

<b>Employability Covid-19 Response Operational Group Minutes</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2020</b>
<b>Time:</b>	<b>10:30am - 12:30pm</b>
<b>Location:</b>	<b>Teleconference</b>
<b>Attendees:</b>	<b>Annex A</b>

### **Introduction**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting via Skype. Full list of attendees can be found in **Annex A**. Minutes from last meeting are published on the Employability in Scotland (EIS) website. Current Highlight report and Action Log are completed and are available on Objective Connect.

### **Review of Action Log**

Action points were reviewed and agreed. Action Log updated.

### **Issues Arising**

Chair indicated that the majority of updates could be found in the Highlight report, before opening to any significant updates from members.

### **Local Authority (LA)**

LA highlighted the work of the Social Renewal Advisory group. The Group agreed that the work of this group should be considered by the Operational group and summary papers would be issued to group members.

### **Skills Development Scotland (SDS)**

Stated they are awaiting an announcement this week from Ms. Hyslop concerning the Enterprise and Skills report.

### **Scottish Training Federation (STF)**

The Supplier Relief National programme is going well and has been extended for a further two months. Feedback from providers is it will be approx. 5 weeks before the full picture is known, therefore the planned employer poll has been postponed.

### **Sectoral responses Enterprise & Skills Strategic Board (ESSB) sub group report**

The ESSB report was published on 3/7/20.

The report shows 10 recommendations. The first 4 recommendations are the most urgent and the reference paper covers these issues. The report was produced in conjunction with the Advisory group for Economic Recovery in response to the Benny Higgins report. A further 4 recommendations concerning recruitment and retention of staff were due to be taken forward, but this was postponed to allow focus to be directed on the most urgent areas. Scottish Government (SG) confirmed that different areas of the report were being handled by different departments within SG. Economy are leading on feedback. The Group has met with the Deputy First Minister and Mr Hepburn on two occasions thus far to discuss the report and resource implications.

The group agreed that a lot of work is still to be done in this area to align and avoid clutter and confusion for employers and other concerned parties. It was also agreed that it is important to knit this together effectively. The group was asked to provide any comments or feedback for consideration in the response no later than Close of Play Friday 17/07/2020.

### **Response to Economic Recovery Action Planning**

Venture Trust explained that the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector and private sector employability and training providers collaboration group (Network of Networks) includes a network of 500 organisations across Scotland. The group have met on a couple of occasions so far and have agreed to have 3 sub-groups representing:

- Young people
- No One Left Behind
- Commissioning

A Terms of Reference for each group is in progress. The aim of each sub-group is to develop (at pace) key recommendations to be taken forward. This will mean the group will be well placed to implement the principles of No One Left Behind, putting the voice of the people at the heart. It was stated that the report also aligns with the ESSB plan, working to promote cross sectorial working and the need to include 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations. Venture Trust explained that the Network of Networks would build on the good relationships 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations already have with employers and with service users needing and seeking support. It was stressed that wellbeing is at the heart of user engagement.

The group agreed that the voluntary sector has changed due to the effects of the Covid pandemic and are aware that some provision will no longer be available due to the focus on resources for front line delivery services. The collaboration group realise the importance of supporting the most vulnerable people in particular looking at long term unemployment and the scarring effect that is resulting from the pandemic. The group went on to review the paper and agreed the importance of data gathering and data sharing to improve labour market data particularly at this time – i.e. data concerning Furlough, PACE, etc. which would enable 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations to work alongside other sectors and enable them to target specific groups more effectively.

It was highlighted that this a challenging time for 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisation as their annual fundraising has been affected by Covid.

Local Government welcomed the creation of the Network of Networks as this would provide a central communication and engagement avenue with 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisation and private training and employability providers. It was agreed that as this is an evolving activity this would be a regular item discussed at the Operational Group meetings and that further information would be shared with the group as and when available. Public Health Scotland offered their support towards the Network which was accepted.

## **PACE**

Redundancy is a key feature in the current climate. PACE are currently working on a response to the Skills and Strategic Board to scale up the delivery of PACE. They have a Ministerial led short-life working group who are asking PACE partners what they think a scaled up PACE offer looks like. This group were due to have their next meeting on Thursday 16/7/20, however this was postponed pending the Cabinet Secretary's announcement. PACE are looking at a pre-PACE offer - bringing in partners to look at how to stave off redundancies and keep businesses going. Business Gateway will play an inaugural part in this.

SG via PACE have asked Local Government, SDS and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to clarify their roles and what they are able to offer. They confirmed they also have a teleconference arranged with DWP to discuss their recruitment of Work Coaches and the services they will be offering including Flexible Support Fund and the Job Funding Service. PACE are keen to discuss how the Job Retention scheme has effected unemployment. They will be looking at extending the reach of PACE with increased communications etc. as support schemes come to an end. They are also considering expanding PACE partnership to include advice on health, debt and housing. PACE have asked SDS to consider promoting PACE through their partners.

All PACE partners have been asked to maximise their web resources. SDS stated they are progressing with a working group to move the delivery of PACE forward. They are consulting with Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) looking at aligning services to see where gaps exist. They are also in discussion with SLAED and DWP to coordinate and align services at a National level. DWP confirmed they were awaiting the Chancellors statement and hoped this would give further information.

SDS stated they are making enhancements to their digital support and preparing for face to face services to resume when the Government announce it is safe to do so at which stage they will be looking to protect appointments for the most vulnerable users who may have been otherwise lost on the digital platform. The group agreed that the priority should be that the right support is offered at the right time. The main issue will be the jobs deficit. The group were encouraged to ensure they are up to date with the PACE offer and to promote it where possible. Further information will be shared with the group when available.

## **AOB & Close**

LG stated they are working with SG on a joint delivery plan for No One Left Behind (NOLB). SG confirmed the plan will show activities and progress up to 2021 (and beyond). The finalised document will go to Ministers with a view to publish on 28/7/2020.

Last Updated: COH 05/08/20 @ 09:00

The Chair thanked everyone for attending. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> August at 10:30am. As the Skype for Business format appeared to work well a Skype for Business invitation will be issued to group members along with the agenda and supporting documents prior to the next meeting date.

**Annex A**

## **Attendees**

### **Chair**

Pamela Smith

### **Attendees**

#### **Scottish Government**

Pamela Kellock-Shetty; Sharon Telford; Natalie Stevenson; Bridget Sly; Greig Chisholm; Arfan Iqbal; Alison Hippman; Rosemary Whelan; Julie Bilotti; Alison Moore; Anne Shiels; Craig Alexander  
Heather Quammie (Secretariat)

#### **DWP**

Brian Wallace

#### **Local Government**

Robert McGregor

#### **SDS**

Paul McGuinness; James Russell; Gordon McGuinness; Taylor Stewart

#### **Third Sector**

Amelia Morgan; Rachel LeNoan

#### **STF**

Stuart McKenna

#### **Public Health Scotland**

Donna Burnett  
Deborah Shipton

### **Apologises**

Kirstie Corbett; Chris O'Hanlon; Amy Stuart; Kenneth McDermid; Julieann Airens