

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Staff Governance
<b>DATE</b>	24 June 2024
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Developing the Young Workforce Update
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	CORS/24/183
<b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>	Andy MacDonald
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Isla Newcombe
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Alison Paterson / Lesley Strachan
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	2.2

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report follows on from a report to Staff Governance Committee in June 2023 (CUS/23/153), which provided an update to Committee on the progress on our activity relating to developing our young workforce and where it was agreed that a report would be brought to Committee to report progress on an annual basis.
- 1.2 The report also provides an update from a report at the April 2024 Staff Governance Committee; Workforce Deep Dive – Approach to Workforce Capacity and Hard to Fill Roles (CORS/24/107), where Members asked for measures of success of our apprenticeship programme.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 notes progress of the continuing work to develop our young workforce, to do this in line with our LOIP commitments, and to shape our workforce for the future.

### 3. CURRENT SITUATION

#### 3.1 Strategic Context

- 3.1.1 Our Workforce Delivery Plan, relating to the workforce strategy included as part of the TOM 1.2 was approved at Staff Governance Committee in January 2023. The plan includes developing our young workforce (DYW) in order to meet our current and future organisational challenges, including our demographic challenges.
- 3.1.2 Our DYW approaches include involvement in employability programmes to support delivery of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) in terms of increasing the number of young people achieving positive destinations, as well as elements of the Socio-Economic Rescue Plan by providing supported work

placements, with built-in employability support to young people who are at risk of long-term unemployment. As a direct result of participating in internships, young people gain valuable work experience (in many cases resulting in continued employment with the Council), a reference, and in some cases, a qualification. Employability is a theme which runs strongly throughout the LOIP, with employment, training, and achievement of qualifications all being desired outcomes.

### 3.2 **Young Persons Guarantee**

3.2.1 We continue to develop initiatives and actions under our Young Person's Guarantee (YPG) employer status. The YPG pledges to support young people in the form of five pledges:

- To prepare young people for the world of work
- To help all young people achieve their potential
- To invest in a skilled workforce
- To create jobs, volunteering and training opportunities
- To create an inclusive and fair workplace

3.2.2 This report provides an update on the DYW activity we are undertaking, in line with the Young Person's Guarantee pledge.

### 3.3 **Apprenticeship Update**

3.3.1 We continue to develop and expand our Apprenticeship Programme which includes:

- Foundation Apprenticeships (FAs) which are opportunities for secondary school pupils, S5 and S6 (age 15-17) to gain work experience and work-based learning whilst still at school gaining a qualification equivalent to a Higher.
- Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) which offer young people aged 16-24 an opportunity to undertake an apprenticeship which combines learning with on-the-job experience, whilst earning a salary.
- Graduate Apprenticeships (GAs) offer individuals of any age, the opportunity to undertake an undergraduate degree whilst retaining their existing employment.
- All our Apprenticeships are part of a structured learning programme and the Apprentices are supported by a workplace mentor and the learning provider.

3.3.2 **Foundation Apprenticeships:** we continue to support work placements in Early Learning and Childcare, Business Skills and this year Fleet Services supported 5 pupils from Northfield Academy for the Automotive framework and our Laboratory supported a student for the Scientific Technologies framework. We continue to accommodate requests from our learning partner NESCOL for a range of frameworks depending on student need. This approach is very beneficial to the Council from an 'employer of choice' perspective as the young people who undertake their work placement with the Council may consider us as an employer in the future if they have a positive experience.

One of our Foundation Apprentice Students upon completion of their studies in 2023, successfully secured a Modern Apprenticeship with the Council and now

has a permanent role. Please see Appendix 1 for case studies from some of our Foundation Apprentice students.

**3.3.3 Modern Apprenticeships:** we continue to employ apprentices to our traditional Building Services roles (Electrician, Joiner, Plumber, Blacksmith, Mechanic etc) as well as Early Learning and Childcare, Adult Social Care, Business Administration and Customer Service. Alongside this, we continue to work with services to identify opportunities to create modern apprenticeships. In addition, as all new vacancies require approval to fill from the Establishment Control Board, the Board determine whether any vacancies submitted, could be filled on an apprenticeship basis, and this is discussed further with the recruiting manager. This process has recently resulted in Modern Apprenticeships also being introduced in schools in school administration roles. In addition, over the last 12 months we have introduced Modern Apprenticeships in our Pensions and Roads teams, and are currently developing Modern apprenticeships in our payroll and revenue and benefits teams.

**3.3.4** The table below shows the number Modern Apprentices we have recruited since we introduced our wider corporate apprenticeship programme in 2019, expanding the offer beyond our craft/trade roles.

	2019	2020*	2021	2022	2023
<b>Craft / Trades</b>	12	1	10	16	9
<b>New Areas</b>	19	-	44**	26	21

\* 2020's intake was impacted by the COVID19 pandemic

\*\* 2021 saw a large intake of Early Learning and Childcare Modern Apprentices to support the Early Years Expansion Programme

**3.3.5** In terms of the success of our apprenticeship programme, there has been a very positive impact, with successful outcomes for the majority of Modern Apprentices. Since 2019, at the time of writing, 60 Modern Apprentices have completed their apprenticeships and secured either permanent or fixed term roles within the Council and a further 8 are Relief Workers, which either suits their lifestyle (perhaps whilst in further education) or whilst they await a permanent vacancy arising.

The programme has had a significant impact in terms of the Early Years workforce, with Modern Apprentices moving into Early Learning & Childcare Support Worker or Early Years Practitioner roles. Other areas to benefit from Modern Apprentices are Adult Social Care, Customer Services, Business Services and Pensions.

**3.3.6** The table below provides some data showing the journeys of our Modern Apprentices.

2019	Of the 31 who started an MA in 2019, 29 have completed their apprenticeship. 25 secured permanent or fixed term roles in Business Administration, Housing, Early Learning & Childcare and Adult Social Care within the Council.
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2021	Of the 54 who started an MA in 2021, 35 have completed their apprenticeship with some still to complete. 23 secured permanent or fixed term roles in Customer Services, Adult Social Care and Early Learning & Childcare and 5 are relief workers.
2022	Of the 42 who started an MA in 2022, 15 have completed their apprenticeship with many still to complete. 10 have secured permanent or fixed term roles and 2 are relief workers.
2023	Of the 30 who started an MA in 2023, 3 have completed their apprenticeship with many still to complete. 2 have secured permanent roles and 1 is a relief worker.

3.3.7 Our Apprenticeship Programme also links to other employability programmes and we have seen a number of young people from our Career Ready Programme and our CEYP Internship programme, being successfully appointed to Modern Apprenticeships.

Please see Appendix 2 for some case studies from some of our Modern Apprentices.

3.3.8 **Graduate Apprenticeships:** we continue to offer these to our existing staff as a development and succession planning offering, whereby employees have an opportunity to undertake an undergraduate degree whilst working. The cost of the degree programme is funded by Skills Development Scotland through the apprenticeship levy. Our learning partner for our GA programme is the Robert Gordon University (RGU) for all courses with the exception of Civil Engineering, which is the University of Dundee.

3.3.9 Since we started offering Graduate Apprenticeships in 2018, 33 employees have taken up the opportunity to undertake these apprenticeships. Of this, 6 have completed a 4-year undergraduate degree programme with one of these graduates going onto graduate from a 1-year MSc in Cyber Security. There are a further 26 employees working their way through degree programmes currently. These are in a range of subjects as follows:

- Business Management
- Construction in the Built Environment
- Construction in the Built Environment - Quantity Surveyor
- Data Science
- Accountancy
- Software Development
- Civil Engineering

In 2023, an employee who came through the MA programme has taken the opportunity to commence a Graduate Apprenticeship. Please see Appendix 3 for some case studies from some of our GAs.

### 3.4 **Internships for Care Experienced Young People**

3.4.1 We continue to work together with the Employability Team within City Development and Regeneration, to create job and career opportunities for our care experienced young people, targeted at our hard to fill vacancies across

the Council. This supports our commitment to Care Experienced Young People as Corporate Parents and one of our aims in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan is to sustain positive destinations on leaving school for children in our priority localities, and another is to support care experienced young people into paid employment through public-sector funded employability programmes.

- 3.4.2 One such employability programme commenced in 2023 with a pilot programme to create Internships for Care Experienced Young People, using funding secured by the Employability Team. The internships were fully funded at Grade G4, Living Wage, with the number of hours per week increasing incrementally throughout the period to ease the young people into work, depending on their needs.
- 3.4.3 Working with Children's Social Work, 23 care experienced young people expressed an interest in the programme and were matched with a job area that they wished to be considered for. Supported selection processes were developed, as many of these young people have never applied for jobs or attended interviews before. 14 young people were successful in gaining and completing an internship with the Council across a range of services, including early years, adult social care and roads.
- 3.4.4 The pilot programme was successful and some of the young people secured employment with the Council either in Modern Apprenticeships or entry level roles. Others went onto other employers or further education or other employment, and some continue to be supported by the Employability Team to become work ready with a dedicated employability keyworker.
- 3.4.5 The success of the programme was recently recognised during an ABZWorks Celebration Event on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at the Town House.
- 3.4.6 We have now commenced the second cohort of internships with a further 15 care experienced young people.
- 3.4.7 Any young person put forward for an internship who is not successful in immediately securing a placement, or who is not yet ready for it, will receive ongoing employability support to prepare them for a future opportunity.

### 3.5 **ABZ Campus – Employability Pathway Programme**

- 3.5.1 This employability pathway programme provides a new and unique opportunity to provide a vocational work experience option to students who may otherwise have made the decision to leave school, with limited qualifications or positive destination.
- 3.5.2 In June 2023 a pilot programme commenced with 10 pupils in S4 in 2 academies within the city. The programme started with a range of key skills workshops to prepare them for work and to gain an insight into the different types of jobs and career pathways available at Aberdeen City Council. They were matched to a particular job area within the Council according to their skills and area of interest and undertook a supported work placement.

- 3.5.3 The programme provided an opportunity for young people to identify and develop the key skills required for employment, and to develop their confidence and readiness for joining the workplace, as well as gaining a recognised SQA qualification at the end of the course.
- 3.5.4 The work experience placements were aligned to some of our hard to fill vacancy areas including Early Learning & Childcare, Roads, Fleet and Business Services.
- 3.5.5 All pupils completing the programme are eligible for a guaranteed interview for any ACC apprenticeships / entry level roles they wish to apply for, as well as a reference from their placement Manager / Mentor and in some cases, support from a dedicated Employability Key Worker.
- 3.5.6 This pilot programme is just coming to an end, and plans for the next cohort for academic session 2024/25 is underway and in addition a similar programme for pupils with additional support needs is being developed with a view to commencing in August 2024.

### 3.6 **Career Ready**

- 3.6.1 Career Ready is a social mobility charity providing school age young people in S5 and into S6 with a mentoring programme preparing them for the world of work. Each student is allocated a workplace Mentor over the 2 year programme, a 4 week paid internship in their Mentor's organisation, masterclasses and workplace visits. We continue to provide Mentors for the programme and support the 4 week paid internships. We are also a member of the Career Ready Local Authority Board.
- 3.6.2 In March 2024, for the first time, we hosted the North East Career Ready Graduation event for the 2022/2024 cohort from across Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. This event was attended by pupils, Mentors, School Co-ordinators and the Senior Education team. This event recognised the pupil's success and the Mentors who supported them.

### 3.7 **Young Employee Voice**

- 3.7.1 The Young Employee Network provides a mechanism to hear our young employee voices about their employment experience, their ideas for change and the opportunity to get involved in organisation wide programmes. It was established in 2018, and since the end of 2023, work has been ongoing to re-energise the Network, which has been supported by Angela Scott, Chief Executive, with a 'Meet the Chief Executive' informal session. This has seen new employees join the Network. Two further sessions have been held with a focus on climate change, pensions and career progression. The next session will focus on agreeing the purpose of the Network and begin to identify areas / actions the young employees wish to focus on.
- 3.7.2 The Young Employee Network also feeds into the wider Age Working Group as part of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan.

### 3.8 **Collaborating with Partners**

3.8.1 We continue to work with partner organisations such as DYW Northeast, Skills Development Scotland, our schools, colleges and universities on new employability programmes or initiatives.

3.8.2 We regularly attend and participate in jobs and career related events at schools across the city, colleges and universities promoting the range of jobs and careers that the Council can offer as well as internship, apprenticeship and entry level roles. This includes promoting part-time employment opportunities for students during their studies.

## 4. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

## 5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

## 6. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

## 7. **RISK**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Risks</b>	<b>Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level</b>	<b>*Target Risk Level (L, M or H)</b>  <small>*taking into account controls/control actions</small>	<b>*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?</b>
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	No significant risks identified	None	L	Yes
<b>Compliance</b>	No significant risks identified	None	L	Yes
<b>Operational</b>	No significant risks identified	None	L	Yes
<b>Financial</b>	No significant	None	L	Yes

	risks identified			
<b>Reputational</b>	No significant risks identified	None	L	Yes
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	No significant risks identified	None	L	Yes

## 8. OUTCOMES

<a href="#"><u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2024</u></a>	
	<b>Impact of Report</b>
<p><b>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</b></p> <p><b><u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u></b></p>	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of the following aspects of the policy statement:-</p> <p>Caring for Young People:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the Council follows best practice as a corporate parent to get the best outcomes for looked after young people, those in kinship care, and those with additional support needs such as autism, developmental disorders, or mental health problems.</li> </ul> <p>A City of Opportunity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the number of apprenticeships available through the Council;</li> <li>• Work with the city’s universities, North East Scotland College, and businesses to increase educational and training options and the number of care experienced young people and young people from deprived communities going onto positive destinations, including further and higher education, vocational training, and apprenticeships.</li> </ul> <p>A Prosperous City:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop our economy in a genuine partnership with the private sector, and third sector.</li> </ul> <p>Valuing Our Staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognise that the Council depends upon its staff to deliver the services it provides and believe the Council must properly reward, train, and support its staff;</li> <li>• Engage regularly with staff and trade union representatives</li> </ul>
<a href="#"><u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26</u></a>	



Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of Economy stretch outcomes 1. No one will suffer due to poverty by 2026; 2. 400 unemployed Aberdeen residents into Fair Work by 2026, and 3. 500 Aberdeen City residents upskilled / reskilled to enable them to move into, within, and between economic opportunities as they arise by 2026.</p> <p>People Stretch Outcome 7: Page 22 • 95% of all our children, including those living in our priority neighbourhoods, will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026.</p> <p>The key drivers for this outcome are: 7.1 Improving pathways to education, employment and training for all our children.</p>
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## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
<b>Integrated Impact Assessment</b>	No assessment required. I confirm this has been discussed and agreed with Lindsay MacInnes, Chief Officer People & Citizen Services on 4 <sup>th</sup> June 2024.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	Not required
<b>Other</b>	n/a

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 Staff Governance Committee Report, CUS/22/236 Developing the Young Workforce and Employability Programmes Update, November 2022 [Agenda for Staff Governance Committee on Monday, 21st November, 2022, 10.00 am ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL](#)

## 11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix 1 – Foundation Apprentice Case Studies  
11.2 Appendix 2 – Modern Apprentice Case Studies  
11.3 Appendix 3 – Graduate Apprentice Case Studies

## 12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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## Appendix 1 – Foundation Apprentice Student Case Studies

### **Kornelia's Story**

The reason I chose a Foundation Apprenticeship is because I was going into my last year of secondary school and was keen to gain work experience as well as a further qualification. Therefore, I applied for a Foundation Apprenticeship in Business Skills at NESCOL and I managed to secure a place for myself on the course. The college put me on the 6-month work placement at the Council in the People and Organisational Development Team, which I really enjoyed. I have been determined to continue with something very similar when I leave school and therefore I have secured a Modern Apprenticeship with the Council. I applied for the Modern Apprenticeship because I don't want to feel the pressure of sitting exams and I benefit more from hands on learning.

The Foundation Apprenticeship allowed me to improve my computing skills, which will very much benefit me when undertaking the Modern Apprenticeship as I will be undertaking administration work.

What I found difficult during the work placement was working from home, which I only had to do a few times. I am more efficient and motivated in a work based surrounding, i.e. an office.

The highlight of my experience was being able to be within a workplace and get a proper perspective of what it all looks and feels like. In addition to that, creating SharePoint pages for the team meaning all employees in the Council could see the work I have produced. Also joining group chats and Teams sites within the Council which made me feel very welcomed.

**I would describe this experience as:**

**Beneficial**

**Inspiring**

**Exciting**

*"The advice I would give someone starting a Foundation Apprenticeship is make sure to use your time management skills as you will have to attend school, on top of that college classes and a work placement. However, all of this builds skills and prepares you for the real world of work and gives you great experience to put on your CV. "*

## **Kerem's Story**

Hello! I am Kerem a 17 year old Foundation Apprentice that got placed in Marischal College for their Work Placement, and this is my story.

Ever since my interest in the world of business began, I always imagined working my way up the chain of an organisation or owning my own company. Why did I decide to pick up the Foundation Apprenticeship? Well I don't really know myself to be honest. I saw that the course offered the equivalent to 2 B's at Higher level and offered work experience which was enough to draw me in, thinking that this course can help build my skills that will be necessary in the workplace whilst also deepening my knowledge of the business world.

Overall I have enjoyed the work placement I was assigned to by North East Scotland College (NESCOL). I was able to see the inside work in the council especially in the equalities team which I was assigned. I was put into a team that I enjoyed working with and who were always open to any questions or concerns that I may have had during the placement.

I have enjoyed being put into a different environment from NESCOL or Aberdeen Grammar School which I was getting fed up of. Friday off school to work in Marischal College was now something different and something for me to look forward to becoming a highlight of my week and something I was looking forward to going to, surprising I know. I enjoyed participating in events where I had to work with different people in the team such as an event about how the council's money should be split to priorities where I was greeting people at the entrance and handing out forms that they could complete. Another is going to Aberdeen Gurudwara the first Sikh place of worship in Aberdeen to learn about the religion and how the temple started.

At first it was a strange feeling switching from going to Aberdeen Grammar School to then suddenly going to Marischal College but the environment was surprisingly easy to get used to, much to my surprise.

Overall the Foundation Apprenticeship has been very rewarding in terms of the work placement in Marischal College. I was able to get first hand experience of how the workplace can be and have thoroughly enjoyed it. Being able to work with different people and tasks and gaining an experience that will not be forgotten, showing me how it feels like to be placed in a workplace environment for the first time. And now it is time to see what the future will hold.

## **Emmanuel's Story**

Hi! My name is Emmanuel a 17-year-old Business FA student at Nescol who has been lucky enough to be provided the opportunity to work and learn with the council in Marischal college. I moved to Aberdeen from London just over a year ago now and I am enjoying life here, it is different.

Now, why did I choose to do the business skills FA? To be honest I am not sure. I had always wanted to go into business, but I am not completely sure what drew me to the business FA over all other courses I could have done. However I do not regret it I am thankful this is the path I had chosen.

I truly began to embark on a journey last year when I had joined the business FA as I had seen and realised how humbling and unforgiving life can be. The FA has really taught me a lot being a huge help to me it helped me to learn a lot, while also giving me the opportunity to put everything I have learnt into action. I can gain practical experience as well as knowledge which is pivotal to my future as an entrepreneur.

There is a lot I do not know and can still learn but it has been a guide I never thought I would have and will be forever thankful for.

The hands-on aspect of the FA is especially advantageous because it helped me to learn what it felt like to have an actual first job (and trust me Marischal college is not as simple as it seems) as you are unable to deny the growth achieved by being hands on which is something you would very rarely be able to achieve in school. Each day I feel closer and closer to being able to really step into the world of business realising my dreams.

It is truly a rewarding experience, and I cannot wait for the future.

## **Appendix 2 – Modern Apprentice Case Studies**

### **Ryley's Story**

Ryley undertook a **Support Worker Modern Apprenticeship** in 2021, working with adults with learning disabilities. On completing her apprenticeship, Ryley secured a Support Worker role in one of the in-house learning disability teams. What inspired Ryley to undertake this opportunity was the fact that she left school and wasn't entirely sure what she wanted to do and didn't have much work experience and the Modern Apprenticeship seemed like a great opportunity for her to gain experience and a recognised qualification.

On completing her apprenticeship, Ryley secured a Support Worker role in one of the in-house learning disability teams, within the Aberdeen City Health & Social Care Partnership. From here Ryley can develop within the role and there are many opportunities for her to develop her skills and experience and a range of career progression opportunities for the future.

***“Personally, I would recommend it to anyone as I myself love it and I never in a million years would have thought I would be able to love a job. It is very good for people with less experience as you can learn on the job and get a qualification that would help you progress later.”***

## **Aaron's story**

Aaron undertook a **Modern Apprenticeship in Business Administration** in one of our Children's Social Work teams. What inspired Aaron to undertake this opportunity was the fact that he is a determined individual who wants to progress his career. Aaron knew that the Council offered Modern Apprenticeships and saw the vacancy when he was job hunting after he finished college. Aaron's previous employer's opportunities for progression were limited and he saw this as an opportunity to progress his career.

***"I would definitely recommend taking a Modern Apprenticeship, there isn't a downside to the opportunity at all".***

### **Aaron's top takeaways from his Apprenticeship:**

- He enjoyed the "working while you learn" aspect as being assessed on work you produce everyday seemed more relaxed and got rid of the stress you'd experience when sitting an exam.
- Getting to know the team he worked with and building good working relationships
- He was delighted to be in the top 3 finalists for 'Trainee, Apprentice or Student of the year' at last year's Star Awards.

### **Aaron's future aspirations**

Aaron enjoyed his time in business administration, and since completing his apprenticeship has gone on to secure a permanent, promoted administrative role, within the Music Service team.

Aaron studied music in college, and this new role is good fit for him and his passion for music, and to use his skills and experience in administration.

## **Lois's Story**

Before Lois applied for the **Customer Modern Apprenticeship**, she didn't know that the Council offered Modern Apprenticeships. Lois didn't have any office experience and believed that the Council would allow her to gain just that.

**Lois's takeaway from this experience:** - Lois really enjoyed working with her assessor.

**Lois's career aspirations now that she has completed her Modern Apprenticeship:**

Now she is a full-time permanent employee at Aberdeen City Council as an Information and Investment Assistant, within our Corporate Landlord Cluster. She hopes to gain experience in a number of other teams/services of the Council.

***"I would recommend this experience. If someone is looking to gain work experience or a qualification without going to college or university this is a good option. Also, if someone is looking to gain experience within the places that offer the apprenticeships this is a good starting point."***

## **Appendix 3 – Graduate Apprenticeship Case Studies**

### **Lorna's Story**

Lorna was looking for an opportunity to undertake a degree, however, could not afford to reduce her hours to do this through normal routes. Lorna found that a Graduate Apprenticeship was an ideal solution as it allowed her to continue to work full time and learn at the same time. In 2018 Lorna started her Graduate Apprenticeship BA (hons) in Business Management at the Robert Gordon University.

### **Lorna's top takeaways from the Graduate Apprenticeship**

- Reinforced knowledge and skills
- Helped develop a greater knowledge of the wider council
- Increased confidence in her abilities

In December 2022, Lorna graduated from Robert Gordon University with **1<sup>st</sup> class honours BA (hons) Business Management.**

### **Lorna's advice to anyone considering a Graduate Apprenticeship:**

Try to make sure you link it to what you do on a day-to-day basis. Set aside time, e.g., one evening a week plus ½ day at work, to fully focus on the course so that you don't have great chunks of work to catch up on.

### **Did Lorna face any challenges?**

- Lorna said she found it difficult to get into the rhythm of viewing lecture material and doing the weekly assignments.
- She found it difficult finding the time to complete assessments around her usual workload.
- Some coursework was better suited to the private sector or didn't fit well within her role.

**Despite these challenges, Lorna describes her experience in 3 words as:**

*Challenging                  Worthwhile                  Beneficial*

***“Whilst studying I moved into my current role, and I feel this may not have been possible without the confidence and qualification I gained. I have no great aspiration to advance further at this point.”***



## **Steve's Story**

On Wednesday 8th December 2021, I took to the stage at the Music Hall to accept my BSc (Hons) in IT Management for Business in front of family and friends.

I was part of the first cohort to complete a Graduate Apprenticeship while navigating the impact of the pandemic.

It's been a great experience, complemented by the support and commitment from the university tutors and council staff that kept me motivated. I've enjoyed the opportunity to further my experience and skills around my career aspirations.

If this wasn't enough excitement for one day, my daughter, Natalie Robertson, was in hospital preparing to welcome my first grandchild.

I undertook my degree under RGU's industry-driven approach, where students work full-time for a partner employer while studying towards their degree - integrating student learning with suitable workplace projects and experience as a collaborative effort between university and employer, while also satisfying the career ambitions of the student.

I was inspired by the flexibility the Graduate Apprenticeship course that RGU offered, which Aberdeen City Council supported. University was a different way of learning from being at school, and I found the flexibility and continued support key to the success I achieved.

As with most things, my studies were impacted by the continued presence of the global coronavirus pandemic which forced me and other students to adapt our learning.

I think the pandemic put significant challenges on us as students, but the university adapted its learning patterns to suit, and that gave students assurances and comfort as part of their study and attainment.

I have the qualification now, so I would say the opportunities are endless. There were good times and fun with other students online, and there were challenging times also but I will say that the support I received from the staff and lecturers was fabulous. I take my hat off to them!

As a mature student, I decided to utilise the Graduate Apprenticeship scheme as a means of doing the degree in a flexible way, which helped me to manage my work, study, and family-life balance and I would encourage anyone to do the same.

Steve undertook further studies through the Graduate Apprenticeship Programme and graduated in December 2023 with an MSc in Cyber Security.