



Subject:	Employability Update
Date:	23 February 2024
Reporting Officer:	Christine Sheridan, Director of Human Resources
Contact Officer:	Catherine Christy, HR Manager Development

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To provide the Committee with an update on the employability activity to promote inclusive growth through our role as an employer.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to <ul style="list-style-type: none">note the contents of this report
3.0	Main report
3.1	Background The Inclusive Growth Strategy recognises that as a civic leader and large employer in Belfast we can and should set a strong example for others in driving best practice around employment and that the Council can make real progress towards the achievement of the council's inclusive growth ambitions by looking at our own

employment practices and the job opportunities we create. This report provides a summary of activity this year to date aimed at delivering on these ambitions.

Ring fencing and programme of support for the long term unemployed.

3.2 In the Inclusive Growth Strategy, the council has committed to ring fencing entry level posts, where there is a high volume of posts to be filled, and support this through the provision of appropriate pre recruitment training programmes to benefit those furthest removed from the labour market.

3.3 As part of the current recruitment campaign to fill a number of General Operative vacancies and create a list of reserve candidates, 9 posts (25% of the permanent vacancies) have been ring fenced to candidates eligible to complete a pre recruitment training programme. Corporate HR has worked with the Employability and Skills team in the Place and Economy Department to deliver the programme to participants nominated by the Council's employability partner, Workforce.

3.4 The eligibility criteria of the programme are as follows:

- must live in Belfast (except the four nominations ringfenced to disability organisations)
- must meet the employee specification for the job they'll be applying for:
- must have been unemployed or economically inactive for at least 6 months or work less than 16 hours a week.

3.5 The programme ran from 19 January to 24 January, comprised of classroom-based learning which included guidance on how to complete the application form and two days of work experience on the job. Nine out of 19 nominated participants completed the programme. All 9 participants were invited to mock interviews on 13 February, but only 7 attended. All 9 participants were interviewed on 14 February and 5 have been recommended for appointment.

Support for agency workers

3.6 In addition, job application and interview skills training has been offered to all agency workers currently engaged in the General Operative role. A total of 73 attended the full training course with 2 attending the mock interview element only.

Participation in the JobStart Scheme

3.7 Following the success of the JobStart Scheme delivered in 2021/22, funding has been made available to the DfC through the Northern Ireland Office's New Deal Funding Initiative for a new JobStart Scheme.

3.8 To engage in the programme, the Council must ensure that:

- opportunities offered must not replace existing or planned vacancies or cause existing employees, apprentices or contractors to lose or reduce their employment
- job opportunities must last for six months, with a possible extension to 9 months for those who meet certain criteria
- job opportunities must offer at least 25 hours of employment per week
- jobs offered must pay at least the National Minimum Wage through PAYE
- Employers must develop a training plan to assist participants to gain new occupational and employability skills.

3.9 To participate in the programme the young person must be:

- 16-24 years old and on benefits
- be at risk of long-term unemployment or struggling to obtain employment
- be currently unemployed
- have been allocated a National Insurance number providing them with "the right to work in NI"

3.10 The 9 JobStart vacancies were advertised the week commencing 12 February 2024 with a view to making appointments to the scheme to successful candidates in April.

Other employability support and outreach since 1 April 2023.

3.11 Job fairs and schools/universities support

- Attendance at 10 careers fairs (one targeted at people with disabilities),
- Delivery of 5 mock interview events at schools
- Delivery of an employability talk for a disability organisation,

3.12 Attendance at a further 3 careers fairs is scheduled for February and March 2024.

3.13	<p>The Employability and Skills unit, Place and Economy Department organised a job fair in City Hall on 17 January to promote current vacancies across City & Neighbourhood Services and Property & Projects and promote the benefits of working for the Council. Corporate HR and departmental operational staff were also in attendance. This event was very well attended, and it is hoped that it will have an impact on the number of applications received for difficult to fill posts.</p> <p>Placements</p>
3.14	<p>Corporate HR is facilitating placements across the council on an ongoing basis in conjunction with disability organisations, Belfast Metropolitan College, schools and both universities.</p> <p>Employability outreach for driver recruitment.</p>
3.15	<p>Over May/June 2023, as part of Combined HGV/LGV Driver recruitment, we delivered 2 information sessions at Duncrue for potential applicants which included the opportunity to register for mock interviews. In addition, in September 2023, Corporate HR engaged with participants at a Place and Economy Transport Academy information session regarding the Council's recruitment process and the benefits of working for Belfast City Council.</p>
3.16	<p>It should be noted that Marketing and Communications have played a key role in assisting with the promotion and advertising of recruitment opportunities and employability outreach opportunities using a variety of communication channels.</p>
3.17	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no financial implications to this report.</p>
3.18	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>The Council's employability outreach activity is aimed at assisting those people who are furthest removed from the labour market and those who face most barriers to employment.</p>
3.19	<p>All recruitment is undertaken in accordance with the Local Government Staff Commission Code of Procedures for Recruitment and Selection and in accordance with Fair Employment legislation.</p>

4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None