

Chief executive of Inverness Chamber of Commerce

Stewart **NICOL**

www.inverness-chamber.co.uk @InvernessChambr



First anniversary is perfect time to say thank you

You will be aware from many of my previous columns that Inverness Chamber of Commerce has been successfully running the Scottish Government's Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) programme for Inverness and Central Highland (DYWICH) for over six years.

Formed as part of the Scottish Government's youth employment strategy, our DYWICH group aims to develop sustainable links between schools, colleges and employers with the aim of assisting businesses across the region to play an active role in preparing our young people for the world of work.

A key development of this

strategy, just over a year ago, involved embedding DYW school co-ordinators across all mainstream secondary schools in Scotland. Inverness Chamber of Commerce significantly expanded our DYWICH team by recruiting school co-ordinators for each of our 14 schools across the Inverness and Central Highland region.

Our school co-ordinators' role has focused on increasing employer engagement opportunities and has involved working collaboratively with specialist partners, increasing work-based learning for our young people. By understanding their own school's particular demography and local labour market, each co-ordinator has been able to tailor activity for those who will benefit the most. This is particularly important in supporting young people at risk of a non-positive destination.

Reflecting on a year of our school co-ordinators being in post, I am delighted to report on the huge success and impact they have had across our region and wanted to take this opportunity to thank each of them for all their hard work and commitment.

By working with local businesses and fostering new relationships between educators and employers, we have seen over 490 events organised in schools across Inverness



The Developing the Young Workforce team in Inverness.

and Central Highland involving 17,950 pupils.

In addition, our DYWICH group has worked in partnership with all those engaged in careers, employment and in school to devise local partnership agreements and implement local working arrangements. This work has been vital to ensure our young people have seamless access to individual support, advice, guidance and engagement with employers.

I also wanted to express my sincere thanks to our business community who have demonstrated their support for our young people with over 240 employers across a range of sectors (from construction to social care, hospitality to energy) actively engaging with schools and co-ordinators, helping to shape the future workforce and boost youth employment in our region.

Our DYWICH activity has also led to 14 businesses signing up locally for the Young Person's Guarantee (YPG). YPG is a national scheme which allows employers to formally

declare their intention to support the workforce of the future. Inverness Chamber of Commerce was the first organisation to sign-up for YPG in Inverness and Central Highland and I would encourage all businesses to do likewise in support of this initiative and for the benefit of their own organisation.

Looking forward to the next 12 months, our DYWICH team and school co-ordinators will continue to have a vital role in facilitating the engagement between young people and employers, providing career inspiration, supporting learning programmes and raising awareness among educators and young people of the different career pathways and positive destinations. I am absolutely convinced that this sustained and collaborative approach means we can continue to nurture the next generation of talent in our region.

In doing so, I strongly believe we will help ensure the future success of Highland businesses and grow a robust regional economy for the benefit of all our communities.

By understanding the demography and local labour market, each co-ordinator has been able to tailor activity for those who will benefit.

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