

FINANCE COMMITTEE

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

SUBMISSION FROM COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

1. The Comhairle takes very seriously its responsibility to support young people in making positive choices for ongoing education or work placements when they finish school. Statistics collected in March 2012 highlight that the Western Isles has 92.3% of young people reported in a positive destination; this is 5% above the national average.

2. The Comhairle's Human Resources Strategy makes specific reference to the Comhairle's wish to support Modern Apprenticeships with the Comhairle, supported by dedicated corporate funding. At present the Comhairle is supporting 76 Get Ready for Work trainees and 76 Modern Apprentices, 17 as Comhairle's employees with a further 9 Comhairle MA placements about to be released. These National Training Programmes have achieved good results locally with 71% of Modern Apprentices gaining a qualification and 67% of Get Ready for Work trainees achieving employment or moving on to further education. In addition, the Comhairle works closely with Job Centre Plus to provide work placements through the scheme Get Britain Working, where a number of young people have received placements and some have gone on to contracted employment with the Comhairle.

3. As a local authority the Comhairle manages the Outer Hebrides Employability Support programme which delivers a comprehensive and integrated programme targeting provision at individuals furthest removed from the labour market who face significant and often multiple barriers to employment. In the period from April 2010 to June 2012 the programme has supported 170 individuals across three specific strands of activity:

- The Outer Hebrides Employment, Enterprise and Training Programme (OH-MEET) scheme began in 2010 with funding from Comhairle Eilean Siar, Job Centre Plus and European Social Funding, and provides waged placements for up to one year with the objectives of helping the unemployed re-enter the world of work; providing work experience for the long-term unemployed; equipping participants with skills and qualifications to enable them to secure and keep employment or to become self-employed; and to create jobs through the provision of a waged work placement. In 2011/12, 60% of participants went on to paid employment after their time with the OH MEET project.

- Hebridean Independent Living and Learning Service (HILLS) provides additional support to unemployed adults and school leavers who have physical, learning or mental health needs and require support to prepare for and enter employment. This is a long term project for many and at present all participants involved in the HILLS project are still receiving support.

- First Steps provides supported training opportunities for school leavers who have significant barriers that require to be addressed to enable them to become job ready for able to take up one of the National Training Programme initiatives. Of the thirty two participants who have moved on from First Steps, 78% have moved on to positive destinations.