning what to wear
7. Can you suggest people who might help you with this?
8. Is there anything else you can tell us that might make it easier for you to:
 - access the placement?
 - stay in the placement
 - progress from the placement
 - **Prompt might include** CV's, application forms, interviews, mentor, realistic goal setting, information to support progression
9. What would you hope to achieve /outcomes from a family firm placement?

Appendix 3

Family Firm Path for young people who are looked after either at home or away from home

- Young people who meet the criteria for placement in Family Firm must be provided with information about Family firm by means of the Family Firm Leaflet describing the opportunity and verbally one to one
- If Family Firm is agreed then the action is triggered through an Action point in child's plan – under the heading Achieving
- Lead Professional will ensure appropriate information is afforded to the Family Firm Co-ordinator with the agreement of the young person
- Family Firm Coordinator will support and explore Family Firm opportunities with young person
- If the young person requires to further develop skills to access a Family Firm placement The Family Firm Coordinator/supporter as appropriate will explore other options e.g. activity agreement, skills academy, mentoring, Barnados, Get Ready for Work and report back to the Lead Professional for further actions to be agreed.



- If the young person's skills set is such that a Family Firm Placement is going to be requested but the direction they wish to take is uncertain then more than one service can be considered and multiple taster placements can be sought short term
- Application form will be completed by the young person supported by the Family Firm Coordinator/Lead Professional/other supporter of the young person



- Family Firm Coordinator will contact the relevant service/s to negotiate where/in which section an appropriate placement is available.
- The Application Form will be sent to the service and a date will be set for a meeting with young person, department head/supervisor/ mentor and the Family Firm Coordinator.
- This meeting will consider the duration of placement, the hours of work, how it will be reviewed and monitored, the expected outcome/s and any other points that the young person might need clarification on.
- The placement is then highlighted to the Work Place Assessor who will instigate Health and Safety checks prior to the placement commencing and will organise an Experience Agreement in collaboration with the service section taking account of the aspirations of the young person
- The Experience Agreement will be made available to both the young person and the Family Firm Coordinator for discussion and subsequently to form part of the reviewing process
- Prior to the placement the young person, section mentor and Family Firm Coordinator will agree what is to be reviewed, the method of review, how often review will happen and set a date for the initial review. As a standard review must take place 4 weekly as a minimum but initially weekly would be the preferred timescale
- If a young person is still at school/or has an activity Agreement/or is over the age of 16 then EMA should be considered if they meet the criteria. Any young person accommodated or looked after away from home should get EMA.



- Placement would be on a 3—6 monthly basis but exceptions may be considered for those undertaking a qualification as part of their placement
- An exit strategy with clear progression route should be in place as part of the on-going review process
- The young person should be supported by their section mentor and the Family Firm Coordinator/supporter if another to ensure that their experience is part of a CV or personal statement to be used for their onward journey
- For a Family Firm Placement to be repeated there has to be a clear rationale for this with clear and expected outcome details and measures.

10/04/13