
NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

21 February 2023

Cabinet

Title: North Ayrshire Council's Apprenticeship proposals

Purpose: To provide an update on the North Ayrshire Council's Modern Apprenticeship Programme and seek approval to develop the Council's apprenticeship offer and deliver an enhanced programme from April 2023 to include new entrants and support for existing employees

Recommendation: It is recommended that Cabinet:

- I. Note the contents of this report
 - II. Agree the Council's apprenticeship programme
-

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 North Ayrshire Council is now in its 12th year of delivering a successful Modern Apprenticeship (MA) programme across Council services, supporting the Apprenticeship Charter, confirming the ongoing commitment to create Modern Apprenticeships for North Ayrshire young people and developing young people as part of the Council's future workforce planning approach.
- 1.2 The Council's MA programme has operated as one of the largest local authority programmes in Scotland. The 3-year agreement, agreed by Cabinet in 2018, created 150 new Modern Apprentices across various Council services and concluded in March 2022. A review of the MA programme was conducted to determine the future scale, offer and funding model.
- 1.3 To inform the future apprenticeship offer, the review considered the available budget, the new apprenticeship products now available, workforce development needs, labour market conditions, other employability offers for young people, and feedback from services, past and present modern apprentices. It is proposed changes to the programme will be implemented from April 2023 onwards.
- 1.4 North Ayrshire Council is a Young Persons Guarantee Employer, a corporate parent and a Disability Leader and were the first Community Wealth Building Council in Scotland with a vision of a North Ayrshire that is fair for all. The Modern Apprenticeship programme creates a diverse range of opportunities, with ringfenced places for young people with a disability and or care experience, to join the Council's workforce.

2. Background

- 2.1 In November 2018, a report to Cabinet, set out proposals to recruit 150 MAs by 31st March 2022 with an investment of £3million. North Ayrshire Council's MA Programme forms part of the Council's commitment to tackling youth unemployment. The Council has an Apprenticeship Charter confirming the commitment to create and support Modern Apprenticeships. In August 2022, the Council were approved as a Young Person's Guarantee (YPG) employer, signing the YPG pledge to:
- Prepare young people for the world of work
 - Help all young people to achieve their potential
 - Invest in a skilled workforce
 - Create jobs and training opportunities
 - Create an inclusive and fair workplace
- 2.2 North Ayrshire Council delivers a successful MA programme across Council Services utilising over 20 different frameworks including Active Leisure, Business Administration, Civil Engineering, Horticulture, Housing, Social Sciences and Youthwork.
- 2.3 North Ayrshire Council, as a corporate parent and a Disability Leader, aims to recruit at least 20% from young people with a disability and or care experienced. In 2021-22 the Equality Data report from Skills Development Scotland (SDS) reported NAC recruited 24% (compared to the national average of 13.3%) young people with a disability and 6% (compared to the national average of 2%) who were care experienced to their MA Programme.
- 2.4 The £3million investment, approved as part of a 3-year plan, acknowledged legacy (contingent liability) costs beyond the 3 years as apprentices continue in posts beyond the year, they were recruited in. The MA programme includes varying timescales to complete qualifications from 12 to 48 months, thereby increasing salary costs significantly based on the length of the apprenticeship. The available recurring annual budget has reduced by 25% over the period. Future requirements need to consider the full costs over the length of the apprenticeship, in addition to the number and type of apprenticeships, ensuring options are affordable within the allocated budget.
- 2.5 The actual expenditure incurred within each financial year was within the agreed budget however the carry forward amounts were higher, due to delayed starts because of COVID restrictions and MAs contracts lasting up to 3 years. To support the current MA Programme, contingent liabilities totalling £742,000 are forecast. To mitigate this, a COVID Recovery Funding allocation of £476,000 has been approved and earmarked funds of up to £500,000 are available. This will deliver a balance budget for 2022/23 and continues to fund the contingent liability, based on starts to date until 2025/26.
- 2.6 Over the 3-year period, 151 new MAs were recruited, achieving the target set. The MA programme supports the Council's future workforce planning programme, successfully recruiting local people to gain work experience and a qualification. The following outcomes have been achieved:

Outcomes	MA Starts	Qualifications Achieved	Jobs Secured	Uni/College Progressions	Continuing MAs
2019/20	54	47	42 (36: NAC)	3	4
2020/21	45	30	27 (24: NAC)	3	11
2021/22	52	13	20 (16: NAC)	0	28
TOTAL	151	90	89 (76: NAC)	6	43

These positive outcomes are achieved through the extensive wraparound support from the dedicated Employability & Skills Modern Apprenticeship Team, mentors, and line managers, who all offer tailored support to ensure qualifications and progressions are secured. Feedback received from current and previous apprentices was sought to assist in the review and refresh of the current apprenticeship offering and is detailed within Appendix 1.

- 2.7 In 2022-23, MA recruitment has been more challenging with lower volumes of applications and some posts being advertised on several occasions. This is a reflection on lower unemployment levels, higher volumes of vacancies and a broader range of job and training opportunities for young people. However, in comparison to other local authority areas North Ayrshire has significantly higher levels of youth unemployment at 6.4% (youth claimant count), the 2nd highest rate in Scotland and is significantly higher than the Scotland average rate of 4.1%. Addressing youth employment remains a priority given its impacts on future life chances.
- 2.8 A review and refresh of the Council's approach to apprenticeships provides a great opportunity to consider the broader range of apprenticeship offers which now include Foundation Apprenticeships, Modern Apprenticeships and Graduate Apprenticeships to support vocational based learning. In addition to supporting new entrants, the apprenticeship frameworks can be used to develop the existing workforce. The eligibility criteria for both Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) and Graduate Apprentices (GAs) is employed status.
- 2.9 There is a wide range of training opportunities, in addition to MAs, to support young people to secure a positive destination. 'Your Next Move, Working North Ayrshire' is the Council's Employability Service. This offer includes Ambition Agreements, Modern Apprenticeships, Equal Programme, Skills for Life, Streetscene Environment Skills Training Academy, Justice Employment Mentors, Positive Pathways to Volunteering, Employer Recruitment Incentives and sector specific training as well as tailored pre-employment support. Dedicated keyworkers support all young people on their employability journey from engagement, barrier removal, vocational training, job matching and aftercare to support progression to positive and sustained outcomes.
- 2.10 Research has also been conducted with all Local Authorities, with 18 areas contributing to this. The key findings are:
- 100% deliver Modern Apprenticeships
 - 88% deliver Foundation Apprenticeships
 - 70% deliver Graduate Apprenticeships
 - 65% use MA frameworks to support existing employees
 - 76% use departmental budgets to fund the wage costs for the MA

Modern Apprenticeships

- 2.11 Modern Apprenticeships can support new entrants and existing employees to achieve Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs), up to SCQF Level 9. To be eligible to be a MA, employed status is required. MAs can be offered to employees of all ages, young people and adults and there are over 80 different qualifications available. Funding support is available for most of the training requirements associated with modern apprenticeships. To date, the Council's MA programme has focused on recruitment of new entrants to the Council workforce, offering the national minimum wage rate, based on age. The Living Wage Accreditation scheme excludes Apprenticeships in recognition of an employer's commitment for the scheme.
- 2.12 It is proposed that future programmes should include a cohort of existing staff, paid at their existing rate, offered the opportunity to work towards gaining a SVQ as a Modern Apprentice.

Graduate Apprenticeships

- 2.13 Graduate Apprenticeships (GAs) can support training for existing employees up to master's degree level at SCQF Level 11. A GA provides a work-based learning opportunity to work towards completing a degree and/or a master's degree.
- 2.14 Launched in 2017, GAs offer work-based routes to achieve a degree level qualification, funded for both the learner and the employer, enabling existing employees to achieve accreditation through 80% workplace and 20% academic studies. This qualification is not competency based but is assessed at an academic level with 2/3rd technical content and 1/3rd project-based learning in the workplace, giving a direct benefit back to the organisation. Attendance at University depends on the qualification, but one day per week protected time to enable completion of the qualification and work-based projects is recommended.
- 2.15 In 2020-2021 there were 21 North Ayrshire residents working across 10 local employers registered as GAs, 2 of the 2022 graduates are employed with North Ayrshire Council. There are 12 available GA frameworks and UWS are accredited to deliver the following 5: BA (Hons) Business Management, BEng (Hons) Civil Engineering, BA Early Learning & Childcare, BEng (Hons) Engineering Design & Manufacture, BSc (Hons) IT: Software Development.
- 2.16 The Graduate Apprenticeship programme is delivered by the Scottish Funding Council, is fully funded and contracted to a number of Scottish Universities to deliver across the suite of approved Degree level qualifications.

Training Providers

- 2.17 Partnerships with Ayrshire College could be further developed to deliver more MAs, specifically for existing employees, and with the University of the West of Scotland to deliver Gas. Initial discussions with these training providers have been positive and set conditions to create a strategic, funded, partnership approach to Apprenticeships for North Ayrshire Council. This supports local employers and anchor institutions to grow and develop a talented future workforce, creating fair employment and delivering community wealth building for Ayrshire. This strategic review of the current MA programme will develop an offer which will drive skills development, invest in existing employees and attract new employees.

Foundation Apprenticeships

- 2.18 Foundation Apprenticeships are a work-based learning opportunity for senior-phase secondary pupils delivered in partnership with schools, colleges and employers. Completion leads to a qualification at the same level as a Higher and this vocational qualification is recognised by Scottish Colleges and Universities. These qualifications can raise attainment levels and provide vocational routes for young people to gain work experience and work-based learning while still at school, closing the gap between the classroom and the workplace.
- 2.19 Foundation Apprenticeships are currently available in 12 subject areas including civil engineering, scientific technologies, software development, accountancy, food and drink technologies and financial services. They are linked to the growth sectors of the Scottish economy to enable young people to gain industry experience, develop vocational skills and gain qualifications linked to the forecast demands of the future labour market

Enhanced Apprenticeship Programme

- 2.20 A programme to support over 70 apprentices annually, within the allocated annual budget of £723,000, can be delivered by broadening the offer in line with the strategic workforce planning needs, incorporating other apprenticeship offers, and extending the programme to include support for existing employees.

Details	Apprentices Supported	Budget
*Modern Apprenticeships: New Entrants	41	£715,769
Modern Apprenticeships: Existing Employees	10	0
Graduate Apprenticeship: Existing Employees	10	0
Foundation Apprenticeships: Schools	10	0
Totals	71	£715,769

*This calculation is based on restricted durations; 2 Trade Apprenticeships (24 months), 10 Modern Apprentices (18 months) and 29 Modern Apprentices (12 months) paid at the National Minimum Wage Rate – variances to this would exceed the agreed budget

- 2.21 The above forecast includes the contingent liability and is affordable within the annual budget of £723,000. All costs are calculated at 22/23 levels and in anticipation that all future pay awards are expected to be fully funded.
- 2.22 There are options to increase support for existing employees using Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships with indicative targets suggested in tables. These would be subject to discussions and demand from council services, interest and commitment from existing employees to develop their skills and qualifications and successful application to SFC to support Graduate Apprentices.
- 2.23 Adjustments may have to be made within the apprenticeship programme and each of the products, but it is proposed that the overall target numbers would remain at a minimum of over 50 per year as part of North Ayrshire Council's approach to maximising opportunities for workforce for both new and existing employees.

Proposed Apprenticeship Programme

- 2.24 To continue to deliver the ambition of 50 apprenticeship places per year. This would be made up of a combination of existing employees and new employees to be supported. This would attract new talent and develop the existing workforce.
- 2.25 In line with the agreed budget, new MAs will be recruited annually to meet workforce planning requirements, with consideration to ringfencing opportunities as a corporate parent and disability leader, currently we aim to 20% of our intake meeting this criterion.
- 2.26 Modern Apprenticeships for existing employees offers the potential to support workforce development across a range of services including payroll, hospitality, management, digital, facilities, housing, IT, procurement and social services. These frameworks can support people of all ages and this programme will be developed in partnership with Ayrshire College.
- 2.27 Graduate Apprenticeships for existing employees also offer the potential to support workforce development. This will be developed in partnership with the University of the West of Scotland (UWS) as a pilot and will focus on the following qualifications as options for employees, in accordance with service demands; BA (Hons) Business Management, BEng (Hons) Civil Engineering, BA Early Learning & Childcare, BEng (Hons) Engineering Design & Manufacture, BSc (Hons) IT: Software Development
- 2.28 Foundation Apprenticeships (FA) will be explored and developed in partnership with Education, Ayrshire College and our local employers.
- 2.29 The proposed approach ensures an ambitious apprenticeship programme is developed to support our future workforce needs, provides first class training and learning opportunities for local young people and strengthens partnerships with key stakeholders.

3. Proposals

- 3.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:
- I. Notes the contents of this report
 - II. Agrees the Council's apprenticeship programme

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

- 4.1 An annual recurring budget is available to support an apprenticeship programme. Proposals presented are based on the current budget available. This proposal provides options which are affordable from 2023/24 to support delivery of an apprenticeship programme, which includes the range of apprenticeships now available; Modern, Graduate and Foundation.

To mitigate the impact of the contingent liability costs, COVID Recovery Funding allocation of £476,000 has been approved and earmarked funds of £500,000 (Challenge Poverty Funds) were approved by Chief Executive (30 March 2022) to be used to address the Modern Apprenticeship funding shortfall.

Human Resources

- 4.2 The MA programme is an important workforce development initiative for the organisation. There is a desire to create opportunities linked to the needs of individual professions and service workforce plans within the Council. A small team within EDR currently manage the annual MA programme and would continue to manage the refreshed programme.

Legal

- 4.3 None

Equality/Socio-economic

- 4.4 The MA Programme has had a target to recruit 20% of new employees with a disability and or who are care experience. To ensure a council which is Fair for All, and as a corporate parent and disability leader this will remain at the core of the design of the apprenticeship programme for the future.

Climate Change and Carbon

- 4.5 None, this is a skills programme with no specific carbon objectives, it does not include any construction elements and is intended to support skills development.

Key Priorities

- 4.6 The report covers information relevant to the following Council Plan priorities including:
- North Ayrshire has an inclusive, growing, and enterprising economy
 - North Ayrshire is well-connected with effective infrastructure
 - North Ayrshire is a sustainable environment
 - North Ayrshire is a vibrant, welcoming, and attractive environment
 - An efficient Council that maximises resources and provides value for money

Community Wealth Building

- 4.7 The MA opportunities offer a route to fair work for young people, with accredited training, qualifications, a NMW rate and wraparound support to ensure that young people have a great start to their career. The NMW rate is offered in recognition that these are trainee roles. MAs are supported to apply for Living Wage jobs within the Local Authority at appropriate stages including access to redeployment in the final stages. North Ayrshire's practice in prioritising and resourcing an MA programme of this scale as part of their workforce development is being promoted and advocated to other anchor organisations. North Ayrshire Council has been a Living Wage employer since 2011.

This proposal would develop a partnership with Ayrshire College and UWS, as key anchor institutions. This would also deliver a test of change for other Anchor Institutions to introduce Foundation, Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships as part of their Fair Work offer for employees. This proposal and partnership with North Ayrshire Council is a model of good practice and has been developed with Fair Work as a guiding principle.

5 Consultation

- 5.1 Finance Services have provided budget information to inform the options modelling. Human Resources have provided guidance in developing this proposal and will continue to be part of the development of the future Apprenticeship programme. Consultations have been undertaken with key stakeholders including council services, current and former Modern Apprentices to ensure service user involvement is at the heart of the future design. Other Local Authorities have been consulted to adopt models of good practice across Scotland. Consultation with training providers; UWS and Ayrshire College as well as Skills Development Scotland.

RUSSELL McCUTCHEON
Executive Director (Place)

For further information please contact **Laura Neill, Senior Manager Employability & Skills**, on **07795 528243**.

Background Papers

Cabinet Report, 13 November 2018, 3 Year Plan for North Ayrshire Council Modern Apprenticeship Programme

Survey Responses: to inform the recommendations, research was conducted with various groups within North Ayrshire Council to include recruiting departments, current and former Modern Apprentices. Key highlights from the research are detailed below:

Current North Ayrshire Council Modern Apprentices – Survey Further Comments

If you were to sell the MA programme to another young person, what would you say?

It is a great learning opportunity and allows you to gain job experience
Worth it
It is a great as you work towards your qualification and get work experience at the same time
Go for it!!! You have nothing to lose and lots to gain... I love it
It is a great opportunity to meet new people and learn new skills
It is a great opportunity. You get paid to learn
That it is a great opportunity to start your career as you are getting a good qualification out of it but are also getting to work and earn money.
It is worth the time
Brilliant life experience and lot more fun and active than College or Uni
I would say it benefits young people getting work experience, so they know what to expect when they get a full-time job
It is a great way to learn new skills
That it is a well planned out course and helps you gain the confidence in the job. There are highs and lows, but you are fully supported.
An MA is a great opportunity especially for people who learn better on the job than a classroom sitting. It is great to get to be working whilst learning & having that experience when you do get a job.
I would encourage them to apply definitely as I have learned so much in such a short span of time compared to other jobs I've had in the past and I'm excited to come to work each day rather than dreading it, it is a brilliant environment, and a Modern Apprenticeship will help further your career a lot.
100% go for it as it gives u lots of experience and is a rewarding job
In a few words go for it! It is amazing and the people are amazing, you get to know and learn on the floor, and it is the most rewarding job there is.
it is not like any other job your supported and its flexible
Not like any other job get paid for fun activities
I would talk about the flexible hours that this position comes with. The different groups you get to work with and the experience you get for future jobs
Good for improving work and social skills
You get paid to learn, you get work experience, and you earn a certificate at the end.
Amazing experience
It is a great way to learn new things, gain experience and knowledge and learn about learning being in a workplace environment.
It helps gain experience
Do your best and communicate with everyone
Doing this apprenticeship has made me so much more confident. It has brought me out of my comfort zone by talking to so many different people every day and learning so many new things while being here.
so worth it, get paid for gaining a qualification at the same time, new fun experiences and brings out a better version of yourself

It is great way to get your qualification through work experience
It is a lot of fun and worth applying for
Modern Apprenticeships allow anyone over the age of 16 to work in a paid job while receiving on-the-job training to gain new and enhanced skills and recognised qualifications, it is always a great way to exercise working with young people.
It is worth it because instead of in a classroom and learning you are getting more practical experience in the childcare setting.
The MA programme is a very enjoyable way to learn and get into the working world. It provides both learning and experience which is a much more interesting way to get into these different sectors.
It is a great opportunity, and it offers you so much

Former North Ayrshire Council Modern Apprentice; Now Employees Survey Further Comments

What was the highlight of the MA experience?

Gaining real life work experience in a busy environment
Being able to use less than a years' experience to gain a full-time job within the council still with HSCP
Working in Education as Business Education Assistant helped me be successful in a permeant post at Greenwood Academy that has now helped me higher my grade to Customer Service Team at Cunninghame House
Assisting a social worker with making an induction pack for a student social worker starting in a few weeks and assisting my other colleagues with a variety of admin-related jobs
Learning every day and meeting new people along the way
Learning on the job
Learning the different council services, also enjoyed the pre-employment training as it really helped me prepare for my new job.
Gaining a full-time position
College
Getting a full-time job
Working within NAC and experiencing the job first hand. This made such a difference in my learning ability, and I felt much more capable from this than any other course
Furthering my education whilst getting vital work experience and building strong relationships with colleagues
Being part of a team
The highlight of the MA experience for me was working across teams and gaining experience in each.
Working within the nursery each day
Constantly learning new things
The children and the placement I worked at.
The relationships and bonds I built with the children and staff
Finding Out I had successfully completed my MA.
Gaining hand on experience and getting to work daily with the children.
Learning different skills

If you were selling this job to a young person, what would you say?

Best way to get into the world of work and learn if the path is right for you
You can make new friends, new experiences, a new vision of the area you live within, see what will be progressing, you find ways to help and can be part of the help. It is also very good for people who love to volunteer as there have been many opportunities to help other teams and events that HSCP put on.
That it is worth it, growing confidence, working my way up the council, new skills and treated with respect and responsibility
I would let them know what tasks and responsibilities they will be doing in the job, what qualifications they need, North Ayrshire Council's staff values and behaviours (Focus, Passion and Inspiration). I would also add where they will be working, their pay rate per hour, how many hours they will work and if it is full-time or part-time and if it is permanent or temporarily.
Take the chance and learn from the amazing people that are skilled in the job. Always remember that it is a journey not a race.
Great opportunity
Best way to learn while you earn and perfect way to get a qualification to help get further employment
Great way of learning while earning and progressing your career within chosen service.
Great job to get in to
Modern Apprenticeship in NAC is a great experience and a first foot in the door with good pay while getting a qualification.
Bereavement Services is an amazing team, with great support from other members of staff. If you are interested in this type of role, go for it. Due to the nature of the service, you very quickly begin to adapt and understand how to help best with vulnerable people, which will come in handy for any future roles, like it has with me.
It is a fantastic opportunity to earn money while you are also learning and gaining work experience that will help you to secure another post in future.
This is your step into the door of a council, and you will gain a job for life as well as gathering qualifications.
Very rewarding job
Constantly learning new things
You will not find a job as rewarding as this one.
Do it!!! Best experience of my life, and opens many doors for the future, I will never regret it.
Working in early years can be challenging but very rewarding the changes you can make on these young children's lives is incredible even just showing them that you are listening to them makes their faces light up.