

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education and Children's Services Committee
DATE	24 June 2025
EXEMPT	No, with the exception of Appendix I which is exempt under paragraph 5 of Part 1 of Section 7A of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as it includes information relating to the adoption, care, fostering or education of any particular child or where any particular child is subject to a compulsory supervision order or interim compulsory supervision order (as defined respectively in sections 83 and 86 of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011) information relating to the order
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	ABZ Campus
REPORT NUMBER	F&C/25/150
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 progress with ABZ Campus, with particular reference to levels and achievements of participants and of plans in place for 2025-26. The report also includes a full review of the impact of the role of the Pathways Advocate.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee :-

- 2.1 Note the progress made in delivering *ABZ Campus* which aims to further broaden the curriculum offer for young people in the Senior Phase in Aberdeen City Council schools;
- 2.2 Instruct the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to support the roll out of Phase 3 *ABZ Campus*; and
- 2.3 Instruct the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to continue to report the progress of ABZ Campus to Members through a yearly Service Update.

3.1 CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1.1 *ABZ Campus* is a collective effort from the eleven secondary schools, partner organisations and central officers to contribute to the continued need to broaden the curriculum offer available in the senior phase, to seek out new

opportunities including growth-sector relevant courses, and ultimately to raise attainment for young people in Aberdeen City schools.

- 3.1.2 The work of ABZ Campus supports, but does not replace, the ongoing work of individual secondary schools to offer a broader curriculum that meets the needs of all young people in Aberdeen City.
- 3.1.3 The work of ABZ Campus commenced through the collective will expressed by secondary Head Teachers in the form of a proposal paper in November 2021. This led to resourcing, planning, creation of new courses, opening up choice to young people and the first launch of new courses in June 2023. Following further planning, an extended tranche of courses commenced in June 2024. Course choice concluded in early April 2025 to allow for the third phase of ABZ Campus to commence from June.
- 3.1.4 Delivery of the phases of ABZ Campus to date has incorporated some common features to allow for effective implementation and impact. These common features are identified below and will form the structure of this committee report:-
 - 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. increase the breadth of courses, with alignment to growth-sector industries, through *ABZ Campus* and provide impetus and support to the individual work of broadening the curriculum by the eleven secondary schools in Aberdeen City
 - c. support increasing breadth for ABZ Campus through developing partnership connections with other local authorities and organisations
 - d. respond to the voice of young people to create a streamlined application portal, more accessible course information, and regular surveys and focus groups for an understanding of the experiences of young people on ABZ Campus courses
 - e. effectively track and monitor the progress of young people within courses and then analyse the impact of ABZ Campus on young people at the point of certification, comparing young people on ABZ Campus courses with those participating in more regular school-based experiences
 - f. respond to the need to provide bespoke support to our care experienced and most vulnerable young people.

Column Alignment

- 3.2.1 One of the most common aspects of ABZ Campus provision asked about by other local authorities has been the work to align aspects of the senior phase across our secondary schools in Aberdeen. The structure agreed by leadership teams in March 2022 has remained in place for the three phases since launch. However, this current session, 2025-26 will be the first where all eleven schools have fully aligned with the structure described below, with Harlaw Academy making further changes to their curriculum structure during this most recent session to allow their young people to fully benefit from the courses on offer across all columns.

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

Breadth of Courses

- 3.3.1 As with the initial commitment to broaden curricular offers with a particular focus on growth-sector industries, the practice of making transparent connections with growth-sectors has continued. Figure 2 shows examples of how courses delivered by a variety of partners are linked to growth-sector areas.



ACCOUNTING (Higher)		SCIENTIFIC TECHNOLOGIES (NPA Level 6)	
LEVEL	HIGHER	LEVEL	NATIONAL PROGRESSION AWARD – SCQF LEVEL 6
DELIVERER	ABERDEEN GRAMMAR SCHOOL	DELIVERER	OLDMACHAR ACADEMY
GROWTH SECTOR	FINANCIAL & BUSINESS SERVICES	GROWTH SECTOR	LIFE SCIENCES
 FOUNDATION APPRENTICESHIP (1 Year): SOCIAL SERVICES & HEALTHCARE (Level 6)		 FOUNDATION APPRENTICESHIP (1 Year): CONSTRUCTION (Level 5)	
LEVEL	SCQF LEVEL 6	LEVEL	SCQF LEVEL 5
DELIVERER	BON ACCORD CARE or NEScol – ABERDEEN CITY CAMPUS	DELIVERER	ST MACHAR ACADEMY (DELIVERED BY NESCol)
GROWTH SECTOR	CARE	GROWTH SECTOR	CONSTRUCTION

Figure 2

- 3.3.2 Having completed Phase 1 (2023-24), in the process of concluding Phase 2 (2024-25) and preparing for the launch of Phase 3 (2025-26), a picture of increasing breadth can now be seen, as demonstrated in Figure 3. The three phases have seen; a widening of growth-sectors covered, an increasing range of courses from Level 4 to Level 7, and a diversification in the method of delivery from Phase 2 onwards, with ‘anytime’ and ‘twilight courses’ increasingly available to young people across Aberdeen City.

Session	Courses	L4	L5	L6	L7	Agriculture	Childcare	Construction	Digital	Energy	Financial & Business	General	Healthcare	Life Science	Tourism & Hospitality	Providers	In Person	Virtual	Anytime	Twilight
2023-24	36	1	2	15	18	0	4	0	2	5	5	7	4	4	5	10	35	1	0	0
% 2023-24		2.8	5.6	41.7	50.0	0.0	11.1	0.0	5.6	13.9	13.9	19.4	11.1	11.1	13.9	27.8	97.2	2.8	0.0	0.0
2024-25	70	1	14	30	25	6	5	4	5	9	6	12	6	6	11	16	55	1	12	2
% 2024-25		1.4	20.0	42.9	35.7	8.6	7.1	5.7	7.1	12.9	8.6	17.1	8.6	8.6	15.7	22.9	78.6	1.4	17.1	2.9
2025-26	78	4	14	30	30	5	5	3	5	10	8	20	5	4	11	18	57	1	16	4
% 2025-26		5.1	17.9	38.5	38.5	6.4	6.4	3.8	6.4	12.8	10.3	25.6	6.4	5.1	14.1	23.1	73.1	1.3	20.5	5.1

Figure 3

- 3.3.3 As we approach the launch of the third phase of ABZ Campus, we are now able to compare the picture of applications for courses. This does not equate to participation as the application process is followed by system to ensure that young people are applying for the best possible course, that they have a realistic prospect for success and, of course, we recognise that young people will inevitably change their minds as they go through the process, not least when results from a prior year are considered. Figure 4 shows the comparison across three phases of applications (with Phase 3 applications still being accepted at the time of writing).

Applications from Aberdeen City	
Year	Total
23/24	1279
24/25	1461
25/26*	1496
Applications from Aberdeenshire	
Year	Total
23/24	6
24/25	46
25/26*	11
* Applications still being accepted. Data taken from ABZ Campus applications	

Figure 4

Partnerships

- 3.4.1 There is recognition that partnerships must be maximised in order to give young people the best possible range of certificated experiences in the Senior Phase. These partnerships arrive in a variety of forms; schools, fellow local authorities, and wider organisations.
- 3.4.2 As referenced in section 3.2.1, Phase 3 now has all of our secondary schools fully aligned within the column structure. Since Phase 1, a greater number of our schools have become providers of courses, developing a better geographical spread to 'host' ABZ Campus courses, as can be seen in the 'provider' column of Figure 3. The intention is to continue to develop this geographical spread in future phases of ABZ Campus.
- 3.4.3 The development of ABZ Campus has given rise to twin potential benefits for Aberdeen City in relation to our partnership with fellow local authorities. Firstly, the ABZ Campus Curriculum Manager and central officers have now met with six other local authorities who are either interested in developing a similar curriculum model or in replicating aspects of delivery such as anytime or twilight courses. Secondly, we have looked to develop opportunities for shared courses with Aberdeenshire and Moray Councils. Currently, we have contracted access for small cohorts of our young people to Foundation Apprenticeships in Construction and Automotive with Aberdeenshire Council and, in turn, offer access to some of our in-person and 'anytime' courses for young people from Aberdeenshire Council. The intention is that some course delivery could be offered across local authorities to further develop the range of certificated experiences our young people can access and officers will explore the funding of this approach in the coming year.
- 3.4.4 A central part of our ABZ Campus offer has been our continued partnership with North-East Scotland College (NESCol). At around the same time that ABZ Campus commenced course offers, an *Enhancing the Senior Phase* project was launched encouraging regional collaboration to support certificated offers

for targeted groups of young people. NESCol continue to offer a significant proportion of ABZ Campus Courses, with a number of Foundation Apprenticeships, HNC and Skills for Work courses. To support the pipeline of interest in energy-related growth sector courses, NESCol is leading on the *Energy on the Move* vehicle which is aimed to provide rich curriculum experiences on energy transition, low-carbon energy industries and promote pathways into energy careers for young people in S1-S3 across Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. In addition to this, we are grateful for close working relationships with other partners to help us to deliver ABZ Campus courses, Figure 5 provides an overview of just some of our delivery partners.



3.4.5 ABZ Campus offers an opportunity to work with partners in wider organisations to develop the scope of certificated experiences for young people. Our partnership with NUCO Training has seen the introduction of First Aid Training for young people in the Senior Phase, typically as part of senior phase induction activities in our secondary schools. Information on this can be found in Figure 6 below. Initial discussions with prospective ABZ Campus partners Sport Aberdeen have taken place to support them to offer certificated courses and we continue to engage with all potential partners to support pathways for all young people through enhancing the offer. During 2024-25, the Employability Pathway has supported 12 young people who are looking to transition into employment which has been under represented in post-school destinations. Work experience and induction experience has been provided through various parts of Aberdeen City Council. This session also saw the implementation of a bespoke ASN Pathway for 6 young people which benefited from an investment of time from teams within Aberdeen City Council. Work placements for both of these Pathways were partners including CFINE, a local nursery, bakery and Instant Neighbour Aberdeen.

Course	Total
Emergency First Aid at Work - FAA Level 6 Scotland Award - 1 day	1026
Paediatric Emergency First Aid - FAA Level 6 Scotland - 1 Day	8

Figure 6

Pupil Voice, Communication & QA

- 3.5.1 There has been a consistent desire to ensure that the voices of young people play a significant role in ABZ Campus. This started with initial focus groups leading to the development of consistent course information and a bespoke application portal, as shown in Figure 7.

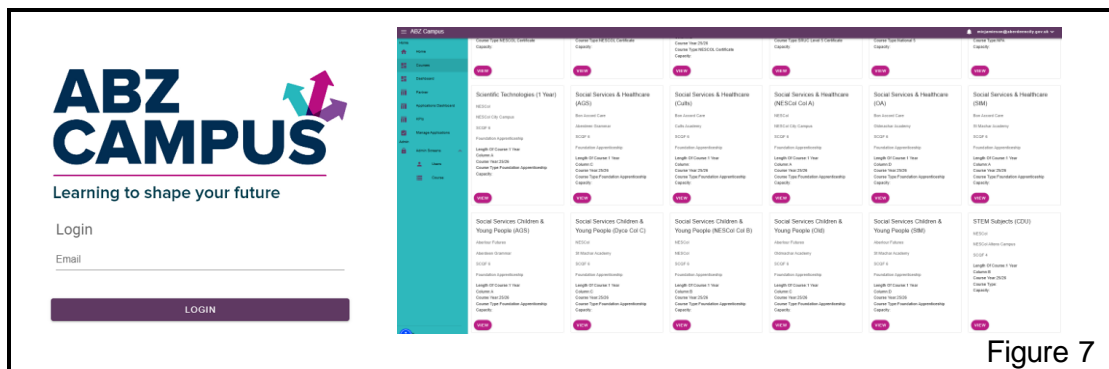


Figure 7

- 3.5.2 During the course of the last two sessions, surveys and focus groups have been carried out with young people who were participating in ABZ Campus courses. During February and March 2025, young people responded positively to the accessibility of the course information and application process, and also confirmed that they felt valued as part of the ABZ Campus class (see Figure 8). In Figure 9, we see young people respond favourably to the quality of learning and teaching, with just under half rating this as excellent. Given this is the second year of gathering the voice of young people in this way, a comparison is possible, and shown in Figure 10. The responses show young people remain confident in the accessibility of course information and satisfaction with ABZ Campus courses.

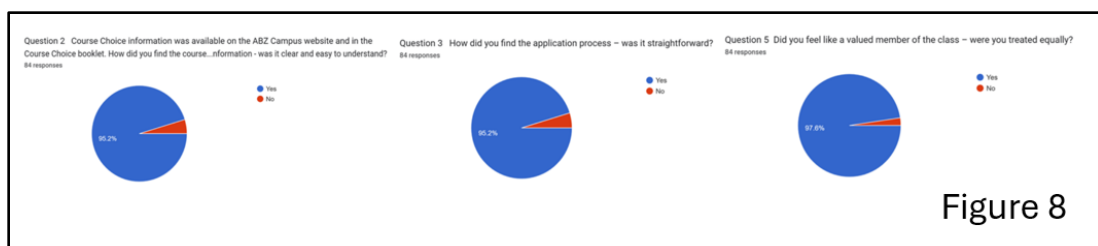
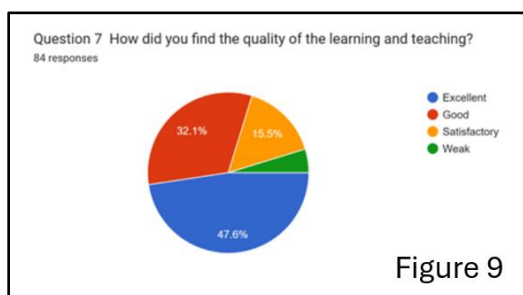


Figure 8



Selected Questions for Comparison	2023-24	2024-25
Number of Responses	97	84
Response	Yes	Yes
Course Choice information was available on the ABZ Campus website and in the Course Choice booklet. How did you find the course information - was it clear and easy to understand?	95.70%	95.20%
How did you find the application process - was it straightforward?	92.40%	95.20%
(If you choose a daytime course that involved attending another school or provider) were you welcomed into the building and given an induction?	82.60%	85.70%
Did you feel like a valued member of the class?	94.60%	97.60%

Figure 10

3.5.3 During Phase 2 (2024-25), the ABZ Campus Curriculum Manager, central officers and partner organisations collaborated to commence a programme of classroom visits to validate the positive responses from young people and support the analysis of successful participation through certification. At the time of report-writing, nine collaborative visits had taken place shared between central officers and partner organisations, with further visits planned during May and June 2025.

3.5.4 Communication with young people, families and staff teams continues to be a high priority to ensure that all are aware of the additional course range that is available to young people across Aberdeen City schools. The ABZ Campus curriculum manager visited a number of Career Events during the course choice window (January to March). In addition, a twilight event was held for our school choice teams in schools on 29th January to support their knowledge of courses on offer. Finally a family information recording was made (<https://abzworks.co.uk/abzcampus/parents/>) to support applications from all young people in Aberdeen City.

Track, Monitor & Impact

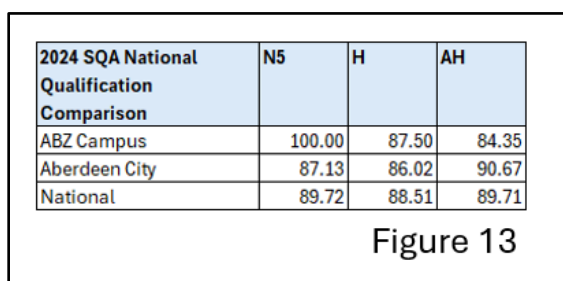
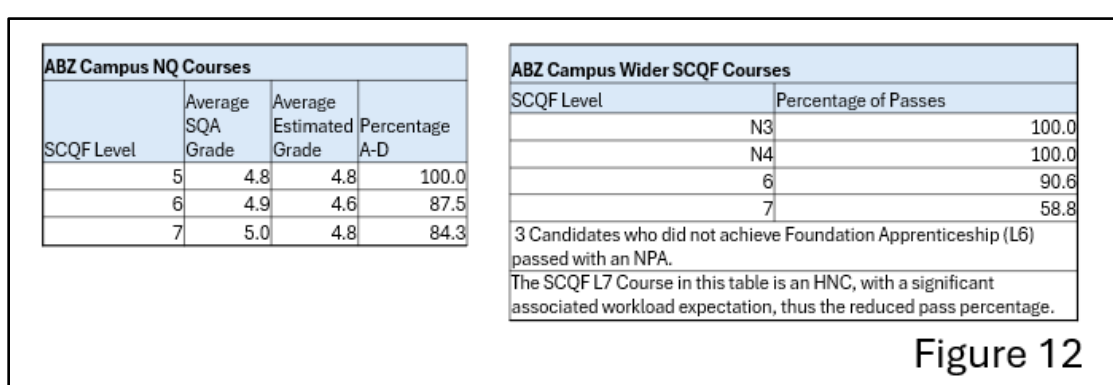
3.6.1 In June 2024, all secondary schools made the decision to move to a common tracking system which has begun to have a positive impact both for schools in relation to having a more robust tracking mechanism, and for central officers as consistent data is available much more readily than if eleven separate systems were being used. For ABZ Campus Phase 2 courses currently approaching examination and assessment in May and June 2025, the picture for estimated grade has been provided in Figure 11. In addition, most young people are on track to successfully pass those wider SCQF courses (such as Foundation Apprenticeships) that carry a pass/fail result rather than a grade.

ABZ Campus NQ Courses - Estimated Grades 2024-25		
SCQF Level	Average Estimated Grade	Percentage A-D
5	5.1	100%
6	4.6	90%
7	4.4	94%

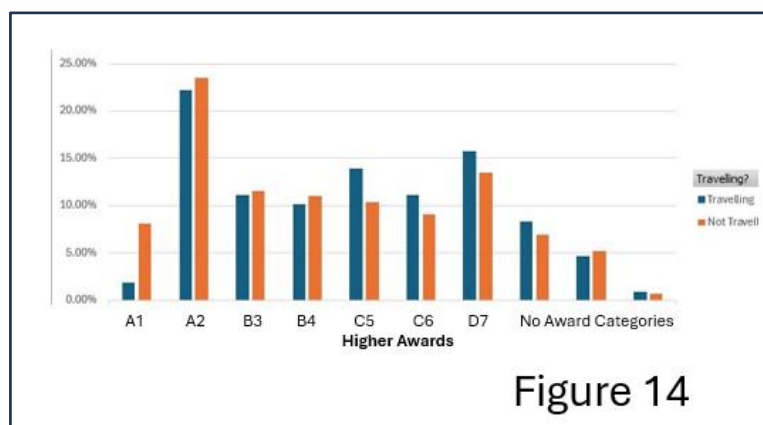
Figure 11

3.6.2 With young people in Phase 1 of ABZ Campus having completed assessments and received results in August 2024, a first year of SQA results is available for

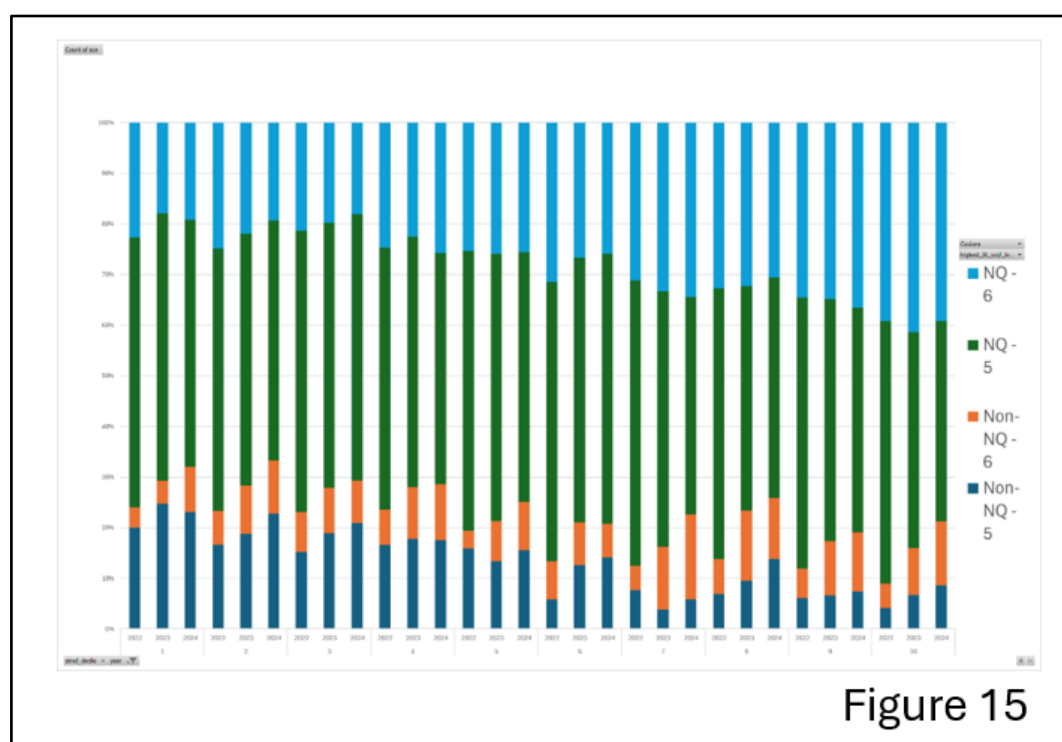
analysis, and a brief overview shown in Figure 12. For National Qualification (e.g. National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher) courses, the results were encouraging with the final average grade sitting at a B for National 5 and Higher, and on the cusp of a B and a C for Advanced Higher. The A-D pass rate was also positive. For wider SCQF (e.g. Foundation Apprenticeships and HNC) courses, pass rates again were positive. The HNC course carries the 'weight' of over two Advanced Higher courses and can open up access to year two of a University course, thus the pass rate is slightly reduced. Figure 13 provides a comparison on the A-D pass rate for both Aberdeen City and National benchmarks. On balance, the results for young people in ABZ Campus courses justifies the investment of time and energy into the initiative. It is worth emphasising that; these are courses that would otherwise be unlikely to run in individual schools, the ABZ Campus numbers are low and therefore more susceptible to statistical fluctuation, and that this is the first year of running and so no trends can be observed.



- 3.6.3 A question that has and will continue to be asked (and the outcome monitored) is whether there is an impact on attainment for those who travel. With only one year of data, it is not possible to draw a conclusion, and again, the choice for young people taking ABZ Campus courses is not whether to travel or not to travel, but whether to access a course they could not otherwise choose or not. Figure 14 shows a broad comparison between results for those who travel against results for those who do not. The outcome, again with the caveat that this is only one year of data, suggests that there is broad correlation between the two (with A Band 1 grades the only outlier). When this is expressed as an average, both show that a young person will on average achieve a 'lower' B grade (this graph shows Higher Level only).



3.6.4 The purpose behind the creation of ABZ Campus centred around opening up access for all young people, irrespective of school, and also a desire to provide the broadest possible range of pathways for young people in Aberdeen City. Our first set of results in 2024 also suggests that the introduction (both through ABZ Campus and through the general curriculum work in our secondary schools) of wider SCQF courses is disproportionately helping young people from areas of higher deprivation. Figure 15 below shows the change over three years for each of the 10 deciles (SIMD) from left to right, with orange and blue bars showing wider SCQF courses. As can be seen, the proportion is higher towards the left hand side of the chart where the lower deciles sit. This will continue to be subject to analysis as young people in further phases of ABZ Campus move towards certification.



3.6.5 The introduction of wider courses by our secondary schools, of which ABZ Campus forms just a part, is resulting in a greater number of attainment gains for young people in Aberdeen City. These gains are shown in Figure 16 below.

Wider Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) - Level	Attainment by number of courses from Aberdeen City Council young people in 2024	Attainment by number of courses from Aberdeen City Council young people in 2023	Attainment by number of courses from Aberdeen City Council young people in 2022
SCQF 4	595	400	360
SCQF 5	940	685	480
SCQF 6	730	435	160

Figure 16

Pathways Advocate

- 3.7.1 Committee *instructed the Chief Officer to report back on the impact of Pathways Advocates within one calendar year.* The full review is contained in Appendix I of this report and a summary of the conclusion and recommendations found below.
- 3.7.2 The role of the Pathway Advocate was introduced to provide young people who are care experienced with the opportunity to have an informed advocate in school to advise and support in the area of choices, vocational pathways and future options. Qualitative information including feedback from young people and staff has been positive, with some examples of success found within case studies shown in Appendix I. There are also signs of positive progress when looking at the quantitative data.
- 3.7.3 The recommendations from the Pathways Advocate – June 2025 Evaluation are as follows:-
- the Pathways Advocate role continues in schools to enable a more extended period of time to fully embed the role and evidence impact
 - Improve the tracking system to better support evidencing impact, including linkage with the newly established master tracking system
 - Continue to refine the cohort of young people to be supported to ensure the right young people are benefitting

Future Plans

- 3.8.1 Given the continued positive experiences of young people, and the evidence that *ABZ Campus* is playing an important part in broadening curriculum offer and supporting improvements in attainment, early thought has already been given to how Phase 4 in 2026-27 can build on what we already have. It is important to note that discussions around Phase 4 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.
- 3.8.2 As with previous phases of ABZ Campus, we are committed to continuing to grow the offer for our young people. Discussions have started with both partner local authorities and organisations to work together to offer an even wider range of courses in a way that is sustainable and cost-effective.
- 3.8.2 Introducing a suite of ABZ Campus work placements has been planned for some time, however challenges have been experienced with progressing this

aspect to allow introduction for Phase 3. The intention now is that this offer will be included as part of Phase 4.

- 3.8.3 During Session 2024-25, all of our secondary schools have started to use a new tracking system for monitoring, tracking and reporting on the progress of young people. The intention is that school-based ABZ Campus courses will be tracked and reported using this new system in future sessions. This will allow a fully aligned and consistent approach to this important area.
- 3.8.4 Following the Chief Officer instruction to review the impact of the Pathway Advocate role, and the resulting report contained in Appendix I, the recommendations in Section 3.7.3 will be adopted as part of the plans for ABZ Campus going forward.

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. This continues to be monitored carefully.
- 4.2 Earlier in 2025, the Scottish Government confirmed that responsibility for providing national training programmes, including apprenticeships, will move from Skills Development Scotland to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). It is anticipated that these changes will take effect in autumn 2026, and it is possible that these changes will change the way we are able to access funding for Foundation Apprenticeships, currently principally through our partners North-East Scotland College but also through other local partners such as Bon Accord Care, Aberlour and Aberdeenshire Council.

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	Risk of not focussing our offer on growth and volume sectors to support growth in the local economy.	Planning courses which are designed to support young people to access growth and volume sectors.	L	Yes
Compliance	As work to incorporate the UNCRC progresses, there is a risk of not being guided by young people to ensure they can claim all of their rights.	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	Risk of low uptake resulting in no improvement in attainment	Mechanisms in place to monitor update and progress to ensure that we remain agile and responsive.	L	Yes
Financial	Risk that ABZ Campus is not prioritised by partners and secondary schools.	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.	M	Yes
Reputational	Risk of young people not completing courses	Mechanisms in place to monitor update and progress to ensure that we intervene and respond in a timely manner.	L	Yes

Environment / Climate	Risk that the curriculum does not prepare young people to face the challenges ahead.	Continued focus on volume and growth sectors with plans for future phases to focus on Green Technology and Employability Projects	L	Yes
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8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	The delivery of ABZ Campus is aligned with Stetch outcome 6 of the Children's Services Plan and Local Outcome Improvement Plan.
UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes	<p>The Education (Scotland) Act 1980</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Duty to provide adequate and efficient education for our area. <p>The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Duties regarding meeting the needs of children and young people with additional support needs. <p>The Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc. Act 2000</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raising standards Requirement that education be provided in mainstream schools <p>The National Improvement Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

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

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Education & Children's Services Committee – 30.04.24, Item 10.3 ABZ Campus](#)

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Pathways Advocate – June 2025 Evaluation – Exempt Appendix

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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