

Slide script – Dumfries and Galloway Council. Youth Employability Category

1. I represent Dumfries and Galloway Council's Employability and Skills Team. Previously I worked in Education. I was seconded into Economic Development to support our local authority to deliver the Developing Young Workforce recommendations. The workplace skills award had already been developed by my Manager Lynne Burgess and the team. Developing the Young Workforce and the partnership between Education and Employability and Skills provided the catalyst to embed this model in our service delivery and last year our success was recognised in the Youth Employability Category by SURF.
2. The short video gives a bit of background on the award which was developed by Lynne Burgess, Service Manager for Employability and Skills. Analysis of research from SQA local employer, training provider and young people events suggested the top employability skills important to employers. These findings are also reflected in the top 10 employability skills developed by STEMNET and the CBI endorsed Employability Framework. As explained in the clip the award prepares people for the workplace and this is accredited using existing SQA Units. What is unique about our award is the Extended Work Experience Unit which sits alongside Workplace Core Skills and provides a framework to support young people to build and develop workplace skills valued by employers offering the chance to gain a qualification if there is evidence that they have the ability to apply these skills in a workplace.
3. The skills in the framework are:
 - A positive attitude
 - Self-management
 - Team working
 - Business and customer awareness
 - Problem solving
 - Communication and literacy
 - Application of numeracy
 - Application of information technology
 - Leadership and entrepreneurshipThe key to the success has been partnership working using the framework to facilitate a shared understanding of the goals for our young people.
4. This slide summarises what is provided for young people who sign up for our award. The success for the young people involved has been working in partnership to support them to link the skills and experiences they have gained in education, build their confidence and give them the chance to develop skills in a workplace. The key has been for this to be recognised with a qualification that has 'currency' with parents, employers and young people themselves. Being SQA accredited means young people can be rewarded for demonstrating workplace skills in the same way that other young people are rewarded for classroom skills. We also use our Workplace Skills Award to support and accredit young people with additional needs who are part of our Project Search Programme and young people with experience of care who are referred to our service for support. We are now building up a number of case studies which show the positive impact that an award like this can have for young people who can sometimes struggle to get recognition for their skills, helping them to feel valued and giving them the confidence to know they can achieve a positive outcome.

Around 30 young people have completed the award and been supported into work including care experienced young people and young people with additional support needs or disabilities on our Project Search programme. A growing number of young people and industry partners are also recognising the value of our pioneering land-based employability initiative for young people in their senior phase at school, delivering the award in partnership with local farmers and SRUC Barony. We currently have around 40 people being supported to undertake the award at the moment.

5. Our team have been working on this since 2014 and there have and continue to be a number of challenges.

The nature of the young people that we are supporting means that they do not often learn in a linear fashion and so we have had to work hard to ensure that the SQA processes and the necessary paperwork associated with registering and completing a qualification to meet the standard required does not in itself become a barrier to achievement. This means ensuring staff are well trained in the policy and procedures and capable of 'translating' that for young people, 'hiding the wiring' where we can.

It is always challenging to find suitable work placements and provide young people with an opportunity to learn new skills, mentored by staff who recognise that young people may not arrive with all the skills required. We try to address this by taking time with employers to talk through the framework and involve them in the process of evaluating the skills that their placement can provide and then supporting the young person to develop those. Particularly with land based placements we have found resources like the Employer Toolkit useful.

Partnership working can be a challenge. We have found partners very willing to work with us but the challenge has been resourcing the coordination needed to keep all partners informed, engaged and working collaboratively. This takes time and effort and is a continuous process as it can be difficult to maintain collaborative ways of working if personnel change and agreements are not embedded in systems and processes.

Working with educators and convincing parents and young people that this opportunity is valuable and valued is a considerable and ongoing challenge. However, as we have more and more young people who can talk about the benefits to them and employers recognising that young people who have achieved this award are genuinely ready for the workplace we are confident that the reputation of the award will help address this.

6. In Dumfries and Galloway Council our team (Employability and Skills) are responsible for delivering No One Left Behind which includes the Opportunities for All Commitment to young people. We use the award to provide a quality assurance framework for our delivery of employability skills and, while not all young people register with the SQA and formally undertake the award, adopting the principles ensures we have a rigorous and consistent approach with all our young people. We are currently training more members of our team to become assessors and moving forward all our key workers will be expected to train to become assessors, providing rigour and high standards to our approach with our young people.

Planning a programme of support around our framework provides young people with a clear pathway. With that 121 support and regular feedback they can develop an understanding of the skills they have and, supported by an extended work experience, they have the opportunity to generate personal evidence, making it possible for them to articulate how they have developed and applied valuable, transferable skills in a working environment.

7. This slide shows the structure of the award.

The units in orange are classroom based, those in blue are achieved in the workplace. All together they make up the Workplace Skills Award

The extended work experience was the unit developed for Dumfries and Galloway but available to share by agreement with DG Council.

Initially the Award was called the Dumfries and Galloway Employability Award but we have recently changed the name to Workplace Skills Award for two reasons.

1. The team thought workplace skills better represented what the award was for
2. By removing the Dumfries and Galloway from the title it enables us to share the award more easily for other areas in Scotland if it would be beneficial as part of a pathway to support young people into employment.

8. A real success has been using the award as part of a pathway from school into the Dairy Farming sector which is an important sector with many opportunities for young people. The video clip provides a summary of how we developed a package of preparation for the workplace delivered by the schools, extended work experience supported by local farmers and employability key workers and additional knowledge and understanding delivered by SRUC (6 minutes).

We are now looking into developing a similar pathway for hospitality, care and construction - other important sectors that can offer opportunities for our young people. The real benefit of this award however is its flexibility – it can be used to accredit skills applied in any workplace at a level and pace appropriate to each individual and, with additional knowledge and understanding delivered by collaborating with partners (or now potentially online learning) it can be tailored to suit the individual needs of any young person.

9. More than 30 young people have so far benefitted from this pathway and we were successful in attracting funding from South of Scotland Economic partnership to extend the model: geographically into the Scottish Borders; and in range to beef and sheep farming and other land based industries.

Young people tell us that this style of learning suits them and value the fact that our award recognises achievements demonstrated while working and therefore allows young people to learn in different ways.

10&11 Some quotes from a couple of the young people who have benefitted.

12. We are happy to share our experience and have already begun working with some other local authorities to consider Service Level Agreements to enable a formal sharing of our development work.

Contact details and more information is available by contacting our local employability partnership.