ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education and Children's Services Committee
DATE	30 April 2024
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	ABZ Campus
REPORTNUMBER	F&C/24/115
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Eleanor Sheppard
CHIEF OFFICER	Shona Milne
REPORT AUTHOR	Mark Jones
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.2

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report updates Committee on some of the key areas of progress made in implementing Phase 1 of ABZ Campus in Session 2023-24 (including the provision of Pathways Advocates), plans in place for Phase 2 in Session 2024-25 and future plans for Phase 3 in 2025-26.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Committee :-

- 2.1 note the progress made in delivering Phase 1 of *ABZ Campus* and advanced plans for Phases 2 and 3 which aim to further broaden the curriculum offer for young people in the Senior Phase in Aberdeen City Council schools;
- 2.2 instruct the Interim Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to support the roll out of Phase 2 and 3 of *ABZ Campus*; and
- 2.3 instruct the Interim Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to report back on progress including a full review of the impact of Pathways Advocates within one calendar year.

3.1 CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1.1 *ABZ Campus* is a collective effort from the eleven secondary schools, partner organisations and central officers to respond to the need to continue the ongoing work to broaden the curriculum offer available in the senior phase, to seek out and align growth-sector relevant courses, and ultimately to raise attainment for young people in Aberdeen City schools.
- 3.1.2 Planning and collaboration with key partners took place during academic session 2022-23 with a view to launching Phase 1 of *ABZ Campus* in Session 2023-24.

- 3.1.3 The key features of work in preparation for the launch of Phase 1 of *ABZ Campus* were to:
 - a. agree column alignment across all eleven secondary schools and thereby a vehicle for offering courses that would be accessible to all young people irrespective of the school they attend.
 - b. align existing courses to growth sector industries, and identify gaps in provision to target in future phases of *ABZ Campus*.
 - c. increase the breadth of courses through *ABZ Campus* and provide impetus and support to the individual work of broadening the curriculum by the eleven secondary schools in Aberdeen City.
 - d. respond to the voice of young people to create a streamlined application portal and more accessible, consistent course information to allow them to make informed course choices.
 - e. create an employability pathway pilot to explore how young people can experience a blend of certificated experience in school, a work placement internship and then a guaranteed job interview.
 - f. respond to the need to provide bespoke support to our care experienced and most vulnerable young people.

3.2 PREPARATORY ACTIVITY FOR ABZ CAMPUS

3.2.1 Work to align columns across the eleven secondary schools took place in advance of Phase 1 to allow all young people, irrespective of their 'home' school, to have access to all that *ABZ Campus* has to offer. Figure 1 shows the resulting column structure that was put in place for Phase 1 and all future phases of *ABZ Campus*.

DAY	MORNING (BEFORE BREAK)	MIDDLE OF DAY	AFTERNOON (AFTER LUNCH)
Monday	Column C		Column A
Tuesday	Column D	Column E (Virtual)	Column B
Wednesday	Column C		Column A
Thursday	Column D	Column E (Virtual)	Column B
Friday			
			Figure 1

3.2.2 Each course was analysed and aligned to one of the growth sectors identified for the North East of Scotland. An example of how this has been represented for each course can be found in Figure 2 below.

BIOLOGY (Advanced Higher)		
LEVEL	ADVANCED HIGHER - SCQF LEVEL 7	
DELIVERER	HARLAW ACADEMY AND ST MACHAR ACADEMY	
GROWTH SECTOR	LIFE SCIENCES	
		Figure 2

3.2.3 Thirty courses were listed in the course guide as part of Phase 1 of *ABZ Campus*. In addition to nine of our eleven secondary schools delivering *ABZ Campus* courses, there was significant partnership participation by *North-East Scotland College*, *Aberlour Futures*, *Bon Accord Care*, *CityMoves* and our local

authority partners *Aberdeenshire Council* who provided a Foundation Apprenticeship course.

3.2.4 The voices of young people played a significant role in beginning to shape *ABZ Campus*. Three particular comments were made by young people as part of focus groups hosted by partners *Skills Development Scotland*. The first piece of feedback suggested the need to have simple and consistent information about courses on offer. The second piece of feedback was the need to ensure that there was one straightforward way to apply for courses. Finally, young people wanted to have confidence in both travel and a positive welcome when they travelled to partners or other schools for courses. Figure 3 shows an excerpt from the *ABZ Campus* Course Guide with simple information replicated for each course, and Figure 4 shows the online application portal login screen where young people can apply for *ABZ Campus* courses. Further, a series of open-day opportunities were held in advance of courses starting to allow young people to 'try out' travel and to meet teachers/lecturers on location.

	ED HIGHER - SCOP LEVEL 7		
OELIVERER HARLAW	ACADEMY AND ST MACHAR ACADEMY		
GROWTH SECTOR LIFE SCIE	ICIS		
PROGRESSION PATHWAY			
	NCED ICCCCCV	A coreer in a biology-board discipline or working ones. Noch on Meadin Biology Nochon Meadin Nochon A educotion or environmental	ABZ
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Course assessment shuchure: • Question paper – 100 marks • Project – 30 marks			LOGIN
LINKS TO FURTHER INFORMATION			
	ares)		
A&Z Works - Growth Sector (Life Scie SQA Course Specification	555 A		

- 3.2.5 An Employability Pathway pilot was created for Phase 1 of *ABZ Campus*. The pilot was designed in partnership with various services within Aberdeen City Council. A group of young people from a few city schools are given a blended experience with input from People & Citizen Services (PCS) on employability skills, support and certificated input from school staff, and then internship experience within chosen services across Aberdeen City Council. Young people who complete the course have a guaranteed job interview with their service at the end.
- 3.2.6 As part of the duty and desire to ensure that all young people in Aberdeen City Council achieve their potential, a new post of *Pathways Advocate* was created and this one day per week role was funded for each of the eleven secondary schools through Scottish Attainment Challenge funding. This role had the purpose of supporting care experienced and vulnerable young people with a particular focus on their choices, careers and ultimately positive destinations.

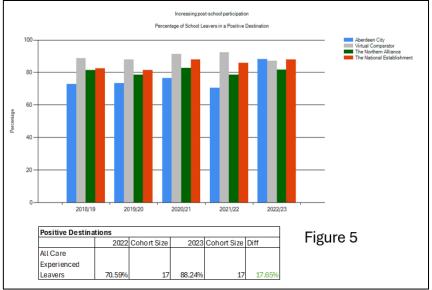
3.3 PHASE 1 – EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

3.3.1 Full evidence of the impact of *ABZ Campus* on attainment will start to become clear when examination results are published in August 2024, and then further with the release of INSIGHT attainment data in September 2024. The INSIGHT

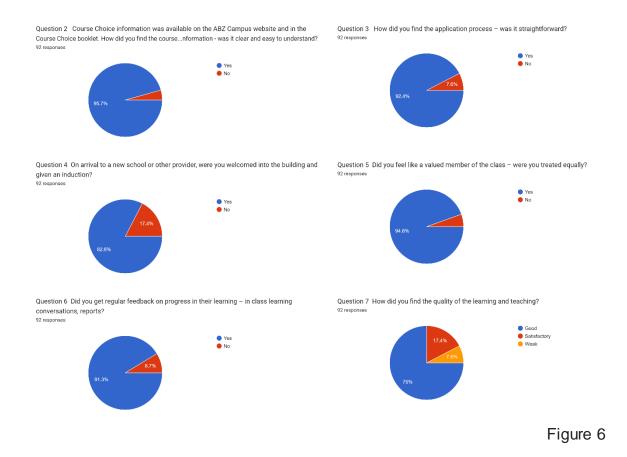
release contains not only the SQA results, but also the wider certificated success of young people in National Progression Awards, Skills for Work qualifications and Foundation Apprenticeships. Although it is believed that the collective work of *ABZ Campus* will contribute towards improvement, this both contributes to existing improvements within individual schools and also is likely to unfold over a number of phases of implementation.

- 3.3.2 During the application process, approximately 900 applications were made to *ABZ Campus* courses, with selection taking place into the 31 courses available in Phase 1 thereafter. 392 places were taken by 372 young people from Aberdeen City secondary schools, this equates to approximately 36 places per school. For graded courses (e.g. Higher and Advanced Higher), those young people on *ABZ Campus* courses were, on average, sitting at between a C and a B during the February 2024 tracking period. This evidences that there is no notable difference in performance progress for those who are engaging in courses through *ABZ Campus* compared to those engaging with courses in their own school. For ungraded courses (e.g. a National Progression Award or Foundation Apprenticeship where the result is either a 'pass' or 'fail'), 80% of participants were 'on track'. Again, this suggests that progress is in keeping with peers undertaking courses in their own school.
- 3.3.3 The employability pilot currently contains 13 young people who are engaging with various services within Aberdeen City Council, including Roads, PCS and City Development and Regeneration. Although small in number, these young people are gaining valuable experiences both within school and workplace settings and, where they complete the course, will have a guaranteed job interview to look towards. Officers will track these 13 young people to judge the long term success of this initiative.
- 3.3.4 The Pathways Advocates are currently involved with 248 vulnerable young people. Of these young people, 202 are care experienced. The number of young people supported in each of the 11 schools has differed according to identified need with the number supported ranging from 9 to 57 per school. As the Pathways Advocate role is currently 0.2FTE for all schools, prioritisation has been required for those schools with greatest need, there may require to be consideration of an allocation that is proportionate to need as we move forwards. Of the current total of 248 young people, 58 are benefiting from intensive or regular support, with Don locality (total of 114 supported with 23 intensive or regular) having the greatest number followed by Dee locality (total of 74 supported with 22 intensive or regular). Through the termly quality assurance visits, discussions about young people have resulted in bespoke and tailored interventions including support for families and advice on the appropriateness of current plans. Attendance, positive relationships and progress in school are tracked for each young person, with these fluctuating across the session for differing reasons and often signalling a need for intervention. Of the 27 young people who have been closed to the Pathways Advocate, 25 have moved into a positive destination with the other 2 who have been identified as moving into a negative destination, having identified supports beyond school through Skills Development Scotland. Given the role is limited (0.2 FTE), there have been staffing changes for a number of the schools and, understandably, the impact has been best where there has been consistency of staffing, there is learning here for consideration as part of a fuller evaluation.

One of the principle ways to measure the impact of Pathways Advocates would be to see improvements in positive destinations figures which are published in February each year as part of INSIGHT (the national attainment dashboard that provides schools with information about progress it is making). Although it would be too early to be definitive that Pathways Advocates have made all of the difference, there has been a 17.65% improvement in the figure for positive destinations for care experienced young people between 2022 and 2023. This can be seen in Figure 5 below. Given the relational aspect of supporting our most vulnerable young people, it is proposed that a full review of the Pathways Advocate role is provided for committee in 2025 to help inform how this provision dovetails with our emerging model of Family Support.



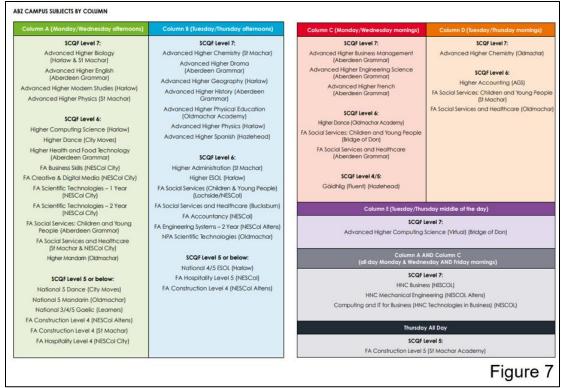
3.3.5 At the mid-point of Phase 1 of ABZ Campus, a survey of young people participating in courses was taken, and 97 responses were received. An early question was asked about the accessibility of the course information, and pleasingly almost all respondents reported that they found course information clear and easy to understand and almost all young people said the application process was straightforward. In relation to questions around welcome and value for courses, most young people were positive about their welcome and induction, and almost all felt immediately valued as part of the class. Most young people felt they received regular feedback on their progress and most rated the quality of the learning and teaching as good. In addition to the survey, a series of focus groups underlined the overall positive experiences being felt by young people in ABZ Campus courses with face-to-face conversations with the young people offering the opportunity to have a two-way dialogue which confirmed the responses from the young people's written responses. A summary of some of the graphics relating to the voice of the young person in this survey is shown in figure 5. Clearly the desire of all connected with ABZ Campus is that our 'almost all' and 'most' returns are as close to 'all' as is possible, and we will continue to work with partners and schools to make the experience as positive as it can be.



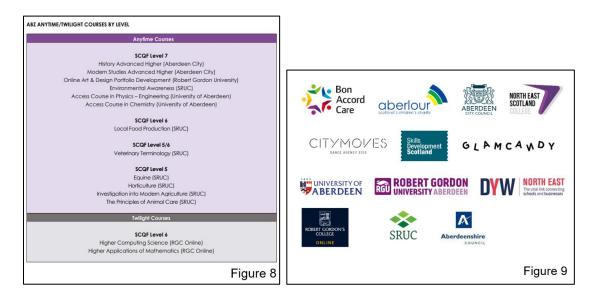
3.4 PHASE 2 ACTIVITY

- 3.4.1 As soon as Phase 1 of *ABZ Campus* coursing began in 2023, planning for Phase 2 commenced. This was greatly aided by allocating additional internal resource (four days per week) to act as *ABZ Campus* Curriculum Manager to take over the leadership of some key operational and strategic areas. Principle areas of focus for Phase 2 were:
 - a. Consolidation and expansion of the range of *ABZ Campus* courses available.
 - b. Exploring how *ABZ Campus* could offer alternative ways for young people to achieve courses of study through 'any-time' and 'twilight' delivery.
 - c. Using *ABZ Campus* to find new ways to partner with Aberdeenshire Council to grow opportunities for young people.
 - d. To expand upon the employability pathway by creating a small pilot for young people with more complex ASN needs.
 - e. In partnership with the City Development and Regeneration Employability Team, launch the ABZ Pipeline Project which aims to map and create broad pathways into renewables careers.
- 3.4.2 Over the course of this session (2023-24), the *ABZ Campus* Curriculum Manager worked closely with schools and partners including North-East Scotland College to create an offer of a total of 54 courses, a significant increase on Phase 1. Figure 7 shows the Phase 2 course offer currently available to young people in Aberdeen City schools in addition to those courses already available as part of their school choice.

3.4.3 The agreement to align curricular columns across Aberdeen City allows young people to enrol for courses being offered within another secondary school where spaces are available at the conclusion of the host school's course choice process. This process, known as 'clearing', offers additional opportunities to study a course which may unavailable either within the home school or through the *ABZ Campus* offer and makes the best use of resources.



3.4.4 An emerging need had been identified by schools over recent years with young people increasingly looking for a flexible approach to the curriculum to respond to their changing needs. There are a small but growing number of young people who are looking to remain enrolled at school but have a caring responsibility at home, or a part time job which mean they are looking to complete courses available more flexibly as part of the school week. Responding to this, a working group of partners and both Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Council staff created a separate *ABZ Campus* course guide for those courses which could be accessed on a twilight or anytime basis. Although these are *ABZ Campus* courses, access is being opened up to Aberdeenshire Council young people also. Figure 8 shows the 14 anytime/twilight courses on offer and Figure 9 is a graphic showing the range of partners now supporting *ABZ Campus* – a real team effort!

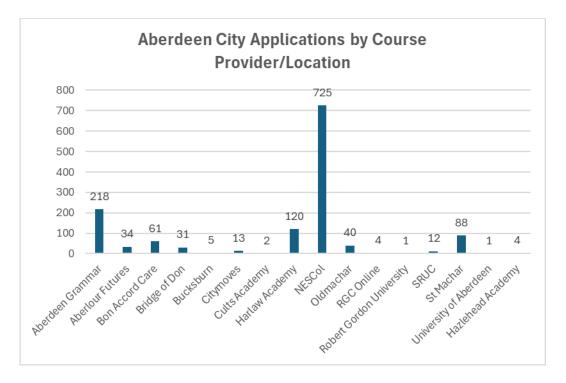


- 3.4.5 In addition to the emerging partnership between the two local authorities, there is a pilot piece of work being undertaken to explore how Lochside Academy (Aberdeen City) and Portlethen Academy (Aberdeenshire) can find ways to work together on curriculum. This work is in the early stages but showing signs of promise.
- 3.4.6 During the course of session 2023-24, an Education Support Officer (ESO) has been collaborating with Orchard Brae School, Bucksburn Academy Wing and the enhanced provision at Cults Academy to identify young people with Additional Support Needs to be part of the pilot of creating some of the ingredients contained within the employability pilot from Phase 1 of *ABZ Campus* for a certificated and work-related experience. So far six young people have been identified and they are being matched with organisations who will provide them with placements during the course of the year. Due to the variety of additional support needs, certification and placements will need to be bespoke and tailored to what is best for that particular young person. These young people will be carefully tracked to help determine the impact of this approach.
- 3.4.7 Many employer-led school experiences are one-off activities with limited followup or measurable impact on learners. In partnership with the City Development and Regeneration Employability Team, Education is launching ABZ Pipeline, which aims to map and create broad pathways into the renewables sector. The ABZ Pipeline project will create a programme of curriculum linked opportunities with employers to establish a targeted pipeline of activities across the secondary school phase. ABZ Pipeline will initially focus on energy, before expanding to encompass other growth and large-employing sectors, including health and social care, hospitality, life sciences, technology and digital, creative industries and culture, food and drink, tourism and hospitality, education, and entrepreneurship.

3.5 PHASE 2 EMERGING EVIDENCE

3.5.1 The portal for ABZ Campus applications for Phase 2 courses opened at the beginning of February with a closing date of 29th March 2024. At the time of

writing, the picture for Aberdeen City applications is already healthy and a summary can be seen below in Figure 10.





3.5.2 A further summary detailing the spread of current applications through the portal, at the time of writing, for each school can be found in Figure 11. It is worth noting that each school has a different choice process timeline, with some choice processes closing later than others which is impacting on the number of applications made by some young people at this point.

Young Person's School	Applications
Aberdeen Grammar	187
Bridge of Don	134
Bucksburn	77
Cults Academy	56
Dyce Academy	62
Harlaw Academy	69
Hazlehead Academy	74
Lochside	155
Northfield	149
Oldmachar	205
St Machar	220

Figure 11

3.5.3 With our increased focus on partnership working with Aberdeenshire Council, particularly for the anytime/twilight courses, the current application picture from Aberdeenshire young people is modest, yet encouraging, and can be found in

Figure 12. The Aberdeen City anytime/twilight application picture is provided alongside Aberdeenshire numbers.

Course	Aberdeen City	Aberdeenshire	Total
Computing Science Higher (RGC Online)	2	2	4
Equine (SRUC)	1	4	5
History Advanced Higher (Aberdeen City)	2	2	4
Horticulture (SRUC)	0	1	1
Online Art & Design Portfolio Development (RGU)	1	5	6
Principles of Animal Care (SRUC)	5	3	8
Access Course In Chemistry (University of Aberdeen)	0	1	1
Access Course In Law (University of Aberdeen)	1	0	1
Higher Computing Science (RGC Online)	2	1	3
Applications of Mathematics Higher (RGC Online)	2	1	3
Veterinary Terminology (SRUC)	6	3	9
Modern Studies Advanced Higher (Aberdeen City)	7	1	8

Figure 12

3.6 PHASE 3 – FUTURE PLANS

- 3.6.1 Given the positive experiences of young people, and the emerging evidence that *ABZ Campus* is beginning to play an important part in broadening curriculum offer and supporting improvements in attainment, early thought has already been given to how Phase 3 in 2025-26 can provide further impetus to this work. It is important to note that discussions around Phase 3 are in the early stages and an important next step will be to build in time with the Secondary Head Teachers agreeing the details of what follows.
- 3.6.2 The changing nature of the Senior Phase curriculum will inevitably require changes to the way that work placements and internships are offered and structured. Phase 3 discussions are likely to include working closely with the ABZ Works and Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) teams to ensure that we engage with and attract industry to support such placements and also meet the needs of our young people.
- 3.6.3 To date, our Employability programmes have centred around using Aberdeen City Council services to deliver experiences for young people. In Phase 3, we will seek to identify an external partner to support this approach.
- 3.6.4 In Phase 3 we will continue to work closely with colleagues to develop *ABZ Pipeline* to map and create pathways into the renewables sector. It is anticipated that the work within the pilot school(s) will be well established and ready for expansion.
- 3.6.5 As would be expected, the desire is to continue with sustainable expansion of the range of courses available both through *ABZ Campus* daytime and anytime programmes. This will include efforts to further develop close working relationships with Aberdeenshire Council.

- 3.6.6 There has been early planning and discussion across *ABZ Campus* partners around quality assurance. It is planned that by Phase 3 these discussions will have coalesced into a strategic plan both for a shared quality improvement framework and approach to tracking and monitoring.
- 3.6.7 Finally, future phases of ABZ Campus will require to respond to the changing national landscape following responses to the *Withers* (James Withers *Independent Review of the Skills Delivery Landscape*) and *Hayward* (Louise Hayward *Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment*) reviews. ABZ Campus is well-placed to do so, given that the concept of an aligned column structure and broad set of delivery partners can be re-focused in areas that provide best-fit to meet the needs of young people.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 *ABZ Campus* relies upon funding contributions from each of the Aberdeen City schools, for investment in the senior phase by partners and a significant allocation of central resources to oversee and manage the Phases. In order to continue to increase broader opportunities for young people through *ABZ Campus*, there may be a need for an increase in contributions from our secondary schools. There is also a risk that financial constraints limit the contribution being made by partners.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct environmental implications from this report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	focussing our offer on growth and	Planning courses which are designed to support young people to access growth and volume sectors.	L	Yes

Compliance	the UNCRC progresses, there is a risk of not	Continuing to regularly canvass young people through survey and focus group will provide confidence that their voice is heard clearly in future iterations of <i>ABZ Campus</i> .	L	Yes
Operational	uptake resulting in	•	L	Yes
Financial	Campus is not prioritised by partners and secondary	Ensuring that Phases are aligned to the needs of secondary schools helps mitigate this risk. Regular discussions with partners will help provide early warning of any changes in their investment.	Μ	Yes
Reputational	Risk of young people not completing	Mechanisms in place to monitor update and progress to ensure that we remain agile and responsive.	L	Yes
Environment / Climate	Risk that the	Continued focus on volume and growth sectors with plans for Phase 3 to continue the focus on Green Technology and Employability Projects	L	Yes

7. OUTCOMES

<u>(</u>	COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN	
Aberdeen City Local Outcor	me Improvement Plan	
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	The delivery of ABZ Campus is aligned with Stetch outcome 7 of the Children's Services Plan and Local Outcome Improvement Plan.	
UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes	 The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 Duty to provide adequate and efficient education for our area. 	
	The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004	
	 Duties regarding meeting the needs of children and young people with additional support needs. 	
	 The Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc. Act 2000 Raising standards 	
	 Requirement that education be provided in mainstream schools 	
	The National Improvement Framework	
	• Education Authorities are under a duty to endeavour to secure improvement in the quality of education of school education which is provided in the schools managed by them and to carry out the duty with a view to achieving the strategic priorities set out in the National Improvement Framework.	

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	New Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

10. APPENDICES

None

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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