

**ARGYLL AND BUTE EMPLOYABILITY TEAM – UPDATE ON FINANCIAL
POSITION AND SERVICE PROVISION GOING FORWARD**

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the members of the Policy and Resources Committee with an update on the current financial position of the Argyll and Bute Council's Employability Team and to seek approval to deliver the new Fair Start Scotland contract over a three year period commencing on 3rd April 2018.

Current Financial Position

1.2 Welfare to Work services were devolved to Scotland on the 1st April 2017. To manage this significant policy change from a UK to a Scottish level, the Scottish Government treated this current financial year 2017/18 as a transition year.

1.3 In order to meet the Employability Team's ongoing contractual obligations until the end of 2017/18, with the minimal necessary staffing complement, it was agreed at the Policy and Resources Committee on 29th October 2015, endorsed by Argyll and Bute Council at the full council meeting on 29th November 2015, that an indicative net cost of £456,000 would be covered by Argyll and Bute Council's earmarked reserves as a one-off cost.

1.4 The above committee papers also noted the intent of the Employability Team to actively pursue potential additional income streams. This paper outlines the income from the current provision. This is summarised as follows:

- delivery of the Employability Fund across Argyll and Bute on behalf of Skills Development Scotland (SDS) for the final quarter of 2016/17 and for the financial year 2017/18;
- delivery of the Work Able Scotland contract across Argyll and Bute during 2017/18 on behalf of Progress Scotland; and
- ad hoc employability service provision, within short timescales, such as the delivery of discrete courses for Jobcentre Plus during 2017/18.

- 1.5 Employability Fund provision during 2017/18 is being delivered in partnership with the Council's Adult Learning and Literacies Service. As well as assisting with client delivery on the ground (with associated delivery costs being paid internally between teams) this service also hosts the Argyll and Bute Community Learning Scottish Qualifications Assessment (SQA) Centre.
- 1.6 Over the last three years (since April 2014 to date) the Employability Team has supported 266 individuals into work.
- 1.7 With detailed input from Strategic Finance the anticipated end position by the 31st March 2018 is forecast to be a surplus of £113,626. Therefore a forecast balance of £435,164 could be released back to the general fund from earmarking. Please see **Appendix B, Tables B1 and B2** for the detailed financial calculations.
- 1.8 The Employability Team worked with a range of council services to achieve its improved financial position, in particular the Adult Learning and Literacies Service, and will continue to do so.

Future Provision

- 1.9 During this current financial year, the Scottish Government has devised the new Fair Start Scotland contract which was put out to tender in May 2017 for provision over the three financial years 2018/19 until the end of 2020/21.
- 1.10 The successful tender for the Highlands and Islands contractual area was awarded to an organisation called PeoplePlus (as announced on 4th October 2017). Argyll and Bute Council's Employability Team was included in the PeoplePlus bid to deliver the Fair Start Scotland contract across the whole of the Argyll and Bute area. However, it was made clear in a covering letter to PeoplePlus that participation of and delivery by Argyll and Bute Council would be subject to approval by the Policy and Resources Committee on 8th December 2017.
- 1.11 At present, the indicative contract value for Argyll and Bute over the three year lifetime of Fair Start Scotland is **£866,150** (net of PeoplePlus management fees). This contract will come with on-costs such as a start fee per customer (figures to be confirmed but approximately £400-£600 per start) plus ongoing sustainment payments triggered after 13 weeks in a job outcome. It should be noted that the indicative contract value is dependent on the indicative referral numbers being achieved for each contractual delivery strand (detailed in the report). The financial difficulties experienced during the Work Programme are not expected to arise with the Fair Start Scotland contract due to the more financially viable payment model being offered which is anticipated to make the Employability Team self-financing.
- 1.12 The annual wage bill for the remaining five staff within the Employability Team is circa £142k thus the indicative contract value for Argyll and Bute

will meet such costs and allow for associated running costs that will not exceed £140k per annum. The service provision, financial and operational risks for this contract are outlined in **Table 2** in the main report with clear mitigation actions included for each risk.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Members are asked to:

- Agree that the Employability Team delivers the Fair Start Scotland contract which has an indicative value of £866,150 (net of management fees) over the lifetime of the contract.
- Agree that unused earmarking is released back to the general fund, estimated to be approximately £435k (better than anticipated).

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the members of the Policy and Resources Committee with an update on the current financial position of the Argyll and Bute Council's Employability Team and to seek approval to deliver the new Fair Start Scotland contract over a three year period commencing on 3rd April 2018.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Members are asked to:

- Agree that the Employability Team delivers the Fair Start Scotland contract which has an indicative value of £866,150 (net of management fees) over the lifetime of the contract.
- Agree that unused earmarking is released back to the general fund, estimated to be approximately £435k (better than anticipated).

4.0 DETAIL

4.1 The overarching remit for the Council's Employability Team is to assist long term unemployed people into sustainable employment. Since the service's inception in 1999, the team has developed a preventative approach to employment support for the most vulnerable individuals across Argyll and Bute and has enabled cost savings elsewhere, particularly on health issues, given the significant correlations between unemployment, low income and health outcomes.

4.2 Over the last three years (since April 2014 to date) the Employability Team has supported 266 individuals into work.

4.3 With detailed input from Strategic Finance the anticipated end position by the 31st March 2018 is forecast to be a surplus of £113,626. Therefore a forecast balance of £435,164 could be released back to the general fund from earmarking. Please see **Appendix B, Table B1 and B2** for the detailed financial calculations.

- 4.4 The Employability Team worked with a range of council services to achieve its improved financial position, in particular the Adult Learning and Literacies Service, and will continue to do so.
- 4.5 In order to meet the Employability Team's ongoing contractual obligations until the end of 2017/18, with the minimal necessary staffing complement, it was agreed at the Policy and Resources Committee on 29th October 2015, endorsed by Argyll and Bute Council at the full council meeting on 29th November 2015, that an indicative net cost of £456k would be covered by Argyll and Bute Council's earmarked reserves as a one-off cost.
- 4.6 The approval of the funding support to cover the staffing costs and operational activities of the Employability Team until the end of March 2018 was also based on the requirement for the team to actively pursue potential additional income streams to offset the call on earmarked reserves. The secured Employability Fund provision on behalf of Skills Development Scotland (SDS) for the final quarter of 2016/17, and Employability Fund for SDS and Work Able contract for Progress Scotland during 2017/18, did not incur any additional operational expenditure (bar internal team payments¹) as the funding models associated with the new provision included on-costs such as recruitment payments at the outset and rural uplift payments eligible for all customers in Argyll and Bute. A summary of the aims of the contracts delivered are presented in **Appendix A**.

Service Provision 2018/19 to 2020/21

- 4.7 During this current financial year, the Scottish Government has devised the new Fair Start Scotland contract which was put out to tender in May 2017 for provision over the three financial years 2018/19 until the end of 2020/21. As with the current Employability Fund and Work Able contracts referrals are entirely voluntary. Fair Start Scotland will offer specialist support to long-term unemployed people and claimants with health conditions, disabilities and a wide range of other complex barriers.
- 4.8 The successful tender for the Highlands and Islands contractual area was awarded to an organisation called PeoplePlus (as announced on 4th October 2017). Argyll and Bute Council's Employability Team was included in the PeoplePlus bid to deliver the Fair Start Scotland contract across the whole of the Argyll and Bute area. However, it was made clear in a covering letter to PeoplePlus that participation of and delivery by Argyll and Bute Council would be subject to approval by the Policy and Resources Committee on 8th December 2017.
- 4.9 At present, the indicative contract value for Argyll and Bute over the three year lifetime of Fair Start Scotland is **£866,150** (net of PeoplePlus management fees). This contract will come with on-costs such as a start fee per customer (figures to be confirmed but approximately £400-£600

¹ Further to an operational decision taken by senior officers, the Employability Team, in partnership with the Council's Adult Learning and Literacies Service, is currently delivering the Employability Fund on behalf of SDS until the end of March 2017/18

per start) plus ongoing sustainment payments triggered after 13 weeks in a job outcome.

- 4.10 It should be noted that this indicative contract value is dependent on the referral numbers being achieved for each contractual delivery strand as depicted in **Table 1** below. The referral figures quoted are estimates at this time and need to be used with care until a formal contract has been received from PeoplePlus. Signing of such a contract will be subject to scrutiny by the Council's Legal Services and ultimately on approval of the recommendations in this paper.

Table 1: Argyll and Bute Volume Projections & Indicative Contract Value			
	Core Strand	Advanced Strand	Intense Strand
Customer Volumes	63	224	161
Indicative contract value until end of 2020/21			£866,150

Source: Scottish Government's (SG) volume projections, which may be subject to change.

- 4.11 The annual wage bill for the remaining five staff within the Employability Team is circa £142k thus the indicative contract value for Argyll and Bute will meet such costs and allow for associated running costs that will not exceed £140k per annum. Such running costs will include the provision of appropriate external specialist health service provision, tutors as required and internal payments to the Council's Adult Learning and Literacies Service for delivery support. In addition, PeoplePlus will provide specialist self-employment support on a call-off basis at no additional cost to the council for up to 15% of the indicative volumes outlined in **Table 1** above. It is not clear at this time if this 15% applies to each strand or 15% of the volumes across all strands.
- 4.12 The information received on the contract to date, including anticipated performance levels, is outlined in **Appendix C**. It should be noted that an initial introductory meeting has been arranged by PeoplePlus on 23rd November which will be followed by a two day training session (date to be confirmed) where it is hoped more details on the contractual delivery requirements will be provided. As appropriate, officers will provide a verbal update to committee members on the 8th December.
- 4.13 In summary, if the Fair Start Scotland contract goes ahead the anticipated value will support the staff costs of the existing Employability Team staff and associated running costs to continue to support vulnerable residents in the communities across the whole of Argyll and Bute which includes urban, rural, remote rural and island areas, complemented by input from PeoplePlus, Adult Learning and Literacies staff and specialist provision as required. There will be no redundancies incurred at this time.
- 4.14 As presented in **Appendix D**, there is also the ongoing potential for the Employability Team to deliver ad hoc provision for the DWP through the detailed factsheets on the team's experience and capabilities that have been uploaded onto the new Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS).

Service provision is demand led by DWP and to date no calls have been required for Argyll and Bute.

Risks

4.14 **Table 2** below outlines the risks associated with the delivery of employability services and how these will be addressed. A value score of between 1-5 has been deemed as low risk (green); a value score of between 6-12 represents medium risk (amber) and a value score of between 15-25 has been deemed as high risk (red).

Table 2: Risks Associated with Employability Provision				
Service Provision Risks				
Description	Prob	Impact	Value	Action to mitigate risks
Policy and Resources Committee does not give approval for the Council's Employability Team (in partnership with Adult Learning and Literacies) to deliver the Fair Start Scotland contract over the period, 2018/19 to 2020/21.	2	5	10	There are no other providers that can cover the whole of the Argyll and Bute area. PeoplePlus (contracted by the Scottish Government to deliver this contract within Argyll and Bute) would therefore have difficulty finding alternative providers if the Employability Team did not deliver the Fair Start Scotland contract. The Employability Team would cease to operate during 2018/19 subject to compliant completion of existing contracts.
Financial Risks				
Description	Prob	Impact	Value	Action to mitigate risks
Employability service provision – costs of delivery outweigh the income generated.	1	5	5	The funding models are based on an on-costs approach where payments are made for programme starts rather than an outcome based model associated with initiatives such as the former DWP Work Programme.
Council spends money which it cannot reclaim from main provider due to non-compliance with financial record keeping.	1	4	4	With direct input from Strategic Finance, robust systems will be put in place to monitor spend and claims to the main provider, to ensure compliance with programme rules.
Lower number of referrals than anticipated at the contract outset.	2	4	8	Actively promote Fair Start to ensure referring agencies are fully aware of provision and its benefits to the customer.

Table 2: Risks Associated with Employability Provision (continued)				
Operational Risks				
Description	Prob	Impact	Value	Action to mitigate risks
Failure to engage by voluntary customer	2	4	8	Ensure customer's attention is grasped from the outset to highlight the benefits regular attendance can make to their

				life style and wellbeing.
Inappropriate referral	1	5	5	This would add a time pressure on achieving the full number of referrals. A quick turnaround from referral to induction will mitigate the effects of this and allow for a quick replacement candidate.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 This report provides the members of the Policy and Resources Committee with an update on the current financial position of the Argyll and Bute Council's Employability Team and seeks approval to deliver the new Fair Start Scotland contract over a three-year period commencing on 3rd April 2018.
- 5.2 By working together, PeoplePlus, the Employability Team, the Adult Learning and Literacies Service, and specialist support, as appropriate, are able to offer a unique approach to delivery of the employability provision across Argyll and Bute. Through combining skills, strengths and experience this approach will allow for maximum benefit to be delivered to vulnerable individuals across the whole of Argyll and Bute's urban, rural, remote rural and island communities through existing employability professionals.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy The current and proposed employability service provision fits and contributes to *Outcome 3: Education, skills and training maximises opportunities for all* and *Outcome 5: People live active, healthier and independent lives* within the Local Outcome Improvement Plan.
- 6.2 Financial The funding models have a payment structure which includes upfront customer start costs prior to ongoing sustainment payments which are triggered after 13 weeks in a job outcome. The financial difficulties experienced during the Work Programme are not expected to arise with the Fair Start Scotland contract due to the more financially viable payment model being offered which is anticipated to make the Employability Team self-financing.
- 6.3 Legal All appropriate legal implications will be taken into consideration.
- 6.4 HR The delivery of potential employability services will be taken forward by the existing staffing complement of five staff within the Council's Employability Team and with Adult Learning and Literacies staff supplemented by input from specialist support as appropriate.

6.5	Equalities	Delivery of the Fair Start Scotland contract will comply with all Equal Opportunities policies and obligations.
6.6	Risk	See Table 2 in the main report.
6.7	Customer Services	None.

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2nd November 2017

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Appendix A: Secured Contracts

Employability Fund

Employability Fund activity aims to support employability, vocational training and employment opportunities linked to the local labour market which falls within Stages 2 to 4 of the nationally recognised Strategic Skills Pipeline. The nature of content expected from the Strategic Skills Pipeline is outlined in **Table A1** below.

Table A1: Strategic Skills Pipeline (SSP) – Stages 2 to 4	
Stage	Nature of Content Expected
Stage 2	Provision should create a foundation upon which individuals can build their employability skills, personal development and core skills.
Stage 3	Provision should support individuals in preparing for and sustaining employment, including entry to Modern Apprenticeships.
Stage 4	SDS approved industry specific provision should directly enable individuals to access sustained employment.

A proposed participant is eligible for Employability Fund activity if he/she:

- has been assessed as requiring interventions which fall within Stages 2 to 4 of the Strategic Skills Pipeline;
- is ineligible for support under the DWP Work Programme; and
- is within one of the following categories:
 - those aged 17 and under, who have reached their statutory school leaving date and not in education, employment or training;
 - those aged 18 and over who are in receipt of DWP benefits and have been unemployed for a period of 13 weeks or more (does not include those in receipt of Universal Credit who are earning);
 - those under threat of redundancy and are within 13 weeks of their notified date of redundancy; or
 - those who are 18 and over, not in receipt of benefit and not in education, employment or training.

Referrals to the Employability Fund come from a number of referring organisations, which includes Argyll and Bute Council as presented in **Table A2** below.

Table A2: Referring Organisations	
Referring Organisation	Designated Staff
SDS	SDS Regional Operations staff
DWP	DWP Jobcentre Plus staff
Argyll and Bute Council	The Local Employability Partnership e.g. post school departments such as Community Learning and Development. Opportunities under the Council's Modern Apprenticeship Programme.
Argyll College, UHI	Appropriate Argyll College UHI staff
Employability Fund Training Providers	Each agency with a current SDS contract for delivery of the Employability Fund shall decide which staff can make referrals to the Employability Fund e.g. Employability Team Area Team Leaders and Adult Learning staff.

Argyll and Bute Council's Employability Team currently deliver stage 2 and stage 3 Employability Fund on behalf of Skills Development Scotland (SDS) to individuals across Argyll and Bute. The contract allocation is; 41 stage 2 and 30 stage 3 for the financial year 2017/18. To date they have received 18 stage 2 and 11 stage 3 starts. Estimated income generation is £125,900.

Work Able Scotland

The Work Able Scotland contract is an interim part of Scotland's new employability services. The initial one-year contract, is managed by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) to provide continuity of support for those who need it most.

Argyll and Bute Council's Employability Team delivers the contract on behalf of Progress Scotland (a consortium between Working Links and Lennox Partnership), this commenced on 1st April 2017 for the financial year 2017/18.

The aim of this provision is to:

- support Work Able Scotland customers into sustainable jobs through the provision of high quality employment support to those with health conditions who want to enter the labour market and for whom the achievement of a job outcome is a reasonable objective within the period of 52 weeks, (a job outcome will be defined as 16 hours or more per week for a period of 6 weeks); and
- work in partnership with stakeholders to establish support that achieves high quality outcomes.

To be eligible customers must be:

- 18 years and over;
- not in employment;
- in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit equivalent;
- eligible and assessed as capable of progressing into work within a 12 month period; and
- want to work.

The length of support for all customers is 52 weeks in line with the requirements of the Scotland Act 2016. Referrals to the programme were initially capped and it was anticipated that Argyll and Bute Council would be allocated 17 starts to deliver during 2017/18 with an estimated income generation of £30,300. To date the Employability Team has received 16 starts. As the uptake has been slow in other contract package areas, the Employability Team has been informed it may receive slightly more starts than the initial 17.

Appendix B: Current and Forecast Financial Position

The actual (2016/17), current (2017/18) and forecast financial position is as detailed in **Table B1** below. With detailed input from Strategic Finance the anticipated end position by the 31st March 2018 is forecast to be a surplus of £113,626.

Table B1: Employability Team – Anticipated Financial Position at 31st March 2018				
Costs	Position at end of March 2016	2016/17	2017/18	Anticipated end position, end of March 2018
Staffing costs		£175,050	£142,268	£317,318
Running costs/expenditure (e.g. staff travel, premises, delivery partner payments etc. but excluding salaries)		£44,361	£60,443	£104,804
Mandatory Work Activity Programme (MWA)		£5,040		£5,040
Community Work Placement (CWP)		£13,843		£13,843
Scottish Employer Recruitment Incentive (SERI)		£3,207		£3,207
All DWP contractual income only				
Actual		-£354,655	-£89,553	-£444,208
Projected			-£36,710	-£36,710
Costs related to partner payments				
Actual		£188,559	£46,608	£235,167
Projected			£22,732	£22,732
Net contractual income (income – partner costs)		-£166,096	-£56,923	-£223,019
Non DWP secured income				
Mandatory Work Activity Programme (MWA)		-£8,190		-£8,190
Community Work Placement (CWP)		-£77,552		-£77,552
ERI		-£35,604		-£35,604
Agreed annual contribution from EDI		-£15,000	-£3,000	-£18,000
Contribution from Economic Development with regard to ESF application preparation and Scottish Employer Recruitment Incentive (SERI)		-£1,500		-£1,500
Contribution from Economic Development to mitigate drawdown on Council reserves		-£9,500		-£9,500
Additional one off contribution for Redundancy and Inverness rent costs		-£15,600		-£15,600
New Employability Fund		-£8,848	-£125,900	-£134,748
Work Able Scotland (commenced 01/04/17)			-£29,790	-£29,790
Redundancy Provision		-£4,335		-£4,335
Forecast Balance		-£100,724	-£12,902	-£113,626

The calculation to show the derivation of the forecast balance of £360,164 be released back to the general fund from earmarking is outlined in **Table B2** below.

Table B2: Employability Team – Earmarked Reserves	
<i>Forecast surplus to return to earmarking</i>	£113,626
Original earmarked reserves	£456,000
Drawdown to date from earmarked reserves	£134,462
<i>Balance remaining of earmarked reserves</i>	£321,538
Forecast balance to be released back to the general fund from earmarked reserves	£435,164

Appendix C: Potential Contracts for 2018/19

Fair Start Scotland

Fair Start Scotland is Scotland's new Employability Support Service and will commence from 3rd April 2018 following the one year transitional programme, Work Able Scotland and Work First Scotland.

PeoplePlus was successful in their tender submission to deliver this contract in the Highlands and Islands contract package area. Argyll and Bute Council's Employability Team has been approached by PeoplePlus to deliver provision on their behalf in Argyll and Bute.

The key focus for the service will be tailored and personalised support for all those who participate. Key elements of the service are:

- It will be entirely voluntary and will offer specialist support to long-term unemployed people and claimants with health conditions, disabilities and a wide range of other complex barriers.
- It will provide support to disabled people and those at risk of becoming long-term unemployed to find and retain work.
- All participants can expect to receive in-depth action planning to ensure the support they receive is tailored for them and suits their individual needs and circumstances.
- The service will offer pre-work support of 12 to 18 months.
- The service will offer high quality in-work support for 12 months.
- Those who require specialist support to help them find work can expect to receive it; working closely with specialist health services, specialist intervention partners and experts in this field.
- There will be national standards to ensure everyone is supported consistently across the nine geographic contract package areas across Scotland.
- For disabled customers who require intensive support, supported employment and individual placement and support will be available.

Performance Levels

All subcontractors will be required to meet the Scottish Government's (SG) minimum performance levels, detailed within the Fair Start Scotland ITT documentation. PeoplePlus's final performance offer to SG will be above the minimum performance levels. For illustrative purposes, PeoplePlus has detailed the Fair Start Scotland expected minimum performance levels by service strand in the **Table C1** below. The final performance offer will be shared with subcontractors upon award of contract.

Table C1: Minimum Performance Levels			
	A	B	C
Service Strand	13 week job outcome %	26 week sustain % of 13 week job outcomes	52 week sustain % of 13 week job outcomes
Core	41%	84%	70%
Advanced	27%	84%	70%
Intense	28%	84%	70%

Note: A: 13 week job outcome is the % starts that sustain a job at 13 weeks.

B: 26 week sustain is the % of 13 week job outcomes that sustain after 26 weeks.

C: 52 week sustain is the % of 13 week job outcomes that sustain after 52 weeks.

Appendix D: Ad hoc Contract Delivery for 2017/18 and 2018/19

Provision for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

The DWP has launched a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) as a new way of delivering local provision which will operate in all Jobcentre Plus (JCP) districts in England, Scotland and Wales. The DPS comprises an "Employability Journey" which details a number of Service Categories along with supporting narratives to explain what type of provision DWP will be buying. The DPS has been redeveloped as an accreditation portal for Welfare to Work providers to enter into contracts via the Basware online contracting system.

All potential employability providers need to become accredited on the DPS portal in order to be considered for delivery. Further to an operational decision by senior officers, Argyll and Bute Council successfully registered on Basware as a supplier of work focused activities to the DWP on the 30th of September 2016. Upon accreditation service providers are asked to upload service delivery factsheets in one or more of the service provision categories as follows:

- 1: engagement;
- 2: moving towards work;
- 3: support for hardest to help with complex and multiple barriers;
- 4: supporting hardest to help into work;
- 5: addressing barriers;
- 6: skills for work;
- 7: getting jobs; and
- 8: keeping jobs.

Factsheets have been prepared and uploaded by the Employability Team and the Adult Learning and Literacies Service.

Both of these council services propose to deliver tailored sessions according to their strengths e.g. the Employability Team has many years of experience in delivering soft skills (confidence building, interpersonal communication, interview techniques, motivation) and work placements, whereas Adult Learning and Literacies is accredited by the SQA to deliver digital, literacy, numeracy and employability skills. The intention is to deliver across all categories (some provision will be provided by both services for discrete elements of each category) with the exception of the first category.

The main requirement of this new method of purchasing provision is that the courses are short and targeted to a specific labour market need. Courses may last one day or up to four weeks or longer, depending on the topics covered and the desired outcome. Income will be generated only if one of the services is selected to deliver a particular course, with a fee per participant, for customers in the Argyll and Bute area. It may be that no provision is secured through the DPS. Therefore, it is difficult to forecast an income stream from this opportunity.