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The Scottish Government
Ministerial Summit on Employability
2018 – Ministers Opening Address

Working in Partnership in Scotland's
Future Employability Services

5 December 2018

Norton Park Conference Centre
57 Albion Road
Edinburgh
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MINISTERIAL SUMMIT ON EMPLOYABILITY: WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP IN SCOTLAND'S FUTURE EMPLOYABILITY SERVICES

Thank you Colin, and good morning to everyone.

I am delighted to welcome you all to the Scottish Government's third Ministerial Summit on Employability.

I'd also like to extend a special welcome to Professor Colin Lindsay from Strathclyde University, who will lead us through today's proceedings.

We are hosting this event today in what I think we will all agree is impressive building, run by The Albion Trust. The trust was formed in 1994 specifically to establish this office complex as the first shared premises project for third sector organisations in Scotland. The values of the trust include treating people fairly and equitably, which I think will resonate with all of us in this room, in what we are committed to working to achieve for the people of Scotland.

The theme of today's event is working in partnership to shape Scotland's employability services.

As I look around the room today, I see many key partners who have helped – and who continue to help - to shape and deliver employability services in Scotland.

We are at a significant point in our work to reshape and refocus publicly funded employability support in Scotland. Now our devolved employability service Fair Start Scotland is in place and operational, we've been reviewing the employability programmes that Scottish Government directly funds.

The aim is to build on – and align with - our current devolved powers to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to access fair, sustainable work. I'll say more about the outcomes of that review shortly.

But we also now have a significant opportunity to take partnership working on employability in Scotland to a new level.

I'm pleased to share this platform today with Councilor Kelly Parry of COSLA.

And I'm pleased that today we'll set out a collective intent to work in partnership to align national and local employability efforts.

I know national and local government is only part of the employability support landscape. I know our third sector and private sector partners are crucial to what we want to achieve.

But local government plays a critical part. Not just through the significant financial commitment they make to locally funded employability support.

But also in delivering services in ways that reflect local need, in ways that help local communities, and in ways that connect with people.

I believe it's the job of government to try to lead by example.

That's why today, Councilor Parry and I will commit to a level of partnership working. We work to ensure the collective effort of government is as aligned as it should be, and as effective as it can be.

I'll say more about that later, but as John F. Kennedy said... "Partnership is not a posture but a process-a continuous process that grows stronger each year as we devote ourselves to common tasks."

But first, I want to update you on progress and developments over the last year. And fair to say, it's been a pretty busy year.

I would like start by reflecting on Fair Start Scotland, our first fully devolved employment support service that launched in April this year. I firmly believe the approach that we have taken in Fair Start Scotland is the right approach. It has been designed - and is being delivered - with people at the centre of the service and built on our core values of treating people with dignity and respect.

We published the first set of Fair Start Scotland statistics last week - which are encouraging. They show that Fair Start Scotland has had a strong start, and is already helping almost 5,000 people move towards and into employment in a respectful and dignified way.

This is 5,000 people who have chosen to participate without the threat of sanctions. That is 5,000 Scots who are recognising the benefits of the flexible, tailored support offered by the service. And already, from the people I meet in my many visits around Scotland, I am hearing positive feedback from participants about the way they are being treated. You will hear this from some of the participants of our services, in the short film that will be shown later this morning.

However, our ambitions for this service are great, and we will continue to work with our partners – including the Department for Work and Pensions and Jobcentre Plus - to ensure that those who are eligible know about the service. That they know how it can help them on their journey towards employment. That they can make an informed decision about whether it is right for them.

The Scottish Government is committed to continuous improvement. From the outset of our work on Fair Start Scotland, we have listened to the views of those individuals using the service.

And we will continue to listen, to ensure we remain true to the values and principles that Fair Start Scotland was built on.

However, Fair Start Scotland is just one of a number of levers providing more effective employment support for the people of Scotland.

In March, we published ‘No One Left Behind’ which sets out a vision to deliver more effective and joined-up employability support across Scotland.

No One Left Behind is focused on the better integration of employability support, including other areas that are critical to

helping those people who are further from the labour market – areas like health, justice, and housing services.

Along with a range of partners, our work to deliver the fourteen actions set out in No One Left Behind is progressing well.

For example, we successfully launched a Health and Work Support pilot in the Fife and Dundee areas in June.

The pilot integrates healthcare and employability support so that individuals with disabilities or health conditions can benefit from a service that more closely matches their needs. So that individuals and employers can benefit from a single point of contact for health and work support, allowing them to get fast access to the help they need.

And in September, we delivered an Employability Toolkit to the Navigators, programme run by Scotland's Violence Reduction Unit. The Navigator is an Emergency Department based service that aims to support people with a wide range of complex social and health needs, to move away from violent or chaotic lifestyles.

Navigators are now able to signpost people who want to work to a range of local employability provision as well as Fair Start Scotland.

'No One Left Behind' also set out our determination to review the existing schemes and programmes which Scottish Government currently directly funds.

The timing is right for this. With employability powers from the Scotland Act 2016, a new working relationship between Scottish Government and DWP, the successes of our youth employment programmes, and significant shifts in patterns of improvements in youth employment in Scotland.

Our National Performance Framework sets out our purpose and vision for inclusive economic growth and this is supported by our Economic and Labour Market Strategies. We want everyone in Scotland to achieve their full potential. And at the heart of our purpose lies our values for a society that treats all our people with kindness, dignity, compassion and respect.

A critical aspect of achieving inclusive growth is the way in which we help our people access fair and sustainable work.

Our first commitment in No One Left Behind was to undertake a Review of the Employability Landscape - to look at how we can collectively create the joined up employability system that we need to deliver on our purpose and vision. To look collectively to ensure our employability system is flexible enough to respond to changing economic conditions over time.

It is important that we recognise that Scotland's labour market has and is performing well for many people.

However those who face complex and challenging circumstances, including disability, still consistently find it harder to access and stay in work.

The Scottish Government has been challenged by both the Independent Advisor on Poverty and the Inequality and Race Equality Framework Advisor, to develop a system that is more straightforward for people to navigate, that channels resources into where they are needed most; and can be measured effectively to understand what works best.

These challenges, and the research undertaken for this Review, the consultation that led to the creation of Fair Start Scotland, and publications like the Cambridge Policy Consultants report: Review of the Allocation of Employability Resources in Scotland

– all tell us that to achieve our aim of ensuring all our people achieve their potential, the current system needs to change.

But we can't do this on our own.

The Scottish Government recognises that we don't have all the answers and that there are a lot of good examples across Scotland of approaches to employability support that work - and work well - for those furthest from the labour market.

We want to build on these good examples to work collectively to identify the changes that need to be made to the system to enable us to deliver on our vision.

Over the summer my officials held a number of focussed consultation events with stakeholders and delivery partners, and commissioned research to understand people's experiences of services, to identify the aspects of the system that we all agree need to be developed.

The contributions from all participants have been overwhelmingly positive and I have been impressed at the willingness to explore change and collectively shape our future system.

Today, I am publishing the findings of the Review. And I would like to take a bit of time setting out what we have found and what we will do next.

We have heard that our employability system needs to:

- Provide flexible and person-centred support;
- Be more straight forward for people to navigate;
- Be better integrated with wider services including health, justice and housing;
- Provide pathways into sustainable and fair work;
- Be funded in a simple and co-ordinated way; and
- Support more people – particularly those facing multiple barriers – to move into the right job at the right time.

We agree. And building on what we have learned through our experience of delivering Fair Start Scotland, I have identified the improvements I would like to make.

These improvements can give us a system that :

- Balances a national approach to funding employability services with developing collaborative new local employability delivery models;
- Delivers a consistent approach to measuring the success of our programmes and services which recognises service user development in addition to job outcomes;

- Works with Skills Development Scotland and local authorities to explore a national all-age employability employment support offer, and developing existing digital careers and employability platforms;
- Builds in links to wider services including health, housing and justice
- Invests in continuous improvement and user-led design across the system.

Today's launch is just the start of the conversation to make this happen. Over the coming months we will pull together a programme of work and will ask for you all to be involved. We will need partners from across the system to participate in if we are to be successful.

There are two group discussions today which I encourage you all to actively participate in and give us your thoughts on how we work better collaboratively and in partnership and ensure that service users are engaged in the design of future services.

But before that, I wanted to say something about our intention to work in partnership with Scotland's local authorities.

National and local governments have a collective responsibility for improving the wellbeing of the people and communities they

serve. I recognise and value the significant contribution Local Authorities make to the employability landscape across Scotland and as a strategic partner in supporting employability.

There are significant areas where both governments share a common interest, and we share a collective responsibility for working together to help people to find work, and to stay in work.

Through the National Performance Framework, both Scottish Government and Scottish Local Government have set out their shared ambitions in developing a Fairer Scotland. We agree that sustainable and fair employment is a critical aspect of inclusive growth and the main route out of poverty, inequality and disadvantage and we want to support everyone to reach their potential.

To achieve this, the timing is right to revisit and refresh the working relationship between Scottish Government and Scottish local authorities on employability.

Recognising the wider Public Service Reform agenda in Scotland, and the objectives set out in No One Left Behind, we want this new Partnership with Local Authorities to be at the heart of the implementation of our employability review.

Today marks the beginning of a new Partnership with Local Authorities in Scotland, in employability.

I am keen that we develop a more open, transparent and collaborative approach to delivering employability. I am keen to bring together the best public, third and private sector expertise to deliver services which are effective, efficient and represent value for money.

To start us on that journey, working with colleagues from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), Scottish Local Authority Economic Development Group (SLAED) and the Society Of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE), along with Councillor Parry, I am delighted to announce a new Partnership Working Agreement for Employability between both levels of Government.

I am committed to ensuring this partnership will provide the leadership, and build the right environment drive policy, programme, partnership and funding alignment between employability delivery partners in Scotland.

This new agreement we will sign today sets out the terms of engagement and working. I look forward to co-chairing the leadership group with Councillor Kelly Parry, Spokesperson

COSLA Community Wellbeing Board to drive forward progress in the coming months.

As I mentioned earlier, we will shortly be shown a short film of people who are currently using our services, highlighting the real differences that our services can make to people's lives.

You will hear firsthand the positive impact these services are having at both employee and employer level. The Stirling Community Justice Partnership Project is funded through our Employability Innovation and Integration Fund which has a focus on joining up employability with health, justice and housing. The project aims to improve employability outcomes of people who are in the criminal justice system or those identified as being at risk of offending. And to achieve this it has been working to improve connectivity and relationships between criminal justice social work, community justice voluntary through care, health and employability services. I visited the project earlier this year and I had the pleasure of meeting Robert, a young man who you will see in the film. I was struck by Robert's resilience and his sheer determination to turn his life around. Helping Robert, and others like him, is the real reason we need to continue all of our collective efforts to help those who need support.

So, to conclude, Fair Start Scotland is an important milestone in delivering employability support. We are already seeing the

benefit of this, which is abundantly clear from the participant video that will shortly be shown.

But Fair Start Scotland is only the beginning. Arguably, the hard work starts now.

No One Left Behind is helping us achieve our ambition of delivering person centred services that are more flexible and responsive to the changing labour market.

And now we have agreed with local government, a framework that signals the beginning of a more collaborative approach to delivering employability that brings together the best public, third and private sector expertise. And more importantly, it puts people at the centre, exactly where they should be when it comes to shaping their future.

I hope you all find today useful, and I look forward to hearing the fantastic ideas that will no doubt be shared, on how we shape Scotland's future employability services.