

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
RESOURCES COMMITTEE
10th June 2009

Agenda Item	
Report No	

Trainees and Apprentices in Highland Council

Report by Head of Personnel

Summary

This report outlines the good progress being made in increasing the numbers of trainees and apprentices currently employed by the Council and evaluates options for continuing to increase numbers.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Programme for the Highland Council 'Strengthening the Highlands' makes a commitment to a 33% increase in the number of trainees and apprentices employed by the Council by 2010-11 (a rise to 200). The Highland Single Outcome Agreement Local Outcome 2.J also makes a commitment to increase the number of trainees and apprentices employed by the Council.
- 1.2 This paper outlines the current position in the Council, which shows that the Council has already been successful in reaching the target, and makes proposals for the development of further opportunities.

2. The Current Position 2009-2010

- 2.1 At present, the Council employs:
- 28 apprentices
 - 47 + 2 (summer only) trainees
 - 18 graduate trainees
 - 108 probationer teachers

A total of 203

- 2.2 Services predict in 2009/10 an additional:
- 1 apprentice
 - 8 trainees
 - 6 graduate trainees
 - 2 students (attending University and working in the Council in the holidays)
 - 121 probationer teachers (replacements for the 108 in 2008-9)

This is a potential total of 231

- 2.3 A full breakdown of apprentices, trainees and graduates by Service is in Appendix 1.
- 2.4 The number of young people under 25 currently employed within the Council is 824.

3. Traineeships within the Highland Council

- 3.1 All trainees and apprentices (excluding probationer teachers) are employed and receive the appropriate salary and so are recruited to either existing posts or posts

that are known will be vacant in the future, for example through retirement.

TEC Services provide two placements for students studying for the Environmental Health degree. The students are employed by the Council in the holidays and are employed at the end of their degree to complete their professional exams. On successful achievement of their professional qualifications, they will be retained to fill existing or forthcoming vacancies. However, in some cases where there are no Highland Council opportunities, they do move to other local authorities.

Probationer teachers are employed for the probationary year, but have to apply for vacancies within Highland Council in the normal way. Employment of probationers following the induction year (newly qualified teachers) is between 60-75%.

3.2 As part of the new pay and grading structure introduced as a result of Job Evaluation, the principles of employing and developing trainees have been set out to ensure consistency across the Council. This includes the requirement for a clear career progression plan that takes the trainee from a training post to the fully competent role in the 'qualified' established post. This reinforces the position that apprentices and trainee posts are linked to permanent employment. Please see Appendix 2 - Traineeships and Career Progression

3.3 Some funding is available through the government's Modern Apprenticeship Scheme for specific apprenticeships, but this only contributes towards the cost of the qualification and does not fund pay.

All other posts including associated training and qualifications are fully funded by the Council and so there must be staffing budget available to cover the requirements.

3.4 In addition to formal apprenticeships and traineeships, the Council also offers a range of work placements to pupils and students and is working with Job Centre Plus towards a Local Employment Partnership agreement to help potential recruits to move from welfare to sustained employment.

3.5 The Government has introduced a Future Jobs Fund which will enable local authorities and third sector groups to submit innovative bids for young people and others who face significant disadvantages in the labour market. Information on this new fund has just been made available and consideration will be given as to how the Council can be involved. Details on this are contained within the Employability Report at Item 18 on this agenda.

4. Increasing the Numbers of Employed Traineeships

4.1 As outlined above, the Council successfully uses a range of models of traineeships such as apprenticeships, including Modern Apprentices, student opportunities, trainees and graduate trainee programmes. Although the numbers now exceed the original target, options for increasing the numbers should be considered.

4.2 The Council did have a Youth Recruitment Programme where vacancies were screened for suitability for youth recruitment opportunities through the 'Authority to Recruit' application to the Vacancy Monitoring Group. Suitable posts were then restricted to applicants of 25 and under.

4.3 The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 came into force on 1 October 2006. This means that whilst positive action can be taken to encourage applicants

from under-represented groups, employment opportunities cannot be restricted to specific groups on grounds of age. The Youth Recruitment Programme in its original format contravened the requirements of the legislation and so was withdrawn.

- 4.4 The Council can still, however, screen vacancies for their suitability to be offered as a traineeship or apprenticeship with progression ultimately to the fully competent established post as long as these are not restricted to specific age groups.
- 4.5 It is proposed, therefore, that the Authority to Recruit process includes the identification of suitable training vacancies, but these should comply with the principles outlined in the policy for Traineeships and Career Progression, including a clear statement of the anticipated salary steps and qualification requirements at each stage. Services will be encouraged to consider other recruitment models such as student and graduate training programmes.
- 4.6 It is also proposed that the advertising of such posts is supported by information, on the Council's website and through other promotion, about what a career in the particular vocational area involves and the training that the Council will provide.

5. Temporary Trainees

- 5.1 The other option to increase numbers is to offer traineeships and modern apprenticeships on a temporary basis with no link to permanent employment. Trainees receive wages and supported training towards defined qualifications.
- 5.2 For those who are eligible, some funding may be available through government sponsored programmes such as Modern Apprenticeships and Skill Seekers, but this funding is only a contribution towards training costs and not pay and is not necessarily available for every vocational area. For example, at present funding is concentrated in areas such as construction and care, with little available in areas such as administration.
- 5.3 Where funding is available, employers have the choice of either working through a recognised training provider, who draws down the funding and uses it to provide training, or registering to draw down the funding themselves.
- 5.4 Employers who decide to become a training provider and claim the funding themselves must be accredited to the Scottish Quality Management Standards and be able to undertake the administration necessary to provide the required evidence to claim the funding.
- 5.5 A few local authorities act as funded training providers, but it is usually through a community training unit that runs a full programme which places individuals with a wide range of employers.

6. Resource Implications

- 6.1 Highland Council apprenticeships and traineeships are linked to existing or known future vacancies, so are only possible where Services are actually recruiting. The highest level of activity will therefore be in areas of skill shortage such as Planning, Social Work and property/construction management.
- 6.2 Trainee posts incur training costs but this can be balanced against reduced salary

levels until the individual is fully competent. However, where Services are training for future vacancies, then the salary and training costs will be additional to their establishment and therefore must be budgeted for.

- 6.3 Any extension of traineeships into temporary posts as outlined in Section 5 would have additional resource implications for the Council, both in terms of the costs of pay and training and costs of administration. This is a strong consideration in the current financial situation with the Council managing efficiencies and redeployments. It is therefore recommended that the Council maintains its policy position that traineeships are linked to identified posts as outlined in 'Traineeships and Career Progression', as detailed in Appendix 2.

Recommendation

That Resources Committee:

- a) notes the current situation and future position with apprentices and trainees within the Council
- b) agrees to maintain the Council's current policy position on trainees and employment
- c) agrees to continue to increase opportunities for trainees and apprentices e.g. via the Authority to Recruit procedures and the Local Employment Partnership

Signature:

Designation: Head of Personnel

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Date: 2 June 2009

Trainees and Apprentices in Highland Council

Appendix 1

	Apprentices	Trainees	Graduates	Future 09/10
Chief Exec		1 Trainee Employee Development Adviser 1 Trainee Solicitor		
ECS			Probationer Teachers current: Primary 60 Secondary 48	Probationer Teachers 09/10 Primary 62 Secondary 59
Finance		1 Trainee Accountant		
H&P	22 Craft Apprentices	2 Trainee Architectural Technicians	2 Graduate Architects 2 Graduate Property Surveyors (have now completed their qualifications)	Vacant posts: 1 Graduate Project Mgr 1 Graduate Building Surveyor 1 Graduate Mechanical Engineer 1 Graduate Electrical Engineer 1 Graduate Quantity Surveyor
P&D		6 Trainee Assistant Building Standards Surveyors 2 Student Rangers (Summer only)	9 Graduate Planners	1 Graduate Planner
SW		17 Trainee Social Workers (to fill existing posts)		8 new Trainee Social Workers

		4 Adult Residential & 12 Child Residential – potential future posts		
TECs	6 Engineering Craftsman (Mechanics)	3 Trainee Technicians (Roads & Infrastructure)	3 Graduate Engineers (Roads & Infrastructure) 2 Graduate Environmental Health Officers	1 Apprentice - Street Lighting 2 Student Environmental Health Officers to attend University and work with HC in the holidays
Total	28 Apprentices	46 + 2 (summer only) Trainees	18 Graduates 108 Probationer Teachers	8 Trainees 1 Apprentice 2 Students 6 Graduates 121 Probationer Teachers
Current Total	203			
Potential Total 09/10	231			

Highland Council Traineeships and Career Progression

1. Highland Council has a range of trainees, graduates and modern apprentices appointed against fully qualified posts in the Council's establishment. This note sets out principles of employing and developing trainees to apply to all grades and professions across the Council. In the case of modern apprentices, any specific requirements set by the Modern Apprenticeship Programme will also apply.
2. All Traineeships must have a clear Career Progression Plan that takes the trainee from a training post to the fully competent role in the "qualified" established post.
The qualifications, experience and associated grades must be explicitly defined, along with any relevant timescales for achievement.
3. Details of the career progression route must be submitted to Personnel as part of the VMG documentation, along with a job description and person specification, as part of the normal 'Authority to Recruit' process.
4. Each trainee will receive a clear job description and person specification at commencement of employment. The Job Description should accurately reflect the duties of the trainee post, including the training and development to be undertaken to progress to the next level.
5. The attribute statements in the Person Specification should accurately describe the type and level of skills, knowledge and behaviours required of the post holder. This should include the requirements within the post to work towards further qualifications and experience. Guidance will be given by Personnel at the appointment stage as to appropriate starting salary.
6. Induction will introduce the Career Progression Plan including length to completion and different milestones plus anticipated salary steps at completion of each stage, how progress is to be monitored and reviewed, including the Personal Development Plan process. The Career Progression Plan forms part of the PDP.
7. Qualifications to be undertaken as part of the career progression plan, should be agreed through the Council's Qualification Scheme <http://ntintra1/persintra/guidance/Qualifications-Guidance.doc> which includes the completion of a Learning Contract that specifies the support arrangements agreed for the individual.
http://ntintra1/persintra/guidance/qualifications_learningcontract.doc
8. As a trainee progresses to the next grade of the traineeship or to the full role, the Job Description and Person Specification will be reviewed and amended to reflect the next stages in the career progression plan or the full duties of the qualified post.
9. Trainees should progress according to the schedule set out in the Career Progression Plan. Where the trainee does not achieve the

requirements of the plan, this should be discussed as part of the PDP process and the required support identified. Where failure to progress is a matter of conduct, then normal disciplinary procedures will apply.

10. Support in drawing up a Career Progression Plan can be provided by Employee Development.