



# Community Planning Aberdeen

<b>Progress Report</b>	Project End Report 2.3: Employability Support for Care Experienced Young People
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<b>Governance Group</b>	CPA Board – 19/042023

## Purpose of the Report

This report presents the results of the LOIP (Local Outcome Improvement Plan) Improvement Project Aim 2.3 which sought to support 15 care experienced young people progress to employment through public sector funded employability programmes by 2023 and seeks approval to close the project as the aim has been achieved.

## Summary of Key Information

### 1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Many care experienced young people face significant barriers to employment and the majority of those who do will need additional support and mentoring to help them achieve and sustain employment. The range of barriers faced is broad and can seem overwhelming.
- 1.2 Significant interventions and support can be needed to get them to a position of being ready for employment and able for work. Some of these young people are living chaotic lifestyles, and mental health can be a challenge for many. Events in their pasts prevent them from accessing certain jobs or put them at a disadvantage, for example a lack of family support and guidance, or indeed ongoing family issues can cause difficulties.
- 1.3 This is not the case for all care experienced young people and it is important that all are treated as individuals. This report is written in general terms, with a recognition that care experienced young people generally face greater barriers than those who are not care experienced. It is known that a higher proportion of care experienced young people are likely to engage in risky behaviours, including drug use, to offend, or to have a criminal record than those who are not care experienced. This cohort is also at a higher risk of homelessness than those who have not come through the care system. It is also known that many care experienced young people will have lower attainment levels than those who are not care experienced. Positive and early work experience or employment helps with a smoother transition to life beyond care and minimises the risk of homelessness and offending.

- 1.4 National Health Service Research found that a young person not in education, employment, or training (NEET) in 2008 would cost an average of £56,000 in public finance costs before retirement age. This reflects the public finance costs of welfare payments, health and justice-related costs and lower tax and national insurance revenue. On the basis of this, the Scottish Government estimates the lifetime cost of a single cohort of young people failing to make the transition into regular employment to be in the region of £2 billion. There are significant links between unemployment and poor physical and mental health.
- 1.5 The Covid-19 pandemic negatively impacted the employment opportunities for young people, both in the short term and longer term ‘scarring effect,’ as well as being known to have increased social isolation, anxiety, and mental health difficulties. This report should be read in the context of care experienced young people facing even greater barriers to employment than pre-Covid, but conversely with greater funding available in the employability system to support them.

## **2 IMPROVEMENT PROJECT AIM**

- 2.1 Against this background, on 22 February 2022 the CPA Board approved the [project charter](#) for the initiation of an improvement project which aimed to support 15 care experienced young people into employment through public sector-funded employability programmes. Work on this improvement aim was already underway via a charter which was created ahead of the LOIP refresh.
- 2.2 The additional challenges faced by care experienced young people, and poorer outcomes across many areas of life are well known. This is a group of young people who may need extra support and, in many cases, do not have family support, or appropriate family support, but are instead reliant on corporate parents. The majority of Community Planning Aberdeen member organisations are corporate parents. Supporting these young people into employment can result in significant improvements in their life outcomes, and reduce the risks, listed above, which they may face.

## **3 WHAT CHANGES DID WE MAKE?**

- 3.1 The journey to employment can be a lengthy one, sometimes with bumps along the road and taking years to navigate. The prospect of entering employment can also be frightening for some people and may seem unachievable. In delivering this project, while employment was the ultimate end goal, securing a ‘positive destination’ (education, training, formal volunteering) was the initial focus with a longer-term view of moving into employment.
- 3.2 A number of changes were tested during the project:

### RiteWorks

- 3.3 Working Rite was commissioned to deliver a pilot programme delivering intensive employability support for care experienced young people, taking account of the wide variety of needs and challenges they may face, in partnership with Aberdeen City Council’s ABZWorks employability team. Youth Social Work teams, the Virtual Headteacher, and partner agencies including Skills Development Scotland were informed of the project and referral routes into it, and sat on the project steering group.
- 3.4 This project gave Working Rite direct access to relevant teams across the organisation, including in Children’s Homes – more access than any other local authority has ever provided them with – and this approach has been particularly helpful in ensuring the appropriate support has been in place for each young person engaging in the

RiteWorks project, as well as ensuring that any concerns could be immediately addressed by the most appropriate professional.

- 3.5 The intention was to start with one-to-one activity and move to groupwork when individuals were ready, however given the different stages on the [employability pipeline](#), interests, and barriers they were facing, combined with the pandemic and lockdowns, most of the work was one-to-one. It included confidence building, access to fitness and team building activity (largely through Street Soccer sessions), online and face-to-face training, ASDAN qualifications, work tasters, and work experience. Linked to this, the WorkingRite team has been supporting the young people capture their stories, in their own words.

#### Guaranteed Interview Scheme

- 3.6 The Council has offered a guaranteed interview scheme under the Disability Confident Scheme for over 20 years to those candidates that consider themselves to have a disability under the Equality Act 2010. In September 2019, the scheme was expanded to allow for proactive and positive action for other disadvantaged or under-represented groups including care experienced young people, those that are in continuing care or are a care leaver up to age 29 applying for all jobs. Applicants will be required to meet the minimum job requirements for the specific role.

#### Kickstart

- 3.7 The UK Government Kickstart scheme, operated by the Department of Work and Pensions, provided paid six-month work experience placements for 16-25-year-olds who were in receipt of Universal Credit and identified as being at risk of long-term unemployment. Aberdeen City Council acted both as a Kickstart gateway, supporting employers to access the scheme, and as a Kickstart employer in its own right.

#### Seed Fund

- 3.8 Using Young Person Guarantee Funds from Scottish Government, ABZWorks created a seed fund for 16-25-year-olds who were not in education, employment, or training.

#### Communication

- 3.12 A series of information sharing sessions was hosted by ABZWorks to help social workers supporting young people to understand the support available from the employability team.

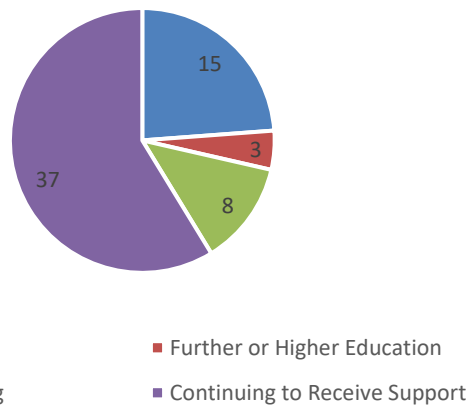
#### ABZWorks Website

- 3.13 Aberdeen City Council's Socio-Economic Rescue Plan identified two specific actions linked to employability and education: the first was to create a website promoting employability support to people of all ages in the city, and the other to promote learner pathways to young people and parents. These actions were taken together to create the [ABZWorks](#) website, which was delivered via Young Person Guarantee funding.

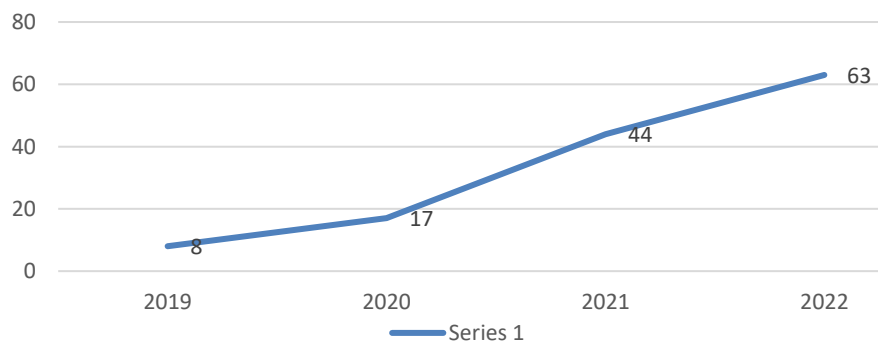
### **4 HAVE OUR CHANGES RESULTED IN IMPROVEMENT?**

- 4.1 Yes, the project has achieved its aim with 15 care experienced young people moving into employment. Between 1 April 2019 and 31 January 2023, 63 had accessed support via ABZWorks. Of those, 15 had moved into employment, three into further or higher education, eight had progressed to further training and the remainder continue receiving support. Since 31 January, two care experienced young people have been referred to/registered with ABZWorks, in addition to the 34 who have come forward for the aforementioned paid work experience project.

### Progression Routes for CEYP participating in public sector employability programmes



### No of CEYP Accessing Support through ABZWorks



The project measured the impact of each of the changes tested with the following impact achieved:

#### RiteWorks

4.2 Twenty-eight young people have received support through the RiteWorks project. Of those, 12 have moved onto positive destinations (employment and further education), eight of whom are known to have sustained beyond six weeks. Three are currently on work experience placements, five continue to engage with support, eight are disengaging or failing to reach a positive destination, though support remains available to them.

#### Guaranteed Interview Scheme

4.3 Unfortunately, the system used for recruitment does not enable reporting of numbers who ticked the Guaranteed Interview box, so we cannot report on outcomes for this. However, this scheme is promoted to all care experienced young people by various teams supporting them and specifically by the People and Organisational Development team which actively promotes the option, the Youth Team, and ABZWorks employability keyworkers, all of whom actively encourage care experienced young people to identify themselves as care experienced. This includes reassurance where needed that the scheme is beneficial, not detrimental, to a young person’s chances of securing employment. Information about this scheme has been shared with training providers across the city.

#### Kickstart

- 4.4 The DWP controlled referrals to Kickstart jobs and does not record whether a young person is care experienced, so we are unable to confirm the number of care experienced young people securing jobs with employers who accessed it via the ACC Gateway. Of the 83 Kickstart interns who secured Kickstart opportunities within the authority, two disclosed that they are care experienced. They have since secured sustained employment outwith the authority. Kickstart was a fixed-term opportunity and the DWP currently has no plans to repeat it.
- 4.5 Through the Scottish Government-funded Long Term Unemployed Labour Market Initiative scheme for people aged 25+ who had been unemployed for 12 months or more Aberdeen City Council supported 89 people into paid work experience placements in similar vein to Kickstart, paid at Real Living Wage rate. Three of the 89 are care experienced. This scheme will run until the end of March 2023.
- 4.6 Following the success of Kickstart, Council officers have developed a paid-work experience scheme of 12 weeks duration and paid at Real Living Wage rate, for care experienced young people within the authority. 34 young people have been put forward for this to date, with carefully selected managers signed up to participate and support these young people. Employability officers working alongside the Talent team will oversee the placements. Work is being carried out in advance of young people being placed to ensure that they are ready for the opportunity, and employability support will be put in place for those who are not yet ready, with a view to moving them into placements at the right time. Single year employability funding means that the future of this project, if successful cannot be guaranteed.

#### Seed Fund

- 4.7 Of the 11 young people who have accessed this fund to date, two disclosed being care experienced. Of them, one is resident in Aberdeen and was supported to set up a carpet fitting business. The other is a young woman who is cared for outwith the city and was supported to set up in business as a personal trainer working in a gym. All young people accessing the seed fund receive support from their ABZWorks keyworker and a Business Gateway advisor. The seed fund will continue to be offered, subject to availability of funding.

#### Communication

- 4.8 During those sessions and discussions with the Youth Team lead it became apparent that social workers were not fully aware of the support available, and many had been trying to provide employability support themselves. These sessions also helped to assuage concerns from social workers that insufficient support would be provided to young people who may struggle to engage or were not yet ready for employability support. The assurance that the door to employability support remains open to our care experienced young people was welcomed. This messaging has resulted in an increase in referrals for employability support from social work. Referral sources are not recorded in such a way as to enable us to report on the numbers received without going through the record of every participant on employability programmes, however, the increase in the numbers of care experienced young people receiving support via ABZWorks reflects the success of this simple approach, which is now BAU.

#### ABZWorks Website

- 4.9 The Champion's Board was involved in the creation of the site, which since launch on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2021 has had 7,956 visits. In early 2021, the Champions Board was consulted on how best to directly engage with care experienced young people. In June 2021, direct consultations were held with care experienced young people. Their views

were sought on the design and navigation of the website, the content and the visual elements. They were also invited to co-produce some content for the website and this process provided an entry pathway into broader ABZ Works Employability Programmes. The ABZWorks chatbot was introduced as a direct response a direct response to feedback from care experienced young people, to help them to easily find what they need. It is not possible to say how many of those visits have been by care experienced young people.

- 4.10 The views of young people, via the Champions Board, have been taken into account in the development and delivery of the above listed activity, whether that is in the development of their bespoke employability action plans with their keyworker, or development of programmes

## **5 HOW WILL WE SUSTAIN THESE IMPROVEMENTS?**

- 5.1 External funding streams have been used to deliver elements of the improvement activity detailed in this report and these funds are essential to ensure ongoing support at scale. We will continue to provide support to care experienced young people and to deliver activity which we have established is successful, but also to trial new and innovative approaches, and to include young people in the development of those. An early example of this has been to set up a working group of care experienced young people with support of a City Growth Employability project officer to develop a pilot employability project for care experienced young people
- 5.2 Ongoing and regular communication with partner services and agencies to promote the availability of employability services to care experienced young people is essential to ensuring awareness of the support available and ongoing referrals and engagement. This is now business as usual. It is equally essential that ABZWorks continues working with the Youth Team, virtual headteacher, and Skills Development Scotland to promote the availability of support directly to young people. This relational piece is essential to ensuring an ongoing spirit of trust and collaboration between professionals, which results in positive opportunities and outcomes for young people.
- 5.3 The Guaranteed Interview Scheme and associated support activity has been incorporated into business as usual.
- 5.4 The identification of care experienced young people as a target group for support in the LEP Delivery and Action Plan ensures that a focus will remain on this cohort of young people. Several LEP members are corporate parents, which further cements the focus on this group of young people for future years.
- 5.5 Taking a person-centred approach and ensuring that the needs and aspirations of care experienced young people are heard and taken into account in the development of their individual employability activity is essential to success and continued engagement. That person-centred approach is built into the Scottish Government's No One Left Behind strategy, which is our main source of funding and so is embedded into the service as business as usual.

## **6 HOW WILL WE MONITOR THESE IMPROVEMENTS?**

- 6.1 The ABZWorks team is required as part of the No One Left Behind grant agreement with Scottish Government, which provides the majority of funds for employability activity delivered by the Council, to report on everyone receiving employability support



and the barriers they have to employment. Being care experienced is one of those barriers. This reporting is anonymised.

- 6.2 The LEP is required to report, via the LEP Chair (Council's employability lead), to Community Planning Aberdeen on a quarterly basis, about its activity, including support delivered to and outcomes achieved for target groups. The quarterly report is delivered to Aberdeen Prospers.
- 6.3 Should it be agreed that the project is ended, the data recorded will also continue to be monitored and reported to Aberdeen Prospers, as well as added to the Outcomes Framework/Improvement Programme Dashboard to ensure that performance continues.

## **7 OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCALE UP AND SPREAD**

- 7.1 One of the key improvements made through this project has been achieved via relationship building, information sharing, and awareness raising both amongst professionals and individuals. The successes of that have led to significantly increased numbers of care experienced young people engaging with employability services and progressing along the employability pipeline. This activity is applicable to any group of people entitled to employability support and is being stepped up across the piece. A good example of this is in the response to the influx to Aberdeen of displaced Ukrainian people. The response has brought Council services and other agencies together to not only work closely together to support our Ukrainian Guests across a range of needs, but also to share information, knowledge, and best practise resulting in, for example, ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) for the care sector classes being delivered to support activity to move people into employment in the health and social care sector.
- 7.2 Participant voice is incredibly important to the success of any employability activity and should be embedded in all employability work, and in any LOIP activity which seeks to provide support to groups of people and individuals to improve outcomes for them. Lived experience is invaluable.
- 7.3 As noted elsewhere in the report, the scale of success of this Improvement Project would not have been possible without external funding, and Young Person Guarantee (YPG) funds in particular have been used to pay for activity which involved cost in this Improvement Project. YPG funds are now at an end and, while we continue to receive No One Left Behind monies, financial restrictions will limit how far activity can be scaled up or spread for care experienced young people. Funding, alongside procurement rules, mean there is no guarantee that the RiteWorks programme can be extended beyond the current contract. However, the learning from it can be taken forward and applied elsewhere.
- 7.4 The Guaranteed Interview Scheme is something which could be spread and adopted by other organisations. Aberdeen City Council has already increased the number of Guaranteed Interview Scheme options for other groups, including people with disabilities and young people educated in Aberdeen City Council schools.
- 7.5 Experience gained through this project is being used in other Aberdeen Prospers activity, including a project to support people aged 50+ into employment, and another to support people with convictions into employment.

## Recommendations for Action

It is recommended that the CPA Board:

- i) Agree that testing is concluded and that this Improvement Project is brought to an end on the basis that 15 care experienced young people have secured employment and almost 100 are engaged in employability support activity.
- ii) Note that the majority of activity delivered as part of this project has been delivered using external funding, provided on an annual basis, from Scottish and UK Government and that prevents permanent implementation of the activities outlined above.
- iii) Note that long-term employability support is required in the majority of cases to ensure that a young person can not only engage and sustain employability activity, but also to sustain a positive destination.
- iv) Note that while this project was to support care experienced young people into employment, the success of young people who have continued to engage or moved into other positive destinations should be recognised.
- v) Note that the data set for the overall aim will continue to be reported via the improvement programme dashboard to ensure progress is monitored

## Opportunities and Risks

The capacity of services to continue to deliver the level of support required is a risk in the face of growing demand for employability support.

That said, the opportunities to create and deliver innovative and person-centred approaches to employability support to help people progress along the employability pipeline and into employment or other positive destination are broad, and taking lived experience into account and supporting co-design of activity are attractive and will result in positive outcomes. Strengthened links between partner agencies and identification of key individuals in those agencies creates a stronger network of support for officials and participants, with greater sharing of knowledge, experience, and best practise.

There is an appetite to work collaboratively across services, agencies, and providers.

As detailed elsewhere in this report, financial risks impact this activity. It costs on average £6,000 to move someone into employment; more if an individual needs longer-term or more intensive support.

Single year funding from Government poses challenges for maintaining support, particularly for those in need of longer-term support as it prevents the issuing of longer-term contracts for employability provision and carries staffing risks. Consistency of relationships is important for participants.

## Consultation

Aberdeen Prospers  
CPA Management Group

## Background Papers

The following papers were used in the preparation of this report.

[ABZWorks Employability Plan](#), City Growth and Resources Committee June 2022

[Local Outcome Improvement Plan](#)

Charter [Charter-2.3-CEYP-Employment.pdf \(communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk\)](#)

[Aberdeen Local Employability Partnership Delivery and Action Plan](#)

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