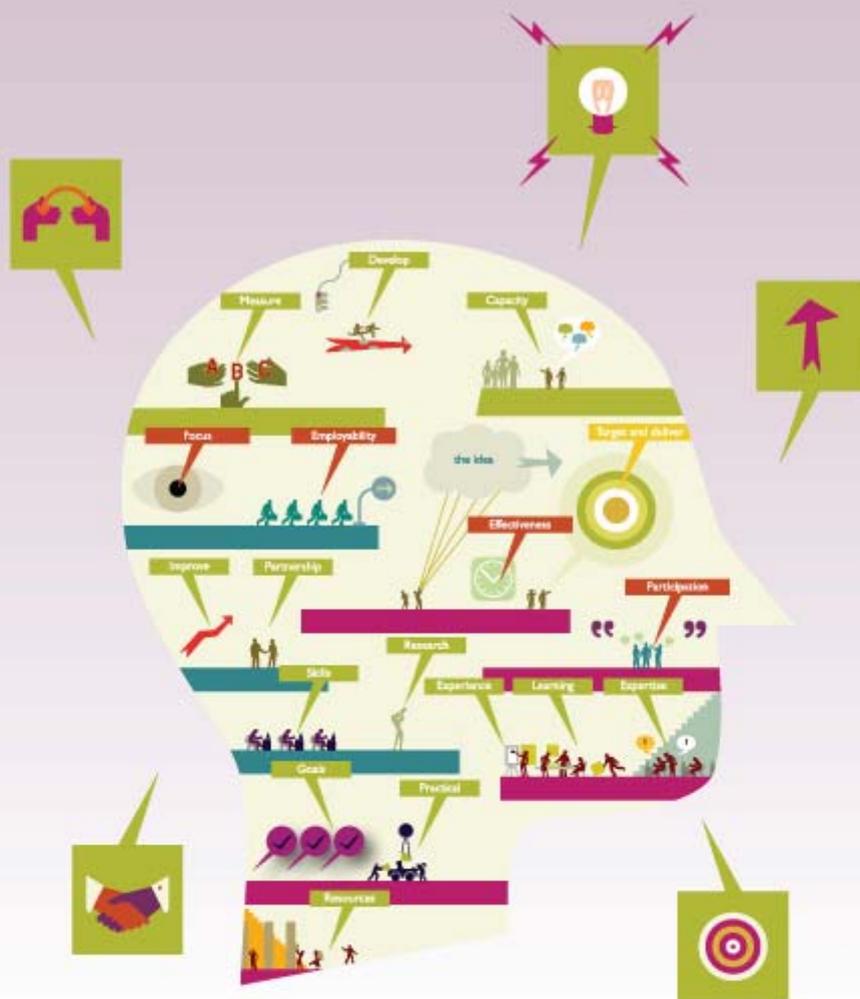


Employability Learning Network Event Summary

Supporting Employability: A Co-ordinated Approach to Employer Engagement

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Background

Employer Engagement is a key priority across all areas in Scotland, in a variety of different contexts, and encompasses issues such as how we tailor the 'offer' to and the 'ask' of employers both nationally and locally.

The need to develop a more effective and integrated approach to employer engagement nationally and locally becomes even more of a necessity as we move into a very tight fiscal environment.

This event, chaired by Professor Alan McGregor (Director of Training and Employment Research Unit (TERU)/Professor of Economic Development University of Glasgow) was the second in a series of events to initiate the discussion and begin the process of effectively linking-up local delivery.

It has been agreed that Employer Engagement would be approached from the employers' perspective and focus around Determined to Succeed, More Choices More Chances and Employability: three important and cross cutting policy areas.



Event Aim

The event brought together local representatives from these three policy areas to help develop a deeper understanding of the employer's perspective, and explore ways of working together to join up this agenda at a local level.

The event aimed to help delegates:

- Establish a more cohesive employer experience
- Develop improved understanding of national developments
- Identify strengths in their approach to employer engagement
- Identify key actions: individual, collective & national



Summary

Determined to Succeed, More Choices More Chances and Employability leads from each Local Authority heard from the following speakers:

Janice McGoldrick, East Ayrshire Council & Claire Baird, Ayrshire Chamber of Commerce

Janice and Claire shared how three Ayrshire LA's joined together with the local Chamber of Commerce to deliver employer engagement to deliver on one policy area. How the partnership has evolved and what action they have taken since the last event.

Janice's presentation provided an overview of the work undertaken in East Ayrshire since the initial contact with the Ayrshire Chamber of commerce in 2005. This has included the introduction of a Work Experience programme.

Claire explained that every school, both primary and secondary, in the area now has an enterprise contact. They now produce an e-newsletter and have introduced the Business Award for schools.

Alan Millar, Dundee City Council

Alan explained the system established by Dundee City Council aimed at simplifying the engagement process for employers in the area. He described how the process was created, the lessons learned and what they are now doing to improve the process further.

Alan's presentation explained how the four organisations (Dundee City Council, Dundee Chamber of Commerce, Jobcentre Plus and Skills Development Scotland) got together to create the structure covering:

- Employer Offer
- Job Brokers
- Public Sector
- DtS

Sandra Darling, West Lothian Council & Linda Kirk, Jobcentre Plus

Sandra explained that West Lothian Council have recently created a single point of access portal for employers.

Sandra's presentation shared the steps they took starting from the Employer Event that started the process to the stakeholders involved to reach this point as well as the lessons they have learned along the way.

West Lothian's single point of access has a dedicated phone and email for employers to contact. They also have links on the [West Lothian Council website](#).

Linda explained how Jobcentre Plus works in partnership with the council and have been able to introduce projects to help employers including sourcing interview facilities throughout the area.

Sandra Bell, Scottish Government

Sandra introduced the [Employability in Scotland website](#) and discussed the benefits of utilising it as a medium for co-ordinating the way information is shared across policy areas in relation to employer engagement. The opportunity for networking and sharing effective practice locally, regionally and nationally was discussed.



The afternoon session concentrated on the employers' perspective with presentations from representatives from the business world.

David Metcalfe, Lloyds TSB and Scottish Employability Forum Board Member

David highlighted the expression by employers that there is a need to simplify the landscape. He explained the role of the Scottish Employability Forum who are attempting to bridge the gap between provision available and the knowledge of employers.

Julie Stevenson, Head of HR & Development, Scottish Water

Julie explained Scottish Water's experience of working with multiple LA's to deliver employability opportunities. She explained that she SW have introduced a National Work Placement Scheme which launches in January 2011. This was done by making contact with DtS and then working closely with the LA's. One of the main issues that arose was the bureaucracy involved as each LA had their own versions of essentially the same paperwork.

Moira Gash, Director of Classic Abode

Moira shared her experience of small company engaging in the agenda. She explained how she used local media (newspaper) to find opportunities and through the Federation of Small Business held a local employer engagement event which then led to a project with the local school. Moira explained that she had no knowledge of national or local employer engagement schemes.

Jeanette Forbes, Managing Director, PCL Group.

Jeanette shared her experience from the perspective of a medium sized company. She explained that cash flow and staffing problems are the main issues for SME's. She explained her experience of the bureaucracy involved in recruitment. She also believes that schools need to do more to point children towards industry, not just into further education.



Evaluation

Of those who attended the event 40 completed an evaluation form. 97% felt that the event was a useful investment of their time. Comments included:

- *An excellent resource that I have since passed on to my team.*
- *Good to see what other local authorities are doing. Think the resource is an excellent tool and glad it was flagged up to others.*
- *Extremely useful in hearing about good practice in other areas but in particular having employers in the room to share their experiences.*
- *I thought it was well put together and provided the participants an opportunity to share and to an extent discuss practice.*

82% of delegates said that the event met or exceeded their expectations:

- *It was good to hear what other local authorities were doing and subsequently to compare that with what we are doing.*
- *Found the sharing local experience most useful as it provided potential models which could be applied in my own area.*

Delegates were asked how they will implement what they have learned in their planning process, comments include

- *Our Employer Engagement Sub-Group could consider contracting services to our Chamber*

- *Discussions will take place next week across all parties in the area and we have to implement ways to cut down the requests on business*
- *Changing employer engagement marketing materials to angle it more towards "here's what's in it for you!"*
- *Look at how we can learn and incorporate similar activities*
- *We will continue to drive partnership working in our authority and see if we can develop a more consistent line of communication with our employers.*



Next Steps

Delegates were asked if they felt there was a need for follow up events. Responses included:

- *More sharing of best practice and funding models*
- *Concentrating more on adults, perhaps recently unemployed*
- *feedback from the Work Health and Wellbeing Coordinator and how we can link in with her role/activities*

The teams within Scottish Government responsible for this event have collated the evaluation forms. These forms and other feedback will help form the basis for further events and national support. We will look at the actions and content for follow up action and will provide information on these in due course.

