

ITEM No ...7.....

REPORT TO: CITY GROWTH AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE – 17 NOVEMBER 2025

REPORT ON: DISCOVER WORK ANNUAL UPDATE

REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CITY DEVELOPMENT

REPORT NO: 336-2025

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This annual report updates Committee on the *Discover Work Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2027*, which responds to the Scottish Government and Local Government's ambition to transform Scotland's employability services through the *No One Left Behind* policy; progress with "*A Step Change in Positive Destinations for Young Dundonians*" including improvements in the Annual Participation Measure; and performance of the new Employability Pathway programme up to 31 March 2025.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
- a notes the most recent progress in delivering the *Discover Work Strategy and Action Plan*, including "*A Step Change in Positive Destinations for Young Dundonians*" and improvements in the Annual Participation Measure for 2025;
 - b notes the performance of the new Employability Pathway programme for the period 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025 and commitment in 2025/2026 to enhance services for priority customer groups; and
 - c remits the Executive Director of City Development to bring a further report to the City Growth and Infrastructure Committee in Autumn 2026 on progress in delivering the *Discover Work Strategy*, including "*A Step Change in Positive Destinations for Young Dundonians*", and performance of the Employability Pathway programme up to 31 March 2026.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the agreement of this report. The reference to additional commitments of funding is due to an increase in external funding. As a result, there are no net financial implications for the Council.

4 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Reference is made to Article IX of the Minute of the City Governance Committee on 22 April 2024 (Report No. 113-2024 refers) where a focused update was given on Dundee's Annual Participation Measure and committee approved the draft *A Step Change in Positive Destinations for Young Dundonians* report and Improvement Plan.
- 4.2 Further reference is made to Article III of the Minute of the Fair Work, Economic Growth & Infrastructure Committee on 10 June 2024 (Report No 133-2024 refers) where committee noted progress with the *Discover Work Strategy and Action Plan* including the commitment of funding to deliver a new Employability Pathway programme until March 2029.

5 DISCOVER WORK STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2022 – 2027

- 5.1 Discover Work is Dundee's Local Employability Partnership. It is a multi-agency approach to the development of shared objectives, the alignment of efforts and the commitment of resources relating to employability and skills. Discover Work members include Skills Development Scotland, Dundee and Angus College, the Department for Work and Pensions, Dundee City Council, Dundee & Angus Chamber of Commerce, Dundee Volunteer & Voluntary Action (Third Sector Interface), Developing the Young Workforce, Dundee Health and Social Care Partnership, NHS Tayside, Business Gateway, and Social Security Scotland.
- 5.2 The Discover Work Strategy 2022 – 2027 was published in April 2022, which sets out its ambitious strategic vision, goals and context in "*Transforming employability for a new Dundee*". It aims to maximise the opportunities provided by Scottish Government and Local Government's ambition to simplify Scotland's employability system through the No One Left Behind policy, and deliver outstanding and recognisable improvements in outcomes for customers. The Strategy is supported by a detailed Action Plan, with all actions aligned to three strategic goals:
- a strengthen the functions and effectiveness of Discover Work;
 - b improve employability outcomes for customers; and
 - c establish, promote, and increase awareness of Discover Work.
- 5.3 As detailed in the Discover Work Strategy 2022-2027 and reflected in the Council Plan 2022-2027 and City Plan 2022-2032 at the time of publication, there were approximately 11,000 unemployed or inactive people of working age in Dundee who want to work or could work, many of whom have mental health conditions and other disabilities which hinder their participation in the labour market. The priority for the Council and wider partnership in subsequent years was to assist this cohort and the harder to reach groups find fair and rewarding employment by transforming the way we deliver services and the more efficient use of funding.
- 5.4 In addition to the Council and City Plan, Discover Work supports progress with other strategies, policies, and action plans such as:
- Dundee's Fairness and Local Child Poverty Action Plans;
 - The Equality Outcomes Action Plan; and,
 - The Community Wealth Building Action Plan.
- 5.5 Since its publication, Discover Work has progressed its Strategy through the implementation of the detailed Action Plan and the establishment of Task and Finish Groups that are accountable for progress with agreed outputs. Summaries of progress with existing priorities are provided in **Appendix A**. These are in addition to progress completed to date and reported previously.
- 5.6 Additional information on "*Step Change in Positive Destinations for Young Dundonians*", including changes in the Annual Participation Measure, is provided in the next section.

6 "A STEP CHANGE IN POSITIVE DESTINATIONS FOR YOUNG DUNDONIANS"

Annual Participation Measure (APM)

- 6.1 The APM reports the proportion of young people (aged 16-19) participating in employment, education, or training. It is a measure of performance in education and our local economy, as well as of the City's ambition relating to fairness, inclusion, poverty, and productivity set out in the Council Plan 2022-2027 and City Plan 2022-2032.

- 6.2 As detailed in Article IX of the Minute of the City Governance Committee on 22 April 2024 (Report No 113-2024), a focused update was given on Dundee's APM including findings of A Step Change in Positive Destinations for Young Dundonians and the implementation of an Improvement Plan and corresponding Positive Destinations Framework.

Positive Destinations Framework

- 6.3 The Positive Destinations Framework aims to implement a consistent approach across all secondary schools while retaining flexibility for special schools and establishments that deliver alternative education, including Offsite Education and Kingspark, as they may have a different approach to suit their context.
- 6.4 Each school has established a *Core Implementation Group* to manage the transition of young people at the greatest risk of leaving school and not participating. True integrated partnership working and cross-sector collaboration has been achieved in each of our secondary and offsite settings. These groups are essential to the increase in numbers of young people who are participating and achieving a sustained positive destination.
- 6.5 In addition, post-school quality assurance meetings are scheduled for each school 4 times per year to support and challenge the *Core Implementation Groups*. This rigorous process ensures that no young person is forgotten or without an offer of support. These meetings were drivers for improvements in our APM during 2025.

Improvements in 2025

- 6.6 Although Dundee remains the lowest performing area in Positive Destinations for Young People, our performance has improved significantly. For the first time, we have delivered improvements for two consecutive years including:

Highest Participation Level	We have never had a higher level of participation since this measure was instigated. We now need to support a further 124 young people to participate to meet the Scottish average. This was 188 in 2023 and 133 in 2024. (see Appendix B, Chart 1)
Lowest Unconfirmed Level which is better than the Scottish average	While there were still 153 young people who we could not contact, it's the best position we've been in. It better enables us to identify those who are not participating, so we can make best use of resources to target young people more effectively. (see Appendix B, Chart 2)

- 6.7 Furthermore, and as detailed in the Annual City Plan Progress Report, the percentage of care experienced school leavers entering a positive destination has increased by 41%, and the Youth Unemployment rate (16-24) has decreased by 9%.
- 6.8 It is worth noting these improvements have been delivered against a more challenging backdrop where Dundee's population of 16–19-year-olds (6121) has never been higher. This is an increase of 13.4% since 2020, compared to 10.8% for Scotland. We are supporting 25% more young people proportionate to the increase in Scotland.

7 EMPLOYABILITY PATHWAY PROGRAMME: APRIL 2024 - MARCH 2025

- 7.1 The aim of the Employability Pathway is to ensure those furthest from the labour market are proactively targeted and supported to progress towards and enter sustainable positive destinations including employment.

- 7.2 As detailed in Article III of the Minute of the Fair Work, Economic Growth & Infrastructure Committee on 10 June 2024 (Report No 133-2024), Employability Providers were appointed following a competitive co-commissioning process during December 2023 – February 2024. The co-commissioning process was titled “Discover Work Challenge Fund 2024-2029”, which invited applications from organisations to deliver services in a new Employability Pathway programme for five years. Providers operating in our Employability Pathway programme are:
- a Dundee City Council's new single Corporate Employability Service (formed through the merger of the previous Adult Employability Team within City Development, and Youth Employability Team in Corporate Services); and
 - b All in Dundee - a consortium of seven third sector organisations led by ENABLE Works in partnership with Alexander Community Development, Barnardo's, Helm, One Parent Families Scotland, Street League, Volunteering Matters.
- 7.3 All providers are required to target priority customer groups and deliver specialist support to address the barriers they face, that is provided in a way that is simple, streamlined, and attractive to them. Providers work together to improve the proportion of customers that progress towards and enter employment and ensure most customers sustain their employment.

- 7.4 The following table provides a high-level summary of performance and impact during 2024/25:

1451	Customers Supported
56%	Aged 15-24 - supporting improvements in our Annual Participation Measure and Youth Unemployment rate, as outlined in paragraphs 6.6. and 6.7.
59%	Presented with a health condition - eg disability, mental health condition, learning difficulty, long-term physical illness/condition, and/or autism spectrum disorder/condition
25%	Parents including those belonging to Priority Family Groups - defined by <i>Best Start, Bright Futures</i> (Scotland's Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-26) as being at the greatest risk of experiencing poverty
68 (5%)	Customers participated in volunteering or flexible work tasters
571 (39%)	Customers Entered a Positive Destination - eg Employment, Self Employment, Modern Apprenticeship, Further/Higher Education
74%	Sustained their positive destination for at least 12 months

- 7.5 Further performance information is provided in **Appendix C** including the characteristics, circumstances, and localities of those supported.
- 7.6 Within the Scottish Local Authority Economic Development (SLAED) group performance Indicators (which are used to inform the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF), Dundee's performance is the 3rd highest of all local authorities in Scotland (10th in 2022/2023), and 1st in the LGBF family group (3rd in 2022/2023). In addition, the cost per unique customer supported into employment is the 8th lowest cost nationally (10th in 2022/2023) and 5th in the family group (same as 2022/2023).

Additional Investments

- 7.7 Further funding has been made available by the Scottish Government during 2025/2026 to enhance existing services; a proportion of which is for *Specialist Employability Support*. This has been committed to the following areas.

Initiative	Purpose and Beneficiaries
Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) Programme for Scotland's Childminding Futures	<p>A programme to support up to 10 new childminders in Dundee with a training and induction package from SCMA, business start-up support from Business Gateway, and a Scottish Government Business Grant. Promotion is ongoing to start onboarding of interested customers.</p> <p>4 people are currently progressing with further SCMA marketing and community engagement commencing.</p>
Discover Together – NHS Tayside	<p>6-month paid placements for up to 8 unemployed or underemployed parents within NHS Tayside starting in September 2025.</p> <p>Placements are paid above the Real Living Wage and offer family friendly working pattern to accommodate family commitments.</p> <p>Preparatory training included accredited learning provided by D&A College. Ongoing support is provided by Employability Providers. The aim is for all customers to secure permanent employment following the initial 6 months.</p>
Individual Placement & Support Service - All in Dundee (ENABLE) and NHS Tayside	<p>An expansion of a specialist service known as Individual Placement and Support (IPS) developed to support people with severe and enduring mental health problems to secure and sustain employment. IPS is delivered in partnership with NHS Tayside, where Enable Works' Employability Key Workers are integrated with clinical health specialists.</p>
Earn and Learn Opportunities	<p>Up to 10 Modern Apprenticeship opportunities with partner organisations for young people not participating in employment, education, or training.</p> <p>This is being developed in direct response to findings of 'A Step Change in Positive Destinations for Young Dundonians'.</p>
The ARC – All in Dundee (Barnardo's)	<p>An Alternative Route Collaborative (ARC) designed to support young people who have engaged with Dundee City's offsite provisions, including Rockwell Learning Centre, PACE, or RISE.</p> <p>This is being developed in direct response to findings of 'A Step Change in Positive Destinations for Young Dundonians'.</p>

8 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The content of this report was previously considered in Article VII of the minute of the City Development Committee meeting on 5 September 2022 (Report No 206-2022) and remains valid. The original report was subject to an Integrated Impact Assessment. An appropriate Senior Manager has checked and agreed with this assessment. For follow-ups relating to initial reports agreed prior to 22 August 2022 a copy of the Integrated Impact Assessment is available (where applicable) on the Council's website at www.dundee.gov.uk/iiia. For follow-ups relating to initial reports created after this date, a copy of the Integrated Impact Assessment is included as an Appendix to that initial report.

9 CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 The Council Leadership Team have been consulted in the preparation of this report and agree with its content.

10 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 None.

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24 October 2025

APPENDIX A

DISCOVER WORK STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2022-2027 - PROGRESS BY TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

Task and Finish Group	Purpose/Remit	Progress
Review of Council Employability Teams	Explore opportunities for the Council as a provider of employability services, how the Council may respond to the Discover Work Strategy, and add further value	<p>Following a Corporate Employability Review undertaken by the Council during 2023/24, the Task & Finish Group ('Review Board') and Council Leadership Team approved the creation of a new single Corporate Employability Service, through a realignment of the existing Adult Employability Team within City Development, Youth Employability Team in Corporate Services, and elements of the Employment Support service in Dundee's Health & Social Care Partnership.</p> <p>Subject to concluding the consultation with trade unions, the proposed structure and functions of the team are to be finalised and implemented imminently.</p>
Employability Pathway Steering Group	To ensure the Employability Pathway operates as a single programme of support, including the co-design of shared areas of work where Discover Work has committed to coordinated approaches driven by collaboration between Employability Providers and wider partner organisations	<p>Members include key managers/decision makers from each Employability Provider and broader Discover Work partner organisations. The group was formally established in August 2025.</p> <p>The initial priority for members is the development of a joint Stakeholder Engagement Plan including Customers & Communities; Employers; and Referral Partners.</p>
Increase Awareness and Access to Discover Work	Increase the awareness of Discover Work amongst customers, employers, and partner organisations while simplifying access for customers into and between services	<p>Employability Providers are supporting place-based offers as part of the Local Fairness Initiatives and wider multi-agency 'Advice Hub' models to develop links with partner organisations while reaching and engaging customers in priority areas such as Linlathen, Douglas, Lochee, and Stobswell. The Douglas Advice Hub and Stobswell Together drop-in commenced in January and May 2025 respectively.</p> <p>Discover Work has a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for customers, employers, and referral partners - Email Address (contact@discoverworkdundee.co.uk) and phone number (01382 434552). We have fully delivered upon the Fairness Recommendation - '<i>Discover Work creates a single point of contact/entry</i>'</p> <p>More recently, Discover Work refreshed its website and created new digital referral processes for partner organisations including a streamlined approach for secondary schools as part of <i>A Step Change in Positive Destinations for Young Dundonians</i>.</p>

Task and Finish Group	Purpose/Remit	Progress
Discover Work Hub of Support	Explore options to better align, integrate, and co-ordinate support for customers through the co-location of Employability Providers and other partner organisations in a city centre and/or other suitable location	<p>It was recognised by partner organisations that a phased approach was necessary with phase 1 focusing on short-term co-location arrangements as pre-existing tenancies ended. Good progress has been made through the temporary use of Dundee House until a permanent city centre location becomes operational:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills Development Scotland since 16 September 2024 • Council Employability Staff since January 2025 • Enable Works since 12 May 2025 <p>In addition, Discover Work has supported a Co-location Study commissioned by Dundee & Angus College to inform their infrastructure strategy including the vision for a new campus to replace the Wellgate Shopping Centre.</p>
'Targeting Hidden Talent Project' Development Group	A small group of officers and consultants established to develop a Business Justification Case (BJC) for approval to deliver a 'Targeting Hidden Talent Project' as part of the Tay Cities Region Deal's Skills & Employability Programme	<p>Targeting Hidden Talent (THT) project aims to connect the Tay City Region's most deprived communities with employment, training, and skills development opportunities, striving for inclusive growth and empowerment. If approved, this project will engage up to 334 people.</p> <p>Version 1 of the business case was submitted to governments on 10 July 2025 with feedback received on 5 September 2025. Version 2 was submitted on 3 October, addressing all feedback, with the aim of gaining approval by December 2025 so that service delivery can commence on 1 April 2026.</p>
A Step Change in Positive Destinations for Young Dundonians	Implementation of a partnership Improvement Plan to address the city's Participation Measure of those aged 16-19	<p>A review of our performance in the Annual Participation Measure was completed with an Improvement Plan developed. This is now being implemented.</p> <p>Additional resources have been secured through the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund to increase capacity within education to implement and manage an Improvement Framework within secondary schools and offsite education & learning centres.</p> <p>Further information has been provided in the body of this report.</p>

APPENDIX B

ANNUAL PARTICIPATION MEASURE 2025

Chart 1: % of Young People Participating

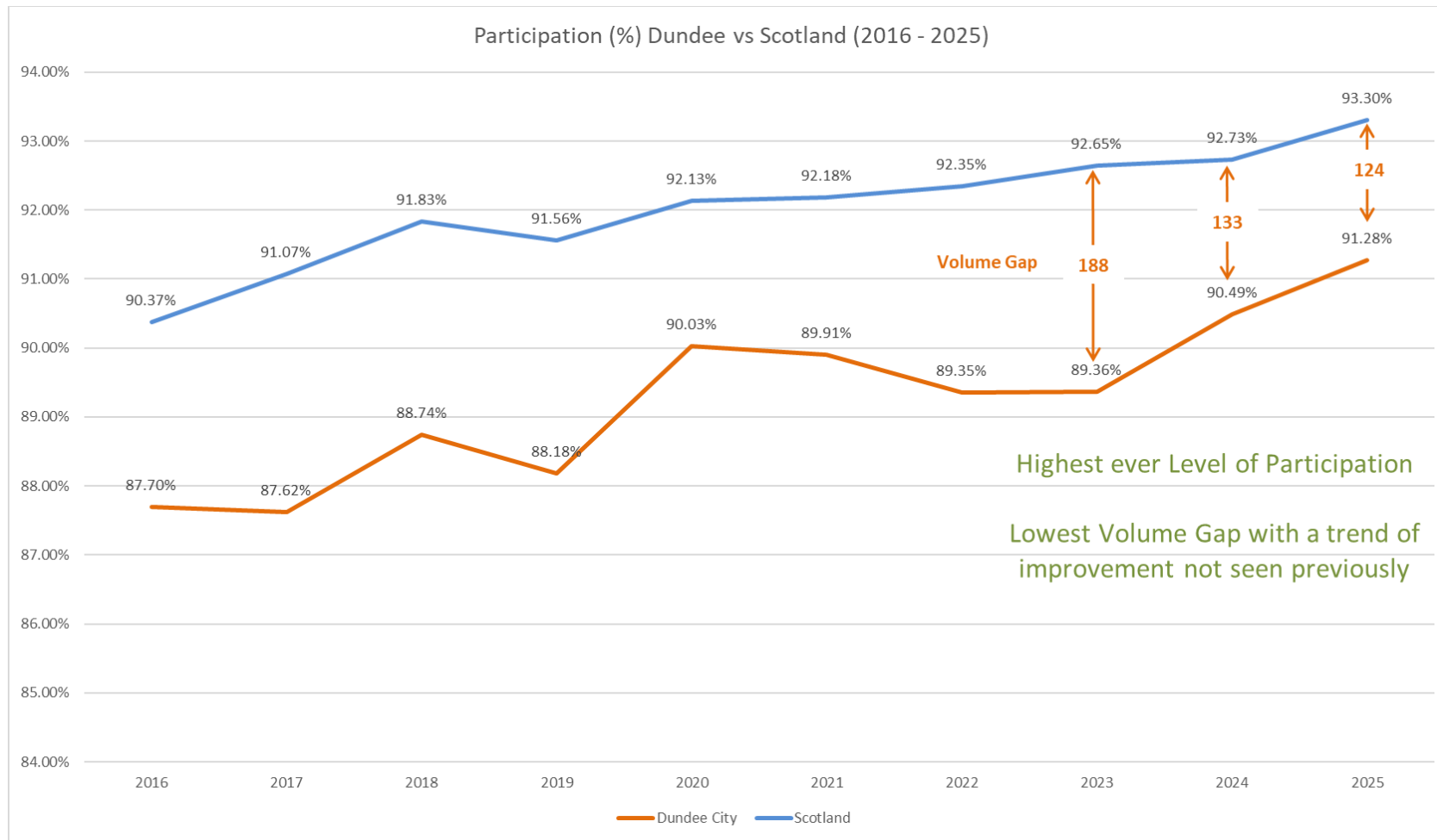
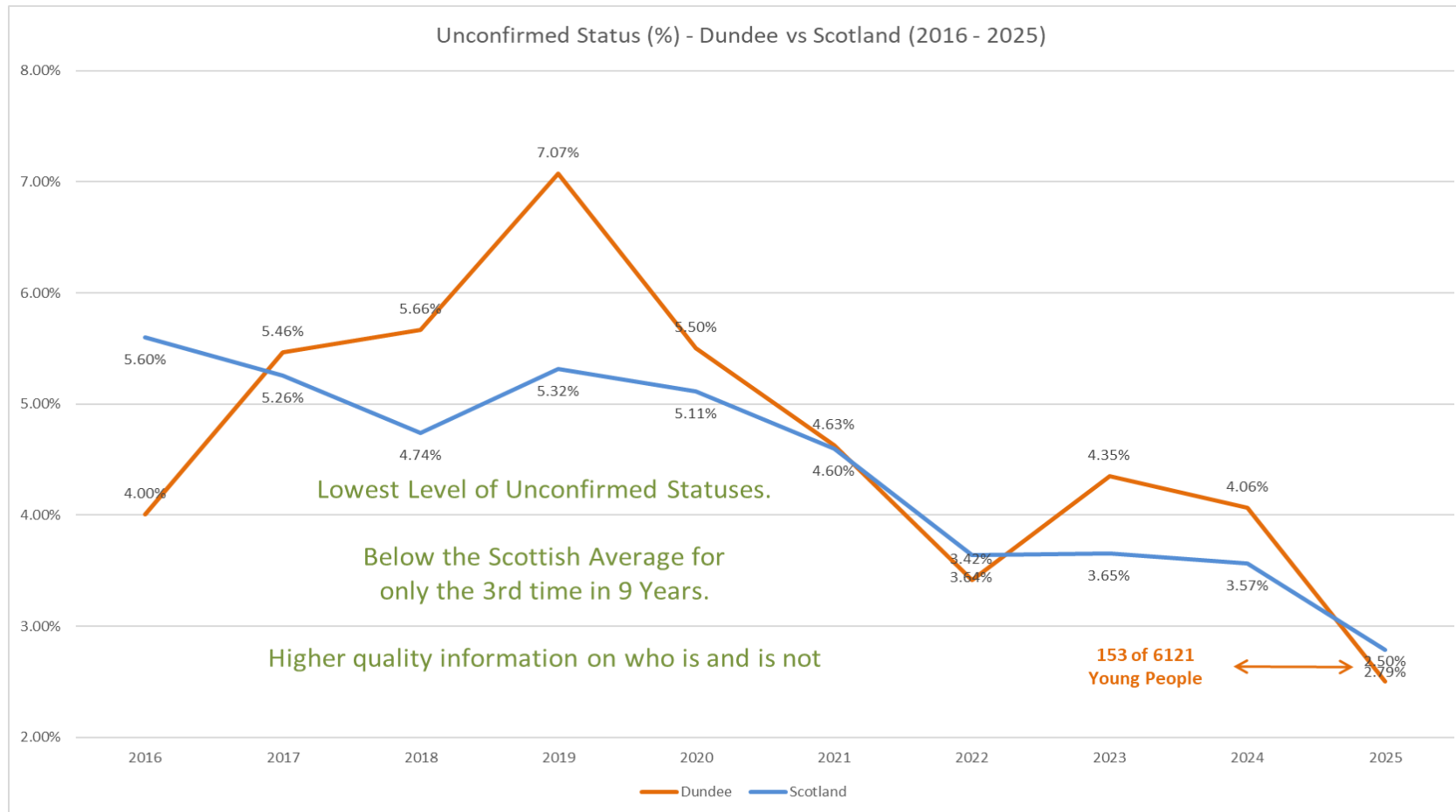


Chart 2: % of Young People who have an Unconfirmed Status

APPENDIX C

EMPLOYABILITY PATHWAY PERFORMANCE: 1 APRIL 2024 - 31 MARCH 2025

Customers Supported

By Customer Characteristics, Circumstances, and Localities		All Customers		Parents Only (subset of All)	
		1415	% of All Customers	348	% of Parents Only
Sex	Female	626	44%	231	66%
	Male	783	55%	117	34%
	Other/Prefer not to say	6	<1%	0	-
Age (at point of registration)	15	70	5%	0	-
	16-19	495	35%	8	2%
	20-24	221	16%	27	7%
	25-34	266	19%	119	34%
	35-49	249	18%	166	48%
	50+	114	8%	28	8%
Ethnicity	White - Scottish, White - Other British, White - Irish	1079	76%	188	54%
	Other/Minority Ethnic Background	342	24%	160	46%
SIMD	Live in the 5% Most Deprived Areas in Scotland (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation)	292	21%	73	21%
Priority Ward Areas	Coldside	217	15%	60	17%
	East End	215	15%	60	17%
	North East	188	13%	35	10%
	Lochee	212	15%	57	16%
	Total Customers Supported from PWA	832	59%	212	61%
LFI Data Zones	Linlathen	52	4%	15	4%
	Stobswell West	13	<1%	4	1%
Health*	Disability	386	27%	86	24%
	Mental health condition	442	31%	103	30%
	Long-term physical illness/condition	134	9%	34	10%
	Autism Spectrum disorder/condition	46	3%	5	1%

*Some customers may have selected more than one of these conditions, so the volumes do not always represent individual customers

Customers Supported into Positive Destination

By Customer Characteristics, Circumstances, and Localities		Employment	Self Employment	Further / Higher Education	Modern Apprenticeship	Flexible Work Taster & Volunteering
		407	17	126	21	68
Sex	Female	191	12	60	9	37
	Male	215	5	66	12	31
	Other/Prefer not to say	1				
Age (at point of registration)	15	10		12	1	5
	16-19	108		75	16	20
	20-24	71	1	14	3	10
	25-34	96	8	15	1	13
	35-49	80	8	7		16
	50+	42		3		4
Ethnicity	White - Scottish, White - Other British, White - Irish	290	14	107	20	47
	Other/Minority Ethnic Background	117	1	19	1	21
SIMD	Live in the 5% Most Deprived Areas in Scotland (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation)	87	8	28	2	9
Priority Ward Areas	Coldside	68	2	11	1	9
	East End	90	3	33	2	11
	North East	66	3	22	5	6
	Lochee	56	3	18		13
	Total Positive Destinations from PWA	280	11	84	8	39
% Positive Destinations from PWA		69%	65%	67%	38%	57%
LFI Data Zone	Linlathen	12	1	7	1	1
	Stobswell West	4		4		
Health*	Disability	108	8	31	3	20
	Mental health condition	122	10	46	6	23
	Long-term physical illness/condition	27	4	18	1	8
	Autism Spectrum disorder/condition	8		6		4
Parents (see below BSBF data)	All parent groups	108	12	22	1	21

Breakdown by Positive Destination		All Customers	Parents Only (subset of All)
Total Positive Destinations		571	143
% of Total Customers Supported		40%	41%
Initial Positive Destination			
	Employment	407	108
	Self Employment	17	12
	Modern Apprenticeship	21	1
	Started Further/Higher Education	126	22
Work Related Activity	Flexible Work Taster & Volunteering	68	21

Parents Supported and those entering a Positive Destination

Best Start, Bright Futures – Priority Family Groups*				Supported		Achieved Positive Destination	
				348	% of Total	143	% of Total
Lone Parent				192	55%	85	59%
Parent from minority ethnic background	Customers who identified as an ethnic background that was not White – Scottish, White – Other British, or White – Irish			160	46%	61	43%
Parent who is aged <25				35	10%	17	12%
Parent with 3 or more children				75	22%	20	14%
Parent with a disabled child		Although these are one measure, our data captures this separately	39	11%	16	11%	
Parent with a disability			89	26%	35	24%	
Parent whose youngest child is <1				23	7%	8	6%

*Some customers may be included in more than one measure, so the volumes do not always represent individual customers

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