

Item: 9

Education, Communities and Housing Committee: 9 September 2026.

Developing the Young Workforce.

Report by Director of Education, Communities and Housing.

1. Overview

- 1.1. This report presents key activities of Developing the Young Workforce Orkney during 2025/26, for noting.
- 1.2. Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) Orkney is responsible for improving the link between education and the world of work, increasing young people's career awareness and skills development. This is done by developing employer engagement opportunities for young people, including work placement opportunities, workplace visits, employer talks and careers events. All of this is to help young people better understand their options, the various pathways into careers and enable them to make informed decisions about their future.
- 1.3. DYW Orkney comprises a Project Manager, an Administrative Assistant and three DYW School Co-ordinators who work in the two Secondary Schools and three Junior High Schools. The DYW School Co-ordinators work closely with Skills Development Scotland, their respective school's Senior Leadership Team and Guidance staff, as well as other partners, to support young people into positive post-school destinations.
- 1.4. The DYW School Co-ordinators develop employer engagement activities to suit the needs of their individual schools and the school's demographic.
- 1.5. During financial year 2025/26, DYW Orkney has delivered employer engagement activities to 3,975 young people, supported by 110 employers. DYW Orkney is fully funded by the Scottish Government.
- 1.6. Appendix 1, attached to this report provides an overview of the key activities undertaken by DYW Orkney during 2025/26.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. It is recommended that members of the Committee:
 - i. Note the key activities of Developing the Young Workforce Orkney during 2025/26, as detailed in Appendix 1 attached to this report.

3. Next Steps

- 3.1. DYW Orkney has been provided with a full year of funding from the Scottish Government, up to 31 March 2027 of £238,601.
- 3.2. This funding will enable the planning and delivery of two more years of activity, including the fourth Orkney Careers Fair in 2026.
- 3.3. DYW Orkney will continue to build on the work undertaken in 2025/26, offering more young people the opportunity to take part in targeted employer engagement activity.
- 3.4. The team will continue to work with local schools, Skills Development Scotland, UHI Orkney, Community Learning, Development and Employability and other key employability partners to develop and deliver employer engagement activity to meet the needs of individuals.

For Further Information please contact:

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Implications of Report

1. **Financial** – DYW Orkney received a grant of £238,601 from the Scottish Government for financial year 2025/26. This funding covers the salaries of all DYW Orkney staff and the activities developed and delivered by the team.
2. **Legal** – DYW activity supports the Council's wider education, employability and Community Learning and Development functions and is consistent with the Council's statutory obligations. The proposals contained in this report do not give rise to any legal issue
3. **Corporate Governance** – Not applicable.
4. **Human Resources** – Not applicable.
5. **Equalities** – Not applicable.
6. **Island Communities Impact** – Not applicable.

- 7. Links to Council Plan:** The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the following Council Plan strategic priorities:
- ☒ Growing our economy.
 - ☐ Strengthening our Communities.
 - ☐ Developing our Infrastructure.
 - ☐ Transforming our Council.
- 8. Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan:** The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the following Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priorities:
- ☐ Cost of Living.
 - ☐ Sustainable Development.
 - ☒ Local Equality.
 - ☒ Improving Population Health.
- 9. Environmental and Climate Risk** – Not applicable.
- 10. Risk** – Not applicable.
- 11. Procurement** – Not applicable.
- 12. Health and Safety** – Not applicable.
- 13. Property and Assets** – Not applicable.
- 14. Information Technology** – Not applicable.
- 15. Cost of Living** – Not applicable.

List of Background Papers

None.

Appendix

Appendix 1 – DYW Orkney Annual Report.



Appendix 1 – DYW Orkney Annual Report

1. Island Legacy

- 1.1. During 2025, Skills Development Scotland undertook a Skills Challenge Pilot to address a recommendation from the 2023 Careers Review that schools should offer experiential careers learning which is practical, work-related and skills focused. Orkney was one of three areas identified to take part in the pilot.
- 1.2. Established as a co-design project, Orkney's pilot included partners from Kirkwall Grammar School, Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) Orkney and the local Skills Development Scotland team. Six second year pupils from Kirkwall Grammar School volunteered to take part in the co-design and during a two-day process, they came up with a concept for the type of careers learning they would like to take part in. This concept was then developed by partners into the final event, Island Legacy, which was delivered to all S2 pupils over two days.
- 1.3. 'Island Legacy' is a choose your own adventure game, where pupils are stranded on an island and work in teams to either try to escape, or remain, survive and thrive. During the game, teams move around the island gathering resources, encountering obstacles or gaining advantages as they try to escape or remain and build a community.
- 1.4. Alongside the game element, pupils took part in five experiences which helped them to develop transferrable skills and explore a variety of careers. Each experience had a competitive element and the points gained could be used to buy resources and help their progress in the game.
- 1.5. The experiences pupils took part in were delivered by the UHI STEM Co-ordinator, the Moredun Institute, staff from Skills Development Scotland and DYW Orkney. Experiences delivered included an engineering challenge to build a communications tower, a STEM activity to identify and manage disease in animals and a design activity to create a flag for their team. Pupils also took part in team-building activities to help with their team-working, problem solving and communication skills.
- 1.6. The pilot was supported by careers guidance inputs from Skills Development Scotland Careers Advisers who worked with pupils before and after the event to help them identify the skills they developed.
- 1.7. The pilot was so successful in Orkney that it was delivered again in May 2026, with plans for it to be an annual event for S2 pupils at Kirkwall Grammar School.

2. Isles Careers Roadshow

- 2.1. Developed by the DYW School Co-ordinator for the Junior High Schools, the Isles Careers Roadshow gave pupils who live on Sanday, Stronsay and Westray the chance to meet local employers and learn more about the careers available across Orkney.
- 2.2. Held in each of the Junior High Schools, the events were targeted to pupils in upper primary (Primary 5-7) and secondary school (Secondary 1-4). Pupils were able to speak to employers and ask questions, learning more about what their business does, the variety of jobs available and some of the routes into careers including apprenticeships, further training and education. There was also a chance to try out some fun activities and some of the equipment used in different jobs.
- 2.3. The islands' Development Trusts also attended their local event, helping young people know more about the role they play on the island and showcasing some of the local job opportunities with the development trust. In addition, at Westray Junior High School, the Parent Council also attended to explain how they add to school life.
- 2.4. DYW Orkney and Careers Advisers from Skills Development Orkney were also on hand with information about apprenticeships, courses available at UHI Orkney and support for anyone who may need help to take the next step on their career journey.
- 2.5. Across the three events, 14 different businesses and organisations attended, including NHS Orkney, Police Scotland, the Pickaquoy Centre and BAM Nuttall.

3. Construction Careers Event

- 3.1. Following a successful event in 2023, Orkney Construction Training Group and the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) held their second construction career event in October to showcase the variety of careers available in the industry.
- 3.2. DYW Orkney supported the event and facilitated school attendance for all S3 and S4 pupils. Pupils had a chance to 'have a go' at some of the trades, with ten stations dedicated to different areas of the industry including joinery, painting and decorating, plumbing, stonemasonry and, architecture and CAD drawing. There was also a chance to see some heavy plant machinery.
- 3.3. Some of the activities pupils could try out included bricklaying, taping and filling and wiring a light switch. There was also a chance to try out operating a crane and climb some scaffolding.

- 3.4. Thirteen employers within the construction industry supported the event, along with staff from UHI Orkney, the CITB Apprenticeship Officer in Orkney and staff from Orkney Construction Training Group, who organised the event.
- 3.5. Employers were on hand to speak to attendees, answering their questions about working in the construction industry. They also explained how to undertake the activities on offer and provided advice and support to attendees while they tried their hand at some of the activities.
- 3.6. As a result of the event, many pupils have undertaken work placement opportunities with local construction businesses, some of which have resulted in apprenticeship opportunities.

4. Stromness Academy Careers Week

- 4.1. Careers Week is an annual week of activity held at Stromness Academy. Now in its seventh year, it was developed to support S3 pupils as they make their subject choices for fourth year.
- 4.2. Throughout the week, pupils learn about some of the careers available to them in Orkney and hear about the different pathways they can take to achieve their future career. The aim of the week is to inspire pupils and help them make more informed choices for the subjects they want to study in S4 and beyond.
- 4.3. The week's activity included an opening assembly where they heard from an inspirational speaker, took part in games to help them explore careers, and learnt about the support available to them as they prepare to move on from school to further education, training or employment.
- 4.4. A series of workplace visits were offered throughout the week, with pupils choosing from a visit to a construction site, a tour of Kirkwall Airport, a visit to a local nursery or a tour of Northlink Ferries's Hamnavoe. All visits gave pupils a chance to see 'behind the scenes' of a workplace and learn more about the different careers available.
- 4.5. Four 'Lunch with an Employer' sessions were also held, offering a variety of activities to help pupils learn more about some of the skills they may need in a particular business. Employers included NHS Orkney and Hamnavoe House; Kyloe Partners; Katy Firth, the Ness of Brodgar Education Officer, and Freedom Group.
- 4.6. Pupils also took part in a Medical Insight Session when a GP and two medical students from Heilendi Medical Practice visited the school to deliver a skills

workshop, showing pupils how to deal with a choking incident and how to use a defibrillator. They also had a chance to test their suturing skills and listen to a talk about working as a GP. All pupils in S3 and those in S4 and S5 who are studying two or more sciences, were given the opportunity to attend this session.

- 4.7. The week concluded with a careers fair held in the school which was attended by 12 exhibitors and open to all S3-S6 pupils, with S1 and S2 pupils attending a drop-in session over break-time.
- 4.8. Throughout the week, S3 pupils had the opportunity to engage with 20 different businesses and organisations, learning about a variety of careers and pathways.

5. Other Activity

- 5.1. In addition to the above activities, the DYW Orkney team supported 95 pupils to undertake a work placement, supported by 51 employers. This included placements to facilitate apprenticeship or training opportunities when they leave school and placements to give pupils an insight into their preferred career, or to gain experience to help them apply for a job, apprenticeship, college or university course.
- 5.2. The school leavers' programme, Planning for the Future, is delivered in partnership with Skills Development Scotland and offered to pupils who planned to leave school at the end of the academic year. Delivered as a two-day intensive programme, with sessions in Stromness and Kirkwall, the programme helps pupils explore their options, identify their skills and provides them with the tools to write a CV, complete an application form and prepare for an interview. The programme ends with a mock interview session with local employers. This year, 27 pupils attended the programme.
- 5.3. A Health and Wellbeing event was held at Kirkwall Grammar School for a second year. Developed to support senior pupils as they prepare to complete final assessments, sit their exams and get ready to leave school, the event reminds pupils to take care of their physical and mental wellbeing, ensuring they have some balance alongside the pressures of schoolwork. An introductory assembly let pupils hear from three speakers – Councillor Jean Stevenson; local athlete and Midwife, Tayla Paterson and, Cameron McConnachie from the Orkney Drug and Alcohol Partnership. Pupils then attended a marketplace in the school Dance Studio where 16 local organisations were on hand to promote the support that is available to help young people navigate this stage of life. Finally, over lunch Orkney Rugby Club ran a taster session for all school pupils.

- 5.4. An Apprenticeship Marketplace was held at Kirkwall Grammar School in November as part of Scottish Careers Week. The event was aimed at senior phase pupils to help them understand the breadth of opportunities available with local businesses. Seven businesses attended along with CITB, UHI Orkney and Skills Development Scotland, while DYW Orkney staff provided information about the three apprenticeship levels available in Scotland.
- 5.5. A Maritime Pathways event was delivered to S3 pupils at Stromness Academy, to help them learn more about the wide range of careers available in the Maritime sector. Delivered by the Scottish Maritime Cluster as part of a national programme, the event let the pupils take part in hands-on activities that brought industry roles to life, while also equipping them with key skills such as team work, problem-solving and creativity. They were also able to speak to industry professionals to gain an insight into their job roles.
- 5.6. A group of pupils from Stromness Academy took part in a programme to gain an insight into a career as a Midwife, which was developed and delivered in partnership with NHS Orkney. The programme aims to help them learn more about the role of a midwife and help them gain knowledge that will be beneficial of a college, UCAS or job application and interview. Pupils first take part in the Solihull Approach for Young People, which is delivered by the OIC's Early Years Team. They are then able to observe Parentcraft classes, which are delivered by a midwife and attended by expectant mums and their partners. The programme concluded with a tour of the Maternity Unit where pupils were able to see the clinical environment midwives work in and learn more about some of the activities they undertake as part of their duties. Pupils were also able to ask questions and learn more about the different routes into a career as a midwife.
- 5.7. Pupils from Stromness Academy and Kirkwall Grammar School have taken part in Save a Life Scotland Training, which was organised by their DYW School Co-ordinators. The Heartstart Course taught them life-saving CPR skills, how and when to use a defibrillator and how to deal with a choking incident. They were also taught how to deal with an emergency situation, learning who to call and what to say in an emergency, how to place someone in the recovery position and how to check if someone is breathing properly. A total of 76 pupils across both schools took part, all receiving certificates in recognition of their participation and completion of the course.