

Fife

on Foundation Apprenticeships

Foundation Apprenticeships are increasing opportunities for young people and fundamentally changing the way schools, learning providers and employers are developing the young workforce.

Why Foundation Apprenticeships?

We recognised the importance of providing a wider curriculum that would be suitable for all pupils and Foundation Apprenticeships offered more choice, vocational pathways and opportunities to gain qualifications.

We also thought it was the right thing to do, as it would support employability and the wider needs of the local economy.

When Foundation Apprenticeships were launched by the Scottish Government it was clear that a co-ordinated approach was needed to make it work across Scotland, so we felt it was vital to be involved in the control and co-ordination to successfully deliver it in Fife.

Encouraging schools to provide Foundation Apprenticeships

There's a joint approach in terms of procuring frameworks and a DYW Employment Manager has been appointed to drive up interest and get schools engaged and involved.

The employment manager co-ordinates the relationships between schools, colleges and employers and helps schools with its employer links by getting more on board as partners.

A main aim for us is getting schools on board and, within that growth, ensuring consistency.

For this second phase of delivering Foundation Apprenticeships we have funded DYW co-ordinators to work in 18 schools for an equivalent of a day a week. This devolves responsibility for the marketing and in some cases, the delivery of the FAs to the young people. Schools are supported with an additional funding resource, transportation for young people moving between schools and college and coordinator activities from a central pool of staff.

Gaining support from teachers and senior school leadership

It involved a 'sell' to the board and schools, pressing the case that this was a national initiative and they had responsibility to deliver the DYW agenda.

It was made clear to them that the council was fully committed to FAs and therefore had put in place a dedicated team and the resource to support them.

Outlining to schools staff that this vocational pathway is the right option for many young people who would greatly benefit from Work Based Learning activities experienced during the programme.

Building capacity in schools to support Foundation Apprenticeships

Centrally, we have built up links with employers, to ensure schools can offer frameworks within the curriculum. To date, many of these employers are large scale and our current strategy includes building on this by splitting the region into seven localities and making more local links between employers and schools based in each.

We have also supported schools by organising a range of events aimed at promoting FAs to both pupils and their parents or carers.

We have been getting employers in to schools to deliver talks to pupils and parents or let pupils participate in employer-led workshops, to get familiar with the different types of careers and job roles available.

Promoting the offer and benefits of Foundation Apprenticeships to pupils and parents or carers

The council is focused on equity for all and closing the attainment gap and so we are focused on getting out a message that there's more than one pathway to learning and a career for young people.

We explain the value of a Foundation Apprenticeship in terms of its ability to provide work-based learning along with a recognised qualification and that it's not about taking a pupil's focus away from time that could be spent achieving a National 5 or Higher.

We ensure that parents and pupils understand the benefits of FAs within the context of the Curriculum for Excellence, so that they understand that it's part of the wider education strategy.

We communicate this in a number of ways and in partnership with schools, colleges and employers, which includes special Q&A events for pupils and parents and holding employer workshops for pupils

Foundation Apprenticeships give young people the edge over others when applying for jobs. Employers recognise that young people who have completed the FA's will spend less time at college and will add value to the business quicker.

Moving forward, we will track those young people who have completed their Foundation Apprenticeships to see where they have gone onto and if their experiences have influenced career choices. Also, we will survey employers to find out about their experiences and if they have employed from the programmes.

Foundation Apprenticeships supporting Curriculum for Excellence, Developing the Young Workforce and the council's ambitions for participation and attainment

We're trying to link much of what we do to STEM careers, which is a DYW priority, and develop employability skills that match with employer needs and expectations.

Taking this approach has led to the Council developing better relationships with employers. We need to encourage more employers to get involved and hold employer events to raise awareness about FAs.

Benefits to schools and pupils of greater employer engagement through Foundation Apprenticeships

Through FAs, pupils are given the opportunity to understand that there are jobs available that they can be equipped for.

FAs provide greater clarity on what a job entails and provides the chance to gain experience in areas of growth where more skills are needed, such as computer sciences.

Young people are also made aware of the career opportunities available locally and understand the different sectors out there and which ones are growing. Young people should be given an opportunity to select the most appropriate curriculum relevant to their needs and ambitions. The FA provides another dimension to this curriculum.

Tackling challenges in introducing and embedding Foundation Apprenticeships in the curriculum

Challenges have been that some schools are more enthusiastic than others about offering Foundation Apprenticeships and parents are more traditional about their views in terms of pathways to further education.

The link established between the Manager and the School Coordinators should provide a clear link leading to more consistency. Regular meetings with these staff and meetings with parents should be helpful.

Employer partnership work to promote FAs

Skills Development Scotland, Fife Council and Fife College organised a region-wide skills roadshow which promoted Foundation Apprenticeships

Five information events for S3 and S4 pupils were delivered in partnership with a host of local employers promoted Foundation Apprenticeships to S3 and S4 school pupils from across 17 schools.

The events at Fife College campus locations in Dunfermline, Kirkcaldy and Glenrothes, as well as Waid Academy in Anstruther, included careers talks given by SDS advisers and interactive workshops led by employers such as Babcock, Purvis Group, Marine Harvest and AST Risk Consultancy and Training Services.

Over 750 pupils participated in the roadshow, getting involved in fun activities such as designing homes for housebuilder Taylor Wimpey.

The College also ran its own virtual reality workshops at each of the events, giving pupils an insight in to learning using the latest cutting-edge technology which transports the learner in to virtual worlds.

