

JUNE 2022

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

North Ayrshire Community Benefit News



Hello and welcome to the June issue of the Community Benefits newsletter!

This month we're running an employability takeover of the newsletter, highlighting the work our contractors and teams have been doing to improve employability outcomes for the residents of North Ayrshire.

If you want to find out more about the employability services offered by North Ayrshire Council please contact Angus O'Henley on angusohenley@north-ayrshire.gov.uk

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The Equal Programme

Equal is the Supported Employment Service in North Ayrshire, helping anyone with a disability to find long term, fulfilling employment in addition to providing ongoing support for their clients and future employers. Equal's clients are all 16 years plus, residents of North Ayrshire and have a registered physical or learning disability, and have one thing in common: **they believe work is a REAL option for their future.**

As an Employer it's important to know that your business services and production are in safe hands. Equal will meet and spend time with you and your teams to get to know you and your needs. They'll provide a robust recruitment service that will enhance your teams with talented staff that really fit in. And, when they've made a match with one of their clients, Equal will be on hand to continue that support for as long as you or your new employee need them.

Equal's clients engage in a variety of activities, with the busiest being the community garden (read on to find out more!). Work experience is offered within Eglinton Community Garden, and there are currently ten trainees taking part in this programme. They are all being trained in horticulture and basic construction and joinery skills. To date they have constructed their own polytunnel, raised beds and garden benches; and just recently they dismantled a cabin and re-built this on the site to provide a purpose-built workshop. With support sources through community benefits, they have also recently complete a slabbed classroom area inside our polytunnel.

Equal is now half way through their second year of traineeships and look forward to a very bright future for all of their clients.

If you feel you can support Equal in any way please contact Linda Ford, Programme Manager on 07545 346780.

We have included accessible 'See Me CVs' of two of Equal's current cohort opposite; scan the QR codes to find out more about Calvin and Liam, and let Linda know if you might be able to offer either of these young people an opportunity in your workplace.



See Me CVs

Calvin Johnstone – Calvin is really interested in finding a career within Joinery. He has gained some skills through school, college and working at home with his family and he would now really appreciate any opportunity to learn new skills and begin some formal training in order to gain certification.



Liam MacRae – Liam is another budding joiner with skills gained in college. He then gained work experience working on a project to modernise a flat upgrading floors, doors skirtings etc. He is now looking to gain formal training in order to start his career within construction.



Spotlight on: McTaggart Construction

McTaggart Construction Ltd are based in Dalry, North Ayrshire, and have been working closely with the Council to deliver employability opportunities for young people in the local authority for several years.

As a local business and a responsible contractor, McTaggart are keen to support the community surrounding its sites, and take its responsibilities beyond just contributing bricks and mortar and 'ticking off' community benefits contributions.

At a recent developmen, Dalrymple Court in Irvine, the associated community benefit programme has included:

- creation of local jobs
- subcontracting to smaller local businesses
- engaging with schools through a programme of education outreach events
- working with local community groups to support their projects



Irvine Harbourside

Part of McTaggart's commitment to support the local economy post-COVID is a commitment to create job opportunities for young people and the long-term unemployed. Establishing successful partnerships with the Jobcentres in Irvine and Saltcoats meant that McTaggart were able to enroll with the UK Government's Kickstart scheme, which supported the creation of 9 new entrant jobs at Irvine Harbourside, in addition to 7 other roles created to support the work.

Since then...

- 7 young people from the Kickstart programme and work experience placements have progressed to apprenticeships on the project.
- In addition, the project has supported a further 8 local apprentices

Spotlight on: McTaggart Construction

Post-COVID, McTaggart were keen to look at ways to support and encourage young people into the construction industry.

The business worked with a wide range of partners, including Lowland Training, Action for Children, Barnardos and Ayrshire College to design and support the provision of sector-based work experience programmes.

A socially responsible contractor: facts and figures

- Over 3000 hours per year donated by McTaggart to the Education sector
- During COVID, McTaggart supported "Developing the Young Workforce" activities and events, delivering over 40 hours to career sessions for young people
- Working with local employability partners, McTaggart have been able to support some of North Ayrshire's most vulnerable young people, including working with local partners to provide support for housing.
- Supporting a Community Wealth Building economy in Ayrshire has been a significant achievement for the partnership, with more than 50% of the sub-contractors used on site being Ayrshire business, and more than 50% of the workforce on site living in Ayrshire
- McTaggart have also provided more than 33 free training courses to site operatives in their local partner businesses while on site in North Ayrshire.



The young people featured over these two pages are just some of the successful new employees with McTaggart through their Kickstart and apprenticeship schemes

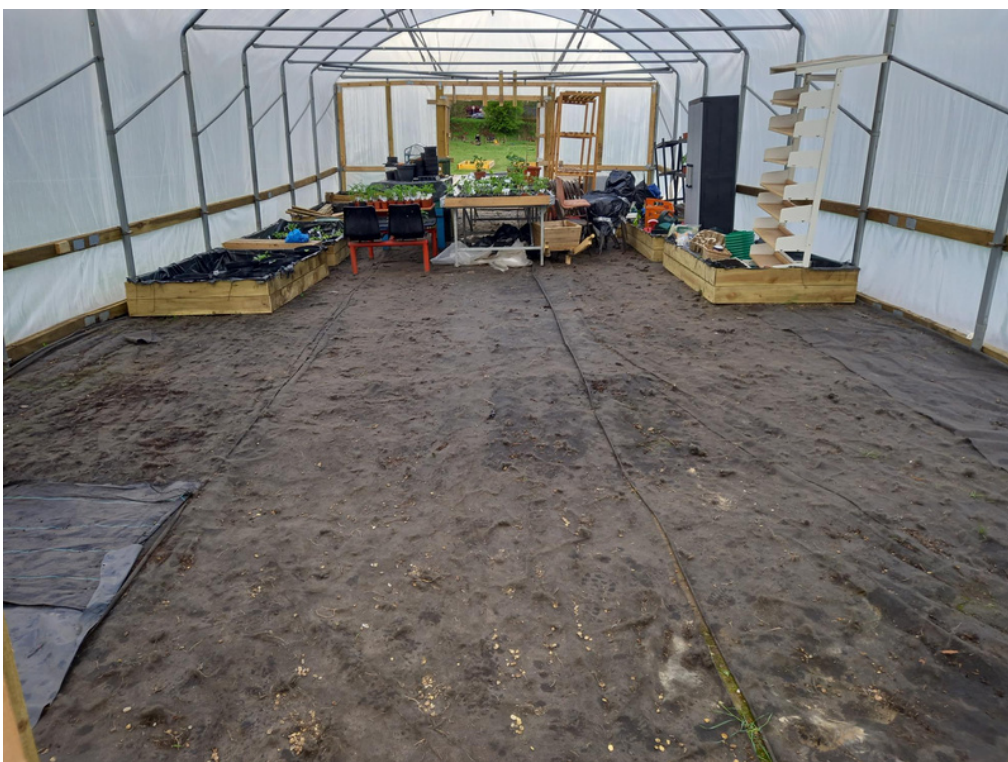
Spotlight on: Equal Community Garden

Equal Community Garden is based at Eglinton Community Garden on the edge of Kilwinning. It's part of a supported employment programme that helps people with disabilities or long term health conditions into employment, while offering ongoing support throughout. Having the garden opens up even more possibilities, with Caledonian Horticultural Society qualifications and an SVQ in Horticulture now an option for those on the programme.

Faskin Group Ltd are a roofing contractor and reached out to the Council about supporting Equal Community Garden after seeing it on the Wish List. They offered to donate the 90 2x2 slabs and accompanying wind dust required to slab one end of the group's polytunnel, increasing accessibility for those with mobility issues. In a very helpful coincidence, another Council contractor were also interested in the same wish! Ricoh UK provide the Council with print services, and also got in touch to see how they could help. Within 3 weeks from the first discussion, Faskin had arranged for the delivery of slabs to Eglinton, and a team of 7 volunteers from Ricoh (coming as far away as Edinburgh and Fife!) arrived to begin work at the garden.



The team from Ricoh worked alongside some of the team from Equal, moving the wind dust out of the delivery sacks, levelling the uneven ground of the polytunnel and laying the slabs. The newly levelled surface will allow the slabbed end of the polytunnel to serve as a covered classroom and learning space during bad weather, and greatly increases access for wheelchair users. The combined efforts of both contractors have been exactly the right thing at the right time, and by the end of a long day's work, the group are much further ahead than they would have been without the extra pairs of hands. Rod McIntosh, project lead at the garden, says: "It has been a great help – we will be able to even open our area up to potentially more individuals with mobility difficulties and to wheelchair users. Our teaching area will now also be offered out to other groups within our community garden if they have any specific training they need to deliver."



The before: uneven ground and no accessible surface for learners to use

Spotlight on: Equal Community Garden

On seeing the images of the work completed by the volunteers from Ricoh, Karen from Faskin Group reflected that “we feel very lucky that we were in a position to be able to offer the help. I really like the idea of the wish list, I feel it allows us to see the direct benefit of what we are delivering. We would definitely use the wish list again.”

Patricia Craig, who helped to organise the input from Ricoh (and came along to volunteer!), said that “This is our first visit to the community gardens and hopefully won’t be the last... The impact for our team has been very positive, they enjoyed the day and the benefits of working outside has been beneficial for mental health and wellbeing.”

Doug Craig, Regional Service Manager at Ricoh added “Firstly, I would like to thank the community garden staff for their hospitality and allowing us to help them carry out one of the many projects they have pending. It was also fascinating to learn what they do at the group and the people they aim to help. We were privileged to be working with some of the clients who attend the group which allowed us to get first hand experience of their enthusiasm and the hard work they are willing to put in.



The task of laying 90 slabs was totally out of our comfort zone, however, as a team and I include the clients and staff from the group, we achieved a great start as a result.”

The trainees themselves are really pleased with their “fantastic area”, which is “brilliant for having hands on horticulture”.

If you have been inspired by this project and would also like to offer some support to Equal Community Garden, they’d love to hear from anyone who could help them rebuild a cabin on the site, or who might be in a position to donate armoured wiring to help connect them to electricity. If this sounds like it’s a good fit with your work, please drop us a line at communitybenefits@north-ayrshire.gov.uk



Left: the team of volunteers from Ricoh and Equal. Right: the newly fitted slabs at the end of a day of hard work!

Community Benefits Wishlist: Youth Focus

Across North Ayrshire, there are many groups run by and for young people, offering them a safe space to build their confidence, explore their interests and gain the skills and experience they need for the future.

Some of these groups are looking for support through the Community Benefits Wish List, and we'd love to hear from you if you might be able to offer them a helping hand.



- **The Mungo Foundation:** looking for help to renovate supported accommodation for the young people they work with. This includes painting, decorating, donations of garden furniture and other items that will help their young people have a home away from home.
- **Turning Point Scotland:** run a community garden linked to their Prevention, Early Intervention and Recovery service which needs support with planting, upkeep, painting and support to market upcoming events
- **Garnock Valley Youth Forum:** looking for support with redecorating their youth-led school uniform swap shop and donations of good quality school clothing
- **Arran Youth Foundations:** help with odd jobs around the cabins used by young people - installing a dart board, putting up shelves, helping fix things here and there to make sure the facility can continued to be used by young people locally
- **Kilwinning Community Sports Club:** looking for donations of family picnic tables (ideally made from recycled plastic!) to support outdoor events throughout the year
- **Evolution Skatepark:** looking for some support to fix up some of the structures on their site: a plumber to help with some work on the public toilets; an external fire door for one of the units and some materials for young people to create murals
- **ACES Woodwynd:** renovating their play area in the community centre grounds and are looking for donations of some shrubs, plants and trees to create a bright space for young people to enjoy
- **The Music Project:** donations of equipment (e.g. guitars, drums, PAs, technical equipment) to help young people access musical instruments, performance opportunities and a chance to build confidence
- **Corsehill Community Champions:** working in partnership with Abelour, the group are hoping to install a new local playpark facility and are looking for a contractor to survey the proposed site
- **Loudoun Montgomery Parent Council:** the group have already raised almost £10k to build an outdoor learning classroom and are now looking for support with the groundworks and building - they'd love to speak to anyone who can help!