
NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

19th June 2018

Cabinet

Title: **Supported employment service proposed for people with disabilities**

Purpose: The paper presents an early stage proposal for a Council Supported Employment Programme, which will support people with disabilities to enter and sustain employment in the open labour market, contributing to closing the “Disability Employment Gap” in North Ayrshire.

Recommendation: That the Cabinet agrees to:

- (a) Consider and agree that the Challenge Poverty Fund is used to create a new Supported Employment programme.
- (b) Agree to the proposals set out in the report, establishing a Supported Employment programme.

1. Executive Summary

1.1 This report sets out a proposal to develop a “Supported Employment” employability programme for disabled people in North Ayrshire, using Challenge Poverty Fund resources. It sets out the policy background at a national and local level, including North Ayrshire Council’s commitment to improving the employment rate for disabled people as a Fair for All pledge. In addition, the report sets out the current employability service provision for disabled people and the extent of the “disability employment gap” in North Ayrshire.

2. Background

Policy Background – national and local

2.1 There has been an increasing focus, at a national and local level on tackling the disability employment gap that is to increase the number and proportion of disabled people in employment, relative to the population as a whole. The Scottish Government in 2016 made a commitment to “reduce by at least half the employment gap between disabled people and the rest of the working age population by 2021”.

- 2.2 The Scottish Government has also recently published a consultation on “increasing the employment of disabled people in the public sector”. This includes a series of proposals for introducing a disability employment target for the public sector in Scotland, potentially including local authorities. In the autumn, the Scottish Government will publish a “Disability Employment Action Plan” which will set out a range of measures to help tackle and reduce the disability employment gap.
- 2.3 Similarly, North Ayrshire Council has made a commitment to increase disabled employment. The Fair for All strategy contains a Pledge to “improve employment rates for disabled people relative to other local authority areas. Closing the disability employment gap in North Ayrshire is key to promoting inclusive growth in the area, to ensure the full range of the population benefits from economic opportunity.

Definition of disability

- 2.4 The definition of disability is the one included in the Equality Act, 2010, “a physical or mental impairment that has a “substantial” or “long term” negative effect on a person’s ability to do normal daily activities”.

Disability employment gap

- 2.5 The “disability employment gap” is the difference, or gap, between the employment rate of people with a disability and the population as a whole. The table below shows the disability employment rate and the employment rate for the whole population for North Ayrshire and Scotland in 2017.

Table 1: Employment and disability employment rate for North Ayrshire and Scotland in 2017

2017	Employment Rate	Disability Employment Rate
North Ayrshire	68.1%	36.4%
Scotland	81.2%	45.4%

- 2.6 The disability employment gap for Scotland in 2017 was 35.8 percentage points. For North Ayrshire the disability employment gap was slightly smaller at 31.7%. This is due largely to the lower employment rate in North Ayrshire compared to Scotland and the disability employment rate in North Ayrshire is lower than Scotland as a whole. In order to reduce the disability employment gap by half by 2021, to meet the Scottish Government target approximately an additional 1978 disabled people would need to find employment. The figures, published by the Scottish Government in a report “Regional Employment Patterns in Scotland: Annual population survey 2017” show that North Ayrshire has the 4th lowest disability employment rate of the 32 Scottish local authorities, with only Inverclyde, East Ayrshire and Dundee City having lower employment rates. These figures clearly demonstrate the scale of the effort required if the Scottish Government’s target of reducing the disability employment gap by half 2021.

Current provision

2.7 In North Ayrshire, there is a range of provision to support people with a disability find and maintain employment. This includes:

- Mainstream employability pipeline services, in 2017/18 just under 10% of clients supported by services had disability as a barrier to employment.(North Ayrshire Council and ESF funded)
- A condition management service provided by SALUS to help people secure and maintain employment when they have health issues. (North Ayrshire Council and ESF funded)
- An Individual Placement and Support (IPS) supported employment service provided via the HSCP for people with a significant mental health problem. (HSCP funded)
- Job coaches supporting people with learning disabilities at the Hazeldene day care centre. (North Ayrshire Council and ESF funded)
- Ayrshire DICE (Disability Inclusive Confident Employers) a partnership, led by the Chamber of Commerce to encourage and support companies to employ disabled people.
- North Ayrshire Council is a registered “Disability Confident” employer.
- Fair Start Scotland is the new employability service from the Scottish Government, which has been developed as part of the devolution of social security powers from Westminster to the Scottish Parliament. The Fair Start programme has an explicit commitment to supporting people with a disability find and maintain employment.

2.8 However, as the figures show, more needs to be done, beyond the current level of service provision to address and close the disability employment gap in North Ayrshire and to meet the Fair for All pledge.

Disability Service- Target Group(s)

2.9 Under the broad definition of disability, there are a number of more definable groups. In developing a new service to support people with a disability, it is important to be clear which group of people/ clients the service will be supporting, as these groups can have substantially different needs and require different services. Broadly, there are 4 potential target groups. These are:

- Physical disability- including sensory impairment.
- Learning disability- including those with Autism, Asperger’s and acquired brain injury.
- Mental health problems which are substantial and long term.
- “Pan Disability”- which would be inclusive of all three target groups outlined above.

Disability Employability Service

- 2.10 Research and evaluation evidence indicates that the supported employment model is the most effective way for disabled people to enter and maintain employment in a competitive labour market. The 2011 independent review of employment support for disabled people by Louise Sayce for the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) noted that “support that is flexible, personalised, long lasting when needed, with a rapid focus on job search, is more effective than a series of stepping stones to employment”- that is the Supported Employment model, rather than mainstream employability services. It is proposed that a Supported Employment service be resourced from the Challenge Poverty Fund allocation of £500,000 from the 17/18 budget, along with EU funds which will be bid for during 2018.
- 2.11 The definition of supported employment agreed by the European Union in 2005 is: “Providing support to people with disabilities to secure and maintain paid employment in the open labour market”
- 2.12 The key features of this approach are as follows:
- Paid Work- the disabled person is paid the going rate for the job, which is at least the national minimum wage.
 - Open Labour Markets- the disabled person is a regular employee, employed on the same terms and conditions as other employees.
 - Ongoing Support- job support is provided in its widest aspect, the support is individualised on a needs basis for both employee and employer.
- 2.13 It is also worth noting what the supported employment model does not include. Supported employment is not:
- Work experience
 - Voluntary work
 - Vocational training
 - Therapeutic work.
- 2.14 The supported employment service would be the first phase of developments to address the disability employment gap but would be followed by an action plan for reducing the disability employment gap which would examine other issues in more detail. Economic Growth would lead on the development of the action plan with input from across the Council. The action plan would consider the following:-
- How the Council as an employer can increase its recruitment of disabled people
 - As part of this, how the Council can increase its recruitment of disabled young people onto the Modern Apprenticeship programme
 - How we ensure effective transitions for disabled young people on leaving school or Further Education

- How we better engage the private sector in this agenda.

2.15 At this stage, we have scoped out the basic principles and staffing structure required to launch a supported employment service towards the end of 2018. In order to achieve the scale of service required to make a real difference, then the service should be pan disability. All referrals should be assessed for suitability for the service, with capability and willingness to work key components of this.

- Eligibility; A disabled adult (16-65) who lives in North Ayrshire. Referrals can come from the individual or from a referring agency such as College, JobCentre Plus, HSCP, NHS Ayrshire and Arran and other employability services.
- Criteria; “ working with people with disabilities who want to work, but require a degree of intensive, individualised support to gain and retain work- which is generally outside the capacity of mainstream employability providers”.
- The new service is developed and delivered within the context of existing employability programmes- both national and local.
- The service will focus on moving people into employment and finding support for people in work.
- All participants would be supported using the nationally agreed supported employment framework.
- It is proposed that the new service will be part of the Employability and Skills team with the Economy and Communities directorate. Linking the new service into the existing employability employer engagement services is best achieved on this basis.
- The service will be available to residents from all parts of North Ayrshire, however it is clear that physical base(s) for the service will be required. The detail of service delivery locations will be agreed in the coming months.
- It is proposed that the service consists of 5 job coaches, a team leader and a programme manager.
- The aim is to provide a supported employment service to approximately 200 participants per year.

3. Proposals

3.1 That the Cabinet agrees to:

- A. Consider and agree that the Challenge Poverty Fund is used to create a new Supported Employment programme.
- B. Agree to the proposals set out in the report, establishing a Supported Employment programme.

4. Implications

Financial:	<p>The funding for the service is from the Poverty Challenge Fund agreed in the Council's budget for 2017/18. An allocation of £500,000 from the Fund is required to deliver the service over 3 years.</p> <p>The staffing structure proposed would cost £760k over the period 18/19 – 21/22.</p> <p>45% of the funding required will be secured from a bid to the final phase of EU employability funding. The project will start 2018/19 and scaled up subject to securing EU funding from Jan 2019.</p>
Human Resources:	<p>The report recommends the creation of new posts –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Programme Management G12 (overseeing supported employment service but also driving wider developments to close disability employment gap)Senior Programme Delivery Officer G10 to oversee day to day operations of the supported employment service5 x job coaches G8 <p>The policy agenda around how we close the disability employment gap will likely will have a number of implications for Human Resources in the Council, including how we recruit staff, the support provided to new and existing members of staff.</p>

Legal:	There are no legal implications associated with this report.
Equality: Children and Young People:	The development of a Supported Employment Service is specifically to provide greater support to disabled people to get a job and maintain their presence in a competitive labour market. A significant proportion of the disabled service users will be young people.
Environmental & Sustainability:	There are no environmental or sustainability implications from the report.
Key Priorities:	Growing our economy, increasing employment and regenerating our towns; Ensuring people have the right skills for learning, life and work
Community Benefits:	There are no implications from community benefits from this report.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 As part of the development of these proposals, council officers consulted with 8 other local authorities that have a supported employment service. We also consulted with national experts in the field such as the Scottish Union of Supported Employment (SUSE) and Scottish Council for Learning Disability (SCLD). We have also consulted with local partners including the Health and Social Care Partnership, Ayrshire College, NHS Ayrshire and Arran and Council services such as Peoples Services and Education and Youth Employment. In addition a development workshop was held with stakeholder at the beginning of May to scope out the focus and key elements of the proposed service. We will continue to consult and engage with all stakeholders as we develop and implement the new service.



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Background Papers

Insert titles of any background papers or N/A