



UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN MEDIA RELEASE

Project SEARCH welcomes new funding

A project based at the University of Aberdeen which helps local people with learning disabilities and/or autism is looking forward to a bright future having secured funding for Session 2023/24 from Aberdeenshire Council and from lead corporate sponsor Shell UK Ltd.

DFN Project SEARCH combines real-life work experience, training in employability, and independent-living skills to young people in the north-east of Scotland with learning disabilities and/or autistic spectrum conditions who want to go on to find paid employment.

The financial contribution from both organisations will enable the 12 Interns recruited to the programme to study towards a City & Guilds qualification, undertake 3 work placements (graduating with over 800 hours of work experience on their CV) and receive coaching support to prepare them to enter and prosper within the world of work.

Aberdeenshire Council has played an active role in the programme since its launch 10 years ago and during this time has provided financial support, alongside valuable contributions in hosting placements, supporting Interns employed within Council offices and delivering referral and after-care services in partnership with Values Into Action Scotland, the project's licence-holder.

Shell UK plays an active role in encouraging employability skills across the North East of Scotland, including supporting broader educational activities delivered by Project SEARCH partners, the University of Aberdeen and North East Scotland College, via energy transition scholarships, technician training and the award-winning Shell Girls in Energy programme.

Heather Crabb, who leads the University's contribution to Project SEARCH, said *"We are delighted to be working with Aberdeenshire Council and Shell UK this academic year. Our programme is a shining example of how cross-sector partnership working in our local area can deliver real improvements to the lives of our Interns and their families, widen the talent pool available to local employers and generate broader social and economic benefits."*

Simon Roddy, Senior Vice President, Shell U.K. Limited, said: *"Shell is committed to the communities where we operate. We proudly back Project SEARCH and its vision to help local talented individuals in the North East achieve their full potential. To help sustain employment in the region, we will work with Project SEARCH to support people in getting a qualification and receiving tailored employment support."*

Ewen Allardyce, Employability Co-ordinator, Aberdeenshire Council said: *“Project Search is an integral part of the Aberdeenshire employability offer and we are delighted to continue our support of those requiring additional support into employment.”*

The Interns are looking forward to planning, organising and hosting an event later this year to celebrate this exciting new chapter in the programme’s history.

NOTES TO EDITORS

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