

**West Dunbartonshire Council – Working4U Employability Grant programme**

**Key Information, Guidance and**

**Sources of Useful Data.**

**March 2025**



1. **Introduction and context**

The West Dunbartonshire Employability Grants Programme aims to support unemployed, economically inactive and low paid people to move towards, into, and within work. It recognises that to help local people to develop the skills and confidence employers are looking for, we all need to work together at a local level to provide the best possible services to those who need them most.

There have been, and will continue to be, changes in how employability support is funded in Scotland. Both the Scottish and UK Governments are choosing to distribute funding at a more local level and through a Local Employability Partnership (LEP). This partnership decides on the local priorities and areas for action and ensures that local employability providers continue to have the opportunity to access funding for services through a co-commissioned process. In West Dunbartonshire our LEP is called The Strategic Employability Group (SEG).

**At this point in time, we anticipate a budget of around £700,000 for delivery in 25/26 however, as funding is not yet confirmed, this figure may change.**

Funding agreements cover one financial year 25/26. However West Dunbartonshire Council are keen to enable organisations to design and deliver services which meet the complex needs of service users and enables the provider to effectively manage and deploy their resources in West Dunbartonshire. Longevity of funding is key to the planning and delivery of high-quality employability support. Partners can indicate on the application if their delivery model would be enhanced with the ability to deliver over a 2 year period. If a grant spans two years, future funding is agreed "in principle" only. Grants for an additional year will depend on annual reviews, the Council’s financial position, and the organisation’s performance.

Funds that will contribute to delivery in 25/26 are as follows: Scottish Government No One Left Behind (NOLB); Child Poverty (Parental Employment Support) and Specialist Employability Support\* and UK Government Shared Prosperity Funding

**\*Specialist Employability Support**

Specialist Employability Support is targeted at people with significant and on-going barriers to employment whose needs are not able to be met by mainstream employability support.  Typically, they will require longer-term access to services including significant aftercare and in-work support to sustain employment. Participants may include, but are not limited to, disabled people including those with severe and enduring mental ill health, in recovery from addictions or experiencing long term health conditions and who require support from Key Workers with relevant experience and training.

1. **Our Grant Outcomes and Principles**

The West Dunbartonshire Employability Grant Programme will contribute to **these key outcomes**:

* **To maximise the role that employability plays in delivering national and local aims of tackling poverty, promoting inclusion and social justice, and creating a fair and prosperous Scotland;**
* **To reduce levels of child poverty by supporting parents from the priority family groups to increase their income from employment, by providing relevant employability support related to training for employment;**
* **To provide training to those in low income employment, especially parents, to help ensure participants are able to progress to better paid work, or work which better suits their circumstances;**
* **To reduce inequality in the labour market by supporting those further from the labour market to increase their income from employment, by providing relevant employability support through training for employment.**
* **To improve labour market outcomes by reducing local Economic Inactivity, supporting those who want to work to enter employment.**
* **To reduce levels of long-term unemployment by providing employability support to those who are at risk of being long-term unemployed and are claiming reserved benefits; and**
* **To help reduce the Disability Employment Gap by supporting disabled people to enter and remain in the workforce.**
* **To provide pathways to employment for vulnerable young people furthest from support.**
* **To expand provision that supports the green jobs and net zero commitments;**

**6 NOLB principles** will underpin the delivery expectations for all provision supported through the West Dunbartonshire Employability Grants Programme:

1. **Provide flexible and person-centred support.**
2. **Be more straightforward for people to navigate.**
3. **Be better integrated and aligned with other services, particularly with health, justice, and housing provision.**
4. **Provide pathways into sustainable and fair work.**
5. **Be driven by evidence, including data and the experience of users.**
6. **Support more people – particularly those facing multiple barriers – to move into the right job, at the right time.**

**Participants must meet all the following eligibility conditions:**

* Reside in West Dunbartonshire
* Be of Working Age (16\* – 67) With the exception of 15 years who are within 6 months of the school leaving date and who are identified as being at risk of not moving on to a positive destination.

If clients cannot prove the right to work, they are eligible for employability support and access to non-cash payments such as bus tokens, lunch vouchers etc.

1. **What Type of Provision are we looking for?**

This grant programme will support **provision across all 5 stages of West Dunbartonshire employability pathway** for unemployed and economically inactive West Dunbartonshire residents, particularly those furthest from the labour market and/or for whom the current employability service provision does not fully meet their needs. It will also support provision for low-income parents to help them progress within work and increase their income.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Stage 1 | Stage 2 | Stage 3 | Stage 4 | Stage 5  |
| **Engagement**  | **Support to overcome barriers**  | **Vocational activity**  | **Employer engagement and job matching**  | **In work support and aftercare**  |

The employability services and provision being applied for should be:

* Appropriate for the age and stage of the target participant group.
* Proportionate to the numbers of unemployed.
* Delivered locally in facilities that are accessible to all.
* Needed locally and not duplicating existing provision.
* In line with current and future labour markets, skills requirements, and job vacancies.

**West Dunbartonshire Council Core Employability offer:**

Around **1,000 West Dunbartonshire residents are receiving support through the SEG’s core offer each year**. Working4U **Keyworkers** play a crucial role in providing support throughout participants employability journeys, including helping them to navigate the provision available. **The SEG Grants funded provision must be complementary to this.**



**Employability Grants Programme Themes and Requirements 2025-26**

Having undertaken significant engagement with a wide range of stakeholders and analysed local data including the performance of the previous commissioned grant funded programmes, the SEG has identified 7 priority themes that it would like to focus its co-commissioning on through this grants programme.

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| **Priority Group(s) and Themes**  | **Rationale/evidence of need /useful data**  | **Pipeline** **Stages**  | **Fundable Provision**  |
| 1. **Ethnic Minorities -**

People for whom a lack of English language skills is impacting on their ability to progress into work | Housing, employability, college and community learning services report an ongoing high demand for English language support and waiting lists.Employability services report a significant increase in the numbers of clients from minority ethnic groups engaging often with low English language skills, a key barrier to employment. CLD and the local college deliver ESOL however our needs assessment for employability clients suggest that there is a need for conversational classes/support, both generic as well as sector specific. | 1/2 | **1.** Innovative and effective programmes that develop the English-speaking **skills** of refugees, asylum seekers, or other minority groups to enable them to access and sustain employment. The key need is to develop participants **conversational English** in **suitable learning environments** where participants with a range of abilities can develop confidence and ability. |
| 1. **Disabilities –**

People with disabilities or long-term health **conditions**  | Of the 887 individuals accessing employability support from Apr-Dec 2024 the figures below are a snapshot of those recording a disability or long-term condition.* Autistic Spectrum Disorder/Condition 75
* Learning difficulty 91
* Learning disability 46
* Physical disability 62
* Sight/hearing/speech impairment 32
* Long-term illness, disease or condition 157

Priority will be given to initiatives aimed at removing barriers to employment, such as providing accessible accommodation, offering skills training tailored to the needs of disabled individuals, and promoting inclusive hiring practices among local businesses.In addition to key worker support, Project Search commenced operation in West Dunbartonshire in 2024-25 and commissioned provision enhances our service offer to those with disabilities/long term conditions. | 1-5 | **2.1** **All stage supported employment programme** for people (all age) with disabilities as detailed opposite who wish to progress into paid employment. Support should include in work support as required.**2.2**  **Other specialist employment programmes supporting people with disabilities and long term conditions into employment**. |
| 1. **Community Justice –**

Justice System experienced residents  | In Scotland, approximately 1 in 3 men and 1 in 10 women of working age have a criminal conviction. Engaging with the community justice experienced population is recognised as particularly challenging.  Grant applicants are encouraged to clearly identify how they will do this.   | Stage 1-5 | **3.** **Specialist support for people with experience of the Community Justice system** which are impacting on access to employers/jobs. Working closely with Social Work colleagues to identify clients who will benefit from employability support across the justice process.Evidence suggests that access to specialist support and guidance to justice experienced residents and potential employers in relation to convictions and access to appropriate work experience placements will be a key aspect of delivery.   |
| 1. **Families facing poverty -** Parents/kinship carersincluding those affected by in-work poverty.
 | 25.6% of children in West Dunbartonshire are living in poverty. A key focus of our parental employment work is to reach those parents more likely to be impacted by poverty: * Single parents
* Families impacted by disability
* Parents under 25
* Parents with children under 1
* Parents with 3 or more children
* Ethnic minority parents
* Experience of the care system

We have a team of key workers supporting parents and a key worker presence in all local high schools, provision commissioned will enhance the key worker model. Understanding the prevalence of households likely to be affected by disadvantage is crucial for employability, learning and support initiatives.It is essential to address the specific challenges faced by these families in the area and tailor support services accordingly.   | All stages considered  | **4.1 Engagement, essential and Life-skills programmes for parents** that will help to support the wider development needs of parents including wellbeing and social prescription and will positively impact on their employability journey. This should include 121 support and group work.**4.2 Other programmes supporting parents into employment** or **improved employment**. |
| **5. Vulnerable Young People** School leavers, unemployed or economically inactive young people including care experienced young people and young people who are neurodiverse. | Key workers support young people, and commissioned provision enhances the range of options available to help young people progress towards and into work. This includes transition key workers in schools and ‘Thrive’ and ‘Ready to Thrive’ personal development programmes.The Working4U ‘Thrive’ and ‘Ready to Thrive’ Programme is a stage 1 personal development programme supporting young people aged 16 – 24 to progress towards a positive destination of their choice. | Stages 1-4Stages 1-4 | **5.1 Personal Social Development programmes** for school leavers/ young people up to 29 years which provide training; essential skills development, qualifications, employment related skills and include work experience. **5.2 Programmes specifically for young people** aged 16-29 years including foundation skills; industry specific training; work experience; job matching; access to Apprenticeship programmes (please detail the frameworks training aligns with) and in work support.  |
| **NOLB/UKSPF activity to support residents across the priority groups** |
| 1. **Vocational Activity** - residents requiring vocational skills and work experience to progress into employment
 | The LEP recognises the need to provide vocational skills training in sectors where there are likely to be vacancies over the coming year. The aspiration of the SEG is to support those gaining vocational skills to progress into related and sustainable work opportunities in West Dunbartonshire, or within other travel to work areas. We have an all age offer in Working4U with people requesting vocational training. (Working4U has the ability to offer vocational training in customer care and social care). Some of this can be met through accessing training on an individual basis however we require a wide range of relevant vocational courses for groups of clients to meet client and employer needs. This support should offer progressions for residents participating in wellbeing and personal development programmes.  | 3/4 | **6. Delivery of 4 -12-week** **vocational skills** programmes/sector-based work academies, which are linked to local employers and evidenced work opportunities. Programmes must include industry recognised qualifications/certificates; a minimum of 2 weeks work experience and guaranteed interviews. Much of what we commission will be **all age and open to all target groups** however we need to ensure our provision meets the specific needs of our priority groups who may benefit from a more targeted and bespoke programme, in particular:**Parents** – who need training provision and jobs with school /parent friendly hours and conditions. **School leavers up to 29yrs** who require vocational programmes adapted to meet their specific needs and job opportunities including apprenticeships.Applicants may opt to deliver vocational programmes for all ages (no specific target group) and/or courses bespoke for parents or young people.  |
| **7 Health and Wellbeing support**  | 52% of those engaging with employability services from Apr-Dec 2024 report a health issue including mental health.Evidence suggests the most common issues relate to mental health and that these issues impact on clients’ ability to engage and progress towards and into employment. | n/a  | **7.** **Delivery of wellbeing courses/programmes** that will positively impact on participants employability journey. |

1. **Additional Information for Applicants**

Interested providers can submit multiple proposals if they believe they have the skills, experience and capacity to deliver these effectively.

A separate application will be required for each programme/service, aligned to each type of support outlined above.

In addition to the specific priority groups targeted through the work areas above to be supported through this fund, we would expect all delivery partners to make particular efforts to ensure their programmes reach:

* Vulnerable Young People
* Long-term Unemployed
* Economically Inactive
* Families facing Poverty
* Individuals with Disabilities
* Long-term Health Conditions
* Neurodiversity
* Care Experienced
* Minority Ethnic Communities
* Community Justice
* Areas of multiple deprivation

***The SEG is keen that potential grant applicant partners use their expertise, local knowledge and links with other partners and employers to develop creative and innovative proposals that they have confidence will meet gaps in service delivery, engage and attract the relevant target groups, and progress participants into a positive outcome. In support of this, partners will be required to deliver provision from accessible facilities within West Dunbartonshire.***

**Benefits Conditionality**

We want to safeguard the benefits and entitlements of residents taking part in activity supported through this grant programme. We will expect applicants to show an understanding of the individual needs of course attendees, giving consideration to possible benefit impacts and ensuring there is no risk to entitlements by the take up of any employability initiative.

Providers should ensure they have had a recent dialogue with DWP to clarify/remove any potential benefit impacts their proposed programme may have.

**Safeguarding**

Training providers must have comprehensive safeguarding policies and procedures that address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of these priority groups. This includes conducting thorough background checks on staff members involved in the program, implementing appropriate risk assessments, and delivering comprehensive training on safeguarding and child protection to all staff. It is crucial to create a safe and supportive environment, fostering open communication channels for reporting concerns or incidents. Regular monitoring and evaluation should be conducted to identify and address any safeguarding issues promptly. Collaboration with external agencies and stakeholders is also vital to provide holistic support and protection to all participants. By integrating robust safeguarding practices into their bidding proposals, training providers demonstrate their commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of young people and adults throughout the grant programme.

**Fair Work Principles**

All funded delivery partners will be expected to deliver their work in line with Scottish Government Fair Work First principles. Information can be found here-

[Scottish Government Fair Work Guidance](https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2023/03/fair-work-first-guidance-2/documents/fair-work-first-guidance-supporting-implementation-fair-work-first-workplaces-scotland/fair-work-first-guidance-supporting-implementation-fair-work-first-workplaces-scotland/govscot%3Adocument/fair-work-first-guidance-supporting-implementation-fair-work-first-workplaces-scotland.pdf)

Completion of a Fair Work Declaration form will be required.

**Payment of Training Allowances to Eligible Young People**

All young people not in receipt of Universal Credit or an Educational Maintenance Allowance, who take part in Grants funded provision must be paid a training allowance of up to £60/week (subject to hours and attendance) **for any programmes/courses of 10hrs or more per week.** Providers must have the necessary systems in place to manage a Training Allowance payment.

All participants regardless of age should also be able to claim reasonable travel expenses and where relevant, be provided with lunch/refreshments.

Applicants should outline how they will administer these requirements and include these associated costs in the project budget.

1. **Application Process and Decision Making**

The West Dunbartonshire Employability Grant programme will provide funding for delivery of services **from 1st April 2025 to the 31st March 2026**.

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| **Milestone** | **Date**  |
| Grant opens for applications  | Wednesday 26th March 2025 |
| Information sessions for potential applicants – please attend 1 session | Monday 31st March 11.30am on Teams Wednesday 2nd April 11.30am on Teams  |
| Q&A open | Wednesday 26th March 2025 |
| Q&A closure | Friday 11th April 2025 |
| Application deadline  | Friday 18th April noon  |
| Assessment process  | W/C Monday 21st April |
| Application outcomes notified  | W/C Monday 21st April |
| Delivery end  | End March 2026 |

**Who is Eligible to Apply?**

Third, public, private and further/higher education sector organisations are all eligible to apply.

If you are applying as a partnership, the lead partner should apply, and detail partners involved. The lead partner would be solely responsible for the overall management and delivery of the project, including budget management and monitoring and reporting requirements.

**What Makes a Good Application?**

* Observe the **word limit** for each question.
* Please do not attach appendices or documents as these will be deleted.
* Please write succinctly and in plain English**.** Use short sentences and avoid acronyms and jargon.
* Be as specific as you can
* Assume the reader knows nothing about your organisation, track record and project - even if you have received local funding before to do similar work.
* Ideally you will provide a clear picture for the reader of what you intend to deliver, how you will do this, and what difference it will make to participants as well as how it contributes to the grant programme strategic outcomes detailed in section 2 above.
* Provision of a strong rationale to show both the need for the services, that there will be a demand from local people to take part in the provision, and that you have a clear idea how to engage them. (Identifying, recruiting and sustaining engagement of the number of participants stated is the responsibility of the organisation receiving a grant - albeit that local agencies such as the DWP, Working4U (West Dunbartonshire Council) and Skills Development Scotland staff will refer some clients).

**Eligible Spend**

Providers will need to ensure that project participants are eligible for support when participating on this Grant Award Programme, for example participants must be West Dunbartonshire residents and be able to prove their right to live and work in the UK. Only direct delivery revenue costs will be considered as eligible grant expenditure.

**Applicants should clearly show the calculations for each cost outlined, including for each member of delivery staff involved.**

**Decision Making**

An Assessment Panel consisting of SEG members will manage the assessment and scoring procedure following the Council’s grant processes.

**Notification of Successful Applications**

Application outcomes including grant award letters will be issued as per the timeline above. Full details of the payment process and terms and conditions of grant, including monitoring and reporting requirements will be included.

The Provider shall provide employability services in the volumes, outputs of services and financial profiles set out in each award of grant **which could be different from the application submitted.**

Any other changes to the programme including a change in what was specified in grant applications will require approval in advance.

1. **Grant Payment Process**

Grant payments will generally be paid quarterly against the actual costs of delivery and not the grant award level.  A payment schedule will be discussed with the applicant, and this will be reflected in the grant award letter.

Applicants will be required to submit claims quarterly.  Required proof of spend and activity to date may be requested at any point.  Applicants will be required to invoice West Dunbartonshire Council after the claim has been approved.  Payments will be processed through West Dunbartonshire Council’s normal accounting system and payment to applicants will be by BACS. All providers must complete approved supplier process if not already done so. W4U can check with successful partners if this is required.

1. **How will we Monitor and Evaluate the Grants Programme?**

**Performance Management**

The key performance indicators listed below are the outcomes sought through the grant funded provision

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| **Key Performance Indicators**  |
| Number of people supported |
| Number of people reporting improved health and wellbeing |
| Number of people gaining basic skills  |
| Number of people gaining a qualification  |
| Number of people in FE/HE education  |
| Number of people commenced volunteering opportunity  |
| Number of people participating in a work placement |
| Number of people in employment, including self-employment |
| Number of people securing a Modern Apprenticeship |
| Number of people sustaining employment for 6 months |

Successful projects may have additional outputs and outcomes which they will also monitor and report on.

Personal information will be gathered and recorded by the grant recipient for the following purposes:

* To provide quantitative performance data on registrations, progressions and positive outcomes to inform service delivery adjustments and improvements.
* To provide qualitative performance data in the form of case studies.
* To contribute to the national No One Left Behind Shared Measurement Framework <https://www.employabilityinscotland.com/media/pgujxbke/for-publication-shared-measurement-framework-updated-december-2022.pdf>

Providers will be expected to keep (and to share with West Dunbartonshire Council) some key data on the employability participants journey and outcomes and equalities data using Advice Pro Client Management System. A data sharing agreement will be issued to successful applicants alongside the Grant Award letter. More information on this will be made available to successful applicants and full training will be provided where required.

At the Inception meeting, first point of contact details will be set out to ensure providers are clear on communication channels. Throughout the delivery period monitoring visits/progress meetings will be scheduled with all providers. These visits/meetings will check that the project has been implemented as described, that financial records associated with the project are in order, that publicity arrangements and equality and sustainability policies have been complied with. Performance will be discussed and any issues identified will require to be addressed through clear improvement actions.

Where the applicant is unable to demonstrate sufficient progress towards achieving agreed outputs and targets, future funding may be withheld or reduced. Further details will be outlined in the terms and conditions.

Monitoring can also identify successful elements of projects. Monitoring is vital in enabling the SEG to gain greater insight into individual projects, but also to ensure and verify that the funds have been spent as envisaged and acknowledged correctly.

**Reporting Requirements**

West Dunbartonshire Council will run reports from the MIS at a project and programme level on a quarterly basis, which alongside qualitative evidence provided by providers including case studies will be reported to the SEG and to the Scottish Government and UK Government.

All providers will be required to submit half year and final year end reports.

**Evaluation and Continuous Improvement**

Grant recipients will be required to establish their own evaluative processes to drive continuous improvement and monitoring processes will include grant recipients evidencing how they do this and to what effect.

The Scottish Government has developed a Continuous Improvement tool-kit for use by LEPs and individual employability delivery organisations and grant recipients- <https://www.employabilityinscotland.com/resources-for-partners/toolkits/>

1. **Key Data and Local Strategic Documents to Support Grant Applicants**

Further useful data sources can be found below.

**UKSPF Technical Note 25/26** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-2025-26-technical-note>

**Scottish Government No One Left Behind Strategic Plan** <https://www.gov.scot/publications/no-one-left-behind-employability-strategic-plan-2024-2027/>

**NOMIS** - [Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics](https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157435/report.aspx) NOMIS provides key and regularly updated data on unemployment and claimant counts in West Dunbartonshire and national levels. This includes data on economic inactivity levels, and date can be analysed by gender, age, and priority geographic areas.

**SDS Regional Skills Assessment** - <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/skills-planning-alignment/regional-skills-assessments/>. These documents contain a wealth of labour market data, including key data on school leavers through the Annual Participation Measure. This is broken down by age, gender, disabilities, and priority datazones. Employment forecasts to 2025 for West Dunbartonshire and the wider Glasgow City Region are also included.

**SDS Sectoral Insights** <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/skills-planning-alignment/sectoral-skills-assessments/> - these provide insights on 17 sectoral insights at the Scottish level.

**The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)** – <https://www.gov.scot/news/scottish-index-of-multiple-deprivation-2020/> The SIMD ranks small areas (datazones) in West Dunbartonshire in order of deprivation, and can assist in targeting employability interventions on priority areas.

**West Dunbartonshire SIMD Local Analysis Report** - <https://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/media/4319962/simd-2020-summary-report.pdf>

**West Dunbartonshire’s Local Child Poverty Action Report** [The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 | West Dunbartonshire Council (west-dunbarton.gov.uk)](https://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/council/key-council-documents/the-child-poverty-scotland-act-2017/)

**West Dunbartonshire Strategic Plan 2022-2027** <https://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/council/key-council-documents/strategic-plan/>