THIRD SECTOR EMPLOYABILITY FORUM
Tuesday 7 September 2010
Scottish Government, Atlantic Quay, Glasgow

Present:

Susan Boath Glasgow South West Regeneration Agency
Alan Boyle West Fife Enterprise
Anita Boyle LAMH Recycle
Blyth Deans Lennox Partnership
Mike Finlayson Forth Sector
Edward Gorman Richmond Fellowship Scotland
David Hall DWP
Karen Herbert Real Work Skills
Diane Hill Shaw Trust
John Hinton Move On
Dughall Laing The Action Group
Oxana Maegregor-Gunn Shaw Trust
Donna Mackinnon SCVO
Fiona Malcolm Scottish Government
Jim O’Rorke Scottish Government / SCVO
Victoria Pope Jobcentre Plus
John Reid Access to Employment
Pearce Stewart Scottish Government
Rucelle Soutar Project Scotland
Adam Taylor DWP
Joyce Thomson SCVO
Doreen Walkinshaw ENABLE Scotland
Lucy Williams DWP
Derek Young Fairbridge in Scotland
Paul Zealey pza (Facilitator)

Apologies:

Alistair Cameron Claverhouse Group
Liz Catterson Scottish Government
Louise Christie Aspire2gether
Philip Dunnion Apex Scotland
Peter Friend Helm Training
Kirsteen Goody Community Care Providers Scotland
Gary Malone Volunteer Centre Angus
Margaret Wallace SCVO
1. 21st Century Welfare

Adam Taylor, a DWP Policy advisor on Strategic Benefit Reform, presented on the current consultation on 21st Century Welfare. The reform anticipates the replacement of existing benefits with a system of Universal Credit, “dynamic benefits” recommended by the Centre for Social Justice, the current minister’s think-tank. The consultation is open to 1st October with a White Paper due at the end of the year and legislation expected in 2011.

Forum members posed questions about job availability, the “Living Wage”, error and fraud in DWP and HMRC operations, Fitness for Work assessments, and potential losers under the proposed new system.

The consultation paper is available at:
Closing date for responses is 1st October.

Action: Jim O’Rorke will circulate the slides to members.

2. Priority Groups

Short papers had been prepared in advance and Alan Boyle, Blyth Deans, Eddy Gorman and Oxana McGregor-Gunn spoke to them.

There was a general discussion with points raised including:

• Where are the jobs? – Particular attention needs to be paid to the sector’s ability to create additional jobs and placements in social enterprises, social firms and placement opportunities
• We need to better understand how other funding models work – for example, resources available for economic development – but time is short
• There is already considerable work underway on a number of issues of importance to this Forum at a strategic level within The Scottish Government and care must be taken to complement this
• There is an agreement in place between the Scottish Government and CoSLA including how local authorities work with the third sector with a mechanism to investigate breaches
• The DWP Code of Conduct will now be embedded within the new Merlin standard
• We should move towards a common understanding of distance travelled

There were specific recommendations for additional training and development sessions. After discussion, it was agreed that the Priority Groups should reconvene both in person and virtually and build upon the “asks” they are making.
SCVO will be procuring external research on the sector’s involvement in local employability planning and provision based upon the research questions proposed by the Priority Group. A research budget of £10,000 has been made available by The Scottish Government.

Action: Jim O’Rorke will co-ordinate agreed following actions:
- Consult on Forum members’ availability for future priority group meetings
- Finalise research brief and circulate to Forum members
- Organise one initial learning and development event

Forum members to identify potential good practice case studies and copy to Jim Scottish Government Third Sector and Employability divisions to liaise on guidance on good practice for effective working relationships between third sector organisations and community planning partnerships

3. Priority 5

Pearce Stewart spoke to his paper and provided an update on ESF Priority 5, the new Strategic Skills Pipeline measure.

There had been 25 bids with requests totalling £104 M for available funds of £52M. A process of reducing this by eliminating possible duplication is underway. Outline Stage 2 bids need to be submitted by 24 September with full proposals submitted by 30 November.

There was a vigorous debate, particularly around the potential for local third sector bids to be in competition with national bids submitted through the National Third Sector Consortium. It was agreed that wherever possible opportunities for conflict should be minimised.


4. Updates

Jim O’Rorke provided a number of updates:

Conference
Jim spoke to his paper with a proposed format for the event which is now scheduled for 10 November at the John McIntyre Centre in Edinburgh. He encouraged Forum members to identify other opportunities to be contained within the day.
Action: Jim will convene a meeting to get more Forum member input into the planning of the conference programme

National Delivery Group
Jim spoke to his paper about the National Delivery Group’s most recent meeting.
Employability Development Manager’s Report
Jim spoke to his paper about recent activities.

5. Recruitment of Chair

Members of the panel interviewing candidates for Chair of the Forum gave verbal feedback. They did not feel that the candidates presented had sufficient gravitas and clout to represent a wide-ranging and disparate sector.

Following discussion it was agreed to continue with the interim arrangements of the external facilitator continuing to chair the Forum and to resume the search for an external Chair if and when resources were confirmed for the Forum beyond March 2011.

Action: Scottish Government and SCVO to look at arrangements post March 2011 with view to being able to appoint chair at earliest opportunity.

6. Work Programme

David Hall and Lucy Williams gave a presentation and provided an update on what was currently known about the Work Programme.

The areas covered included:
- Assessment of financial capacity and turnover including access to working capital for prime contractors
- Primes would be expected to carry some risk on behalf of sub-contractors
- Prompt payment of sub-contractors will be a condition of contract
- There will be different levels of outcome payments but there are no details at present
- DWP will have a stewardship role over prime contractors’ relationships with sub-contractors
- Supply chains will be published and diversity in supply chain required
- DWP will help broker relationships between primes and potential sub-contractors
- DWP will provide additional support to those with no prior experience of sub-contracting

Action: Lucy agreed to make request for some DWP support events currently planned to also be offered in Scotland

9. Any Other Business

Donna Mackinnon advised that Skills Development Scotland was proposing to use existing Training for Work and Get Ready for Work contract values as match funding for its ESF bids. This was of particular concern to some providers who already used the national programmes to co-finance their own European projects.

Action: Any affected organisation to contact Donna Mackinnon
10. Date of next meeting: Tuesday 7 December 2010, Edinburgh