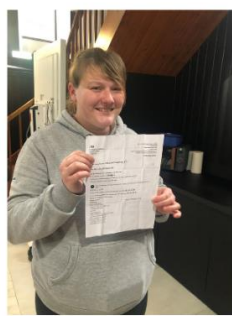


Orkney Local Employability Partnership



Orkney Local
Employability Partnership
Annual Report
2023-2024

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Foreword

As Chair of the Orkney Local Employability Partnership (LEP), it is a great pleasure to present the Local Employability Partnership's Annual Report for 2023-24, which outlines just some of the amazing hard work and achievements that partners have been involved in over this past year.

Since its formation in 2020 the Local Employability Partnership has been focused on ensuring a co-ordinated and collaborative approach to meet employability needs in Orkney. In doing this, the partnership is focused on supporting the implementation of the national, No One Left Behind agenda. Using holistic and inclusive approaches, especially for those facing barriers and challenging circumstances, No One Left Behind (NOLB) is focused on ensuring everyone can access positive progression routes, including sustained volunteering and fair and sustainable work. By ensuring we are responsive to local need, the Local Employability Partnership are committed to providing the right holistic, flexible and bespoke support and opportunities to enable people to achieve positive outcomes.

Orkney's Local Employability Partnership has established robust governance procedures, effective planning, monitoring and review systems and has developed clear and effective links to many other local strategic plans, including the Community Learning and Development Plan, the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan, the Child Services Plan, and Orkney Islands Council's Annual Plan. To ensure effective scrutiny and governance, the partnership reports up through Orkney Islands Council's Policy & Resources Committee and through Orkney Partnership's Sustainable Development Delivery Group.

I hope you enjoy reading this report which demonstrates the valuable input of the members of the Local Employability Partnership to support positive outcomes for those we work with.

Kerry Spence, Service Manager Community Learning, Development and Employability, Orkney Islands Council.

Chair of Orkney Local Employability Partnership

The Local Employability Partnership

Our Vision

- Build on and embed the strengths and effectiveness of the Local Employability Partnership and existing local and national services, to better align funding and improve integration of employability services with wider support services to ensure that services are designed and delivered around the needs and aspirations of the individuals we work with and our local communities.
- Establish, promote and increase awareness of the local employability services/provision and co-ordinated information sharing and action between strategic and delivery partners to meet the needs of the individuals we work with and local communities.
- Improve employment/career opportunities and outcomes for individuals we work with, challenging work based inequalities, through equal access to education, training, learning and fair work, reducing unemployment and inactivity rates and increasing the skills of the workforce within the Orkney Islands Council area.
- Increase income from employment for (low income) parents. This is one of the three key drivers of Child Poverty and one that the Orkney LEP will lead on.

Aims and Objectives

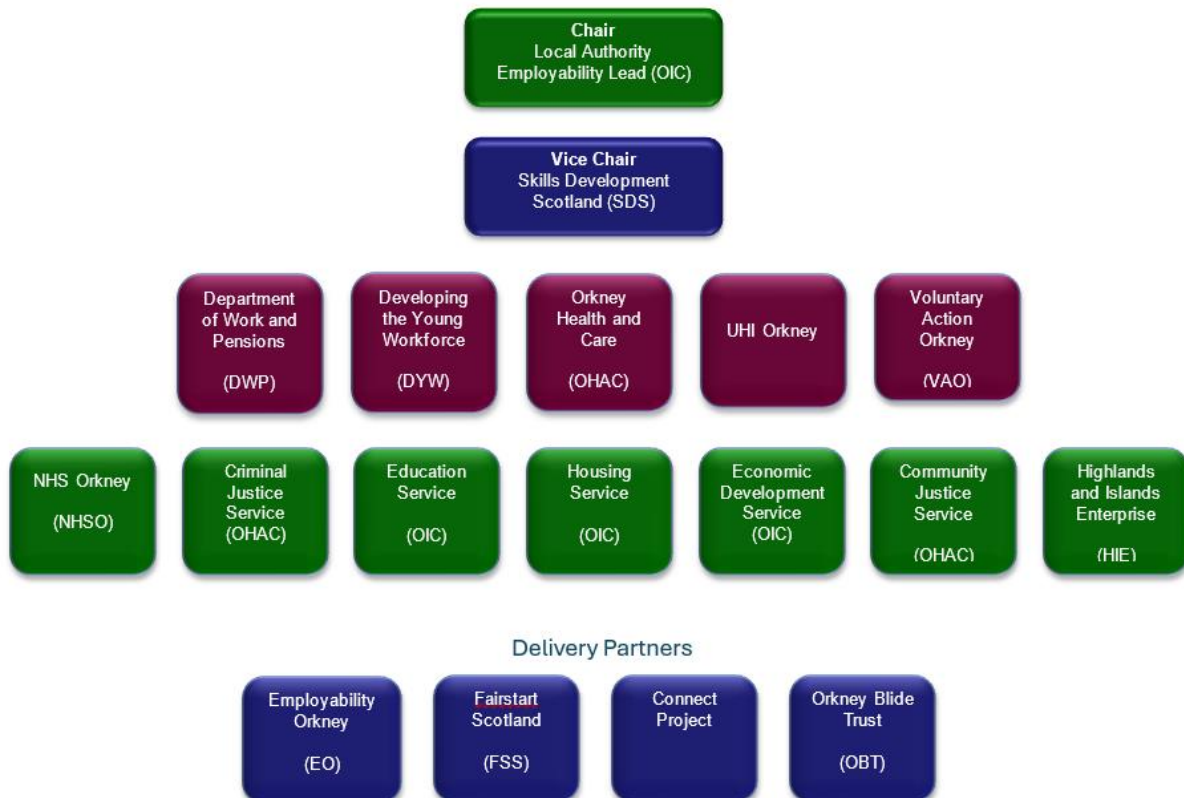
The Orkney Local Employability Partnership will plan, co-ordinate, and deliver employability provision which supports individuals to progress towards fair and sustainable employment that suits their needs and that of the local community. Employability services are pivotal to avoiding the widening of social and economic inequalities. As such, the Local Employability Partnership will work collaboratively by supporting those who are most vulnerable (please see priority groups) and ensuring that the right support is put into place at the right time for those who rely on these services.

The partnership will build on the strengths of existing national and local services. To better align funding and to improve the integration of employability services. The partnership will support to ensure that they are designed and delivered around the needs and aspirations of those using our services.

Objectives

- To drive forward and implement the shared ambitions and actions of No One Left Behind whilst responding to challenges faced by the community following the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit to ensure the right support is available in the right way at the right time.
- To use the [Scottish Approach to Service Design](#) to co-produce an all-age employability support service that is person-centred, more joined up, flexible and responsive to individual needs.
- To involve service users throughout the process.
- To co-ordinate information-sharing and action between strategic and delivery partners.
- To utilise labour market statistics and available data to inform decisions, identify priorities and support an effective partnership response.
- To co-ordinate resources to improve opportunities and outcomes.
- To align as appropriate with regional and national approaches.
- To align the delivery of various No One Left Behind workstreams.
- To support and engage employers in the development of employment provision and support.

Structure



Background

In 2022 the Local Employability Partnership produced and published the Local Employability Partnership, No One Left Behind Operational Delivery Plan 2022-2025. This plan set out our ambitious targets to fulfil the vision, aims and objectives of the partnership. The full plan can be accessed by clicking on the following link - [Orkney Employability Partnership](#).

The Orkney Local Employability Partnership meet each month. These meetings allow strategic partners to analyse national and local data sets and discuss current local issues, challenges, areas of development and also areas of good practice. The meetings also provide an opportunity to monitor and evaluate progress against the Orkney Islands Council's plan and quality assurance structure for the work being undertaken across the partnership.

Budget 2023-24

At the time of writing this report it is important to highlight that despite planning, writing, working towards and reporting on a three-year delivery plan, No One Left Behind funding is allocated on an annual basis. The amount allocated in 2023-24 was £406,000, this was £52,000 less than the 2022-23 allocation. There were also specific challenges with regard to funding, as the Grant Offer Letter was not issued and signed until late in July 2023. This compromised the lead in and implementation time for delivery and resulted in recruitment, provision and commissioning activity being delayed until into the second quarter of the annual reporting schedule. With a hard stop of March 2024, the pressure on the Local Employability Partnership to spend the funding effectively in just eight months, is a clear issue.

Investment	Orkney Allocation 2022 23	Orkney Allocation 2023 24
No One Left Behind		£122,000
Parent Employability Support	£82,000	£165,000
Long Term Unemployed	£50,000	0
Young Persons Guarantee	£59,000	0
General Revenue Funding	£213,000	£119,00
Total	£458,000	£406,000

Progress

In 2023-24 Orkney Islands Council’s Community Learning Development and Employability Service (CLDE) employed 4 FTE within the employability team, made up of:

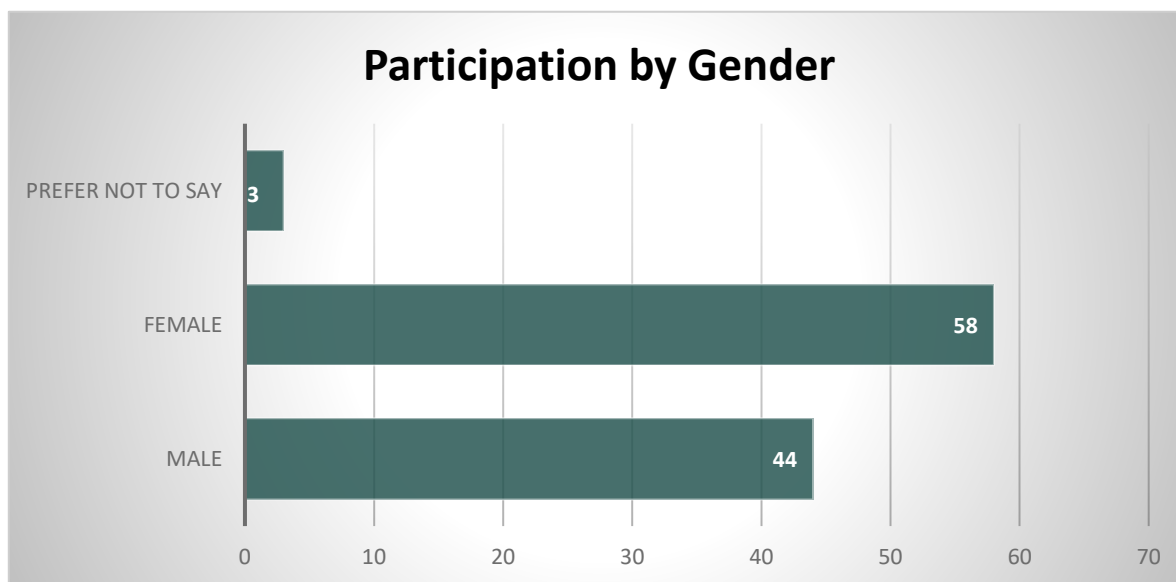
- 1 X 1.0 FTE Employability Team Manager
- 1 X 1.0 FTE Employability Keyworker (August – March)
- 1 X 0.68 FTE Employability Keyworker
- 1 X 0.7 FTE Trainee Employability Keyworker
- 1 X 0.68 FTE Administration Assistant

The CLDE Employability team **worked with 105 individuals** during this reporting period across the various strands of NOLB through a range of one-to-one and group work support.

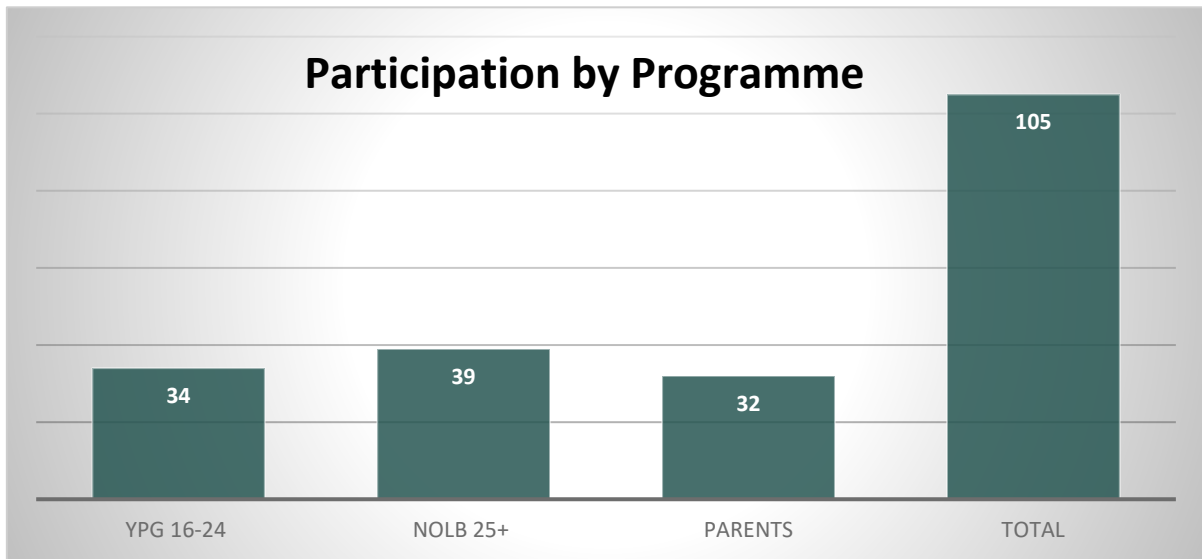
Each person was supported to co-produce a holistic Individual Development Plan detailing personal goals, aspirations and targets to make steps towards future positive progressions to training, education and sustainable and fair work.

Regular review sessions with a designated Employability Keyworker ensures effective monitoring and reviewing of progress towards set targets. These sessions also provide opportunities to reflect on future support requirements and to gather feedback about support and provisions. This allows Employability Keyworkers to explore good practice and also areas for improvement for future service delivery.

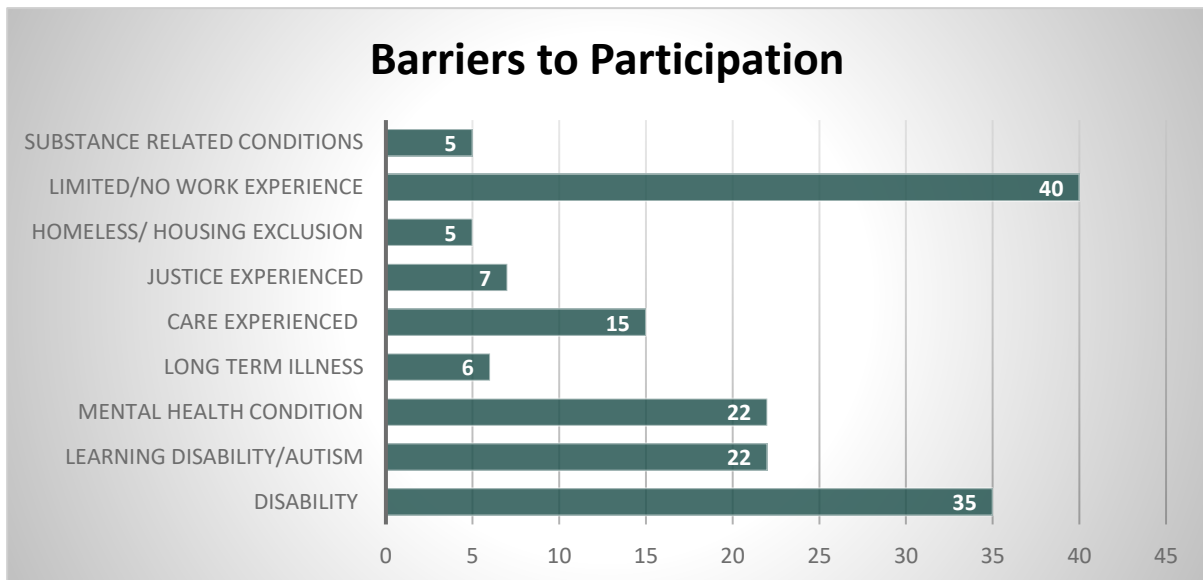
The table below details the breakdown of participants engaging with the Employability team by gender.



The table below details participant numbers for each programme under No One Left Behind during 2023 – 2024.



The table below details the barriers to participation for individuals who engaged with programmes under No One Left Behind during 2023 -2024



In addition to one-to-one support, the CLDE Employability team planned, resourced and delivered a variety of group work sessions to meet the needs of the individuals and communities we work with.

CLDE have worked with the Orkney Blide Trust and young people to further develop the Tuesday Group. This group is for young people who have care experience and their friends. Staff work with young people to develop plans that meet their needs and work collaboratively to plan, resource and deliver sessions. This includes sharing venues, finances and staffing to deliver, monitor and evaluate the work. These sessions support young people to develop knowledge, skills and networks that will support them in future transitions and actively contribute to their health and wellbeing. The group continues to be well attended with an average of six to eight young people joining in each week. The sessions also allow CLDE staff to build positive reciprocal relationships with young people which enable more focused one to one support to be offered out with the group setting if required.

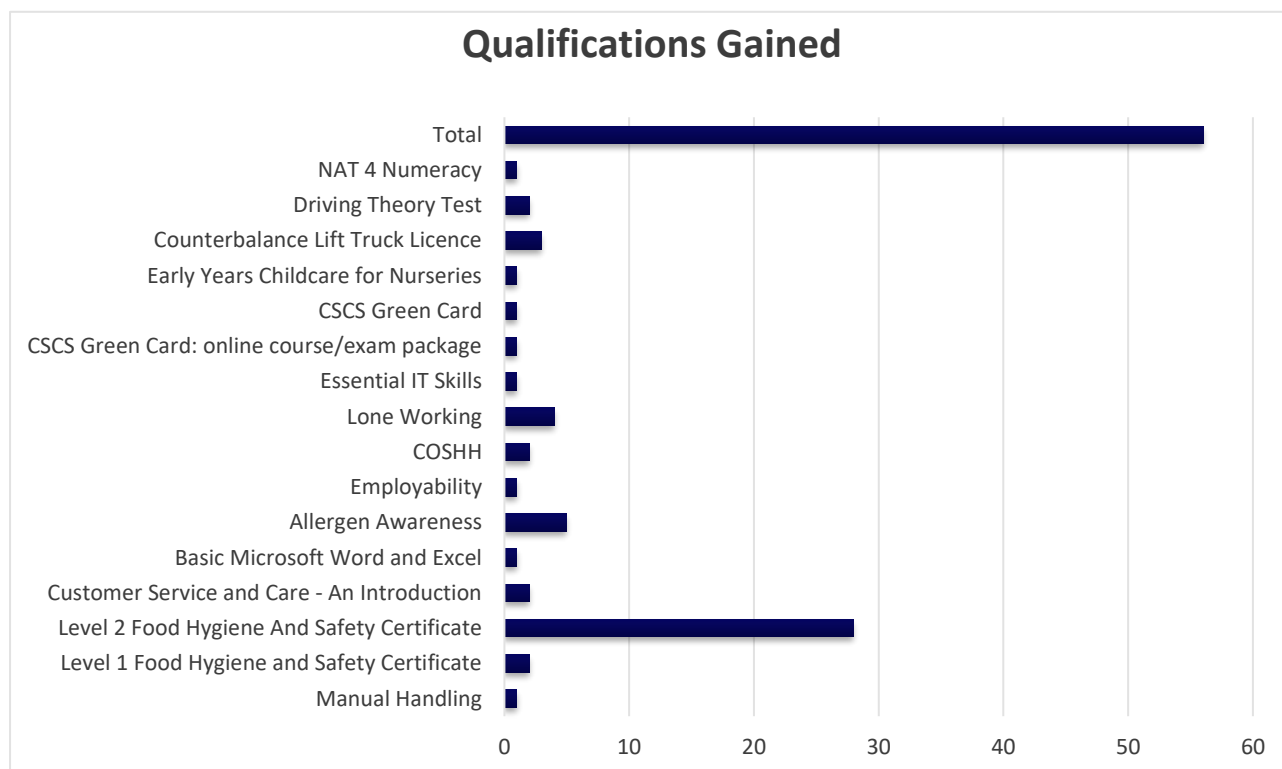
Three young people have gained employment during 2023-24 and four young people have progressed onto further education.



A weekly young parents' group has continued and is delivered in partnership with CLDE Youth Services, Orkney Health and Care and NHS Orkney. This group has **five parents** who regularly attend along with **five children**. Sessions are co-designed with parents and cover a range of topics to promote health and wellbeing, getting involved with the local community and developing knowledge, skills and networks to make informed future choices and progress towards employment. **Three parents have progressed to employment** with two continuing to attend the group when possible.

Driving Theory sessions continued during 2023 24 with 2 individuals participating in session. This resulted in both young people passing their theory test. Both individuals are now accessing driving lessons and working towards passing their practical driving test.

In 2023-24, **40 individuals** were supported by the CLDE Employability team to work towards and gain a variety of accredited qualifications, resulting in a total of **56 accredited courses being achieved**. Topics included Counterbalance Truck Licence; Constructions Skills Certification Scheme Green Card; Level 2 Food Hygiene; Customer Service; Microsoft Excel and Word; Control of Substances Hazardous to Health; Allergen Awareness; Manual Handling; Driving Theory Test and, National 4 Numeracy.



Fifty-three individuals progressed from the CLDE Employability service and **52 continue to access support**. Of those who progressed, **27 individuals moved on to employment/self-employment**. **One young person began a Modern Apprenticeship, 13 people advanced to Further/Higher Education, two returned to school and one individual progressed to sustained volunteering.**

This equates to an **83% positive progression rate**.

Although this is an impressive positive progression rate, it is slightly lower than 93% positive progression rate in the previous year. It should be noted that the individuals we are working with are presenting with more complex needs than in previous years. This, combined with reduced staffing capacity to deliver the intense one-to-one support required, is an ongoing challenge for the team.

Partnership Work

In addition to the independent work of the CLDE, Employability team, there has been a variety of innovative partnership projects throughout the year to support both the strategic direction of the Local Employability Partnership and provision planning and delivery for individuals identified under No One Left Behind initiative.

Pathway Planning Meetings and Co-ordination

Pathway planning, implemented in 2020/21, continues to provide an opportunity to identify those young people who need more support through their transitions to post-school destinations. In addition to this, it continues to provide an important opportunity to ensure employability provision aligns to the requirements of the local community.

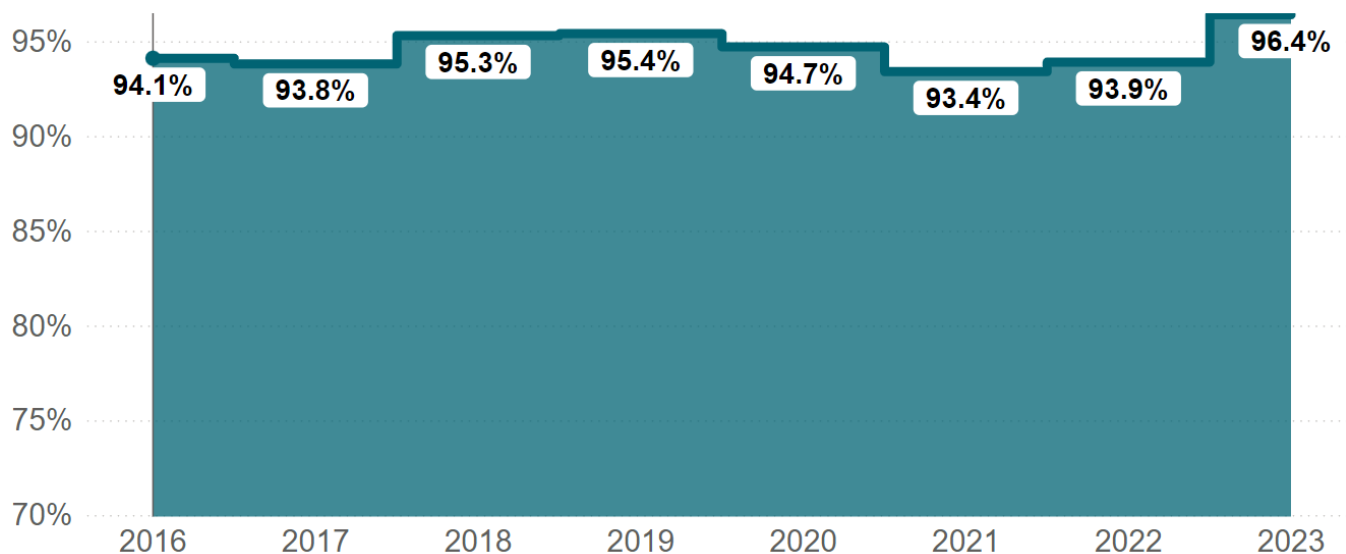
Objective:

- To identify those most at risk of not entering a positive destination and ensure that they have the support to make the right decisions for themselves.
- It will ensure that partners work together in a planned and responsive way to ensure that no one is left behind.
- It also enables the Local Employability Partnership to ensure that the employability provision in Orkney meets the needs of the young people who face difficulty in securing and sustaining a positive destination.

Annual Participation Measure – Published August 2023

The value of the partnership working is evidenced through the Scottish Government Annual Participation Measure which has seen a growth in Orkney of 16-19-year-olds in positive destinations from **93.9% in 2022 to 96.4% in 2023**. Orkney is **currently ranked 6th out of 32 local authorities for 16–19-year-old participation rate**.

The table below details the participation measure data for young people aged between 16-19 in Orkney between 2016 and 2023.



Figures will be published again in August 2024, however the Scottish Government release interim figures in December and May in the lead up to the annual publication in August.

Figures for May 2024 have just been published and show **Orkney currently sitting 4th out of 32 local authorities with a 95.7% participation rate.**

Orkney's partnership working is therefore continuing to have a positive effect on the opportunities for 16-19-year-olds in the local community.

School Leavers Programme

'Planning for the Future' is a school leavers' programme which was developed and is delivered in partnership by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) Orkney. It is aimed at pupils who will be leaving school at the end of the academic year and need support to take their next step. Held in February with sessions in Kirkwall Grammar School and Stromness Academy, it is delivered as a two-day, intensive programme. **This year a total of 12 pupils attended the programme.**

The programme helps young people to plan what they want to do when they leave school and develop the skills they need to write a CV, apply for a job, complete an application form and prepare for a job or college interview.

The programme concludes with mock interviews, where pupils are given the chance to speak to local employers about their skills and answer questions which may come up in an interview. Where possible, pupils are matched to be interviewed by an employer from a business or sector they are interested in working in.

Following this year's mock interviews, two pupils were offered work placements with one of the employers, with the view to them leading to an apprenticeship.

The diagram below illustrates the destinations of the 12 pupils who engaged with the programme. All pupils progressed to a positive destination following the programme

School Leavers Programme Participant Destinations



Young Person Summer Programme (Education, CLDE, SDS, DYW)

Delivered by the CLDE, Employability Team, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) Orkney, the summer programme was developed to help young people develop the skills they would need as they move on from mainstream education onto further education, training or work.

The programme started in May during exam leave and ran throughout the summer holidays. It was targeted at young people who may need more tailored support to move on from school. **Ten young people joined the group, with six attending regularly throughout the summer.**

The weekly sessions were jointly delivered by CLDE, SDS and DYW Orkney. CLDE's activities focused on the development of life skills and the young people were supported to gain accredited qualifications through Dynamic Youth Awards and the Digital College, with online courses on Food Hygiene and Customer Service.

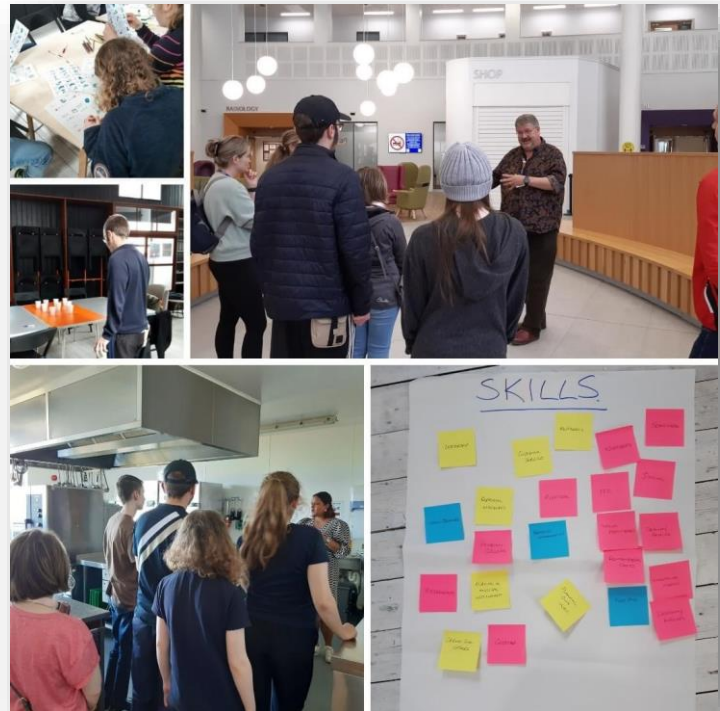
Sessions also focused on online safety, with an input from Police Scotland; inputs on drinking responsibly where they learnt about the impact of alcohol and concluded with the making of mocktails; personal finance and money management education through the I-Lead Money Programme and an opportunity to try out VR headsets at Orkney Library and Archive.

The young people were also given the opportunity to explore their options with visits to UHI Orkney's Hospitality Department and the Balfour Hospital. At UHI Orkney they learnt more about careers in Hospitality, the transferrable skills needed in the sector and pathways into those careers. The visit to the Balfour hospital helped them to learn more about the variety of non-clinical careers available and the work-based learning opportunities offered by NHS Orkney.

The programme concluded with a mock interview session where local employers came along to the group to ask young people some of the questions they could expect to be asked at an interview. Young people were supported to develop answers based on their own skills and experiences.

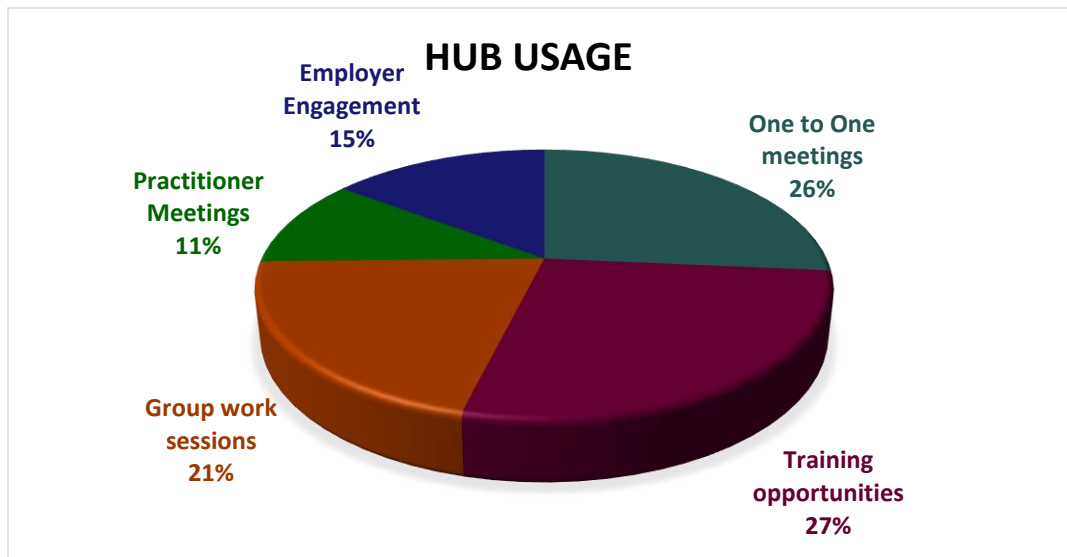
Eight of the young people gained qualifications through Digital College, totalling thirteen accredited qualifications, and six worked towards and completed a Dynamic Youth Award.

All the young people who attended the summer programme made a positive progression.



The Hub for Learning, Skills and Work

The Hub for Learning, Skills and Work was officially opened in February 2023. During 2023-24 the Hub has been used by partners for a variety of purposes. These include one-to-one meetings and work across the partnership (Education, UHI Orkney, DYW, SDS, Housing, OHAC, NHSO), group work activities, training and employer engagement events.



In total the Hub has been used for **598 hours** to deliver support, training and opportunities for staff and the individuals/communities we work with.

The Hub Management sub-group have met monthly during the first year of operation to ensure the partnership facility is managed and used effectively and within the remit set by the Local Employability Partnership. This has included the development of partnership policies and procedures, risk assessments, handbooks and administration tools. In addition, the sub-group have worked quickly and efficiently to identify any challenges or issues and have worked together to find effective solutions.

The Jedi Council

The Jedi Council was developed from the Hub sub-group. This group are now recognised as an official sub-group of the Local Employability Partnership reporting and governance structure. Two members attend the monthly meetings to report on progress made against delegated tasks.

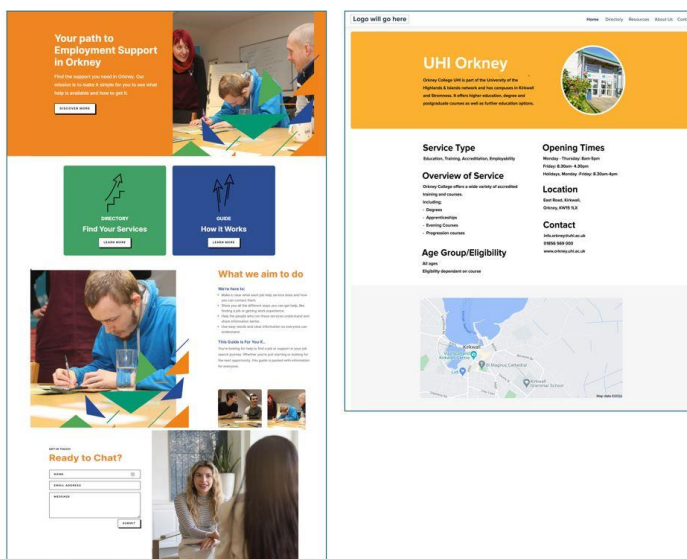
The Jedi Council is a focused group of individuals with a variety of lived experience of local employability support services in Orkney. This group provide a valuable and accurate insight into employability support in Orkney.

The group have continued to meet bi-weekly during 2023-24. There are six regular attendees to meetings, however those who have made transitions to work and further education continue to attend and contribute when they can.

The focus of the Jedi Council over 2023-24 has been to review the [Orkney Employability Pipeline](#) document, make recommendations for future resource and develop a new web-based directory, which details local employability provision and support. This work has included meeting with providers and collecting relevant information on what each organisation delivers locally. The Jedi Council has worked with the Strategy Collective to design a straightforward, accurate and easy to use web-based resource. The Jedi Council will be responsible for managing and updating the resource going forward and have established processes and procedures to ensure information is kept up to date and accurate for users. There will also be hard copies of the resource that will be distributed across the partnership.

Objective: Ensure that potential users of the service understand what each service does and how to access it, recognising that each user may be at a different stage and have a different end goal.

- Clear, simple, uncluttered
- Raising awareness of all of the organisations and services – both for users and across organisations
- Creating consistent language

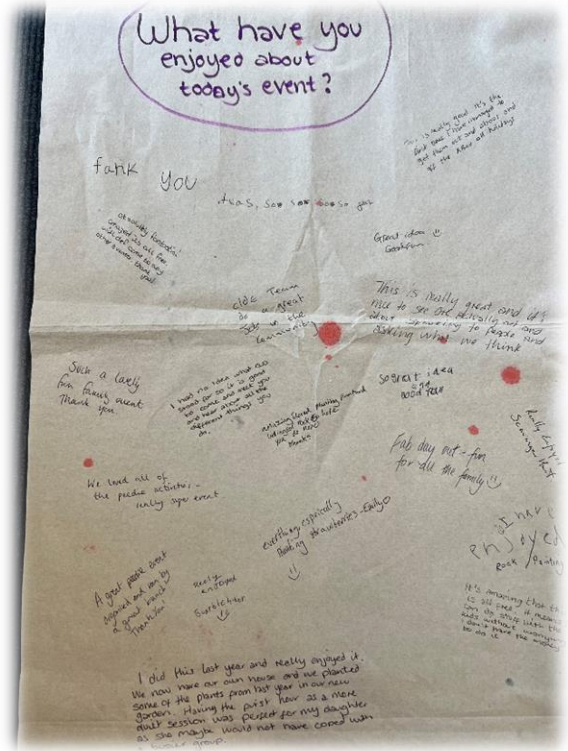


Sunday Funday

In July 2023, the council's employability team worked with Youth Services, The Learning Link and the Yard Plant Nursery to plan and deliver a Sunday Funday, learning and activity day. The day comprised of a variety of family learning activities including planting flower/strawberry baskets, rock painting and a numeracy scavenger hunt. Acting on feedback from the previous year the event was split into two sessions. The first part of the event was by invite only. Invites were issued to key organisations including Woman's Aid, Orkney Blide Trust, Orkney Islands Council Children and Families team, Homestart and Inclusive Orkney. This provided a quieter and more supported environment for those who attended this part of the day, which was well received. The second part of the event was an open session and notably busier.

Families who attended all received an information and activity pack which included family learning activities and information on local support agencies including Orkney Islands Council's CLDE services, Homestart, Orkney Citizens Advice Bureau and Orkney Money Matters.

Throughout the day 174 individuals attended from 54 families.



“ I did this last year and really enjoyed it. We now have our own house and we planted some of the plants from last year in the garden. Having the first hour as a more quiet session was perfect for my daughter as she may not have coped with a busier session.

Orkney Island Council and UHI Orkney SVQ Vocational Routes

Working with the Council’s Organisational Development Team and UHI Orkney, the CLDE service’s Employability Team developed new and fully funded pathways for parents to engage in vocational training to gain qualifications in their chosen area of work. Working with both teams a variety of courses were highlighted and offered to allow individuals to progress within employment and also support recruitment and retention within Orkney Island Council. Courses included:

- SVQ2 Business and Administration
- SVQ3 Business and Administration
- Association of Accounting Technicians (ATT) Certificate in bookkeeping
- Association of Accounting Technicians (ATT) Foundation Certificate in Accountancy SCQF Level 6
- Association of Accounting Technicians (ATT) Diploma in Accountancy SCQF Level 7

- Bricklaying Professional Development Award (PDA) SCQF Level 7
- Carpentry and Joinery Professional Development Award (PDA) SCQF Level 7
- SVQ3 Hospitality Supervision and Leadership SCQF Level 7
- Introduction to a Career in Social Care SCQF Level 5
- Chartered Management Institute (CMI) Level 6 First Line Management.

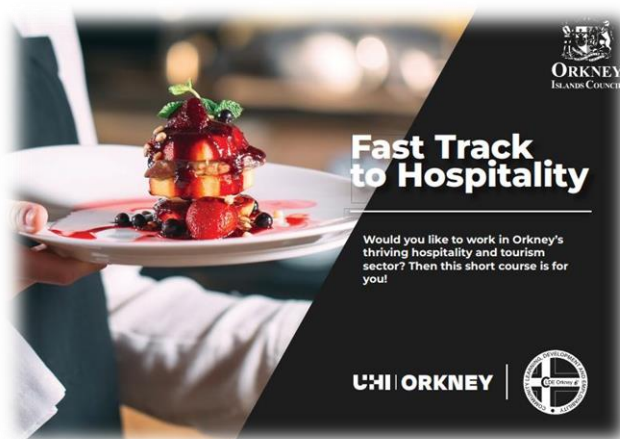
Two parents have enrolled and started the SVQ3 Hospitality Supervision course, and one parent has enrolled to complete the ATT Diploma in Accountancy SCQF Level 7 qualification. In addition, two additional parents expressed an interest in enrolling on the ATT Certificate in Bookkeeping and it is hoped will enrol in the coming academic year.

UHI Orkney Outreach Programme

Working with UHI Orkney, the CLDE service's Employability Team developed a new bespoke accredited outreach programme to support individuals with historic barriers to formal education. A college lecturer was appointed to deliver person centred, bespoke learning opportunities to meet individual needs and deliver sessions in a variety of settings in the local community, including on the ferry linked isles. The programme was targeted towards individuals with low academic achievement, those with learning disabilities, historic school refusers and home-schooled individuals. Six individuals engaged with the initial phase of the programme which ran from January to June 2024. Of those who engaged, six gained accreditation and four individuals have applied to do formal learning courses at UHI. In addition, two individuals are still accessing outreach support and have identified positive future transitions.

Sector based Work Academy Programme: Fast Track to Hospitality

The Hospitality Industry nationally is struggling with staff-shortages, and this has been a real issue within Orkney, compounded by the large number of visitors to Orkney over the Spring and Summer period.



The Fast Track to Hospitality course was created in partnership with CLDE Employability Team, UHI Orkney and local industry to combine practical skills and knowledge about hospitality and tourism in Orkney, with hands-on experiences to support learners back into the workplace.

The UHI Orkney team created an intensive five-week course which covered many areas key to working in the hospitality industry. This included industry visits to local hospitality venues; work experience in the college café; bar skills and mixology;

allergen and COSHH awareness; personal development sessions and practical catering skills. Individuals also had the opportunity to complete a Level 2 Food Hygiene course through the Digital College.

Working across the partnership the CLDE Services Employability team, were able to identify individuals who were interested in gaining skills and confidence and make steps towards employment in the sector. **Working together, partners supported 11 individuals to apply for the course with 10 completing the course in full.** The attendance on the course was positive with average attendance of 87%. **Six individuals completed and passed their Level 2 Food Hygiene certificate.**

“Great course, great tutors, great fun.

“Thank you so much for the experience and I will be sad not to be with you all again.”

“It was amazing, I just don’t want this course to finish. I learned so many new things, I am very happy.”

New Year New Thinking with The Learning Link

The New Year, New Thinking programme was set up in conjunction with two elements of Orkney’s CLDE service - Employability and The Learning Link.

New Year New Thinking was a seven-week programme which aimed to help learners be more aware of how they spend their money, what help is out there for them and how they can make wise financial decisions.

The programme was open to the community and a mix of learners engaged. This included young people who would like to gain their own tenancy in the future, young people who had recently started to live independently and parents with young families. Many of the learners said they had struggled historically with education and faced barriers to accessing learning that they wanted to engage in.

The programme was a mixture of practical support, along with expert advice.

Each week the learners were assisted in exploring ways to help them in the current financial crisis. Whilst on the programme, they also had access to partner organisations that added value and information to the programme. This led to a number of new referrals, and both the learners and outside speakers have gained from the experience. The organisations that supported the programme through delivering information sessions included: Voluntary Action Orkney, Citizens Advice Bureau, Orkney Blide Trust, Tackling Household Affordable Warmth (THAW), Women’s Aid, Warm Works and the Food Bank.

During the weekly sessions individuals had the opportunity to develop and embed their cookery skills, using simple, affordable and fresh ingredients. Learners reported feeling more confident in low-cost meal planning and preparation, increased practical cookery skills, and more informed about local support available for families and households. In addition all learners felt that taking part in the course was beneficial for their mental health.



"I liked doing this course, everyone is kind."

"I actually cooked a meal for myself for the first time and enjoyed it."

"Doing the course has encouraged me to cook with my daughter which is great as she learns new things as well."

"I've not done anything for a couple of years, the course got me out and about again."

"I was really down over the winter. The course got me back out of the house and enjoying myself again."

Small Grants

During 2023-24 the CLDE service's employability team awarded small grant funding to four Third Sector organisations to develop and embed programmes and projects to support individuals to increase confidence, skills, knowledge and networks to make future transitions towards learning, training and employment.

Orkney Sea Cadets received money to deliver a variety of accredited training opportunities for cadets aged over 16-years-old and volunteer staff, making training opportunities more inclusive and affordable.

Stronsay Development Trust received funding to offer work experience opportunities in various hospitality and tourism positions within the community owned Stronsay Hotel, with individuals gaining experience across various areas including catering, housekeeping, administration and business. Individuals also had access to accredited training opportunities through UHI Orkney and other digital platforms.

The Yard Plant Nursery received funds to provide work experience, volunteering and family learning opportunities within their 'Plant to Plate' project. Providing a range of informal learning opportunities developed within the community garden, with individuals and families not only developing skills and confidence but also accessing home-grown produce.

The Pickaquoy Centre received funding to trial a new health and wellbeing programme designed to support individuals with long term health conditions access free wellbeing sessions to improve their physical and mental health and enable them to remain in employment or make step towards volunteering/ employment in the local community.

Blide Trust Café: Paid Work Experience for Care Experienced Young People.

CLDE staff have worked with Orkney Blide Trust to apply for funding to provide various supported employment opportunities. These have included three opportunities for care experienced young people to work at the Saturday Café and a cleaning role supported through the Employer Recruitment Incentive.

Using trauma informed work practices, all these opportunities have supported individuals to develop skills, knowledge and confidence for future transitions. In addition, the Saturday Café has developed as a new revenue stream to support the valuable work of Orkney Blide Trust.

The first café employee has gone on to study in Aberdeen and a current one will be heading to Edinburgh or Dundee after the summer to study to become a paramedic.

The young employees have made observable leaps in confidence and consequently in their ability to work effectively; becoming able to greet customers with confidence and handle all queries well beyond their remit. One has felt able to join Orkney Blide Trust group activities as a result of feeling they have a place there, and both are currently working daily at present to cover for staff absence. Both have undertaken placements as part of college courses and their experience in the café has proved invaluable in supporting this through reflective conversations with Orkney Blide Trust staff in the café. The two individuals have also been able to teach newer volunteers various tasks which they feel confident with, such as using the till or the coffee machine.

Eday Visit

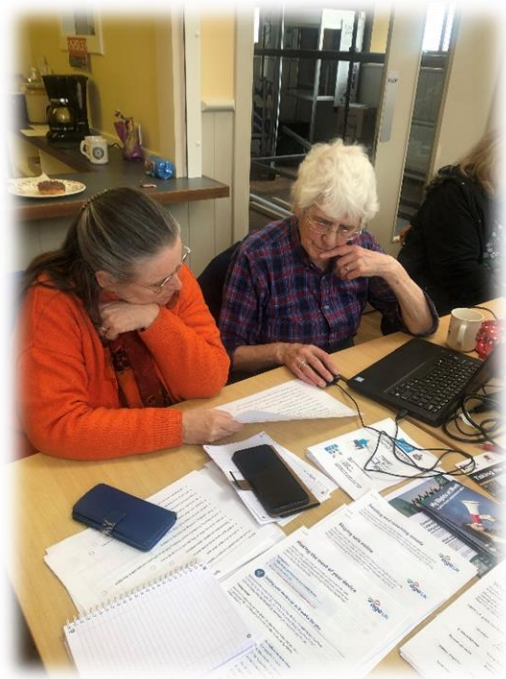
Following community consultation through the initial Orkney Matters consultation, island residents raised concerns about their barriers to participation on community education opportunities. Many of these concerns stemmed from issues with transport and the costs involved in participating in such opportunities on mainland Orkney.

Working with the Eday Development Trust the CLDE service's Employability Team designed a programme of informal and accredited learning opportunities that were requested by residents, through a questionnaire delivered in the local newsletter, The Eday Sound.

In March 2024, representatives from the CLDE service travelled to Eday to deliver training and drop-in sessions over a weekend. The programme included Digital Skills training delivered by The Learning Link, Basic Excel Training and Level 2 Food Hygiene certificate, accredited through the Digital College. The team also held a drop-in session at the community café and did home visits on request.

In total the team engaged with 40 residents during their visit.

- **21** individuals accessed the Digital Skills sessions
- **10** individuals attended the Level 2 Food Hygiene sessions with nine completing the exam and gaining their qualification
- **10** people completed the Basic Excel training
- **2** people had a home visit
- **1** person accessed employability support
- **2** people received numeracy support
- **2** people received literacy support

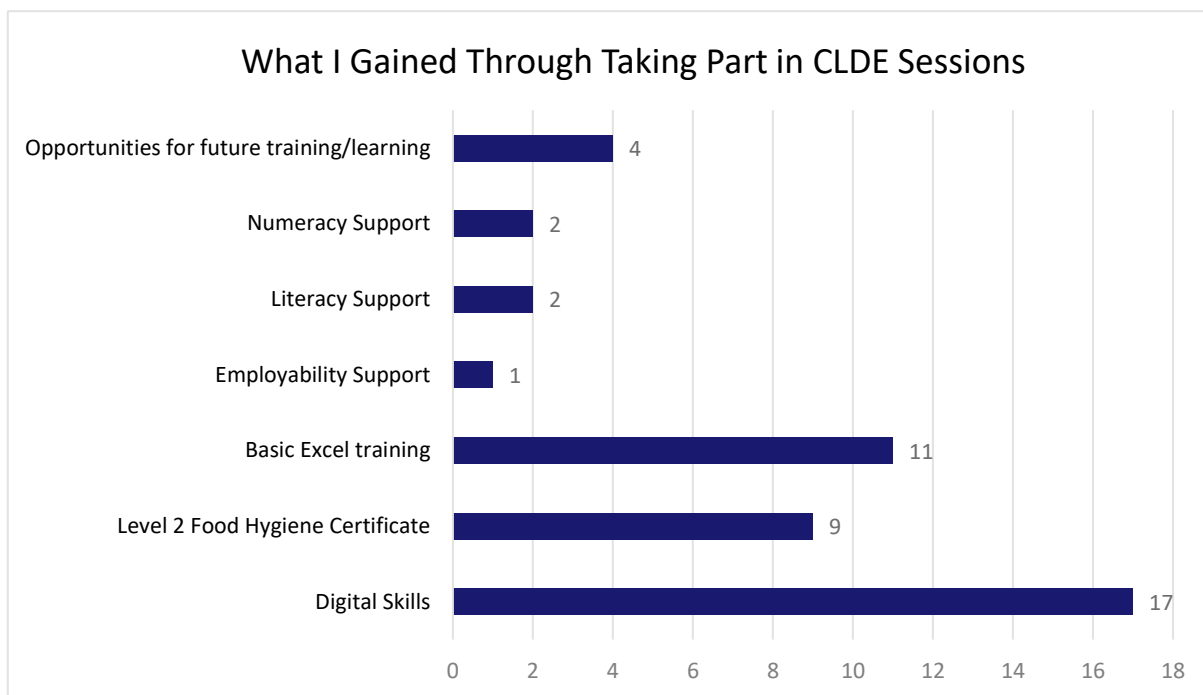


Feedback gathered during the visit was very positive and identified potential future support.

“Informative, friendly, light hearted.

“They were both very interesting and I learned a lot from the courses.

“As community education it was amazing.”



Connect Project

The Connect Project worked with 25 young people aged 15-21 years during 2023-24. All had significant barriers to accessing formal education, learning programmes or employment. This may have been due to physical or mental health issues, disability, challenging circumstances at home or in the community, non-attendance in education or they were highlighted as in need of extra support after leaving school to ensure a positive destination could be sustained.

Connect provide bespoke plans for young people who are not yet able to move onto more formal destinations. In 2023-24 there has been a rise in the number of young people referred to the project, as well as increased complexity of the individual needs of the young people. This has led to young people attending the project for extended periods of time and staff having to prioritise referrals for those with little or no engagement with other services. However, it is also recognised that some young people benefit from a multi-agency approach and young people can attend Connect whilst making transitions to their next steps. This supported transition allows young people to gain confidence with new settings and ensures that their initial transitions are sustainable.



Of the young people that have attended the project during 2023-24, **three have gained employment, two have progressed to sustained volunteering and seven**

young people progressed to further education. Four young people have amended timetables from school.

One young person was supported by Connect to work on communication and peer relationships relating to their autism, while others services built their engagement with the wider community, education and future goals. Another young person moved onto further education but continued once a week with Connect, while another moved into paid employment, maintaining one morning a week with the project until they were more comfortable and stable with that transition. One young person, unable to attend school, has grown in confidence through their volunteering efforts with the project and the Yard Nursery, and was one of many of the young people recognised for their efforts by Liam McArthur MSP during Volunteers Week.



Many of the young people who have engaged with Connect have identified the need for a safe space and good relationships as a first step to understand and accept themselves, working on strategies to handle the challenging circumstances they face, and to feel positive about the future. Through their engagement with the project, it is evident that these young people have become more resilient, future focused and gained confidence to make future transitions.

Connect also provides a summer programme of activities for some young people to help them build relationships and gain confidence. Some have since entered further education with Connect offering a check in or extra support if any issues arose. Every young person who was supported through the summer programme into further education sustained and completed their college courses. All young people moving on from Connect report an increase in confidence and skills.

Employment Support Team (Autism and Learning Disability)

People with learning disabilities are arguably the group most excluded from the labour market, with the Scottish Government estimating that between 4 and 8% are in work compared with 82.5% of the general population. The Employment Support Team, based in Orkney Health and Care, support people with learning disabilities and autistic people, not only to gain employment, but to stay in work long term and develop careers.

During 2023/24 we worked with 27 people, supporting 3 individuals to start new roles and 15 to maintain their existing employment. Others were supported to gain work experience or learn new skills, including two individuals who completed the LANTRA Forklift course.



Employer Engagement and Support

Employer Engagement Service

In 2023-24 Orkney Islands Council externally procured an Employer Engagement Service through Employability Orkney. The scope of the service is to provide targeted employer engagement support across the Local Employability Partnership and to enhance in-work and after care support to help individuals sustain their initial progressions to employment.

The work includes engaging with employers to promote the principles of No One Left Behind, embedding these within the local economy along with promoting what support is available locally and nationally to encourage employers to embed the principles.

The service also supports individuals to complete vocational profiles and look at suitable fair and sustainable work opportunities. The service then works with employers to complete job matching exercises, broker work trials/experience and offer in-work support if initially required for individuals to gain confidence and skills within a new role.

Over 2023-24 16 individuals have engaged with the service. Of these, seven have been supported to gain and sustain employment and three people are now engaging with volunteering opportunities within their local communities.

🌟🌟 Employee of the Month - Sam 🌟🌟

“Restart Orkney’s Employee of the Month for March was Sam, a valued Retail Assistant in our team. Sam shows dedication, commitment, and an outstanding work ethic. Always proactive, Sam consistently offers assistance and seeks out opportunities to help. As a fab team player, Sam continues to impress everyone with his attitude. He is always willing to take on any task and is constantly striving to enhance his skills. Thank you, Sam, for your hard work and dedication.”



Work Experience

As part of their role, Developing the Young Workforce School Co-ordinators work with school senior management teams, guidance staff, curriculum support staff, careers advisers and pupils to identify and organise appropriate work placements. This can be a week-long placement, or half-day or full-day placements over a longer period of time.

Throughout 2023/24, 100 pupils undertook a work placement, enabling them to develop transferrable and practical skills, raise career awareness and increase confidence. This is **an increase of 25 pupils** from the previous year.

Some of the positive outcomes include:

- A pupil who was a Christmas leaver and interested in a career in construction was supported to undertake extended placements with two local construction firms with the hope these could lead to a more long term opportunity. The young person impressed the first placement employer so much, they were offered an apprenticeship after their first week and moved onto their apprenticeship after they left school at Christmas.
- A pupil with additional support needs undertook a placement with a local retailer. This pupil was anxious about the placement, however they were supported by the workplace, undertaking a familiarisation visit beforehand and getting the opportunity to ask questions, having their concerns addressed. This helped their confidence with starting the placement. The young person did so well that the placement opportunity was extended and is still ongoing. There has been an increase in the pupil's confidence, and they have gained a lot from the opportunity.
- One school pupil who was not engaging with school was supported to undertake two extended placements. Despite poor attendance at school, they showed commitment to the placement opportunities, turning up on time and working hard. They received very positive feedback from both employers. There are apprenticeship opportunities coming up at both businesses and we hope they will be successful in securing one of these opportunities.

The following quote is from a school pupil after their work placement:

“Earlier this year I got a work placement and enjoyed it very much. I got the chance to work with all the different teams and got the chance to meet many people who were all very helpful while I was there. Although I might not end up in a job with the organisation, it has given me many options of what I could do within that line of work. It truly was a brilliant experience for me.”

Sector Specific Session in Schools

Developing the Young Workforce School Co-ordinators have also developed a number of sector specific inputs in the local schools. Over the last academic year some of the sessions include:

Midwifery Insight Programme:

Developed in partnership with NHS Orkney, this programme gave pupils an insight into the role of a Midwife. The programme consisted of four elements that pupils were expected to complete. These included completion of the Solihull Approach for Young People – Understanding Yourself and Parenting course, which was delivered by the council's Early Years Team and provides an insight into early child development. A visit to the Midwifery Unit at The Balfour was



organised, giving them the chance to see a clinical environment and speak to Midwives about their role. They were then invited to attend a four-week block of Parentcraft classes, which are delivered by a Midwife and attended by expectant mums and their partners. Finally, a virtual insight session delivered by Robert Gordon University gave support for applying to university.

Seven pupils completed all aspects of the programme, with feedback indicating it helped them improve their knowledge, confirm this was the right career choice for them and helped with UCAS applications. Further details can be found [here](#).

Apprenticeship Marketplace: Held at Kirkwall Grammar School during Scottish Apprenticeship Week, this event aimed to highlight the range of apprenticeship opportunities available in Orkney. Fifteen employers attended and provided information about their business, apprenticeship opportunities and the skills and qualifications they look for. UHI Orkney also attended to provide information on the range of apprenticeships delivered locally.

In total, 210 pupils from S3-S6 came along to the event. Read more [here](#).

Agricultural Careers Event: Delivered in partnership with the Royal Highland Education Trust (RHET), this was an early careers input aimed at S1 pupils to give them the opportunity to explore the wider careers associated with the Agricultural sector. Held at Orkney Auction Mart, 11 organisations attended the event representing livestock transportation, veterinary science and agricultural engineering. Tours of the mart were also given, along with a mock auction being held by the Auctioneer. Read more [here](#).





Construction Careers Event: The Orkney Construction Training Board held a Construction Careers Event to promote apprenticeship opportunities and increase awareness of the opportunities in the sector.

Over 400 S3 and S4 pupils had the opportunity to interact with 13 different employers and ‘have a go’ at some of the trades including joinery, painting and decorating, bricklaying and plumbing.

Read more [here](#).

Multi-Generational Visits: Pupils from Kirkwall Grammar School have been developing and delivering a range of activities for residents of St Rognvald’s House. This gave pupils the chance to engage with residents and learn more about some of the roles available in Social Care. Pupils developed activities, including painting stones, Halloween crafts and playing with a parachute, to help residents with their fine motor skills, cognitive ability and overall wellbeing. Read more [here](#).



“I found the Midwifery Insight Programme useful for giving a wider overview of what being a midwife is like and some of the things you may have to do in the role. My favourite part was learning about labour and the different stages.”

“This programme confirmed that midwifery is definitely what I would like to do for a career. Getting the experience of going into the maternity ward and being taught in more detail about labour, delivery and after birth was a huge advantage and gave me lots to write about in my UCAS personal statement.”

“I really enjoyed spending time at St Rognvald’s doing activities, as I loved getting to know the residents and hearing the stories they wanted to share. I also enjoyed the rewarding feeling knowing that you had managed to make someone’s day by simply sitting and having a chat, or doing an activity.”

Employer Recruitment Incentives

Employer Recruitment Incentives (ERIs) play an important role in supporting those with the greatest barriers to obtain and remain in sustainable employment. The Employer Recruitment Incentive has been developed to integrate and link fully with existing employability and skills programmes, and is available to use as a financial contribution to the additional costs of recruiting and sustaining eligible individuals in employment.

Employers can apply for funding to help with the costs of recruiting and employing someone who fits the eligibility criteria for the fund. It can provide up to £6,000 for newly created jobs or vacancies.

In 2023-24 **the CLDE Employability team negotiated and administered six Employer Recruitment Incentives across a range of third sector organisations in Orkney**. Five young people (16–24-year-old) were employed and one individual over 25-years-old accessed work through the incentive.

Of the six people who were employed through the incentive **all six remain in fair and sustainable work (100%)**.

In addition, the CLD Employability team continued to support 12 individuals and employers to sustain ERIs established in 2022-23. Of the 12 ERIs established in this period **nine individuals remained in sustainable and fair employment when the funding ended. This equates to 75%**.

Kickstart Placement

In 2023-24 Orkney Islands Council allocated funding to support one Kickstart employment opportunity. This opportunity was based within the administration team of Orkney Health and Care (OHAC) and offered a bespoke 16 hour per week role to meet the needs of the individual and the service.

“I joined a busy floor of very experience admin workers. I can honestly say I have never felt so welcome in a workplace.

I have done everything from scanning to answering very delicate phone calls. The experience and knowledge I have gained of office practices and IT systems while working here has surpassed anything I thought.

My confidence has soared, and I have gained good new friends.

I love every aspect of working here in OHAC and hope to continue for a very long time.”

“Following a meeting with TJ and a colleague from Employability, it was clear she had enthusiasm and personal ambition to get back into the workplace, not to mention relevant experience and a skillset that lent itself well to our administrative needs. OHAC were delighted to be able to host TJ and to support her journey back into employment. Our services are wide ranging and often our administrators cover children’s services, to adult social work and criminal justice. TJ was an immediate asset to the team.

Leo, TJ’s assistive dog is also very much part of our team, and we love having him around.

We would quite simply be lost without TJ and the positivity she brings to OHAC. She has been a delight to work with and we would very much hope that we can continue to work with TJ in the future and to host people who have had similar experiences to TJ who want to get back into the workplace. It has been a rewarding experience as an employer, and I couldn’t recommend the Kickstart programme enough. It brings all sorts of opportunities and life enhancing possibilities.”

Flexibility Works Workshops

The Inclusion and Diversity Subgroup of the Local Employability Partnership worked with Flexibility Works to design and promote two bespoke online learning sessions for local employers, focused on flexible working practices. The sessions offered free resources to local employers with the specific focus on increasing fair, flexible and sustainable work opportunities locally, to support employers recruit and sustain high quality and skilled staff. Sessions covered:

- A business case for flexible working and current flex landscape in Scotland – supported by key research data.
- An overview of the types of flexible working including flex in frontline roles.
- Case studies of flex in action in a range of sectors.
- Unpicking key employer challenges in relation to flex.
- Top tips to move the dial on flex in your organisation.
- An overview of new flexible working legislation – 2024.

Employers also had the opportunity to access bespoke one-to-one consultation session with Flexibility Works to discuss the specifics of implementing flexible working within their organisations.

Challenges

As this report demonstrates, there continues to be a huge collective effort across the partnership to progress towards and meet the actions and outcomes of the Local Employability Partnership Delivery Plan, with numerous positive outcomes achieved.

However, once again during 2023-24, there have been significant challenges at all levels of provision, including planning and service delivery due to delays in Orkney Islands Council receiving the Grant Offer Letter from Scottish Government. The Grant Offer letter which details funding allocations and grant conditions was only received in late July 2023. Uncertainty around allocations, delays in receiving grant offer letters and the persistence of only receiving annual funding to deliver on a three-year plan have caused significant problems. Late confirmation of funding allocation and conditions, combined with a hard stop of March 2024, makes allocating and distributing funds in a significantly reduced time scale extremely challenging, with little lead in time and even less delivery time. Effectively the Local Employability Partnership had to mobilise, deliver and report on an annual allocation within an eight-month period.

These challenges have included:

- The inability to plan in a timely and effective manner to meet the needs of the individuals and communities we work with
- The inability to recruit or maintain staff
- Challenges to procure sustainable provision/services needed within the community

The CLDE service, wider Orkney Island Council colleagues and Local Employability Partnership partners have consistently engaged with Scottish Government to raise these challenges and push for multi-annual funding allocations that are administered in an open and timely manner. Without this, the Local Employability Partnership will continue to have significant challenges in providing effective and efficient provision.

In addition to the financial challenges detailed above, partners across the Local Employability Partnership have identified that the needs of the individuals we are supporting are becoming more complex. Many individuals are experiencing multiple barriers to progressions and therefore they require more individualised and sustained support to make their first steps back into engaging with the community, learning, training and work.

As individual needs grow, it is more important than ever to have sustained Employability Keyworker provision available. Despite the challenges associated with the short-term annualised funding, this report highlights the invaluable work that is taking place across the Local Employability Partnership and the significant support that is being provided to allow people to progress and achieve their full potential.

Conclusion

We hope this report demonstrates the volume, breadth and partnership nature of the work being delivered across the Local Employability Partnership, as we strive to support individuals progress towards fair and sustainable employment in ways that meets their needs and that of the local community.

It must be noted that alone an individual partner would not be able to achieve the volume or breadth of work that has been achieved or more importantly, the associated outcomes. It is only by working creatively and collaboratively that this is possible.

Although a relatively new partnership which continues to develop, there is recognition across the Local Employability Partnership and from wider stakeholders, that this Partnership demonstrates a huge commitment to working together at all levels, to plan, fund, coordinate and deliver inclusive provision which supports the individuals and communities we work with. This puts Orkney in a unique and strong position as we move forward and progress and meet the intended outcomes in the final year of our three-year Operational Plan.

For further information on the 3 Year No One Left Behind Operational Plan 2023-2025 please see the link below –

[LEP Delivery Plan \(orkney.gov.uk\)](https://orkney.gov.uk/lep-delivery-plan)