

Work Opportunities Scheme - Policy

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1. SCOPE

Scottish Borders Council's (SBC) **Work Opportunities Scheme** is designed to offer work opportunities, with appropriate support if required, within SBC to improve the employment prospects of those furthest from the labour market including, young people, care leavers, people with mental health issues, those with disabilities or long term health conditions.

This policy sets out the potential opportunities, both paid and unpaid, within SBC for work experience and job taster sessions, work placements (including industrial/academic placements), apprenticeships and traineeships, seasonal employment opportunities, paid work, graduate opportunities and Internships. All of the above can be with or without support depending on what is appropriate.

2. INTRODUCTION

The Council supports the Scottish Government's commitment to ensuring that the public sector improves the employment prospects of those furthest from the labour market. Partnership working with Skills Development Scotland (SDS), Jobcentre Plus, and other agencies is encouraged to make providing such opportunities a success.

The Council recognises its social, moral and statutory duty to employ people with disabilities and will do all that is practicable to meet this responsibility. It therefore, supports the Department of Work and Pensions' Disability Confident Scheme and is formally accredited as a Disability Confident Employer.

A key criterion of the assessment for achieving this accreditation is addressing negative perceptions and attitudes, which are often the key barriers which people with disabilities face when seeking employment.

The Council also commits to the following:

- To interviewing all disabled applicants who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy and consider them on their abilities
- To ensure that there is a mechanism in place to discuss with disabled employees what can be done to make sure they can develop and use their abilities. This can take place at any time but at least once a year.
- To retain where possible people who become disabled. To make every effort when employees become disabled to make sure they stay in employment

The Council's Recruitment & Selection Policy states:

"We value and celebrate the diversity that exists within our community and look to see it reflected in our workforce. We are committed to creating a working environment in which everyone can take full part. We aim to integrate fairness and equal opportunities into every aspect of our employment practices".

As the largest employer in the Scottish Borders, the Council has a corporate social responsibility to the Borders community. There are services within the Council whose aim is to improve the employability of individuals furthest from the labour market. These are detailed below:-

- a) The Council's Employment Support Service (ESS) works with those individuals

identified as requiring extra support within the workplace. The Service provides training and development through Skills Development Scotland initiatives such as their Stage 3 Employability Fund training programme for young people.

The Employment Support Service also offers support to those furthest from the labour market to help them into paid work anywhere in the Scottish Borders. The ESS team will work with SBC managers giving advice should adjustments be required, supporting the individual within their new role, assisting with training and responding to issues as they arise.

- b.** In its role as “Corporate Parent”, the Council is also responsible for joined up working within the Council, ie departments working together, and with key partner agencies and third sector, to meet the needs of looked after children and young people. This includes “taking the lead” in offering work opportunities to people who are disadvantaged and require some support to enter the world of work and making available opportunities where young people in the region can find jobs and begin to reach their potential.

Assistance is provided to this client group in terms of supporting individuals make the transition to independent adult living, including improving employability and securing Employment. This is provided through the Council’s Children’s and Young People’s service mainly through the 16+ Transitions team and through the Employment Support Service.

3. LINKS TO KEY STRATEGIES AND POLICIES

This **Work Opportunities Scheme** links to and is underpinned by a range of plans and strategies designed to improve outcomes for people in the Scottish Borders. These linkages are outlined below:

3.1 Single Outcome Agreement

The Community Planning Partnership’s Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) highlights ‘Grow Our Economy’ and ‘Reduce Inequalities’ as two of its three key priorities. The unemployment claimant count rate has been decreasing recently and at 1.5%, it is below the Scottish level of 2.2%. There are now 995 claimants in the Scottish Borders, including 245 people aged 18-24, a rate of 3.1% for that age group, which is below the Scottish average of 3.2%.¹¹

The SOA includes a number of relevant measures of employment, unemployment, skills and deprivation. There is specific mention of youth employability initiatives.

3.2 Scottish Borders Economic Development Strategy 2023

The Economic Development Strategy highlights ‘Developing the Workforce of the Future’ as one of its four Strategic Aims. This includes bringing more young people and job seekers into employment, which in turn requires support for employability and skills development opportunities. As one of the key employers in the Scottish Borders, the Council can play a significant role in providing these types of employability and skills development opportunities.

¹¹ The unemployment figures are based on stats available as at November 2017.

3.3. `Ambitious for the Borders`

The Council Administration's `Ambitious for the Borders` priorities include a clear focus to support young people into positive destinations.

3.4 SBC Corporate Plan

This Corporate Plan provides the strategic policy context for driving forward the work of Scottish Borders Council (SBC) over the five year period 2012/13 to 2017/18. The plan has been informed by the Council's Administration priorities as stated in "Ambitious for the Borders", by the priorities coming forward from our communities, by key transformation programmes, by projects that are already underway within the organisation and by priorities that we have defined with our community planning partners, founded on a strong evidence base (and contained within our Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) that is submitted to the Scottish Government).

Priority 6 in the corporate plan, "developing our workforce", aims to increase the number of employment opportunities available in the borders.

3.5 Scottish Borders Tackling Poverty & Financial Inclusion Strategy 2014-2019

The Border's Scottish Borders Tackling Poverty & Financial Inclusion Strategy 2014-2019 sets out the Council's plan of how poverty and financial exclusion will be tackled across the Scottish Borders over the next five years and beyond and it is underpinned by the ongoing changes to the Welfare system which are intended to help people to move out of benefits and progress into work.

3.6 Opportunities for All Agenda

The `Opportunities for All` initiative brings together a range of existing national and local policies and strategies as a single focus to improve young people's participation in post 16 learning or training, and ultimately employment, through appropriate interventions and support until at least their 20th birthday. The aim is to ensure seamless participation and progression along the strategic skills pipeline.

This builds on and adds impetus to existing entitlements and commitments to support youth employment through the senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence, including the development of skills for learning, life and work, robust transitions through 16+ Learning Choices and the targeted support offered through More Choices, More Chances (MCMC).

3.7 Activity Agreements

Community Learning and Development offer these programmes which are available to young people 16-19yrs who are at risk or already in a negative destination, to help them become ready for formal learning, training or employment. It's an agreement between a support worker and a young person that they will take part in learning and activities which help them re-engage and progress through the Strategic Skills Pipeline. The young person may receive an allowance in return for complying with this agreement.

In addition to the teams within the Council, there are various organisations such as Apex, Ingeus, Momentum Scotland, Shaw Trust, Scottish Association for Mental Health, Borders College and others offering support to clients and employers to increase the employment opportunities available to individuals.

3.8 SBC Internal Human Resources Policies

Additionally, this policy is associated to the following key policies and where applicable should be cross referenced to gain further detail:

- Attendance Management
- Code of Conduct
- Discipline
- Dignity and Respect in the Workplace
- Equality, Diversity and Human Rights
- Family Friendly inc Maternity/Adoption Leave/Pay, Paternity Support Leave/Pay, Shared Parental Leave/Pay, Parental Leave
- Flexi Time Scheme
- Grievance
- Investigation
- Job Allocation
- Job Sharing
- Leave
- Managing employees with a Disability Guidance appendix 1 Attendance Management Policy
- Recruitment and Selection
- References
- Stress in the Workplace
- Substance Misuse Policy
- Training and development
- Volunteer Policy
- Work Performance
- Working Time Regulations

3.9 Specific SBC health and safety policies are also linked to this policy and should be read and used accordingly.

- General Health and Safety Risk Assessment policy – COR POL O 008
- Managing Stress in the Workplace policy – COR POL W 007
- Managers guide to Workplace Assessments – COR GUD O 001
- Workplace Assessment form – COR WIS O 001

4. PRINCIPLES

There are a number of principles that underpin the Council's approach to the Work Opportunities Scheme. These are:

- Managers will undertake to respond positively to all requests for work experience
- Managers will actively explore options to develop and/or support work experience, employment opportunities and training programmes within their service; preferably linked to succession and workforce planning
- Guaranteed priority interviews will be given under the 'Ring-Fenced jobs initiative'
- A suitable support system, eg placement mentor, will be provided where appropriate
- All work opportunities will comply with relevant legislation
- Individuals taking up work opportunities are covered by the Council's Employers'

Liability Insurance Policy and Public Liability Insurance policy

- Departments will ensure that all necessary health and safety checks have been carried out and that all participants in the scheme complete a full induction with the council
- The Council acknowledges its Corporate Social responsibility to support, promote and emphasise the value of offering opportunities to individuals to experience different areas of work within the Council, and thereby increasing their employability opportunities
- Opportunities should be available within the Council to meet a variety of requests and to all ages
- Managers will play their part in achieving the Council's commitment to significantly improve its track record in offering work opportunities to those furthest from the labour market.

5. OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS

As well as providing positive outcomes for the individuals involved, it is recognised that there are also a number of benefits to the Council and the community from participating in a 'Work Opportunities Scheme'. These benefits particularly assist those who are outwith education, unemployed, and who are receiving support and training through either the Council's services or external agencies.

Outcomes and benefits for the individual include:

- Gaining a rewarding and positive experience
- Assistance in managing a change to their lifestyle into a structured routine as required by employers
- Increased awareness and experience of what is involved in the working environment
- Allows the person to make informed choices about their employment future
- Enables people to improve their key employability skills, work readiness skills and personal learning skills
- Significantly increasing their employability both within the council and in the wider environment
- Assistance in securing permanent employment
- Gaining up-to-date and relevant experience valued by employers
- Provision of a relevant professional employment reference
- Becoming more engaged and accepted within their local community as they progress with their working lives
- The ability to contribute to the local economy through employment
- Increased self-esteem and self-confidence

Outcomes and benefits for the Council include:

- Enhance the Council's reputation as a 21st century employer by reflecting the general population in the Scottish Borders within its workforce
- Significantly improve the Council's track record for equality and diversity as an employer
- The opportunity for staff to develop their knowledge, skills and self-fulfilment through a mentoring role within their departments
- Completion of tasks to a high standard by individuals who bring a variety of outlooks and perspectives to the organisation on a paid or unpaid basis.

Outcomes and benefits for managers include:

- Managers and supervisors will be able to develop valuable training techniques which will support the induction of future employees coming to work at the council
- Managers will be able to identify potential future employees who have undertaken relevant work experience and training
- Current staff will be able to access development opportunities which arise through the mentoring process which will help to enhance the council's pool of potential supervisors/ managers for the future
- Managers will be able to support their departments in meeting equality and diversity targets set by the council
- The satisfaction of being able to offer someone an opportunity and seeing them develop into fully respected members of the workforce.

6. EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

Employability skills are the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed by an individual to carry out a job to the best of their ability. Individuals will need to present their skills to employers, including:

- Self management
- Ability to understand and adhere to dress codes and departmental norms
- Team working
- Business and customer awareness
- Problem solving
- Communication and literacy
- IT
- Numeracy
- Interpersonal skills
- Initiative and self motivation
- Ability to work under pressure
- Ability to work to deadlines where required
- Negotiation skills
- Valuing diversity and difference

7. THE RANGE OF OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE COUNCIL

The Council is keen to develop a range of opportunities, both paid and unpaid, which offer work experience and job taster sessions, work placements (including industrial/academic placements), apprenticeships and traineeships, seasonal employment opportunities, paid work, graduate opportunities and Internships. All of the above can be with or without support depending on what is appropriate.

These opportunities are designed to offer those furthest away from the labour market the chance to become a part of a working environment where they receive valuable training, experience and an awareness of the world of work - a "stepping stone" to employment. Equally important is to offer the opportunity for personal development, for example improving social and communication skills.

To ensure that all work opportunities, paid or unpaid, are recorded an appointment request form **MUST** be completed. The form can be found by visiting the [Human Resources](#) pages of the intranet, scrolling down to Forms> Work Opportunities Scheme Appointment Form.

The range of opportunities within the Council includes:

1. **Job Taster Sessions and Work Experience Placements**

1.1 **Job Taster Sessions**

This is an opportunity to gain a snapshot of a place of employment, perhaps even just a site visit. It may include shadowing someone in their job for a few hours. Ideal for someone who has very little knowledge of the labour market, and who may like to try several taster sessions in order to form an opinion or preference for future employment.

1.2 **Work Experience Placements**

This gives an individual a short period of time in a workplace to gain experience and carry out some tasks under supervision. Placements can be for various lengths of time dependent on the situation but would not last any longer than three months. A work placement would suit someone interested in exploring a specific job role. (School pupils can themselves contact Gateway for details of placements, or the Council directly).

Scope:

To provide an opportunity to experience a real working environment for school pupils, young persons and adults - whether for a number of hours or weeks.

Conditions:

- Unpaid by SBC (may receive payment/expenses from parent organisation)
- SBC placement supervisor = mentor
- Short period of time
- Workplace assessment required
- No PVG/disclosure required – closely supervised, risk management
- No pre-employment checks required (references/application form/health)
- No SBC contract terms or agreement required, other than confidentiality/code of conduct

Aim:

- To gain an awareness of a real working environment
- To improve foundation skills (personal, communication, etc)
- To develop self confidence
- To shadow employees and assist with tasks.

For further information, visit the [Human Resources](#) pages of the intranet scrolling down to Work Opportunities Scheme >Work Experience Placements.

2. **Student Placements**

2.1 **University/College – Sandwich course or Project**

The aim of such a placement is to provide an opportunity for the student, during their college or university course, to apply the subject knowledge and personal abilities gained through academic studies to a period of appropriate paid/unpaid employment in an organisation by undertaking a specified, professional level, project or role. This could include:

- an ongoing situation to which the student makes a contribution e.g. by suggesting solutions that may be put in place later;
- a responsible post that the student fills and can study and analyse the situation.

Scope:

To provide a placement opportunity to enable an academic project or professional role to be carried out by a student of a local college/university.

Conditions:

- Paid/Unpaid by SBC (may receive payment/expenses)
- If the position has been through a grading process, the resultant payment level will apply. If the position has not been graded, the level of payment for a paid placement will be the national minimum/ living wage for the individual's age group. (see Section 10)
- SBC placement supervisor = mentor
- Set period of time = 12 weeks, 20 weeks, 6 months, 1 year
- Workplace assessment required
- PVG/Disclosure may be required
- No pre-employment checks required (references/application form/health)*
- Placement agreement required plus confidentiality/code of conduct statement
- Participate in formal reviews and assessment

Aim:

- To gain an awareness of the working environment
- To improve foundation skills (plan, organise, communication, etc)
- To develop technical/professional and interpersonal skills
- Participate in formal reviews and assessment

Either

- Carry out a specific project, within a timeframe to meet set objectives, or
- Carry out the role of junior professional officer

To establish a post for a project, managers must contact the Job Evaluation Team who will establish the appropriate grade and role profile for the new post. This post then requires to be set up and the usual new appointment process followed to enable the payment of the student on the first point of the scale*. *Managers may wish to discuss this further with HR.

Student work experience opportunities are advertised via My Job Scotland where candidates can apply and indicate their interest. Departments considering recruiting a student/work experience placement should contact HRSS and ask for access to this vacancy list for sight of all applicants.

Departments can contact applicants direct should they wish to interview. Once a student has been selected please complete the relevant appointment form and forward to HRSS who will undertake the necessary pre-employment checks before confirming a start date.

Should you have any queries please contact HRSS.'

Further guidance can be found:

<http://intranet.scotborders.gov.uk/IntranetContent/studentplacement.pdf>

3 Employability Fund Stage 3 programme

The training provider will carry out all administration including the recording of holiday allocation, travel arrangements and timesheets including wages, will give support and carry out a progress review and is always contactable if there are any problems.

Scope:

To provide a placement opportunity to develop personal and work related skills for a young person who is fit for work

Conditions:

- Usually unpaid by SBC (Trainee receives a training allowance from the training provider.
- Set period of time (13 weeks)
- SBC placement supervisor = contact
- Stage 3 co-ordinator = mentor
- Workplace assessment required
- PVG/Disclosure may be required
- No pre-employment checks required (references/application form/health)
- Stage 3 placement agreement required plus confidentiality/code of conduct statement

Aim:

- To gain an awareness of the working environment
- To improve foundation skills (personal, communication, etc)
- To develop self confidence
- To shadow employees and assist with tasks

Either

- To gain employment, or
- identify path to further training/education

For further information, visit the [Human Resources](#) pages of the intranet scrolling down to Work Opportunities Scheme >Stage 3 Placements Guide.

3.1 Corporate Parent – Work Opportunities for Care Leavers

A programme for four trainees, where each trainee will undertake a work experience placement followed by a modern apprenticeship. The programme is supported by the Employment Support Service who will contact relevant managers for their support with arranging placements and modern apprenticeships.

4 Traineeships

These posts will be created based on an existing job, whether professional, administrative or more manual. Such posts should be linked with formal learning, leading to gaining certificates, diplomas, etc.

5 Modern Apprenticeships

These posts will be created based on an existing job, whether professional, administrative or more manual. The council will employ the young person on a fixed term contract in-line with the time the apprenticeship is expected to take (with an extra 3 months to allow for delays in the process and allow the young person to explore other jobs if employment is not an option on completion of the apprenticeship) Over 90 Modern Apprenticeship frameworks are available for numerous jobs and offer a degree of flexibility to suit the employer if required. The appropriate training provider will advise on all aspects of a Modern Apprenticeship and a list of training providers is available on the Skills Development Scotland website. <http://www.ourskillsforce.co.uk/modern-apprenticeships-for-employers/>

Skills Development Scotland will contribute to training costs.

Managers should consider taking a young person on through the Employability Fund stage 3 programme for 13 weeks before embarking on a modern apprenticeship. This will allow both the manager and the young person to see if they are suited before committing to the apprenticeship.

For further information, visit the [Human Resources](#) pages of the intranet scrolling down to Work Opportunities Scheme > Guide to Modern Apprenticeships.

6. **Paid Work/Learning Employment**

6.1 **Seasonal Student**

See 2.1 – student placements.

6.2 **Other seasonal employment,**

Seasonal employment, such as gardeners, will be advertised when available, and will be paid at the rate of the job. Undertaking temporary seasonal employment can lead to more permanent employment by increasing the knowledge, skills and experience of individuals, and through the provision of relevant references.

6.3 **Ring Fenced job opportunities,**

A percentage of the Council's entry level job vacancies will be made available to the Employment Support Service prior to going on general release. The Employment Support Service must respond to the vacancy as a priority, either positively so that a priority interview can be arranged or negatively so that normal advertising can be triggered. Anyone interested in such roles must be able to satisfy the essential criteria of the post. This opportunity works in a way that is very similar to the Council's redeployment process.

8. **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Managers

The commitment, in terms of time and effort, from managers will vary depending on the individual and the type of placement, but will not be excessive, onerous or demanding. Managers will be responsible for:

- discussing and agreeing the scope of the placement
- identifying a placement mentor
- ensuring a level of appropriate supervision
- liaising with the training provider, and
- completing any necessary paperwork.

Managers **must always** ensure that each placement has a **Health and Safety, Workplace risk assessment** carried out. This may require involvement from the Council's Health and Safety section, depending on the level of risk, and particularly when relating to young people and the "non-office" environments.

Managers should ensure that each person completes the appropriate induction into the council.

Workplace Mentor

The Workplace Mentor is the person responsible for day to day support of the trainee(s), and who will liaise with other support agencies where appropriate.

Health and Safety Team

The Health and Safety team will provide guidance on carrying out the Workplace Assessment form.

The undernoted documents are available on the intranet under Health & Safety.

- Workplace Assessment form
- How to complete the Workplace Assessment Form
- Managers Guide to Workplace Assessments for placements and other similar opportunities

For further support contact the Health and Safety team, Scottish Borders Council, HQ, Newtown St Boswells - 01835 826627.

9. POTENTIAL FUNDING STREAMS

1. Employer Recruitment Incentive (ERI) - Targeted Young People

The ERI for Targeted Young People offers funding to support young people who are care leavers, young carers, ex-offenders or disabled people to find and sustain employment, including undertaking a Modern Apprenticeship.

Employers can be given £1500 for recruiting a young person from the target group to help the client to sustain this employment. (Payments are made to an employer when the young person sustains employment of 15 hours per week or more for 4 weeks and 13 weeks).

Eligibility criteria

A person is eligible for the Programme if they satisfy one or more the following criteria:

- “Work ready” 16-24 year old who has been looked after and is eligible for after care support from their Local Authority (care leaver)
- “Work ready” 16-24 year old who has a significant role in looking after someone else who is experiencing illness or disability(carer)
- “Work ready” 16-24 year old who has been convicted or cautioned for a criminal offence and has completed their sentence (ex-offender)

For further information :- www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk

2. Funding a Modern Apprenticeship

Skills Development Scotland manages the Scottish Government's contribution to the cost of training through the Modern Apprenticeship programme.

- the SDS contribution to the cost of training is paid to the learning provider
- this must be the learning provider who will deliver the training for the vocational qualification
- the learning provider is responsible for registering the apprentice for the MA programme, and for drawing down the funds to cover the training element.

The learning provider will be able to explain the process in more detail.

It is important to note that employers are still liable for paying the apprentice a wage. Skills Development Scotland (SDS) will contribute a set amount for training depending on the type of apprenticeship.

Individuals aged over 25 are only eligible for funding in specified sectors which can be

found at <http://www.myworldofwork.co.uk>.

If a MA does not cover the training that your business needs, Skills Development Scotland can work with employers to source relevant alternative training. Speak to an Employer Engagement Adviser on 0800 783 6000.

3. Adopt an Apprentice

Adopt an Apprentice will help cover the wage and recruitment costs of taking on a MA who has been made redundant from another employer.

This will allow the apprentice to complete their training, while contributing to the development of a competitive, skilled workforce for your business. Not only will your business benefit from a skilled trainee, but you will also receive a £2,000 incentive.

A training provider can help you find a MA who has been made redundant and must make the application for you.

10. RATES OF PAYMENT

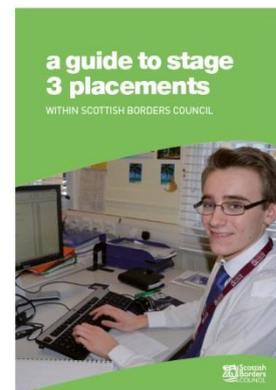
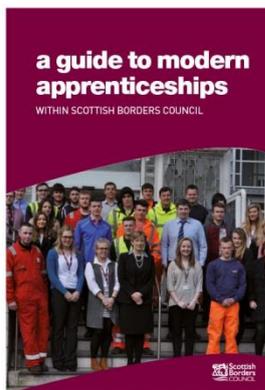
If the opportunity on offer is a paid post and has been through Scottish Borders Council's grading process then the post should be paid according to that grading. If the opportunity has not been graded then the national minimum wage for the recruited person's age will be paid..

11. POLICY REVIEW

The outcomes of this Policy will be reviewed at least every two years. If any trends emerge these will be analysed and appropriate steps taken, potentially including a full review of the policy.

Additionally, as a minimum an equalities impact assessment of the policy will be carried out every two years in accordance with the Council's HR Policy Review programme or as required by legislative requirements in order that the Policy remains relevant and fit for purpose.

12. FURTHER INFORMATION



<http://intranet.scotborders.gov.uk/yourjob/Pages/human-resources/policy-procedures-guidelines.aspx>

To ensure that all work opportunities, paid or unpaid, are recorded an

appointment request form **MUST** be completed. The form can be found by visiting the **Human Resources** pages of the intranet, scrolling down to Forms> Work Opportunities Scheme Appointment Form.

For any further additional guidance on any of the above, please the Human Resources Team at Scottish Borders Council, HQ, Newtown St Boswells - 01835 825052/3
