Highland Employability Partnership
Delivery Plan

Com-pàirteachas So-fhastachd na Gàidhealtachd
Plana lìbhrigidh

2022- 2025

Preface

No One Left Behind (NOLB) aims to change the employability system in Scotland to make it more adaptable, responsive, and person-centred. Transforming the system requires collaborative leadership across all partners and a culture change in the design, delivery, and funding of services through increased local governance arrangements. In Highland this is delivered via the Highland Employability Partnership (HEP) and 3 sub-Highland Local Employability Partnerships (LEPs).

The original 3-year Delivery Plan was approved in August 2022 and is a strategic outline of the proposed employability priorities in Highland through to 31st March 2025. It reflects the priorities of partners and their clients and will complement the statutory provision already in place.

The plan was always envisaged to be a living document, with a commitment to revise in February each year. This allows for flexibility, reflecting local need and the changing social and economic circumstances.

This is the first revision of the original plan, reflecting the situation in February 2023. This includes Annex 1 – HEP Annual Operational Plan 2023/24 and Annex 2 – HEP Annual Investment Plan 2023/24.

This plan is the responsibility of the Highland Employability Partnership (HEP) to produce, review and report on progress and performance. Ensuring that the HEP continues to deliver an appropriate solution across the Highland geography will enable the partnership to address the 7 key principles of No One Left Behind to support the transformation of Scotland's employability services in working towards creating a better person-centred system:

- Treating people **with Dignity and respect**, fairness and equality and continuous improvement
- Providing a flexible and **person-centred support – aspirations for all age, needs based**
- Is **straightforward** for people to navigate – no wrong door
- **Integrated and aligned** with other services – building on the Scottish Approach to service design with the user at the centre
- Providing pathways into **sustainable and fair work**
- Driven by **evidence** including data and the experience of users
- Support more people to move into the **right job, at the right time**

In addition to NOLB, this Delivery Plan will help reach the Scottish Government's statutory child poverty targets and progress the UK Government's Levelling Up agenda in Highland, particularly in relation to the People and Skills and Multiply elements of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Section 1: Introduction
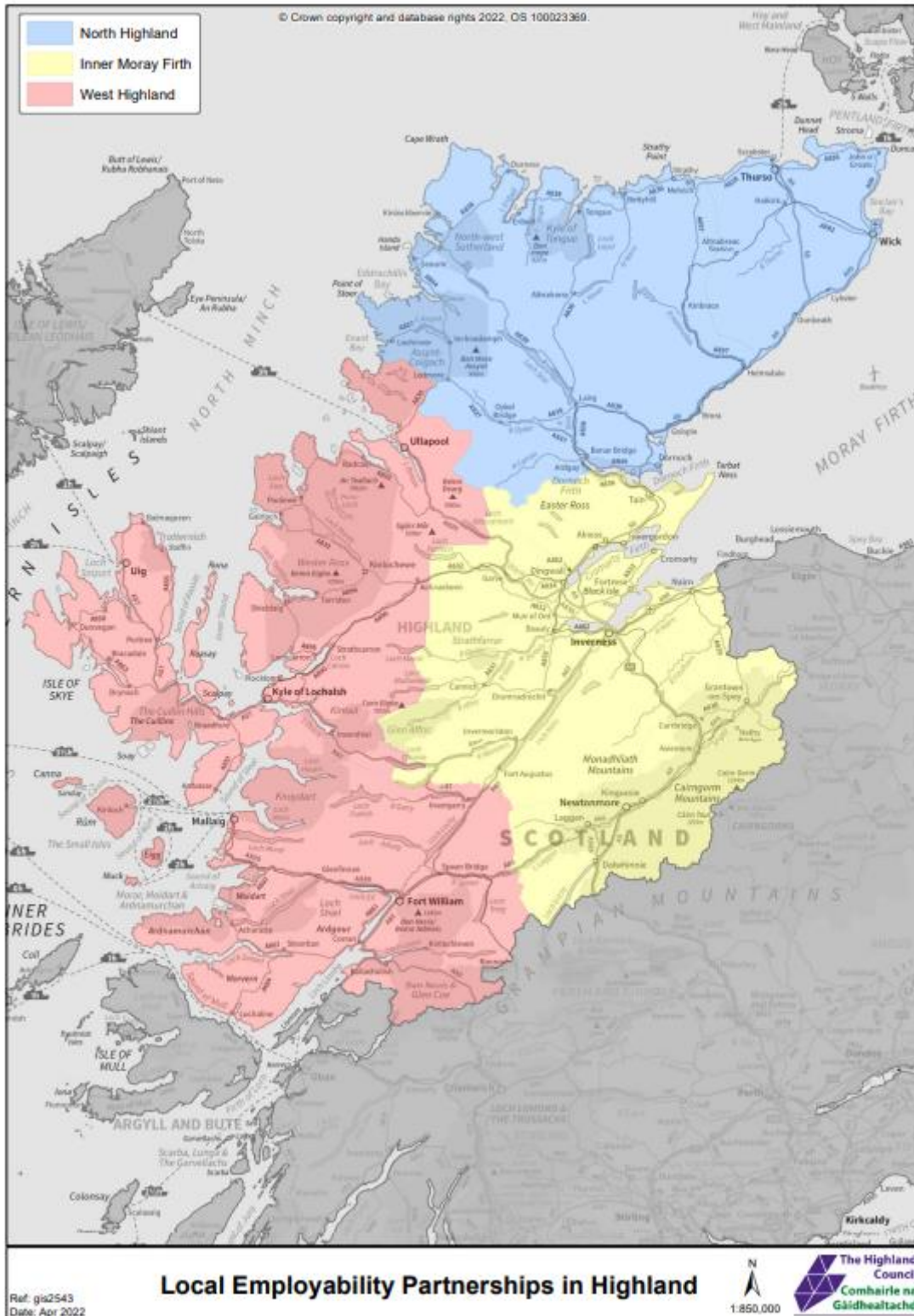
1.1 Background information

The Highland Employability Partnership (HEP) was re-established in 2021. It is a multi-agency approach to ensure that partners work collaboratively to deliver employability services across the area served by Highland Council. Through collective leadership, partners aim to develop shared objectives to service design which addresses the need of both clients and employers and embraces greater integration and alignment of resources to simplify and maximise opportunities.

Through developing a person-centred service offer, the HEP partners aim to tackle unemployment and inactivity rates, improve productivity rates through increasing work-based qualifications and take steps to tackling the effects of poverty through increasing the employment rate and income levels of individuals.

The Highland Council geography accounts for 1/3 of the land area of Scotland, covering the fast growing urban and semi-urban areas around the Inner Moray Firth and the most remote and sparsely populated parts of mainland United Kingdom.

To take account of this, the HEP has been established to provide strategic Highland-wide direction, whilst 3 Local Employability Partnerships (LEPs) have been established to drive operational delivery in North Highland (Caithness and Sutherland), Inner Moray Firth (Easter Ross, Mid Ross, Inverness, Nairn and Nairnshire, Badenoch and Strathspey) and West Highland (Lochaber, Skye and Lochalsh and Wester Ross). A map of the 3 LEP areas is on the next page.

This structure is a unique response to a unique situation and will present both opportunities and challenges through to the end of March 2025. However, we believe that this approach is necessary to ensure that No One is Left Behind in any of our Highland communities.

Local Employability Partnerships in Highland

North Highland
Inner Moray Firth
West Highland

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Ref: gis2543
Date: Apr 2022

1:850,000

The Highland Council
Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

1.2   Membership

Highland Employability Partnership (HEP)

HEP will champion a **strategic level** partnership approach, supporting ongoing dialogue with a range of stakeholders including service users, service providers, employers, local partnerships and national agencies. Membership of the HEP is made up of representatives from the following organisations: -

- Highland Council - Lead Partner and Lead Accountability
- Department of Work and Pensions
- Developing the Young Workforce
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise
- Highland Third Sector Interface (HTSI)
- HTSI Employability Forum
- NHS Highland
- Skills Development Scotland
- University of the Highlands and Islands

Local Employability Partnerships (LEPs)

LEPs will ensure that area **operational level** is client centred, and support pathways for clients as they progress towards, in to and within work, ensuring that area-based delivery meets the local labour market needs and opportunities as well as the unique characteristics of each area.

North Highland LEP membership – Caithness and Sutherland

- Highland Council – area client services co-ordinator
- Department of Work and Pensions – area representative
- Developing the Young Workforce – North Highland
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise – area representative
- Skills Development Scotland – area representative
- UHI North Highland
- North Highland Third Sector representative

Inner Moray Firth LEP membership – Easter Ross, Mid Ross, Inverness, Nairn and Nairnshire, Badenoch and Strathspey

- Highland Council – area client services co-ordinator
- Department of Work and Pensions – area representative
- Developing the Young Workforce – Inverness and Central Highland
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise – area representative
- Skills Development Scotland – area representative
- UHI Inverness

West Highland LEP membership – Lochaber, Skye, Lochalsh and Wester Ross

- Highland Council – area client services co-ordinator
- Department of Work and Pensions – area representative
- Developing the Young Workforce – West Highland
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise – area representative
- Skills Development Scotland – area representative
- UHI West Highland

In addition to the organisations above, each LEP has agreed that a local NHS Highland representative should be added, and both the Inner Moray Firth and West Highland LEPs have agreed for a local third-sector representative to join their groups.

Highland Council

Running in parallel with and feeding into the Highland-wide strategic HEP and the 3 LEPs, Highland Council colleagues across services – Communities and Place; Education and Learning; Health and Social Care; Infrastructure, Environment and Economy; Performance and Governance; Property and Housing - will meet regularly to focus on supporting those furthest away from the labour market. As well as delivering No One Left Behind, this cross departmental approach will play an important part in tackling child poverty across Highland and progress the priorities of Levelling Up.

1.3   Governance

Below is a summary of the relationship between the Highland Community Planning Partnership and the Highland Employability structures at both the Highland-wide strategic and local operational levels. The arrows indicate the two-way communication required between the structures at both strategic and operational levels. Each partner will ultimately be accountable to their own governance structures, whilst ensuring that the Highland-wide and locally agreed priorities are progressed.

	CPP Structure	Employability Structure
Highland-wide strategic	**Highland Community Planning Partnership**	**Highland Employability Partnership (HEP)**
Local operational	**9 x Local Community Planning Partnerships** Caithness and Sutherland Easter Ross, Mid Ross, Inverness, Nairn and Nairnshire, Badenoch and Strathspey Lochaber and Skye, Lochalsh & Wester Ross	**3 x Local Employability Partnerships (LEP)** North Highland LEP Inner Moray Firth LEP West Highland LEP

The Highland Employability Partnership is chaired by the Highland Council in their role as lead accountable body with responsibility for facilitating the partnership and associated resource allocations. Chairs of the Local Employability Partnerships are chosen by the LEP members.

The Highland Council provides the staff resource to facilitate the running of the HEP and the 3 LEPs.

1.4   Reporting arrangements

The Highland Employability Partnership (HEP) meets 8 times a year, meeting approximately every 6 weeks and receives an update from each partner towards the delivery of agreed priorities plus updates from each of the Local Employability Partnerships (LEPs).

The HEP produces an annual report, which is forwarded to the Highland Community Planning Partnership for information.

The 3 LEPs meet 8 times a year, at approximately 6-week intervals, with timings set to ensure that their updates can be fed into HEP meetings. Each partner provides an update on the employability work they are delivering and progress towards locally identified projects.

1.5   Strengthening HEP actions

In summer 2021 each HEP partner independently completed a Readiness Survey which informed the creation of the Highland Employability draft action plan which agreed the following improvement actions:

- To establish the Highland Employability Partnership (Strategic and Operational Network)
- To pool expertise and partner resources
- To engage stakeholders in Service Design
- To agree measures of partnership performance
- To communicate the work of the Highland Employability Partnership
- To design and deliver Operational Delivery Plan(s) (Highland/Area)

In recognition of its NOLB lead partner role as well as a delivery agent, Highland Council have re-designed and expanded their Employability team, organising their services as follows: -

- Client Services - organised across three sub-Highland operational areas; North Highland, Inner Moray Firth and West Highland plus dedicated resource focussing on Care Experienced Young People.
- Partner Services - dedicated resource focussed on supporting and facilitating collaborative working across the HEP, LEPs and Highland Council teams.
- Projects and Systems - dedicated back-office systems team, project staff and procurement of new Employability Providers Framework from 1st April 2022.

Section 2: Key Principles

2.1 Vision

The Highland Employability Partnership vision is: -

> As a partnership of public, private and third sector organisations working together, we will deliver our services in an integrated and aligned manner, giving individuals and employers across Highland an easy to access, high quality and responsive service.
>
> Our clients – young people and adults, will receive a 'person centred' service. As required, they will have someone they can talk to, who will help them work out what support and skills they need as they prepare for the jobs that are (and will become) available. We will ask them about the support they are receiving, organise support and skills training for them and sustain this as they progress into and in work.
>
> Our clients – employers, will be able to secure the skilled and qualified staff they need. As required, they will be able to recruit staff with core employability skills, secure work-based learning and training, and receive support to create jobs. To enable this to be best achieved we ask, when we engage with employers, that they work with us, defining what they need and providing the jobs/work placement and skills training

2.2 Aim

The aim of the HEP is to work with individuals and employers to raise as many Highland residents as possible out of poverty through sustainable and fair work; supporting those who face multiple barriers into employment and enabling progression out of poverty for those who are already in work.

2.3 Outcomes

This aim will be achieved through 4 outcomes as shown below, with a range of accompanying actions.

Outcome 1: More people, who face multiple personal barriers and challenges when securing and sustaining work, are progressing towards, into and within paid employment

- All clients experiencing multiple barriers to employment can have a tailored, person-centred employability solution based on and designed around their needs
- Provide the opportunities and integrated support parents need to enter, sustain and progress in work
- Across all local parts of Highland there is the availability, consistency and quality of employability services offering pathways into sustainable and fair work
- Make it easier for unemployed people particularly from rural and remote rural parts of Highland, to have access to further education, skills development training, employability support and jobs
- Increase the proportion of jobs which receive public support (including job incentive or training grants etc) in rural and remote rural parts of Highland

Outcome 2: More young people, after leaving education, are in paid employment commensurate to their skills or receiving in-work training

- All pupils have a more meaningful experience of the world of work and knowledge about the skills required and the job opportunities that are accessible and available to them
- Improve the number and range of young people undertaking Foundation, Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships.

Outcome 3: More people possess relevant skills and experience to compete for the replacement and new jobs that are or will become available, enabling a qualified workforce across Highland.

- Target support to develop skills in key sectors facing skills shortages and/or emerging job opportunities
- Increase the number and range of work-based learning opportunities available, undertaken and completed across sectors and across all parts of Highland
- Improve the skills set and address any associated barriers, to enable those in low pay/low skilled jobs to progress in the labour market

Outcome 4: Individuals and employers alike receive the services and support they need in an aligned and integrated manner

- Better promote and make it easier for individuals and employers alike to access the range of partner support required and available to them
- Improve co-ordination, alignment and integration of partner services and have systems in place which map support services and secure support service delivery and client progression

2.4   5-stage Employability Pipeline

The 3-year Delivery Plan is based on the key principle that employability support in Highland is person-centred and that the client only needs to know how they can access support and not how partners are organised behind the scenes to deliver the service offer.

At the heart of the person-centred approach adopted by HEP partners is the **5-stage Employability Pipeline** shown on the next page. This will enable client needs to be matched to service provision and their employability journey tracked along the pipeline.

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
Engagement, Referral and Assessment	**Needs Assessment and Barrier Removal**	**Vocational Activity**	**Employer Engagement and Job Matching**	**In Work Support and Aftercare**
This stage is about reaching out and supporting people into regular activity, positive routines connecting them with others	Assessing needs of individuals and agreeing key activities to address any barriers to employment or training	Activities include delivering a range of accredited training, employability core skills, job search etc.	Activities such as work experience or volunteering placements with employers, assisting individuals to secure job vacancies.	Activities includes supporting individuals to maintain and progress within the workplace
End to End Continuous Case Management/Key Worker Support				

Delivery will be designed to reflect local requirements and will be a hybrid approach undertaken either by service providers commissioned by Highland Council on behalf of the HEP or directly by the partners acting as delivery agents.

Employer engagement will be managed in a co-ordinated manner in order to support local employers and anchor institutions to recruit and create jobs for the future, contributing towards growing the skilled workforce, stimulating labour market growth and economic recovery.

The 3-year Delivery Plan and the 1-year operational plan (Annex 1) has been developed and will be delivered in the context of the 6 No-One Left Behind workstreams (Service Design, Shared Measurement Framework, Communications, Alignment and Integration, Governance and Risk, Policy and Finance) and in conjunction with a number of National Frameworks and toolkits developed to support local employability partnerships across Scotland to ensure that services are of a consistently high quality and meet the needs of service users. These include

- The Scottish Approach to Service Design here.
- Employability Service Standards here.
- Employability Customer Charter here.
- Continuous Improvement Toolkit here.

Section 3: Highland Context

3.1   Introduction

The Highland Council serves 1/3 of the land area of Scotland and 11.4% of the UK, including the most remote and sparsely populated parts of the mainland United Kingdom.

The most recently available figures show us that in 2021, Highland Council had a total population of 238,100 (4.3% of the Scottish total), making it 7th out of 32 Scottish local authorities in terms of overall numbers. In terms of population density, Highland Council is 32nd out of 32 at 8 persons per square kilometre.

Since 1998, the region's population has increased by 12.8%, compared to the Scotland-wide increase of 7.1%. In contrast, is the official projection of a 1% fall in Highland's population by 2043 compared with growth of 2.5% in Scotland, and a reduction in the region's working population of 7,800 (-5.4%) compared with slight growth in the rest of Scotland.

3.2   Geography

In a large geography with a dispersed population and localised labour markets, it is challenging to deliver all the services people need to help them prepare for and access work. The fragility

of the existing employability eco-system exposes significant gaps in provision across parts of Highland, compounding challenges in developing a Highland-wide all-age all-stage approach to employability services.

The availability and range of employability support services and job opportunities by occupation and sector, and the availability and accessibility of specialised services will vary depending on where a person is based and can reasonably commute to. Travel to work areas can be quite significant, impacting on the ability of some clients to travel long distances to work, particularly those facing long-term unemployment who may be more reluctant to travel.

The reliance on seasonal employment also presents challenges during the dark, winter months contributing to isolation, loneliness and potentially negatively affecting mental wellbeing.

The following is a SWOT analysis in relation to employability services delivery in our urban, rural, and remote Highland communities.

Urban Highland

Strengths	Weakness
- Concentrated levels of population - Good access to public transport - Good connectivity to high-speed digital services - A good variety of employers of different scales offering year-round employment – competition for staff driving up wages - Competitive and varied employability services environment - A variety of housing available - Child-care options available - Good access to complementary services	- High numbers of employability clients - Over provision amongst the client pool potentially leading to sustainability issues for providers - Potential duplication of effort - Poorer quality of life compared to rural areas - Limited opportunities in some sectors such as agriculture and aquaculture - House price inflation
Opportunities	Threats
- Booming hospitality and construction sectors - One face-to-face employability gateway can serve many clients - Employability providers could share back office administrative functions - Green technology in and around the Inner Moray Firth	- Shortages of skilled labour impacting the growth of key sectors - Cost of living squeeze on household incomes - High fuel prices limiting the number of people travelling in from rural areas - Growing wages pulling in skilled staff from rural areas

Rural Highland

Strengths	Weakness
- On-going expansion of high-speed digital services - Good quality of life compared to urban areas - Space available for developments such as housing - Opportunities in sectors such as agriculture and aquaculture - Good evidence of SME entrepreneurial skills within communities - Local employability service providers are tuned in to the needs of their communities – clients and employers - A good network of public sector facilities in place e.g., schools, service points, libraries, hospitals etc	- Low numbers of employability clients make 1:1 delivery costly - Limited connectivity – digital and public transport - A limited number and variety of employers offering year-round employment - Choice of employability service providers can be limited - Limited access to housing and childcare to support employment - Limited access to complementary services to tackle multiple barriers at the same time
Opportunities	Threats
- COVID restrictions have transformed our view of working from home in a positive way - Stay-cations within the UK are becoming more popular - Partners working together to offer 1:1 support across the Highlands in community hubs - Availability of public and third sector work experience placements - HERO assistance to support SME labour expansion	- Service providers juggling funding from a variety of different programmes to make ends meet - Labour shortages impacting the growth of key sectors - Cost of living squeeze on household incomes – particularly heating and transport costs

Remote Highland

Strengths	Weakness
- On-going expansion of high-speed digital services - Good quality of life - People have multiple skills that they can impart to others - SME entrepreneurial skills evident in remote communities - Communities tuned in to their needs, with a history of finding their own solutions - A good network of public sector facilities in place e.g., schools, service points, libraries, hospitals etc	- Very small numbers of scattered employability clients can make provision virtually impossible - Very limited or no connectivity to digital services and public transport - Very limited number and variety of employers - Employability service providers may not exist, and the remoteness may make it unappealing to providers from elsewhere - Suitable housing and childcare may not be available - Access to complementary services may be many miles away
Opportunities	Threats
- COVID restrictions have transformed our view of working from home in a positive way – particularly in remote communities - Helping one or two clients into work in a remote community will have a huge impact - Partners working together to offer 1:1 support across the Highlands in community hubs or via outreach services - Building local capacity of existing Community resources - Accessing network of local Trusts receiving community benefit resources - Scaling up existing community provision to deliver multi-stage employability activity	- Service providers juggling funding from a variety of different programmes to make ends meet - Labour shortages impacting the growth of key sectors - Cost of living squeeze on household incomes – particularly heating and transport costs - Off grid heating solutions such as domestic oil aren't price capped

3.3   Highland employability data summary

Unemployment

The latest ONS figures covering the period from October 2021 to September 2022 estimated that 3,300 people in Highland were unemployed, accounting for 3.0% of economically active people aged 16 years and over in the area. This percentage was lower than the Scottish rate of 3.4%.

The latest DWP figures for December 2022 show that 3,096 people in Highland were searching for work. The table below shows the number of people in Highland searching for work from December 2019 through to December 2022, broken down by the 3 sub-Highland LEP areas.

Date	Number of people "Searching for Work"			
	North Highland	Inner Moray Firth	West Highland	Highland total
Dec 2019	676	2,138	444	3,258
Dec 2020	1,018	4,333	1,142	6,493
Dec 2021	621	2,652	679	3,952
Dec 2022	506	2,062	528	3,096

Source: Stat-Xplore

- The number of people searching for work in Highland is now lower than pre-pandemic levels. This is also the case in North Highland and Inner Moray Firth but not in West Highland, where the total is higher than in December 2019.
- The December 2022 figures show that 67% of Highland people looking for work in Highland live in the Inner Moray Firth area, 16% are in North Highland and 17% are in West Highland.

The chart below shows the number of people in Highland claiming unemployment benefit during the period through the pandemic, broken down by age.
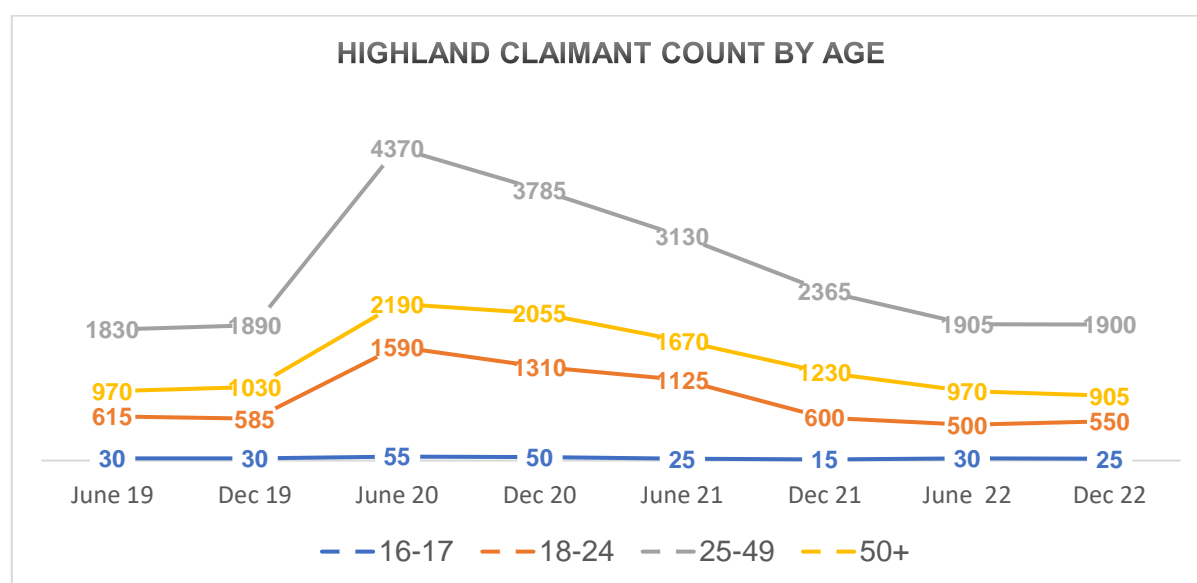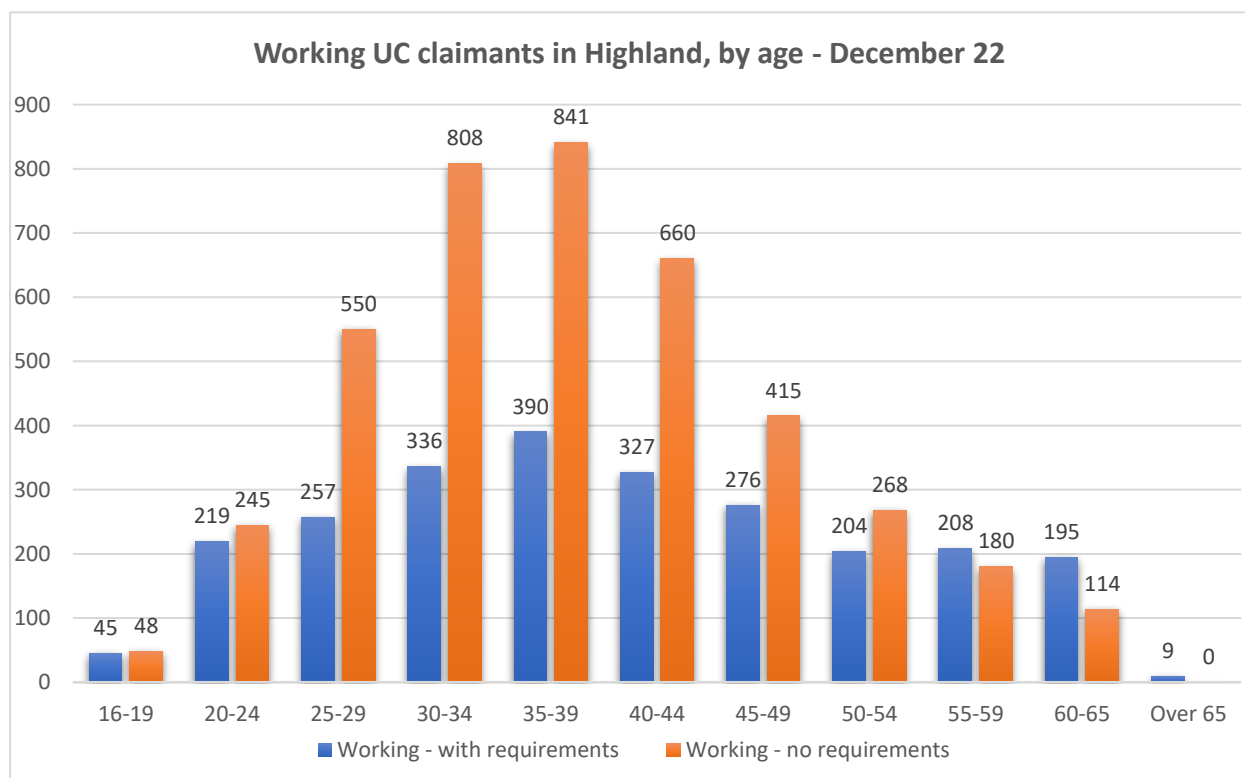

Source: NOMIS

- The number of 16–17-year-olds able to claim unemployment benefits is small. However, numbers in this cohort have returned to pre-pandemic levels, although they are higher in December 2022 compared to December 2021.
- Numbers in the 18-24 cohort have also recovered to pre-pandemic levels but there has been a slight rise since June 2022.
- Numbers in the 25-49 cohort returned just above pre-pandemic levels by June 2022 and have remained stable since then.
- Numbers in the 50+ age group have recovered to pre-pandemic levels and have continued to fall over the last 6 months.

In-work support

The most recent data from December 2022 showed that 6,594 working people in Highland were receiving support from the Department of Work and Pensions. Working people in receipt of additional benefits to ensure that they reach the AET (Administrative Earnings Threshold) are categorised as *working – with requirements* and those who are above the AET level but at risk of falling below it due to changes in circumstances are categorised as *working – no requirements.*

The table below shows these two categories, broken down by age. Worth noting is that just over 50% of the total number of working people supported in this way are in the 30-44 age range.

**Working UC claimants in Highland, by age - December 22**

Age	Working - with requirements	Working - no requirements
16-19	45	48
20-24	219	245
25-29	257	550
30-34	336	808
35-39	390	841
40-44	327	660
45-49	276	415
50-54	204	268
55-59	208	180
60-65	195	114
Over 65	9	0

Source: Stat-Xplore

Economically inactive

The table below shows the total estimated number of economically inactive people in Highland over time.

Total			
Year	**Highland**		**Scotland**
	Number	Percentage	Percentage
Jan – Dec 2019	26,400	18.8%	22.5%
Jan – Dec 2020	29,100	20.5%	23.2%
Jan – Dec 2021	36,100	25.3%	23.8%
Oct 2021 – Sept 2022	35,100	25.1%	22.8%
Source: ONS Annual Population Survey via NOMIS			
Notes: % is a proportion of all those aged 16-64			

- Figures indicate that there are 8,700 more economically inactive people in Highland now than pre-COVID.
- This increase has been driven to a large extent by more people of working age identifying as retired.   This increase is illustrated in the graph below which shows the steady growth in the number of people aged 16-64 categorised as retired.
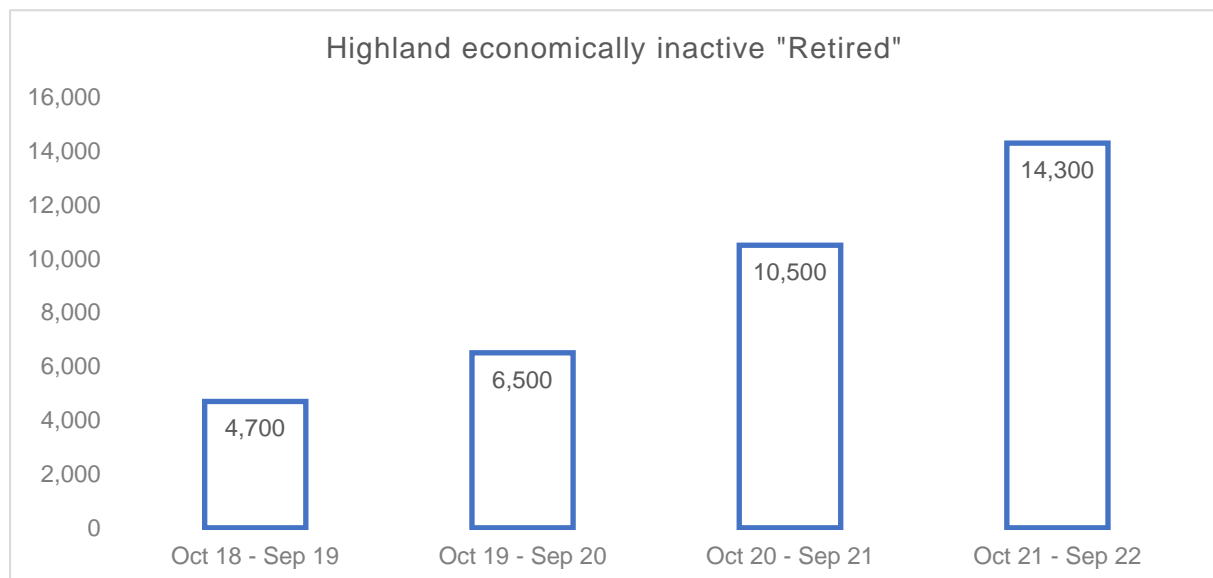
Source: NOMIS

The table below shows the number of economically inactive people in Highland who indicated that they want a job.

Wants a job			
Year	**Highland**		**Scotland**
	Number	Percentage	Percentage
Jan – Dec 2019	6,700	25.5%	20.4%
Jan – Dec 2020	7,600	26.3%	23.1%
Jan – Dec 2021	6,000	16.6%	17.5%
Oct 2021 – Sept 2022	7,600	21.8%	19.6%
Source: ONS Annual Population Survey via NOMIS Notes: % is a proportion of economically inactive			

- The number of economically inactive people who want a job appears to have gone up in the most recent set of figures.
- It is important to note that the 7,600 economically inactive people who want a job are over and above the approximately 3,000 people in Highland searching for work. This means that potentially more than 10,500 people in Highland are available to take up employment. People searching for work are counted as economically active.

**Annual Participation Measure**

The Annual Participation Measure (APM) is the percentage of young adults (16–19-year-olds) participating in education, training, or employment. The APM for Highland since 2019 is shown below, alongside the Scotland-wide average.

Year	**Highland**	**Scotland**
	Percentage	Percentage
2019	92.2%	91.6%
2020	93.6%	92.1%
2021	92.6%	92.2%
2022	92.7%	92.4%

Source: Annual Participation Measure, SDS (Published August 2022)

- The percentage of 16-19-year-olds in Highland participating in education, training or employment is slightly higher than the Scottish average.
- Figures for 2022 told us that 8,924 16–19-year-olds (92.7%) were participating in education, training, or employment, 316 were not participating and the status of a further 385 was unconfirmed.

Child Poverty

Children living in relative poverty 2021
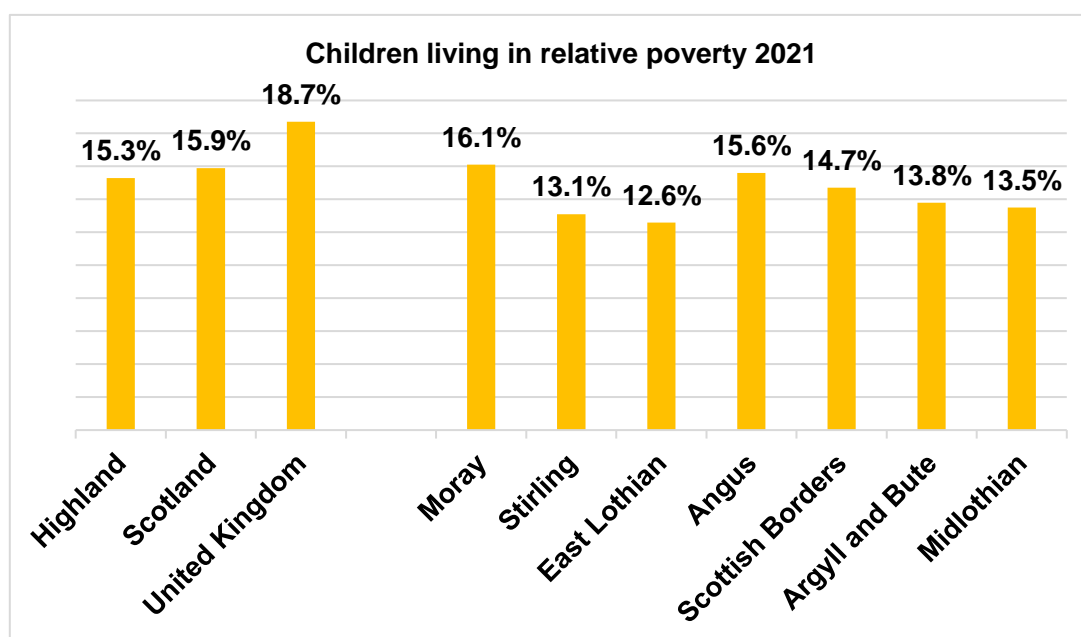
Source: UK Government – children in low-income families via the NOLB Data toolkit
Notes: % of children in Low Income Families – relative measure

- The most recently available data from 2021 showed that 15.3% of children in Highland lived in relative poverty, equating to 5,878 young people. This percentage is lower than the Scottish (15.9%) and the UK (18.7%) figures.
- Also shown are a selection of other local authorities which the NOLB Data toolkit groups together to allow for useful comparison. Two of the local authorities (Moray and Angus) have higher percentages of children living in relative poverty than Highland and five (Stirling, East Lothian, Scottish Borders, Argyll and Bute and Midlothian) have lower percentages.

Employers

Source: HIE Business Panel Report, October 2022
Notes: The survey was carried out between 6 June and 29 July 2022 amongst 1,043 businesses and social enterprises across the Highlands and Islands.

- Among employers, 64% cited ability to attract new talent as at least a medium risk to the business. This was followed by staff working at capacity (59%), skills shortages (55%), lack of permanent staff (52%) and ability to pay competitive wages (50%). More than four in ten mentioned lack of temporary or seasonal staff (47%), lack of staff accommodation (45%) and lack of transport (42%).
- Employers in remote rural areas were more likely to perceive certain risks to their workforce: lack of temporary or seasonal staff, ability to pay competitive wages, lack of accommodation, lack of transport and skills shortages.
- Most businesses (81%) felt equipped to respond to workforce-related risks, while 18% did not feel equipped. Businesses in urban areas felt more equipped to respond whilst tourism businesses and those in remote rural areas felt less equipped to respond.

3.4   Current local provision

The HEP partners participated in a mapping exercise in the preparation of this 3-year Delivery Plan and the results have been mapped to the 5-stage employability pipeline as shown below. This has been further broken down to Highland-wide and local provision. It should be noted that this is still a work in progress. Further mapping work will be carried out on an ongoing basis by the HEP and will be made available publicly to assist clients and employers.

	Stage 1 Engagement and Referral	Stage 2 Barrier Removal	Stage 3 Vocational Activity	Stage 4 Employment Engagement	Stage 5 Employee Support
Highland Wide					
Highland Council	•	•	•	•	•
DWP (Job Centre Plus)	•	•	•	•	•
Skills Dev. Scotland	•	•	•		
NHS Highland		•		•	•
UHI (University)			•	•	•
HTSI (Third Sector)			•		
North Highland					
UHI North Highland		•	•	•	•
DYW – North Highland			•	•	
Inner Moray Firth					
HTSI (Third sector)			•		
UHI Inverness			•	•	•
DYW – Inverness and Central Highland			•	•	
West Highland					
UHI West Highland	•	•	•	•	•
DYW – West Highland			•	•	

3.5   Place Plan Priorities

In preparing this Highland Employability Partnership delivery plan, several key Highland place plans have been considered. These are summarised below, with hyperlinks to the relevant plans included.

Highland Outcome Improvement Plan 2017-27

The work of the Highland Community Planning Partnership is closely aligned with that of the HEP and the 3 LEPs. Highland Community Planning Partnership priorities are outlined in the

Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (HOIP) 2017-27 which has as its strapline "Working Together to Reduce Inequalities in Highlands".

The HOIP is set out under 5 priorities, each with an outcome to be realised by 2027.

- Poverty Reduction – More people in Highland will live a life free from the experience of poverty
- Community Participation and Dialogue – People in Highland will be more involved in decisions that affect their lives
- Infrastructure – Fewer people in Highland experience transport or digital connectivity as a barrier to accessing opportunities
- Community Safety and Resilience – People in Highland will benefit from living in stronger, safer and more resilient communities
- Mental Health and Well-being – People in Highland will benefit from good mental health and well-being

Underpinning these 5 priorities are 4 cross-cutting themes. One of these is Employability, Employment and Skills Development.

Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal

The vision behind the Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal is to position Inverness and the Highlands as a region of digital opportunity. The deal formalised the commitment of £315 million worth of funding - £135m from the Scottish Government, supported by £127m from The Highland Council and its partners, and another £53m from the UK Government. Full details can be accessed here.

The City-Region Deal contains several proposals under three broad headings.

- A Growing Economy
- Enabling the Economy
- A Skilled Economy

An action under the Skilled Economy heading is to pilot a joint Highland Employability Programme to bring about transformational change to employability services.

Child Poverty in Highland

The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 sets several targets aimed at reducing child poverty in Scotland. These are that by 2030, of children living in Scottish households:

- less than 10% should be living in relative poverty (how many families are on low incomes compared with middle income households)
- less than 5% should be living in absolute poverty (how many low-income families are not seeing their living standards improving over time)
- less than 5% should be living with combined low income and material deprivation (how many lower income families cannot afford basic necessities)

- less than 5% should be living in persistent poverty (how many families live on low incomes three years out of four)

The most recent estimate is that in 2021, 15.3% of young people in Highland are living in relative poverty.

In March 2022 the Scottish Government launched the Best Start, Bright Futures – Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-26. The plan can be accessed here.

The delivery plan is set out in 3 parts: -

1. Providing the opportunities and integrated support parents need to enter, sustain and progress in work
2. Maximising the support available for families to live dignified lives and meet their basic needs
3. Supporting the next generation to thrive

Highland Council and NHS Highland are currently updating the Highland Child Poverty Action Plan. The HEP partners will work closely with the Highland child poverty action team to ensure close alignment.

Highland Integrated Children's Service Plan 2021-23

Highland's Integrated Children's Service Plan sits within a context of the Community Planning Partnership and delivering the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan and is a requirement of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. The plan can be accessed here.

The plan sets out a range several priorities for improvement and change under the 6 themes: -

- Health and wellbeing, including mental health
- Child poverty
- Children's rights and participation
- Child protection
- Corporate parenting
- Alcohol and drugs

Levelling Up in the United Kingdom

The Levelling Up policy was articulated in a white paper published by the UK Government in February 2022. The policy aims to reduce the imbalances, primarily economic between geographical area and social groups across the UK but without reducing the prospects of already relatively prosperous areas. The white paper can be accessed here.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will support the delivery of the Levelling Up agenda, with investment in People and Skills identified as a priority, to boost core skills and support adults to progress in work, support disadvantaged people to access the skills they need to progress in life and into work, support local areas to fund local skills needs and supplement local adult provision, reduce levels of economic activity and move those furthest from the labour market closer to employment

<u>Community Wealth Building</u>

"Community Wealth Building is a people-centred approach to local economic development, which looks to increase the flow of wealth back into local economies and places, by giving more control to local people and business" CLES (Centre for Local Economic Strategies) 2020

It focuses on integrating and enhancing social and economic benefits into all economic activity, making sure growth delivers for our people and communities, commonly known as Inclusive Growth.

There are 5 Pillars of Community Wealth Building:

- Fair employment and labour markets (e.g., living wage, removing barriers to employment, diverse workforce)
- Socially productive use of land and property (e.g., building affordable housing, supporting Community Asset Transfer, using land to develop low carbon and renewable energy schemes)
- Making financial power work for local places (e.g., local investment opportunities)
- Plural ownership of the economy (e.g., developing and supporting a range of business models such as cooperatives, social enterprises and employee ownership)
- Anchor organisation purchasing (e.g., public sector buying locally and helping to develop local supply chains)

HEP partners will seek to embed Community Wealth Building (CWB) principles into their policies and practices. Employability initiatives delivered by the partners will play a significant role in this work, with the shared goal of alleviating poverty across Highland.

More information on Community Wealth Building can be found here.

Section 4: Our Approach

4.1   Clients

<u>Individuals</u>

Our partnership services will be available to everyone in Highland who needs support towards achieving the aim of raising as many Highland residents as possible out of poverty through sustainable and fair work.

Utilising the 5-stage employability pipeline approach is key, ensuring that the needs of every individual is assessed, and appropriate support provided.

In addition to the overarching objectives of No One Left Behind to help people of all ages into and to progress in work, the HEP partnership will prioritise the following client groups across Highland for additional support to help get them into or progress in employment: -

- People aged 16 to 26, including care experienced young people.
- Families more likely to experience poverty – lone parents, disabled, 3+ children, minority ethnic, youngest child aged under 1 and mothers aged under 25
- Disabled people

As local and national priorities change, there may be some additional specific targeting of certain client groups or communities and it is important to ensure services are inclusive and accessible for individuals requiring additional support to secure sustainable outcomes.

<u>Employers</u>

HEP partners will work with employers across the Highlands to help them secure the skilled and qualified staff they need. Employers are vital if we are to achieve our aim of reducing poverty through sustainable and fair work.

Our role is to ensure that employers are: -

- able to access support to create jobs if required
- able to recruit staff of all ages with the core employability skills they need
- able to secure work-based learning and training to support the development of clients already in work

It is vital that HEP partners engage with employers at strategic and operational levels, working together to define what they need and providing the jobs/work placement and skills training needed to develop individuals.

4.2   Collaboration

Underpinning our approach is a different mindset, one that is first and foremost collaborative, rather than organisational. A planned, phased implementation will be undertaken in the transition to a new "whole-system" model across the Highlands.

This approach will develop and test new delivery methods to provide solutions to proven market failure and will build on best practice to create a person-centred service offer which is responsive to local labour market challenges.

The success of our approach will be subject to how well it reaches out and engages with all involved at national and local levels and by how those involved at a national and local level, engage in the process.

Mutual trust and confidence based around shared clients, shared assessments, active case management and client progression (if/as required) between providers is what will characterise and drive forward the service. It is anticipated that organisational improvements, such as streamlined back-office administrative support, may well flow from this collaboration.

4.3   Data

It is important that the decisions made by HEP partners are evidence based. Highland employability data is available from a wide variety of sources and will be collated and presented to partners on a regular basis at both the Highland-wide and sub-Highland levels.

This will be vital in ensuring that investments are directed to the places and projects that will make the most difference.

No One Left Behind (NOLB) data toolkit

The NOLB toolkit has been developed by the Improvement Service, The Scottish Local Authority Economic Development (SLAED) group and the Glasgow City Region Intelligence Hub to support the network of Employability Partnerships across Scotland. It draws together existing publicly available social and economic data at local authority level and allows comparison with other similar local authorities and other regional and national level data.

The toolkit is renewed as and when large pieces of new data are released. This is a useful tool for drawing together several important datasets and for allowing local authority areas such as Highland to benchmark themselves to similar local authorities and to the national average.

Section 5: Priorities

5.1 Service Delivery Priorities

During the preparation of this 3-year Delivery Plan, HEP members were asked to give their view regarding priorities. Based on these views service delivery 3-year priorities are shown below organised under the 6 No One Left Behind workstreams.

Service Design

- Operate a Highland-wide employability key worker service
- Create a Gateway / Single referral form / system, triaged to prioritise those most in need of support
- Client and service users engaged at HEP and the 3 LEPs to help inform service design
- Develop a range of accredited training; industry recognised certification and VQs to address identified labour market gaps
- Prepare a suite of labour market work experience opportunities across the public, private and third sectors
- Data collection, sharing and dissemination driving decisions – where and who are the people in most need of support
- Special innovative measures to support people in remote areas
- Engage Highland employers at HEP and 3 LEP levels
- Reduce barriers that employers face to engaging

Alignment and Integration

- Understanding and clarifying roles and responsibilities – training provided to all Highland Employability staff
- Align service standards across HEP partners
- Increase physical access to Highland Employability offer in communities – HC service points, job centres, schools, libraries, SDS offices, HIE offices, colleges, learning centres, health centres

Communication

- Create a Highland Employability brand and on-line presence
- Create and continually update a Highland Employability directory – who, what, where and how – mapped to the 5-stage pipeline
- Collect and disseminate case studies to promote Highland Employability
- Annual Highland Employability conference for staff, service providers and employers

Policy and Finance

- Ensure a smooth transition to No One Left Behind funding arrangements to support service delivery

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- Strategic spend to save programme in 2022/23 – focussed on creating the Highland Employability brand and on-line presence plus training to support better understanding and collaboration
- Post COVID-19 challenge fund. A competitive grant scheme will be advertised in 2022/23 focussed on local delivery of programmes to help overcome social anxiety, improve soft skills and develop digital literacy.
- Establish a HEP small grants scheme to overcome barriers quickly e.g. transport, childcare, small cohorts, employability events

Governance and Risk

- Complete the governance and membership of the HEP
- Establish 3 LEPs – North, Inner Moray Firth and West – to drive priorities at the local level, based on local data
- Employability is on the agenda of the 9 community planning partnerships in Highland

Shared Measurement

- Agree shared performance indicators at the HEP level
- Produce an annual HEP progress report

Detailed priorities for 2023/24 are contained in Annex 1 - HEP Annual Operational Plan 2023/24 and Annex 2 – HEP Annual Investment Plan 2023/24

Section 6: Resource Requirements

6.1 Partner buy-in and contribution

No One Left Behind is an all-age all-stage approach to employability. HEP and LEP partners will take responsibility for ensuring that all clients they encounter will be signposted to the service or services best suited to meet their needs. The HEP and 3 LEP structure is important in this regard as some partners have a Highland-wide remit and will operate in all communities and some will operate in specific geographies.

Some partners are involved in direct delivery of employability services: -

- Key Worker Service – the Highland Council has a team of Key Workers across Highland to support clients on their employability journey. This team will complement the support engaged via commissioned services.
- Accredited Training – the network of Colleges across the Highlands under the umbrella of the University of the Highlands and Islands offer a range of FE and HE accredited training courses.
- Work Based Learning – a suite of "work-based learning" volunteering and training placements are offered across the public and third sector organisations.
- Employer Recruitment Incentive – the Highland Council offers a financial incentive to SMEs to recruit employees who have been unemployed and experience barriers to employment.

6.2 Commissioning

Highland Council has created a Local Employability Support Services Framework which they will access on behalf of HEP partners. This became operational on 1st April 2022. This seeks to develop a menu of diverse activities and interventions to enable engagement with priority clients. It aims to offer tailored support to clients, either individually or as part of a group, enabling them to progress towards sustainable and fair work and to improve their position within the labour market. Services remain flexible to respond to emerging local labour market needs.

The HEP partnership will also have access to the National Employability Service Dynamic Purchasing System where appropriate, to undertake service delivery which will complement activity commissioned via the Local Employability Support Services Framework.

6.3 Service Funding

In financial year 2022/23, in addition to the core Key Worker Service and suite of training and work experience opportunities, HEP ran a Competitive Grant Scheme to help Highland recover from the impact of COVID-19. This allows organisations from across the public and third sectors to test innovative approaches to engagement of priority clients across Highland and thus inform future sustainable service arrangements.

6.4 Delivery Capacity

The partnership will apply appropriate robust monitoring, evaluation and financial management systems and processes to support the delivery of employability services across the Highlands.

Between the HEP and LEP partners, a considerable infrastructure is already in place in terms of staff directly involved in the delivery of employability services, physical infrastructure such as schools, libraries, offices, and health care facilities in communities right across Highland plus well developed on-line offers.

The partnership is dependent on the private and third sector to develop creative service delivery solutions to ensure client engagement and equitable access to support across our geography. Long-term funding and collaborative approaches are fundamental to enable capacity building and strengthen the sustainability of service provision across Highland, particularly in our remote and rural communities.

6.5 Alignment and Integration

Highland geography is challenging but many years of experience, knowledge and hard work means that across the partnership, service delivery coverage is in place to deliver No One is Left Behind. The challenge will be to step away from existing ways of working as separate entities and put the needs of the client at the centre. Clients should only need to know where they can access support, with the partners taking care of the rest.

We are confident that the HEP and 3 LEP delivery structure ensures that alignment and integration will be strengthened at both the strategic and operational levels across Highland.

Going forward, the HEP will strive to better align and integrate support through: -

- Regularly reviewing HEP and LEP memberships to address any gaps in representation (Strategic & Operational levels)
- Ensure appropriate representation across the partnership to progress developing workstreams
- Participation in national and local employability consultations
- Development and delivery of stakeholder engagement and communications plan
- Utilising community engagement insight and service user feedback

Section 7: Performance Management

7.1 Approach

The HEP's approach to performance management will be three-fold.

<u>Employability Shared Measurement Framework (ESMF)</u>

The ESMF has been developed to create a Scotland-wide system to measure the impact of employability services across the country. The first iteration of the ESMF was published <u>here</u> in April 2022.

The ESMF is arranged under 5 themes; Reach, Progression, Skills Alignment, Experience of Services and Value of Services and contains a range of key questions in relation to each of the themes as shown below.

Reach	Who needs support in our community?	Who are we reaching and what challenges do they face?	Are people actively engaged with support?	Who are we not reaching?
Progression	Are people progressing, if so, in what ways?	Are people's goals/milestones being achieved within the expected timeframe?	Have people entered and sustained education, training or employment?	
Skills Alignment	What relevant skills, knowledge and experience are people developing as a result of our support?			
Experience of Services	Are we treating people with dignity and respect?	Do clients receive a tailored service that supports their individual journey?	Do clients find the service easy to access?	
Value of Services	How and in what ways do employability services contribute to national and local priorities?	What is the value for money of our investment?		

The HEP partnership will collect data with the aim of addressing the questions posed by the ESMF.

<u>HEP performance monitoring</u>

The HEP partners will work towards achieving the aim to work with individuals and employers to raise as many Highland residents as possible out of poverty through sustainable and fair work; supporting those who face multiple barriers into employment and enabling progression out of poverty for those who are already in work.

In addition, we will collect and monitor data to support the delivery of the 4 outcomes outlined below:-

- **Outcome 1:** More people, who face multiple personal barriers and challenges when securing and sustaining work, are progressing towards and into paid employment.
- **Outcome 2:** More young people, after leaving education, are in paid employment commensurate to their skills or receiving in-work training.
- **Outcome 3:** More people possess relevant skills and experience to compete for the replacement and new jobs that are or will become available, enabling a qualified workforce across Highland.
- **Outcome 4:** Individuals and employers alike receive the services and support they need in an aligned and integrated manner.

<u>Individual HEP partners</u>

Individual HEP partners will continue with data gathering and reporting requirements in response to source funding regulations. Highland Council will continue to develop its online Hanlon management information system to fulfil its reporting requirements and communicate appropriate data requests and developments for implementation by service providers.

7.2   Continuous Improvement

Striving for continuous improvement is already a key part of the work undertaken by employability partners across Highland. All HEP and LEP partners are supportive of the key principles contained within the Continuous Improvement Toolkit: -

- **Empower** our teams to make tangible and incremental improvements to the services they provide.
- **Equip** our teams with the tools and techniques they need to plan, test, evaluate and implement improvements to services, however big or small.
- **Encourage** a structured approach to continuous improvement, constructively using feedback from individuals and employers, data, learning and good practice to strive for improvement.

7.3   Evaluation

The HEP partners are fully committed to the undertake a programme of evaluation under the NOLB shared measurement workstream. Specifically, in the Operational Plan 2022-23 we agreed to produce a set of shared performance indicators which will allow us to establish a baseline from which to measure year-on-year progress.

In addition, HEP partners will ensure that information gathered and presented will aim to answer the key questions raised within the Employability Shared Measurement Framework, with data extracted from existing sources to measure progress.

Highland Council has committed a team of staff with extensive grant funding management experience to carry out some of this work, along with HEP and LEP partners.

Evaluation processes also include managing the performance of commissioned provision inputting on to Hanlon, allowing the Highland Council team to keep track of progress and outcomes of all individuals and service delivery.

Any issues identified from evaluations or low satisfaction standards will be discussed by the HEP and LEPs on an ongoing basis.

7.4 Review

The 3-yr Delivery Plan will be revised in February each year, after which a new Operational Plan for the upcoming financial year will be published.

ANNEX 1:   HEP Annual Operational Plan 2023/24

The aim of the HEP is to work with individuals and employers to raise as many Highland residents as possible out of poverty through sustainable and fair work; supporting those who face multiple barriers into employment and enabling progression out of poverty for those who are already in work.

Planned Actions for 2023/24	NOLB Key Principle*	Action led on behalf of the HEP by:
NOLB Workstream - Service Design		
Operate a hybrid model for employability key worker support across Highland including the introduction of a new intensive support delivery model.	Person-centred support	HC
Develop a programme of community activity to identify potential clients and develop clear referral routes onto employability services.		HC & DWP
Identify and engage with parents and employers as the basis for the design and delivery of in-work progression projects.		DWP & FSB
Robust and regular data collection at Highland-wide and sub-Highland geographies to inform decision making and to measure progress.	Driven by Evidence	HC
In collaboration with employers, develop training options to address identified labour market gaps	Pathways into sustainable and fair work	UHI
Engage clients to inform service design and support the continuous improvement of service delivery.	Dignity and respect, continuous improvement	HTSI
Prepare a suite of labour market work experience opportunities across the public, private and third sectors	Right job, at the right time	HC & HTSI
NOLB Workstream - Alignment and Integration		
Improve integration and alignment of service and service standards within and across partners	Integrated and aligned	HC
Promote a simple and clear "front door" point of entry to access HEP services – both in person and on-line		DYW
NOLB Workstream – Communication		
Create a communications strategy to raise the profile of the HEP and employability services.	Straightforward for people to navigate	DYW
NOLB Workstream – Policy and Finance		
Identify and specify resources that HEP partners will commit to supporting collective poverty alleviation projects.	Integrated and aligned	HC
Ensure that NOLB, UK Shared Prosperity, Child Poverty and other funding are aligned, supporting those who face multiple barriers into employment and enabling		HC

progression out of poverty for those who are already in work.		
Support NH, WH and IMF LEPs to progress locally identified projects.	Person-centred support	HC
NOLB Workstream – Governance and Risk		
Strengthen links between the HEP / LEPs and the CPP structures at Highland-wide and local levels.	Integrated and aligned	CPP and HEP
HEP to establish a risk register, to be reviewed on a regular basis.	Dignity and respect, continuous improvement	SDS
Create and agree a conflict resolution procedure for the HEP, incorporated into the HEP Terms of Reference (due for review in August 2023)		SDS
NOLB Workstream – Shared Measurement		
Identifying and supporting the "value added" elements created because of HEP collaboration, over and above day-to-day responsibilities of each partner.	Integrated and aligned	NHS Highland
Set baselines and monitor progress in relation to the shared HEP performance indicators	Dignity and respect, continuous improvement	SDS & HIE

*Full version - NOLB 7 Key Principles

1. Treating people with **dignity and respect**, fairness and equality and **continuous improvement**

2. Providing a flexible and **person-centred support** – aspirations for all age, needs based

3. Is **straightforward for people to navigate** – no wrong door

4. **Integrated and aligned** with other services – building on the Scottish Approach to service design with the user at the centre

5. Providing **pathways into sustainable and fair work**

6. **Driven by evidence** including data and the experience of users

7. Support more people to move into the **right job, at the right time**

ANNEX 2:   HEP Annual Investment Plan 2023/24

Community Activity	
2023-24 Budget	£ 270,400

- Client identification and engagement (all ages) through HEP partner collaborative working and third / private sector commissioned services
- Community challenge fund to establish new referral routes for unemployed people and working parents to access support from the Highland Employability Service.

Key Worker Service and Client Progression	
2023-24 Budget	£ 1,322,500

- Hybrid model of key workers employed by Highland Council and third / private sector operators to support clients of all ages to progress towards, into and within employment
- Supported employment to support disabled clients to progress towards, into and within employment
- Training for public, private and third-sector staff to ensure they comply with minimum service standards
- Allowances to support individuals to overcome barriers
- Allowances to support young people undertaking training for employment
- Allowances to support parents transitioning into work – support towards initial upfront costs and childcare
- Specialist support commissioned from third or private sector providers to help clients who need more intensive support to progress towards and into work

Accredited Training/Industry Recognised Certification/Vocational Qualifications	
2023-24 Budget	£ 535,000

- Group Work sessions commissioned from third or private sector providers to help people of all ages into work.
- Accredited training commissioned from public, third or private sector providers to help people of all ages progress along the employability pipeline.
- Access to training to upskill parents to support career progression.
- Industry collaboration to support development of home working to help parents benefit from flexible working.
- Accredited training delivered via a grant to the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) to grow the number of childminders across Highland.
- Apprenticeships
- Accredited training and business start-up support to promote self-employment

Employment	
2023-24 Budget	£ 1,187,000

- Employer engagement and job brokerage
- Volunteering opportunities within the third sector
- Work experience placements for young people or parents, delivered by public and third sector organisations.
- Self-employment business start-up support
- Employer Recruitment Incentives to encourage employers to create sustainable job opportunities for clients of the Highland Employability Service.

Partnership Facilitation	
2023-24 Budget	£ 88,000

- Dedicated resource to support facilitation and co-ordination of Highland Employability Partnership activity within No One Left Behind, Tackling Child Poverty and UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Child Poverty Co-ordination	
2023-24 Budget	£ 78,000

- Dedicated resource to support the delivery of commitments set out in Best Start, Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-26, by ensuring alignment between Highland Employability Partnership and wrap-around services that support parents' transition or progression within work, such as childcare and transport.

Management and Administration	
2023-24 Budget	£ 155,000

- Support for Highland Council as lead accountable body for the management and administration of No One Left Behind, Tackling Child Poverty and UK Shared Prosperity Fund.