

The Highland Council

Caithness and Sutherland Area Committee

27 May 2014

Agenda Item	4.
Report No	CS/12/14

Workskills and Development – Update

Report by Director of Development and Infrastructure

Summary: The Report summarises recent employability related activity in the Committee Area and asks Members to comment on the priorities identified for development in the current year.

1. Background

1.1 The Employability Service works with partner organisations to provide a range of activity in the area. Previous Reports to the Area Committee have highlighted data about employment and unemployment (19 Nov 2012) and partnership working with Job Centre Plus (JCP), North Highland College and Caithness Chamber of Commerce (20 May 2013). Most recently the Committee approved recommendations for the Deprived Area Fund for the Area (18 Feb 2013; 18 Nov 2013 and 11 Feb 2014).

1.2 A comparison with the unemployment situation reported in November 2012 shows a number of changes are evident in the unemployment situation –

- The number of Job Seekers claimants has risen to 790 (Feb 2014) from 728 (Sep 2012). The Thurso and Wick Wards have reduced (though Wick only marginally). The other Wards have seen increased figures.

However, there are caveats to this – September would be the period of highest seasonal employment while February would be highest period of unemployment. DWP have recently been concentrating on moving people from Employment Support Allowance on to JSA, so an increase in unemployment does not necessarily mean a reduction in employment.

1.3 The situation with youth employment shows that there has been an overall reduction in the number of young people aged 18 – 24 who are claiming Job Seekers Allowance – 170 (Feb 2014) from 195 (Sep 2012). The reductions are evident in Thurso, Wick & Landward Caithness. The number in east and central Sutherland remains the same as previously (30), while the north and west has risen (5 to 15).

1.4 Members will be aware of the continuing efforts of economic development agencies and partner organisations to promote business development in the area. While the increase in JSA claimants can be explained in part by seasonal and administrative changes, the figures reinforce the need to sustain efforts to map skills to job opportunities in the area. While any improvement is welcome, Members will share concern about the continuing high levels of youth unemployment.

1.5 These figures and wider analysis form the background to local employability actions outlined below.

2. Employability Services

2.1 As indicated previously, activity in the Area is coordinated through two local employability partnerships, one for Sutherland and one for Caithness. Both include officers from JCP, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and the Council, together with partners from Colleges and Learning Centres as appropriate. In Sutherland the partnership is shared with New Futures Sutherland. A note of some of the recent partnership activity is attached as Appendix 1 to this Report, highlighting joint recruitment work being done with local businesses in both Caithness and in Sutherland. Members will also be aware of the work being undertaken by the Caithness & North Sutherland Partnership through their economic development activity.

2.2. The staffing and activities of the Council's Employability Team in the area are described in Appendix 2. In addition to direct client services, the Employability Team have also engaged with the Council's Transport Services and with partner organisations to identify actual and latent transport needs in the area. While assistance can often be given with transport costs, it is not always possible to source appropriate transport provision. The Transport to Employment project continues to operate on a limited budget and a planning group will meet shortly to discuss ways in which transport might be better facilitated in the area.

2.3 A brief description of some of the client based activity in the area is attached as Appendix 3 to better illustrate the nature and results of the work.

2.4 The key issues for partners in the coming year include –

- Re-procurement of services in general – but particularly for post school provision for young people;
- Aligning new activity with partner organisations and as part of the new EU funding programme;
- To review management of the Deprived Area Fund in Caithness;
- Review provision of services in Sutherland – particularly the relationship with New Futures Sutherland;
- Investigate opportunities to develop the range and extent of local transport provision, particularly in Sutherland.

Members are asked to consider and comment on these developments.

3. Implications

3.1 Resource:

The services described are funded through the Employability Service – some with part support from the European Social Fund.

3.2 Legal, Equality, Climate Change, Risk:

There are no direct Legal, Equality, Climate Change/Carbon Clever or Risk Implications directly arising from this report.

4. Recommendation

4.1 Members are asked to comment on the provision of Employability Services in the area and the work priorities for the year identified in 2.4 above.

Designation: Director of Development and Infrastructure

Date: 13 May 2014

<http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourcouncil/highlandfactsandfigures/benefitsandunemployment/>

Caithness & Sutherland

Local Employability Partnership (LEP)

2 local partnership networks operate for Caithness and for Sutherland. Inter – agency group involving Council; DWP; SDS and Learning / Training providers (and New Futures, Sutherland) working together to ensure alignment and coordination of partner activities through shared needs assessment; employer engagement and service delivery.

Recent LEP Activity

Caithness Jobs Event – PPP, Wick – 8th Feb 2014

- 308 members of the public were recorded attending the event
- 36 local companies and organisations were present on the day to advertise vacancies
- The next '**Jobs & How To Get Them**' event will be held in Thurso in the North Highland College UHI – ETEC Building on Saturday 7th February 2015.

Caithness LEP are in process of evaluating the event

Sutherland Jobs Event Church Hall Golspie 27th Feb 2014

- 123 people recorded as attending (27 from Golspie High School).
- 67 individual evaluations completed and 27 company evaluations
- 30 exhibitors were invited, 27 attended, 20 of those being employers.

The day itself was well received by attendees and exceeded expectations.

Skibo Careers Fair – Meet the Employer 12 March 2014

- Partnership Careers Fair with JCP; SDS and The Carnegie Club and held at Duthac Centre, Tain;
- Attended by The Carnegie Club and school pupils in the morning setting out the career opportunities available at Skibo
- The afternoon session was open to the general public – again highlighting career opportunities in hospitality and touring.
- Staff from other agencies available to assist with generic careers advice, applications, job search etc.
- Opportunities highlighted in greenkeeping, gamekeeping, forestry, gardening, trades, food & beverage, accounts, office administration, kitchen, housekeeping, retail, spa therapy, equestrian, guest liaison, I.T.

Highland Council Employability Service

Employment Support Advisers — deliver a client centred service that assists people who are furthest removed from the labour market to be job ready and move into the world of work
- 2 Advisers x Sutherland (.75 fte); 2 x Caithness (2 fte)- - providing 1 to 1 support to individual clients; attendance at Work Clubs; mentoring of Council trainees; work with school leavers and support to partnership events.
Work It Out - Short-term and part-time “pre-employment” events and courses aimed at building confidence and allowing people to consider their options and to progress onto mainstream employment or learning programmes.
- 1 x Caithness; 2 x Sutherland – pre-employment courses 24 participants total
Work Clubs - Support is offered for looking and gaining a job in conjunction with on-line IT access support, numeracy and literacy issues.
- 4 venues supported; 6 sessions – average 38 attenders (Thurso) and 18 (Sutherland)
Youth Employment Initiative – coordination of activity directed at assisting school leavers to obtain employment or further learning leading to employment or further education.
- Implementation of Activity Agreement and GO4IT! school leaver programmes – 70+ participants in Caithness and Sutherland.
Youth Trainee Programme – 6 month paid training/work experience within different sectors within the Local Authority
- 17 trainees in Caithness, 4 in Sutherland
Deprived Area Fund – targeted funding to areas of disadvantage.
- Support to 2 community organisations in Caithness
Create & Employ – Highland Council/Business Gateway offer recruitment advice and wage support for new employees.
- The number of posts supported through the project Caithness – 42, Sutherland – 18

Case Studies:

Four women attended Thurso Work Club together on 28th March 2014 having been made redundant. Assistance has been given with applications and interview preparation - 3 have obtained employment and the fourth has an interview this week.

Brora Learning Centre have I.T courses including social media, excel and word advanced as well as basic skills running and a number of clients are taking advantage of the training. 4 people have attended the WEA course, Improving Your Job Chances, which covers core skills for work, SCQF level 3 in employability and confidence building. It has been running now for 4 weeks. This course has presented some challenges but is proving to be successful and rewarding for the clients. This course has one more week to run and it is hoped that all the participants will achieve the level 3 award.

Job Centre Plus is running a hospitality course at the Burghfield campus. This course offers work experience and work outcomes. Clients attended Skibo open day as part of the course and job applications were made. Day was busy and hopefully productive. Clients were encouraged to attend and several made applications for the numerous posts on offer.

We have clients attending CITB H&S CSCS site ticket courses, which will enable them to apply for site work. Through this, 2 clients have gained employment, one as a ground works operative and one at Nigg. One client who had no computer skills whatsoever has now secured an interview through his learning in making up C.V's. It was quite a struggle for him, but seeing his confidence grow with his new learning is a pleasure. Having an A.B.E. tutor from Highlife Highland on board, working in both Brora and Lairg Work Clubs, has been hugely positive.

Three clients who have been long term unemployed and attending the Work Club in Lairg have recently secured employment; one is now working in hospitality in east Sutherland. He has now bought a car - this has proven life changing for him in the most positive of ways. Another client has secured employment working on the Kessock bridge, and the third has obtained work with a Hotel in central Sutherland.