



Report

Report to:	Employee Issues Forum
Date of Meeting:	17 August 2021
Report by:	Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

Subject:	Employability in South Lanarkshire - Kickstart Scheme Progress
----------	---

1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ♦ outline the Council's involvement with the UK Government Kickstart Scheme and the progress to date

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Forum is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that progress to date be noted.

3. Background

- 3.1. The UK Government launched the Kickstart Scheme in October 2020 with a view to mitigating the economic impact of the Covid pandemic on the employment and training opportunities of young people age 16 to 24 years of age.
- 3.2. Early indications were that the economic restrictions introduced as a result of COVID-19, such as lockdown of businesses, would disproportionately affect employment of specific groups, such as young people, disabled people, those from ethnic minority backgrounds, those with low skills and women.
- 3.3. The Kickstart Scheme was open to eligible young people aged 16 to 24, who were claiming Universal Credit. The scheme focussed on employers, offering 26 weeks of paid work experience at national minimum wage rate, if they took on an eligible young person. The opportunities had to be new posts, with the hope that the experience would lead to longer-term employment or training opportunities.
- 3.4. The scheme operated using Host organisations and Gateway organisations – a host would offer Kickstart places within its own organisation, and a Gateway would act as a broker for other Employers in the area. The Department of Work and Pensions act as the first point of contact and all vacancies are advertised via Job Centres and referrals provided by their Work Coaches.

4. Current Position

- 4.1. The Council was successful in its applications to become a Kickstart host organisation – the Council as an employer – and as a Kickstart Gateway – acting as an enabler for local businesses. We have up to 50 places as a Host and up to 350 places as a Gateway, based on employer demand. The terms of the grant from UK Government, and facilitated by the DWP, is that all places must be started before the end of the December 2021, may continue beyond that date, and that payments are made via the Council as young people achieve specific milestones in their placements.
- 4.2. All vetting of employers, advertising and processing vacancies, and referrals of young people, is carried out by a central DWP team. Establishing this resource and building capacity has taken some time and has been the subject of discussion at a national and local level.
- 4.3. Our local relationship with DWP partners is positive, and this has helped to put in place local arrangements to speed up administration and referrals now that lockdown restrictions have eased.
- 4.4. There are currently 9 young people appointed to roles within the Council, with a further 16 in the process of being interviewed/recruited. There are 28 young people appointed to placements with employers throughout South Lanarkshire, with a further 29 placements shortlisted for interviews, currently there are 14 jobs advertised with a further 50 in process.
- 4.5. The rate of referral of young people has been slow up until recently, although is now starting to improve. However, the drop off between referral and interview is high, and attributed to a number of factors. These include:-
 - ◆ young people lacking in confidence after lockdown
 - ◆ young people waiting for assessment and exam results before making choices.
- 4.6. For some placements, the length of time in paid placement has been extended, using the Youth Guarantee Programme funds from the Scottish Government. This wrap around funding is aimed at providing extended placements for those young people who need a little more support, or where there is significant initial training required to carry out the role.
- 4.7. As the scheme did not start until April 2021 as a consequence of lockdown restrictions, there are indications that the scheme will be extended beyond December 2021.

5. Employee Implications

- 5.1. Those who take up Kickstart placements are treated as employees for the duration of their placement. They have access to training and support in the same way as other employees.
- 5.2. Kickstart placements are supernumerary to current establishment.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. The maximum value of payment for each young person's placement is up to £7,648.80 per participant, for both Host and Gateway Kickstart grants. Payments are made in arrears as participants complete milestones.

6.2. For placements in the public sector, wraparound funding has been used to top up the hourly rate to the Living Wage rate.

7. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

7.1. There are no implications for climate change, sustainability or the environment as a result of this report.

8. Other Implications

8.1. The focus of the Kickstart scheme is on young people aged 16 to 24 years of age. However, our labour market statistics show that as the Job Retention Scheme comes to a conclusion, those over the age of 25 years also need employability support, and the Council is refocussing other funding to address the needs of this group.

9. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

9.1. There is no requirement for an equality impact assessment on the specific subject of this report, however, one has been carried out on the Council's overall employability services.

Paul Manning

Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

5 August 2021

Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- ◆ Improve the Quality of Life for Everyone in South Lanarkshire
- ◆ Focussed on People and Their Needs
- ◆ Promote Economic Delivery and Tackle Disadvantage

Previous References

- ◆ Finance and Corporate Resources Committee, 17 March 2021

List of Background Papers

- ◆ None

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

Gill Bhatti, Employee Development & Diversity Manager

Ext: 01698 45(5604)

E-mail: gill.bhatti@southlanarkshire.gov.uk