

Appendix One

Detailed Information About ABZWorks Employability Programmes and Services

City Growth's ABZWorks employability team provides a variety of services and support to people and organisations across Aberdeen. A team of employability keyworkers provides a broad range of employability and broader holistic support through ABZWorks to individuals seeking employability support across all programmes. Some individuals will require intensive and long-term support stretching over years, while others require relatively short interventions and flourish once they have taken the first steps towards employment.

The team works closely with departments across the authority (particularly Education, Youth Social Work, Housing, Community Learning and Development, Healthy Minds, Financial Inclusion Team, Refugee Support Team, Libraries, Creative Learning, and Communities) and partner agencies including DWP, Skills Development Scotland, NESCol, and Developing the Young Workforce North East, health services, as well as third and private sector employability organisations. Keyworkers are meeting and engaging with participants from various locations and settings across the city. In partnership with the DWP Work Coaches, keyworkers offer weekly employability support from within the Job Centre Plus Office. Keyworkers are leading additional community outreach activities by offering drop-in sessions and meetings at Skills Development Scotland offices, within secondary schools, local libraries and from Community Hubs, such as the Tillydrone Community Campus and the Torry Community Hub.

Commissioned services enhance the offer for participants with provision available across all stages of the Employability Pipeline, a framework of five stages from Stage 1, where a person is very far from being work ready and may benefit from confidence building activities and barrier removal, right through to Stage 5 where someone has secured employment but might benefit from aftercare and in-work support.

The commissioned services cover a wide range of provision targeted at different groups, examples include: targeted provision for groups such as care experienced young people, people with criminal convictions, young people with additional needs, parents; activities promoting positive mental health and wellbeing, encouraging people out of their homes and instead engaging in individual or group work; digital training; sector based courses aligned with industries showing demand for staff including care, hospitality, construction and transit (HGV).

Combined keyworker support and commissioned services provide a broad offer to employability programmes participants, however as each individual works to develop their own, tailored Action Plan, there is also opportunity to identify specific training or interventions that will benefit them based on their own aspirations.

The ABZWorks team provided advice and support to Early Intervention and Community Empowerment colleagues allocated £90,000 by Council on 10 March 2021 to create a targeted learning package for those whose employment opportunities had been hardest hit by Covid-19. Onward referral routes and opportunities have been highlighted, the activities provided via the £90,000 allocation are promoted to ABZWorks participants and via ABZWorks social media channels, and the team

continues working with Community Learning and Development colleagues to ensure individuals can access a pipeline of employability support to continue their progression towards employment or other positive destination.

Socio-Economic Rescue Plan

The team played a significant role in the development and delivery of the Socio-Economic Recovery Plan, particularly within the People theme.

Key employability outputs include:

- Delivery of Positive Destination Planning Sessions to support young people at risk of leaving school without a positive destination – now business as usual;
- Development of the ABZWorks one-stop employability shop website and social media channels – now business as usual;
- Ongoing workforce and employability schemes;
- A partnership promotional campaign for learning opportunities in the city;
- Support to encourage workers to move into the care sector – ongoing;
- Administration and ongoing delivery of the Kickstart Internship programme, Aberdeen City Council hosted 83 Kickstart internships across the organisation, and supported businesses across the city to secure 220 starts.
- One of the key ‘soft’ outcomes of the Rescue Plan was strengthened partnerships and closer working across various agencies and groups across the city and broader City Region.

Connecting Scotland

This three-phase initiative was set up in response to coronavirus to help get every citizen in Scotland online, with a focus on the most isolated and vulnerable. The programme worked with organisations to support service users get online by providing digital devices, internet access and basic digital skills training.

Connecting Scotland was delivered in three phases: Phase 1 (April 2020) was targeted at the ‘shielding’ and higher risk of severe illness groups, Phase 2 (August 2020) for households with children and care leavers up to the age of 26. The third phase, rolled out in June 2021, focused on people participating in employability activities.

The ABZWorks team, which was also involved in the earlier phases, led the Council’s successful Phase 3 bid, which other clusters, partner agencies and training providers were invited to join. In total 135 devices (86 Chromebooks and 49 wifi hubs) were distributed in Phase 3.

Digital Champion support was provided by employability keyworkers, who were trained to SCQF levels four and six in Digital Inclusion Support through the scheme. Commissioned digital training was provided to recipients keen on furthering their skills.

Parental Employability Support Fund (PESF)

PESF differs from the usual funded programmes in two particulars: it enables support to be provided to parents in employment, with the aim of upskilling them so they can move into better paid work and/or supporting them to access funded childcare so they

can take on more hours; it allows for employability support to be provided to young parents who are still on the school roll.

The programme provides employability keyworker support to all participants, along with referrals to the Financial Inclusion Team for advice, and support to receive better off calculations and benefits checks to be carried out to ensure they are receiving all the funds they are entitled to.

PESF participants with ambitions of becoming self-employed can apply for seed funding to support them to set up their own business. Working in collaboration with Business Gateway, parents will receive support in developing a business plan and have access to a library of resources and training from Business Gateway, while keyworkers will support parents with other self-development needs, for example, an IT course or Microsoft Office course to enable them to be able to manage their own books.

The PESF programme worked in partnership with several organisations including NHS Grampian, Alcohol and Drugs Action, Health and Social Care, and Family Learning to create a Young Parents group held weekly at Tillydrone Community Campus. The purpose of the group was to provide young parents with coping strategies and tools to use when facing the challenges of being young parents. Keyworkers attended the weekly sessions and provided advice and support regarding learning, training, working, and volunteering. These young parents are all also eligible for support via YPG.

Parents registered with the PESF programme were able to access CFINE's Warehouse Skills Development Programme to put all the elements necessary in place for a candidate to apply for and gain full-time employment in any advertised warehouse positions they may find during their job search. Key elements of the programme include daily hands-on work experience in a warehouse, an employment reference, City & Guilds Employability Award, access to certificated e-learning courses, personal development, certificated learning: HACCP, food safety and forklift operator training, as well as cooking skills development.

Through Disabled PESF, Enable was commissioned to provide in-work support to eligible parents who have a disability, including mental health difficulties.

Funding was provided to Aberdeen City Council's Financial Inclusion Team to provide an additional member of staff to support the money support aspect of PESF.

A PESF Workforce Development Officer – a post shared and funded 50/50 with Aberdeenshire Council – informs businesses about free upskilling and workforce opportunities available to eligible staff and broader PESF opportunities which could improve the overall health, wellbeing, and financial situation of employees.

Kickstart

Kickstart provided funding for employers who agreed to provide 16-25-year-olds with a paid work experience placement, with training and employability support built-in, for

25 hours per week for six months. The DWP paid National Minimum Wage and employers could, if they chose to do so, top up hours and wages at their own cost.

Following discussions with partner agencies across the public, private and third sectors, Aberdeen City Council submitted a successful bid to become a gateway organisation to support employers to access the scheme, while simultaneously securing approval to become a Kickstart employer.

Kickstart employers were required to provide young people with support and training to develop basic employability skills, as well as job specific skills to bolster their chances of securing long-term employment following the end of their placement.

The ABZWorks team supported 123 employers to access the scheme, resulting in the advertising of 338 vacancies, with 220 of those converting into placement starts. Aberdeen City Council employed 83 Kickstart interns, 52 of whom are still with us and 13 of whom have gone on to secure permanent roles within the authority to date. The Waste and Recycling Team reported particular success in filling traditionally hard-to-fill roles and attracting young people into an ageing workforce.

Within the Council, every Kickstart intern had a mentor and was assigned an employability keyworker. Support was provided to managers and interns by the ABZWorks and People and Organisational Development teams, with tailored induction and skills development sessions delivered to the young people. This type of internship is a first of its kind for the Council and has been widely welcomed by recruiting managers from a range of Clusters, who have been open to this approach and delighted with the skills, positive attitudes, ideas, and willingness to learn from these young people. All Aberdeen City Council interns received a minimum of 25 hours per week, paid at living wage rate in line with Council policy.

Young Person Guarantee

Young Person Guarantee promised a place in education, training, employment, or volunteering to all 16-24-year-olds in Scotland. Developing the Young Workforce used YPG funding to place employer school co-ordinators in every North-east secondary school.

ABZWorks delivered employability keyworker support and commissioned the services of:

- Barnardos to deliver the TRIBE programme, which was designed in response to rising numbers of young people presenting with poor mental health during the pandemic;
- Working Rite to deliver RiteWorks – a pilot project to provide intensive employability support and improve the long-term outcomes of care experienced young people. Of 19 referred to date, seven have secured work – one of which is an apprenticeship; two have gone to college, one of whom has sustained; eight continue to receive support and two have disengaged.
- Tullos Training to provide practical taster courses across a range of technical specialities, including welding and engineering;
- Values into Action Scotland to deliver Project SEARCH for six young people with a disability;
- Passion for Social to develop the ABZWorks website.

- RoadWise to provide driving lessons to young people whose chances of employment would be increased if they had a licence;
- CFINE to deliver Jamie Oliver's Ministry of Food to provide a taster of catering, teach young people how to cook healthy food on a budget, food safety; build confidence, improve literacy and numeracy skills, and provide each with a slow cooker and community pantry membership;
- CFINE to deliver warehouse training skills course, which includes gaining a forklift license and other qualifications;
- Aberdeen City Council's Creative Learning service to deliver confidence building activities through a range of creative activities.

In addition, through YPG, the service:

- Created a seed fund for young entrepreneurs, delivered in partnership with Business Gateway to ensure every young person accessing this funding had a solid business plan and advice and support about starting and running a business;
- Supported delivery of the successful inaugural Lift Off event for senior school pupils;
- Provided Chromebooks and mifi devices to young people in need;
- Supported delivery of Kickstart in the authority;
- Created two graduate internships;
- 'Adopted' an apprentice who had been made redundant – this young person has since completed the qualification and moved onto a permanent role in the Council;
- Trained employability keyworkers to deliver SQA accredited training to young people;
- Created a bespoke programme of support for young Afghan refugees, including access to ESOL provision, creative learning sessions with a focus on exploring and photographing the city and confidence to cook sessions.
- Provided transport costs, clothing, equipment, and bespoke training required by young people to enable them to access work experience, training, and/or employment;
- Created a project officer post to support the LEP and strengthen local partnerships;
- Developed a tailored programme of support for a group of 10 young Afghans to help them settle into the city and culture, develop their spoken and written English, and prepare them for the next steps towards education, formal training, or employment. This has included city tours, online ESOL classes, an eight-week cookery course with CFINE, photography course with Creative Learning, and sessions with the Countryside Rangers due to get underway shortly.

No One Left Behind

As well as delivering employability keyworker support to NOLB participants, ABZWorks commissioned the services of:

- Apex to deliver the Labyrinth programme, offering specialist support targeted at individuals with convictions of a sexual nature;
- CFINE to deliver the Introduction to Skills Development course targeted at those further away from being work ready, at the earlier stages in their journey

providing confidence building and introductory courses on food safety and manual handling;

- Aberdeen Foyer to provide driver training, class 2 vehicle driver training, construction skills courses, door supervision courses, and community wellbeing groupwork sessions;
- Pitman Training to offer courses in medical administration, reception, and Microsoft packages;
- Triage to deliver short introductory courses in care and hospitality;
- EC-PC to deliver digital skills training courses.

Further provision will be secured via the proposed procurement framework.

*Note that in addition to NOLB, a number of these programmes offered spaces to participants engaging across the other Scottish Government funding streams.

Long Term Unemployed Labour Market Opportunities

This £1.15million programme seeks to support 115 people aged 25+ experiencing long term (12 months or longer) unemployment and facing additional barriers to employment by providing paid 30 hours per week, six months work experience placements with third and public sector organisations. Placements must be paid at the Real Living Wage provide ongoing support for participants throughout the six months. There is an expectation that participants will progress along the employability pipeline and that a high proportion of them will secure a work-based training qualification and permanent employment at the conclusion of the placement, though not necessarily with the host employer.

At the time of writing, Aberdeen City Council has secured 86 placements and engagement with employers continues. Employers already signed up include Aberdeen Foyer, Station House Media Unit, Sport Aberdeen, Instant Neighbour, and Aberdeen Cyrenians. Aberdeen City Council has committed to 26 placements.

PACE Plus

PACE Plus provided funding to create a single point of contact (SPOC) to the people in need of redundancy support to the ABZWorks team, provide intensive employability keyworker support to people at risk of redundancy, or who had been made redundant, training, and delivery of redundancy support events.

130 calls have been received via the SPOC to date.

ABZWorks Website and Social Media Channels

The Socio-Economic Rescue Plan included a specific action for City Growth's ABZWorks Employability team to create a website to promote opportunities in the city. This action dovetailed with an aspiration of Integrated Children and Family Services colleagues to create a website to promote skills and career pathways, with a particular focus on growth areas. The teams joined forces to create the ABZWorks website www.abzworks.co.uk

Young people, school pupils, employability programme participants, and the Champions Board were involved in the development of the website.

Funded through Young Person's Guarantee, ABZWorks provides an incredibly broad range of information, advice, support, and guidance to job seekers of all ages, including school pupils considering their careers, people facing or experiencing redundancy, long-term unemployed, families experiencing poverty, including in-work poverty, and information for parents and guardians to help guide their children. It sets out career pathways, promotes learning and training opportunities, links to support services. The site uses friendly ways to get its message across, with a mixture of animations, infographics, videos, and text. Crucially, it takes a local focus, linking to the best national resources where appropriate, but is firmly rooted in the Granite City.

The ABZWorks film showcasing Aberdeen as a city of opportunity brings home the wide variety of roles available here, including in the energy sector - particularly renewables, health and social care, life sciences, construction, tourism, and hospitality, and more.

Aberdeen City Council partnered with businesses, NESCol, Robert Gordon University and the University of Aberdeen, Skills Development Scotland, and DYW-NE to build the site, which not only features the opportunities offered by the Council and the ABZWorks team, but also those of training providers and support agencies across the city. It also provides information and links to further assistance, including financial help and mental health and wellbeing support, with advice provided by NHS Grampian and the Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership.

The website and work of the ABZWorks team are supplemented by the ABZWorks social media channels. Since launching in June 2021, the website has attracted 3,500 users; the Facebook page has reached 45,032 people, with 3,282 profile visits, and 314 new followers; Instagram reached 18,468 people, 794 profile views, and 166 followers.

North East Economic Recovery and Skills Fund

NEERSF brought together partners including Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Opportunity North East, Robert Gordon University, University of Aberdeen, Skills Development Scotland, Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce, and ETZ Limited to deliver a £14.3million suite of 29 projects to support the economic recovery of the City Region by supporting businesses, boosting employment, and enhancing skill levels in the City Region.

Projects cover a range of sectors including energy, digital, health and social care, tourism and hospitality, food and drink, and agriculture, with entry level and upskilling courses available, as well as management training and accelerator activities. These include an Energy Sector Transition Accelerator, Accelerator Start Up and Innovation Funds, Graduates into Business programme, Expansion of the Digital Start Fund, Climate Emergency and Carbon Literacy Training for SMEs, a Regional Energy Workforce Demand and Skills Review, Health and Social Care short courses, fee waivers on a selection of university short courses, Gourmet Food Open Doors Festival, and the Hospitality Apprenticeship North East scheme.

Aberdeen City Council is directly responsible for delivery of: an internships and paid work experience scheme for people aged 25+; a project to support under-16s who are

at risk of disengaging from education; and a fund to ensure that any additional barriers people may have to accessing any of the projects can be addressed.

Community Benefits

The ABZWorks team includes a Community Benefits officer who is responsible for ensuring the delivery of Community Benefits requirements from contracts let by the Council. This includes the provision of training and work experience opportunities, apprenticeships, and information events.

Activities over the past year include a Meet the Buyer event to promote sub-contracting opportunities for CHAP (Aberdeen) Ltd to local business for Summerhill housing, Tillydrone housing, and Northfield Pool works; and a construction skills and employment opportunities information event, with provision of 1-2-1 CV building sessions supported by ABZWorks keyworkers, held at Aberdeen Art Gallery by CHAP Construction.

An employability event to promote opportunities with Council contractors is in the planning stages, with good buy-in from firms which have committed to attending the event.

The Community Benefits officer continues working to ensure delivery of community benefits requirements against contracts.

Business Support

Through delivery of bite-size Business Booster sessions, learning and information opportunities are provided to SMEs to help strengthen the organisations and highlight potential opportunities and changing legislation. Prior to the pandemic these were delivered in-person at Marischal College and provided networking opportunities. The appetite from SMEs to participate online during the pandemic was negligible, as their focus was elsewhere.

Meet the Buyer events are delivered on behalf of organisations seeking to offer sub-contracting opportunities to local firms in the delivery of major contracts and linked to community benefits. These are usually for Council projects and aim to secure local business and employment opportunities, but are also available on request for external organisations delivering projects in the city.

A Meet the Buyer event for Chap Construction to promote opportunities to sub-contract for the housing development and Northfield Pool works attracted 47 attendees.

Work Experience Unit

The work experience unit works closely with schools to provide long and short-term placements for secondary pupils, ensuring all health and safety requirements are met and that pupils can receive a placement which is relevant to them. The work experience officers also help to secure placements for employability programme participants.

Opportunities for school pupils and employability programme participants to participate in 'real' work experience placements were severely impacted by the pandemic. Several online opportunities were created; however, these do not provide

the same valuable experience as in-person placements and present a range of potential safeguarding issues, which the team is working with education and DYW-NE colleagues to resolve.

Placements for	Placements confirmed	H&S visits completed	In progress
Career Ready	19	11	Placements start in July
Foundation Apprenticeships	11	6	
Schools	67	23	32
Keyworkers	5	2	18
Doctors at Work	49	0	

Recruitment and Redundancy Events

ABZWorks delivers jobs fairs in partnership with DWP, with priority for space given to industries hardest hit by the economic situation. This has seen particular demand from care providers. A jobs fair event at the Beach Ballroom on 6 October 2021 attracted 280 attendees.

A redundancy support event attended by a range of support and advice agencies, including social work, Financial Inclusion Team, Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership, DWP, and a number of training providers, took place the day before the jobs fair and attracted 26 individuals. In addition, the ABZWorks team presented at several redundancy webinars delivered by Skills Development Scotland and delivered sessions directly to businesses with staff facing redundancy.

Further recruitment events are in the planning stages.

An Employability Training Services information event to promote the availability and breadth of employability support across the city took place in April 2022. It attracted 77 members of the public and included a networking session for training providers.

Community Work

ABZWorks keyworkers have provided services across the city, including at the Tillydrone and Torry Hubs, libraries, and the Job Centre.