

FINANCE COMMITTEE

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

SUBMISSION FROM NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

1. As the largest employer in the local area, North Lanarkshire Council is committed to working with those most vulnerable in the community to increase the numbers of young people in education, employment and training and offering support to help progress people towards sustainable employment opportunities.

2. Much has been achieved by North Lanarkshire Council (NLC) in the following areas:

Pre-Vocational Programmes

3. For North Lanarkshire Council as an employer of young people, the Council's pre-vocational training programme offers a twelve week work taster programme and provides the opportunity to progress to a one year modern apprenticeship. The programme offers a work placement in one of the Council's services, and an opportunity to complete core skills certification while on placement.

4. The pre-vocational programmes provide a progression route on to a level 2 or 3 Modern Apprenticeship programme in a range of vocational areas. Around 90% of pre-vocational trainees currently progress on to apprenticeship programmes, with approximately 40 young people participating in the programme every year.

Modern Apprenticeships

5. The modern apprenticeship programme offers young residents of North Lanarkshire, aged between 16-18 years, the opportunity to join North Lanarkshire Council for a period of one year, gain practical work experience and undertake a Level 2 or 3 vocational qualification in a range of areas such as business administration, horticulture, health & social care, catering, laboratory technician, accountancy; and sport in partnership with North Lanarkshire Leisure. In previous years around 90% of participants on the programme found employment within North Lanarkshire Council. More recent restrictions on recruitment have had a significant impact on this success rate, although the Council has gone some way towards offering additional support by allowing a six month recruitment opportunity for ex-apprentices to apply for internal vacancies within the Council. Since 2009/10, the Council has provided 654 apprenticeships for young people in North Lanarkshire, with approximately 200 young people participating on the programme across each year.

Work Experience Placements

6. The Council, as a large employer, participates in a programme of work experience placements for school pupils. Learning and Leisure Services currently

operates a programme for fourth year pupils where they are each offered a work experience placement of one week as part of the wider education for Vocational and Employability Skills. Work experience is a feature of all the Authority's secondary schools and a significant number of our special educational needs schools. Through employer work placements, pupils have the opportunity to sample the world of work within an occupational setting.

7. North Lanarkshire Council is committed to ensuring that this programme continues to be supported and suitable work experience opportunities are offered to pupils in North Lanarkshire schools.

Supported Employment in North Lanarkshire

8. NLC has an established service providing support to a range of people, including people with disabilities, with acquired brain injury, with mental health difficulties and also looked after and accommodated young people, to achieve and sustain employment in both the private and public sectors. A total of 248 service users are currently supported, with an average age of 30. 85 service users are under 24 (34%; average age 21), 163 are 25 and over (66%; average age 35). In addition, the Council's Supported Employment team works in partnership with NHS Lanarkshire, Serco and Motherwell College. Working together on Project Search, based at Wishaw General Hospital, the project delivers an alternative model of supported employment by providing participants with an opportunity to learn vocational skills (in the safety of a training environment) and support in job seeking and interview skills. The third Project Search programme is due to begin at Wishaw Hospital imminently, with expansion of the model now available through Monklands Hospital.

9. For young people in care, successfully gaining employment can be more crucial than it is for many of their peers. Young people from care are much more likely than their peers to experience unemployment, both when first leaving school and throughout their working life. Lack of stability can impact on their chances of securing or maintaining employment. The Council is currently considering options to provide additional support to young people in the above categories by ring fencing 20 to 30 suitable opportunities in the Council, per annum.

Voluntary Work Experience

10. NLC is piloting a programme which utilises the "Get Britain Working" voluntary work experience scheme. The participants in the scheme are referred by JobCentre Plus and have been identified as young people who desperately need some work experience to add to their CV. The Council's waste and recycling section provides the work experience opportunity for the young people and they are supported on placement by the Wise Group. The Wise Group work with the young people to ensure the experience acts as a catalyst to their return to employment.

11. The Council is currently exploring ways in which this work experience scheme can be used in the future as a feeder to other council programmes detailed in this response.

Youth Investment Programme (YIP)

12. The YIP offers employers an incentive to recruit young, unemployed residents of North Lanarkshire. The programme is designed to support businesses financially to create additional job opportunities. The initial focus of the Youth Investment Programme has been on engaging the private sector to provide sustainable opportunities.

13. There are three strands to the programme:

- Apprenticeships (16-24 years) – 50% of wages for 12 months
- Xtra Hands (16-18 years) – 50% of wages for 6 months
- New Start (18+) – 50% of wages for 6 months

14. The programme is focused on two key objectives –

- Engaging sufficient employers to meet the aspirations of the programme
- Engaging sufficient young people in North Lanarkshire who need assistance in securing employment

15. The Youth Investment Programme was launched in late February 2012 but has already secured 568 job and apprentice opportunities for unemployed residents.

Future Development of Employment Opportunities

16. Despite significant achievements to date, there is a consensus within NLC that the Council can and should do more as an employer, influencer and procurer. The Council has recently approved plans and is committing financial resources to support expansion of employment/learning opportunities in three key areas:

- Development of the modern apprenticeship programme by further increasing the number of opportunities available and the range of occupational areas supported by a modern apprenticeship framework. The Council is committing additional funding to allow this expansion to take place during 2012/13.
- Development and implementation of a Graduate Intern programme, providing twelve month placements for 30 graduates.
- The provision of 200 Youth Investment posts, each offering a 6 month placement in North Lanarkshire Council, with the possibility of moving on to a one year modern apprenticeship position.