

## The Highland Council

### Planning, Development and Infrastructure Committee

14<sup>th</sup> May 2014

#### Employability Services

#### Report by Director of Development and Infrastructure

Agenda Item	16
Report No	PDI 13/14

#### Summary

This report updates Members on existing and planned activity for 2014/15 across the various workstreams undertaken by the Employability Team.

The work of the Employability team directly supports the Council's Programme of support for the Highland economy and specifically helps with the creation of jobs and efforts to assist young people who have left school to access training, education or work.

#### 1. Background

- 1.1 The Employability team was established on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010. Brought together with staff from the Chief Executive's, Social Work and Planning and Development Services, with staff transferred from the Working for Families Initiative. The team was tasked to:
- deliver a client centred service that assists people who are furthest removed and distant from the labour market, including those with disabilities – to be job ready – and able to move into the world of work;
  - co-ordinate activity across Council Services and manage the range of Council employability related services, the resources available, and the arrangements for procurement, management and service delivery; and
  - work with partners to align and co-ordinate activity.
- 1.2 Over the past four years the team has delivered on these tasks but has had to do so at a time of significant challenge in the economy/labour market and at a time of rapid welfare reform. In particular, this has impacted on the client group served – with a strong focus now on supporting young people to access training, education or work, and a need to work with business to assist them to create jobs. The award winning Youth Employment Action Plan and the Create and Employ project reflect how positively and appropriately the team have responded to these challenges.
- 1.3 In setting out the work streams for the coming financial year, it is quite clear that there are a number of external uncertainties which will impact on the

Employability team and therefore there is a need when progressing these work streams to continue to be responsive to client and business needs and to new or amended partner services.

## **2. Work Plan 2014/15**

### **2.1 Employment Advisory Service**

The Employability team has 12 advisers (full & part-time) across Highland who work directly with clients providing a client focused service to help them prepare and progress towards the labour market. In 2013/14 the Team registered 310 new clients with around 200 active at any one time. Over 260 clients have made a significant, recorded progression over the period – defined as employment, college, or occupational training. Increasingly over the past two years the team has been active in 12 of the 25 Work Clubs in Highland and this has resulted in an increased client workload with attendances of 175 people each week across Highland.

2.1.1 Over the past year the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) has introduced Universal Job Match, the national on-line vacancy and job search facility. Together with strengthened conditionality requirements they have increased pressure on clients to secure on-line access and provide evidence of job search. The Council awarded the Service £140,000 in 2013-14 from the Preventative Spend funds to respond to this rising demand as indicated above. The funds have been used to install improved on-line and computer facilities in 10 Work Clubs across Highland. The funds have also been used to provide additional tutor/coaching staff from Highlife Highland to enable access and improve people's own capacity to manage on-line.

2.1.2 The Service is also entering a partnership with Citizens Online, a national digital inclusion programme that is also working with HIE and BT as part of the broadband roll-out in Highland. The project will appoint another Citizen's Online Project officer for the Inner Moray Firth Area to work with partner organisations, including the Council and Highlife Highland Services, to promote digital inclusion through practical "hands-on" work through employment, housing and advice agencies, to improve both availability of on-line facilities and people's capacity to use them.

2.1.3 The Adviser Team are also involved as mentors to the Council Work Experience Programme (see para. 2.3.2 below) and increasingly are taking responsibility for managing local delivery and monitoring of contracted services. Advisers are also becoming more involved in working with community organisations and in school leaver Skills for Work activity. This activity, while remaining client focused, reflects the evolving nature of employability activity and the changing role the team/Council undertakes. Over the coming year, however, it is anticipated that Work Club activity and assisting people with online access and digital inclusion will remain front-line priorities. With funding secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the Regenerating Inverness City Centre project, an additional part-time adviser is currently being recruited to focus on working with working with city centre clients.

## 2.2 Deprived Area Fund

There were 19 applications to the Deprived Area Fund (DAF) in 2013-14. 15 were approved within a total budget of £416,000. Approval of the applications was delegated to the Director of Planning and Development following consultation with Ward Members. The DAF projects show a total leverage of at least £1.5m of additional partnership funding and support 19 full and part-time jobs. The projects provide regular reporting on a variety of activities including provision of Work Clubs and pre-employment activity, training and confidence building activity. Most of the community based projects also work with young people and engage with disadvantaged and “hard to reach” people providing part of a network of agencies working with people who are unemployed and seeking to return to work.

The DAF was reviewed and refreshed for 2014-15 at the August 2013 PED Committee to include more geographic areas and with decision-making delegated to Area Committees. All of the Area Committees have been briefed on the Fund and have dealt with the applications received for 2013-14. Local arrangements are in place to deal with the remainder of uncommitted funds during 2014/15.

## 2.3 **Projects and Contracted Services**

### 2.3.1 Create and Employ

Create and Employ is the business advice and recruitment service operated in partnership with Business Gateway. A presentation on this project will be made to Committee outlining the service offered and outcomes achieved since the project commenced in February 2012 (251 people into work, 157 businesses securing recruitment advice). As Members will be aware the project has recently secured national recognition by winning the 2014 COSLA Strong and Sustainable Communities Award.

The project is partly funded by the European Social Fund until September 2014. It is planned at this time to continue the project until end March 2015 with reviewed grant rates to encourage employers to enable newly appointed staff to also access industry sector specific training. An external evaluation is about to commence and this together with the availability/eligibility of ESF funding will inform its extension beyond March 2015.

### 2.3.2 Public Sector Work Experience Programme

Public Sector Work Experience Programme provides 26 weeks paid work experience for young people (under 25) who are unemployed and have had little work experience. Trainees are recruited into various Council Services and are provided with a structured work experience placement with a Service supervisor and Employability Service mentor. Since the project started in August 2012, a total of 135 trainees have been recruited, with 63 recruited in 2013/14. Currently there are 40 trainees in post. As Trainees leave their employment with the Council, typically some 70% of them immediately move into full-time employment or education. In 2013/14 some 300 young people have made application to the project. All candidates have been assisted through a “real” job application and interview with Council staff. They have received advice and assistance with their job search, CV and interview preparation. Positive feedback has been received from those candidates who were not appointed and from DWP Advisers about the positive impact the

experience has been for the young people involved.

This project is partly funded by the European Social Fund until September 2014. It is planned at this time to continue the programme until end March 2015. This has proven to be a very successful project for Trainees and Council Services alike and subject to the future availability/eligibility of ESF, a continuation programme will be developed during 2014/15 for commencement in April 2015.

### 2.3.3 Try It Out

'Try It Out' is the service contracted in 2013 to provide one to one engagement with people with longer term social or health barriers to work who need sustained support to build personal and social skills to enable them to engage better in pre-employment activity such as skills development and more formal training. Two contractors have been operating the contract to March 2013 and 180 clients have been engaged in the programme with around 90 active at any one time.

The programme had a relatively slow start in 2013 and the option to extend the contract to end March 2015 has been utilised to allow fuller monitoring of progress and outcome measures for consideration as part of the new ESF programme. This project is also partly funded by the European Social Fund to September 2014.

### 2.3.4 Work It Out

'Work It Out' is the name given to the short course programme to provide short term and part time "pre-employment" events and courses aimed at building confidence and allowing people to consider their employment options. Courses are tailored to meet the needs of particular client groups (for example, people on Employment Support Allowance; women returning to employment; single parents). The programme has built up well over the past year and 184 people have participated to date. The courses are planned in conjunction with partners (DWP and Skills Development Scotland) to ensure they are appropriate and complementary to other provision. Participants provide feedback which in turn helps develop content and topic. The programme is similar to some adult learning provided by Highlife Highland (HLH) (e.g. Literacy, digital inclusion) and HLH is a contractor on the framework.

This programme is also part funded by ESF to September 2014. It has been extended to March 2015 to enable monitoring and evaluation to be built into the new ESF programme.

### 2.3.5 GO4IT!

'GO4IT!' is the name given to a programme which provides outreach and mentoring to young people not yet engaging in post school activity, for example, Activity Agreements. The contracts are being delivered by Calman Trust (Ross & Cromarty and Inverness) and Highlife Highland (Caithness & Lochaber). To date over 60 young people who have already left school have been engaged in personal support and some group activities. The project will also begin to assess some of the young people currently planning to leave this summer to try to ensure early engagement in the autumn session.

Initial results show progression to employment and other learning opportunities

and the evaluation of the project will be fed into the re-design and procurement for Activity Agreements as part of the new programme from October 2014 onwards. The procurement of this programme will be undertaken jointly with the Care and Learning Service and part informed by the availability/eligibility to access ESF.

#### 2.3.6 Graduate Placements

'Graduate placements' assists businesses to take on a graduate to deliver a project of significant importance to the growth of the business. Like the Create and Employ project this is a service delivered in partnership with Business Gateway. During 2013/14 the Programme has committed over £250,000 to help 27 businesses recruit a graduate. This Programme will continue during 2014/15.

#### 2.3.7 Council Graduate Interns

Council Services have also been offered the opportunity to recruit graduates for work experience and project development. Services have to produce a proposal that demonstrates the work experience and intended outcomes from the placement. To date 24 Interns have been recruited (14 in 2013/14). Financial assistance has also been obtained from the Scottish Government Youth Employment Scotland funding.

Subject to budget availability and external funding if secured, further Graduate Intern opportunities will be progressed during 2014/15.

#### 2.3.8 Partnership projects

While the Employability team has moved to commissioned services rather than grant aided projects, the team continues to work with partner organisations to support innovative activity that responds to particular development issues or circumstances in "action learning" approaches. The significant projects are described below:

- (i) Highland Small Communities Housing Trust – The Trust has been developing an innovative approach to skills development through their Cairngorm Construction Skills Project. This has engaged 28 young people in Badenoch and Strathspey in a joint learning programme with Inverness College. The trainees are offered Construction skills training at the College and 2 days a week work experience with the contractors working on the Trust's housing contracts or other community benefit projects in the CNPA area. The Trust has raised a considerable sum of money from charitable sources to fund the project to date and the Employability Service has provided £16,000 each year over the past two years. The proposals for the 2014-18 three year period involve expanding the model to provide for core management costs and the roll out of the training provision to other geographic areas as part of the construction contracts for 400+ houses.
- (ii) Cairngorm Outdoor Access Trust – COAT provides accredited training and employment for people in environmental management and footpath building in the National Park Area. Trainees are offered work experience and obtain SQA accredited qualifications in Environmental Conservation. Each course includes 6 trainees and 19 will have completed training over the three year period ending November 2014. The Employability Service has supported this partnership project with £13k in 2013/14. It is also

supported by EU, Scottish Government and National Park Authority funding.

(iii) Bridge to Employment – This is the title of the school / work experience programme developed by Johnston & Johnston through their Lifescan Scotland operation in Inverness. It is a programme which engages young people in the senior phase at school in exploring career choices in science and technology. It operates with increasing involvement and learning over three years for pupils who volunteer their involvement, with support from parents and schools. It has been piloted over the past three years with 6 schools and will be rolled out to a further 5 this year. The extended project will also involve Highland & Islands Airports Ltd; Cap Gemini; Scottish & Southern Energy as well as Lifescan, HIE and UHI in delivery. Engagement with schools is underway and recruitment will be undertaken this session for a programme start in August. The Service has agreed with ECS to fund (£35k) the secondment of a coordinator to manage the development of the programme to June 2015.

Based on previous experience it is anticipated that partnership projects of this type will arise and while meriting support they do not neatly fit with other services procured. Accordingly such projects will continue to be considered for funding on an exceptional basis and supported as required.

#### 2.3.9 Youth Employment Scotland (YES)

Scottish Government introduced YES in 2013 as an Employer Recruitment Incentive for businesses across Scotland. Over the year the programme was extended to include provision of wage support for public sector work experience posts for young people. The programme was intended to make provision available across Scotland – but as with some other Local Authorities – Highland was already providing these activities though with differences in the levels of support and conditions available. In partnership with Scottish Government the Service has been able to offer additional provision over the year comprising:

- Wage incentives to tourism and hospitality business to retain young people over the 2013/14 winter season. 8 businesses have been supported to retain 17 employees;
- 22 trainees have been recruited through the Public Sector Work Experience Programme referred to in para. 2.3.2 above; and
- 14 Graduate Interns have been recruited through the Council's Intern Programme referred to in para. 2.3.7 above.

The YES initiative will run to the end of 2014 and will also be incorporated into the 2014 – 2020 ESF Programme. In particular, the Tourism and Hospitality initiative described above is intended as a pilot to develop more specific, sector based approaches within Create & Employ and the new ESF Programme.

### **3 Youth Employment**

- 3.1. The Scottish Government, Highland Council and partners all identify youth employment as a key priority. The Council's activities are co-ordinated via an Employability Board including all Council Services. It is led by the Director of Development and Infrastructure and is focused on driving forward activity across the wide range of Council services which impact on youth employment. The Action Plan is currently being refreshed for 2014-15 and a progress report will be brought to a future Committee.
- 3.2 With the development of the integrated Care and Learning and the Health and Social Care Services there is a need to review the roles and responsibilities for learning and occupational activity post school for young people, and adults, with disabilities or long term conditions. The Employability Service in its role to support people – to be job ready – and able to move into the world of work, is already activity supporting clients who are on Employment Support Allowance. Work during 2014/15 will be undertaken to determine how this can be improved upon and to identify the resource implications.

### **4. Highland Works**

- 4.1 Highland Works is the Local Employability Partnership for Highland. It includes the principal partners of Council; NHS; HIE; DWP; SDS; Third Sector Interface and UHI and has responsibility for setting and delivery of the Employability targets included in the Single Outcome Agreement.
- 4.2 Partnership working is cross-cutting and integral to the everyday working of the Employability Service at both operational and strategic levels with services increasingly co-ordinated and delivered around the strategic skills pipeline. A particular strategic project that is progressing at the current time is an Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) of Youth Employment Services. While EQIA's are undertaken by all partners as they impact on each of their own services, no cross-cutting EQIA has looked across partner services. The project outcome will be to identify any service gaps and to put in place mitigating actions. This work has commenced with an autumn 2014 end date anticipated at this time. With funding from the Scottish Government (see paras. 2.3.7 and 2.3.9) a graduate has been appointed to assist with this project.
- 4.3 During the current financial year the Highland Works Partnership will work on a Strategy designed to assist people with disabilities get into work for the first time or to return to work. The Strategy and associated action plan will be reported to the Highland Joint Transitions Partnership for consideration and agreement.

### **5. Implications**

#### **5.1 Resources**

In addition to the Council's own budget the Employability team has secured and manage external resources from Scottish Government and Europe. Due to the transition period between the European Programmes, Members agreed at the September 2013 PED Committee to earmark funds from the 2013/14 revenue budget for use in 2014/15 to sustain employability activity during this

transitional period. This financial provision is in place and client services will be fully funded at current levels during 2014/15.

At the current time efforts are underway to inform the new European Programmes 2014-2020. This will continue during 2014/15 and a new programme of activity prepared for the period 2015/16 and beyond (probably 3 years in the first instance). A report on this matter, which will address programme content and resource implications, will be brought to a future Committee.

#### 5.2 Legal

The operation of the new EU funding will put the Council in a “lead agency” position in relation to EU Funds – as with other Local Authorities. Work is taking place at national level to develop the forms of Agreement that will be used.

#### 5.3 Equalities

The work of the Employability Service is directed at tackling inequalities, with particular priorities going to young people; women and people with long-term health conditions. As detailed in para 4.2, Highland Works is also undertaking an Equalities Impact Assessment on service provision for young people.

#### 5.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever

There are no direct implications arising though some of the activity supported by the programme will increase environmental awareness and conservation.

#### 5.5 Risk

The scope of Service delivery and activities supported includes significant external funding and has also grown extensively over the past two years now including direct service provision; grant and contracted services. The Finance Service will be undertaking a review and audit of these activities and budget structure in the course of the year, to advise on risk management issues.

The decision in 2013/14 to earmark resources to continue activity through to end March 2015 is in direct response to the uncertainties and risks which exist with the introduction of new European programmes. While it is anticipated that the ESF Programme will commence before end 2014/15, audit uncertainties will remain for some time and therefore a later start date will allow for all uncertainties to be addressed and the risks mitigated.

#### 5.6 Gaelic

There are no immediate Gaelic language implications in the Programme.



**Recommendation**

Committee is recommended to:

- (i) Note contents of the Report and updates given on activity.
- (ii) Agree to the proposed Work Plan 2014/15.

Designation: Director of Development and Infrastructure

Date: 29 April 2014

Author: Bob Mackinnon 01463 702044, Andy McCann 01463 702260