

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Staff Governance
<b>DATE</b>	29 September 2020
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Employment Support for Care Experienced Young People including a Guaranteed Interview Scheme
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	RES/20/103
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Steven Whyte, Director of Resources
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Isla Newcombe, Chief Officer People & Organisational Development
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Lesley Strachan, Talent Acquisition Lead
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	2.1

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update to Committee on progress made on all the initiatives ongoing to support young people both working for the Council and in the community to consider the Council as an employer of choice, including the extension of the Council's Guaranteed Interview scheme to care experienced young people, in line with the Council Budget instruction from 3 March 2020.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee :-

- 2.1 notes the introduction of a guaranteed interview scheme for care experienced young people applying for apprenticeship roles across the Council since July 2019;
- 2.2 approves the continuation of the further extension of the scheme to all Council roles on a permanent basis; and
- 2.3 notes the additional developments being undertaken to support young people, including care experienced young people, already part of our workforce or when considering the Council as a potential employer.

### 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council is committed to supporting our young workforce (defined as aged 16-24 by Investors in Young People, with a Council commitment to support care experienced young people up to the age of 29 in relation to employment opportunities) and to encouraging young people to consider the Council as prospective future employer. This is set out in our Workforce Plan approved by Committee in June 2019.

At September 2020, 3.8% of our workforce are employees aged between 16 and 24 (13.8% if we consider up to age 29) compared to 38.7% in the over 50 age bracket (which represents our largest group of staff). As a result, and in addition to our commitments set out in the Local Outcome agreement and our Workforce Plan, it is vital to invest and focus on young people to develop our workforce for the future.

- 3.1.1 In recognition of the work which has been developed and implemented, the Council was awarded the Investors in Young People Gold Standard Award in March 2020.
- 3.1.2 Evidence, research and feedback from professional bodies such as the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS) and Who Cares? Scotland have shown that care experienced young people achieve poorer outcomes in terms of educational attainment, qualifications and unemployment in comparison to their peers. The Council as a corporate parent, has a duty to provide opportunities to its Looked After Children and care experienced young people like any other parent would.
- 3.1.3 Across Scotland, 71% of looked after school leavers were in positive follow up destinations in 2018/19 as compared to 93% of all pupils. [source: Scottish Government report: Looked After Children: education outcomes 2018/19]. In terms of an Aberdeen City context, the specialist support service within Integrated Children and Family Services, the Youth Team, support 120 care experienced young people and have shared the economic activity status of this group. This profile information indicates the potential benefits of this scheme to a group whose earlier disadvantage continues to impact on their ability to access opportunities which could lead to positive change.
- 3.1.4 To support these young people, and as part of our commitments set out in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) as corporate parents (Prosperous People section), there are a number of initiatives in place or being developed. Some of these initiatives previously reported as a service update to the Audit Risk and Scrutiny Committee in November 2019 are outlined below.

## **3.2 Guaranteed Interview Scheme**

- 3.2.1 The Council has had a guaranteed interview scheme since 1997 which entitles applicants who consider themselves to have a disability and meet the minimum criteria set out in the job profile to receive an interview for that role. (The Disability Confident Scheme formerly known as Positive about Disability, and also known as the two ticks scheme).
- 3.2.2 In 2019, as part of our commitment to developing our young workforce within the Council's workforce plan, the guaranteed interview scheme was extended to our apprenticeship roles, to include applicants who:
  - are care-experienced and aged 16-29;

- are aged 16-24, live in Aberdeen City or attended an Aberdeen City Council school and are applying for a Modern Apprenticeship (except Trades apprenticeships);
- have completed a Foundation Apprenticeship placement with the council and are applying for any apprenticeships relevant to the area in which they did their Foundation Apprenticeship;
- are New Scots aged 16-24 and are applying for any apprenticeships. [For the purposes of this proposal, only those eligible to work e.g. those with refugee status or who have approval from the Home Office to work in the UK (either in all roles, or in shortage occupations), will be able to apply for jobs via the guaranteed interview scheme (dependent on their rights and the role they are applying for)].

3.2.3 In February 2020, the Corporate Management Team approved in principle the extension of the scheme to offer a guaranteed interview to those young people that are in continuing care or are a care leaver up to the age of 29, applying for **all** council vacancies, (who meet the minimum criteria set out in the job profile), rather than just apprenticeships.

3.2.4 In March 2020, a budget instruction came from Council for the Chief Officer – Organisational Development to report to the Staff Governance Committee with a guaranteed interview scheme for any care experienced young person seeking to gain employment with this Council. This report sets out the work to date on the scheme and seeks approval to extend the guaranteed interview scheme to all vacancies on a permanent basis whilst noting that this is not the only support mechanism in place for care experienced young people seeking employment with Aberdeen City Council.

3.2.5 This report provides the Committee with information on the usage of the scheme to date, the further areas of work being done to support care experienced young people in terms of employment opportunities with the Council, and seeks approval to extend the scheme to all council roles on a permanent basis.

3.2.6 The first opportunity to test the uptake of the guaranteed interview scheme was during our advertising campaign for our 2019 Modern Apprenticeship intake. Overall, 104 applications were submitted and 13 of these applicants declared that they were care experienced. Of those 13 applications, 3 were successful in securing an apprenticeship and remain in our employment. Of the remaining 10, 6 either withdrew or did not engage with the recruitment process and 4 were unsuccessful following the selection process.

3.2.7 CMT approval in principle to extend the scheme to include all council roles in February and the budget instruction on the same, came just prior to the covid-19 pandemic and lockdown situation. As a result, only a very small number of vacancies have progressed to external advert, other than those for critical roles such as Teachers and Social Workers. Whilst our application portal through My Job Scotland (COSLA) does not currently offer the ability to report on the number of applicants who indicate that the guaranteed interview scheme

applies, we are developing an internal process which will enable reporting on numbers applying for vacancies under the revised guaranteed interview scheme. This will further support our ability to analyse the success or otherwise of the extension of the scheme.

- 3.2.8 The data above at 3.2.6, whilst representing just one specific campaign indicates that almost half of applicants who were from a care experienced background withdrew from the selection process prior to interview. Whilst the guaranteed interview scheme is a positive initiative, it may indicate that other supportive measures and initiatives need to be in place to support care experienced young people as they consider employment opportunities and selection processes and that without these, the guaranteed interview scheme alone will not be successful. To address this, a number of steps have been taken to provide support to our care experienced young people within our workforce and within the community.

### **3.3 Supportive Initiatives for Care Experienced Young People**

- 3.3.1 In addition to the Guaranteed Interview Scheme, there are a number of additional initiatives which have been, or are currently being developed, to support care experienced young employees or prospective employees choosing to work for the Council. These are set out below:

3.3.2 **Information Hub/ Portal.** In February 2020, the Aberdeen City Champions Board, (a multi-agency board, including senior officers of LOIP partners, together with some care experienced young people) requested that an information hub / digital portal be developed with partners to enable care experienced young people across the city to access information in one place about the range of options and support available to them as they transition from school.

3.3.3 This will include information from each of the employing partner organisations within the Aberdeen City Champions Board about how to access internships, apprenticeships, jobs and careers advice, education, volunteering, wellbeing and support to complete job applications or CVs as well as interview skills and mentoring support including the MCR pathways programme (school based mentoring and talent taster programme for disadvantaged and care experienced young people).

3.3.4 The information hub/ portal will be user friendly, interactive, and will be co-designed with young people. It is intended that the hub will be hosted on the Aberdeen City Council website with links to partner websites and shared widely on social media platforms to ensure it is easily accessible for young people.

3.3.5 A consultation session was held in August 2020 with a group of young people to share an early draft of the information hub and to see their views and ideas about what this will include. These young people will continue to be involved in the co-design of the hub going forward, ensuring that the content and messaging of the hub has a young people's voice. It is anticipated that the information hub will launch in early 2021.

- 3.3.6 **Support with cv writing / applications and interview skills** – working together with colleagues in Children and Family Services, the Talent Team within People & Organisational Development have been supporting care experienced young people with a series of drop-in sessions to provide information about employment opportunities within the Council, career advice, our apprenticeship programme and the ‘No One Left Behind employability programme, with our employability colleagues in City Growth.
- 3.3.7 This work will continue, and in collaboration with our partners at Skills Development Scotland, with the intention of providing support, guidance and advice to young people in developing CVS and completing application forms as well as interview skills to improve confidence and emphasise transferable skills.
- 3.3.8 Work is progressing to establish an **internship programme** to provide ring-fenced opportunities for Care Experienced Young People to undertake periods of work experience within identified areas across the Council. As well as offering an internship that will provide a paid work experience placement, the programme will also provide a range of support to each young person to help ensure that the internship is successful. Evidence indicates that some of our care experienced young people will come from a range of backgrounds, traumas and experiences and may need significant support to be successful within the workplace and in many cases, this will be their first introduction into the world of work.
- 3.3.9 In advance of the internship commencing, young people will undertake the ‘No One Left Behind’ employability programme to provide wraparound support before starting in the workplace.
- 3.3.10 This aligns with the Local Outcome Improvement Plan’s commitments as corporate parents as set out in the Prosperous People section. On completion of their internship, candidates can apply for Modern Apprenticeships or entry level council vacancies under a guaranteed interview scheme as set out at section 3.1 of this report.
- 3.3.11 These internships are being developed by a cross functional working group with representatives from Integrated Children and Family Services, City Growth and People & Organisational Development. The employability and skills support initiatives outlined in the Scottish Government’s ‘Protecting Scotland, Renewing Scotland’ report such as the new Youth Guarantee, together with the UK Government’s ‘Kickstart’ scheme are being investigated to support the development of our internships and other support for care experienced young people.
- 3.3.12 The internship programme will be a key step for care experienced young people to enter a working environment, in a supported way, and will provide an opportunity to develop skills and experience throughout the duration of the internship, so that on successful completion, there are a range of options available to interns to progress within the organisation to entry level roles or apprenticeships for examples. It is anticipated that the internship programme will be available in early 2021. There may also be opportunities for the interns to gain qualifications through participating in this scheme.

3.3.13 In addition, Integrated Children's and Family Services are currently working with MCR Pathways, a national charity, to provide a school-based Mentoring and Talent Taster programme to support care-experienced young people, with the intention that this programme will link with our Internship and Apprenticeship programme.

### 3.4 Supportive Initiatives for Young People across the City

3.4.1 An **apprenticeship programme** has been established within the Council which provides opportunities for young people to 'learn as they earn' by gaining skills, experience and knowledge as well as a formal qualification. Modern Apprenticeships attract funding for the learning element for applicants aged 16-24 (depending on the framework) and for disabled and care-experienced applicants aged 20-29. Young people must meet one of these criteria to apply.

3.4.2 The apprenticeship programme represents a positive opportunity for young people, including care experienced young people, to access a supported and structured programme with opportunities to develop employment experience, skills as well as to gain a recognised qualification. In 2019, these opportunities were promoted widely through our social media channels and via schools and colleges, as well as to care experienced young people across the City via the Children & Families Services team and drop-in sessions were held to provide information about the opportunities. Going forward a targeted approach will be improved by promoting this on the information hub (see section 3.3.2) and directly via colleagues in Children and Family Services working with care experience young people.

3.4.3 Our new programme since 2019 has included Modern Apprenticeships in business administration, customer service, early years childcare, housing and social care. This has been combined with our existing modern apprenticeship offering in the more traditional Modern Apprenticeships in craft roles such as joiners, painters, blacksmiths, electricians and plumbers.

3.4.4 In 2019, 29 new apprenticeships commenced (and an additional 16 apprenticeships are continuing) and are continuing to be supported. The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a delay to our 2020 programme both in terms of the difficulties learning providers face in providing the learning element of the MA programme, and in terms of managers providing the practical on the job experience for apprentices including support now that in many cases we are working in a digital / virtual environment. It is anticipated that we will be able to offer some Modern Apprenticeship opportunities in 2021.

3.4.5 **Mentoring, Coaching and Buddying scheme** – This is already in place for our apprentices, with our 45 current Modern Apprentices each having a mentor and/or buddy as part of their apprenticeship support. The scheme will be extended to include all our young employees, who will have access to a mentor, coach or buddy, where appropriate. Training is currently being developed to support employees and managers to take on these roles. As part of this programme, young employees themselves will be given the opportunity in turn,

to mentor other young employees joining the Council, providing the benefit of their experience to our new young workforce.

3.4.6 We have established a **Young Employee Network** comprising employees from across the Council aged between 16-24 (and includes employees from a care experienced background). The purpose of the network is to gather views from young employees on their employment experience and to involve them in the creation and development of key initiatives.

#### 4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 In the vast majority of cases, there will be no, or negligible costs, associated with these initiatives as they are targeted towards young people within the Aberdeen City boundary. Any costs associated with recruitment and selection processes would be accommodated within service budgets.

#### 5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None.

#### 6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	None	L	n/a
<b>Compliance</b>	None	L	n/a
<b>Operational</b>	None	L	n/a
<b>Financial</b>	None	L	n/a
<b>Reputational</b>	Reputational risk about not supporting care experienced young people in moving to a positive destination in terms of the Council's role as a corporate parent	L	n/a
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	None	L	n/a

#### 7. OUTCOMES

<b><u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u></b>	
	<b>Impact of Report</b>
<b>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</b>	The proposals within this report support the delivery of:  Policy Statement 2 – UNICEF Child Friendly City accreditation;

	<p>Policy Statement 4 - Implementation of Developing Young Workforce programme; and</p> <p>Policy Statement 7 – Commitment to closing the attainment gap – in qualifications and employment levels between care experienced young people and their peers.</p>
<b>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</b>	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 2. 90% of working people in Living Wage employment by 2026.</p> <p>The report outlines plans and initiatives to increase the number of young people working for Aberdeen City Council, a Living Wage employer.</p>
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of:</p> <p>LOIP Stretch Outcome 4 – 90% of children and young people will report feeling mentally well;</p> <p>Outcome 5 – 95% of care experienced young people in positive destinations;</p> <p>Outcome 7 – UNICEF Child Friendly City; and</p> <p>Outcome 8 – 25% fewer young people charged with an offence.</p>
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 1 - No one in Aberdeen will go without food due to poverty by 2026. The employment of care experienced young people by the Council, a Living Wage employer can help address food poverty for young people, coupled with ongoing throughcare and aftercare support which is a statutory requirement.</p>
<b>Regional and City Strategies</b>	<p>The proposals within this report support Theme 4: School to Work Transition within the Regional Skills Strategy.</p>
<b>UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes</b>	<p>The report outlines proposals to support the Council to meet the requirements of Section 66 of The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. The Guaranteed Interview commitment, Developing the Young Workforce programme and Hub initiatives</p>



	<p>supplement this aspect of corporate parenting as care experienced young people remain eligible to receive throughcare and aftercare support up to the age of 26.</p> <p>The proposals also align with the Independent Care Review and particularly help the Council to meet the Care Review's foundations of:</p> <p><b>Voice</b> – as young people are involved in the co-design and co-development of the Information Hub/Portal; and</p> <p><b>People</b> – this focuses on the importance of relationships between adults and young people and the provision of mentorships, internships, coaching and apprenticeships supports this.</p>
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## 8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
<b>Impact Assessment</b>	not required
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	not required

## 9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

## 10. APPENDICES

None

## 11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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