

**SCOTTISH FUTURE EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT SERVICES
ADVISORY GROUP
NOTE OF MEETING HELD ON 22 SEPTEMBER 2015
Scottish Government, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow, G2 8LU**

Present:

Professor Alan McGregor, Director of the University of Glasgow's Training and Employment Research Unit (Chair)

Pamela Smith, Chair of Scottish Local Authority Economic Development (People) Group, Scottish Local Government

Joanne Farrow, Employability Implementation Lead, Scottish Government

Katherine Peskett, Deputy Director, Labour Market & Workplace Policy, Scottish Government

Mike McElhinney, Head of Employability and Skills, Scottish Government

Bernadette Dougall, Employability Implementation Assistant, Scottish Government

Laurence Martindale, Labour Market Interventions Strategy Unit, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

Liz Cameron, Chief Executive, The Scottish Chambers of Commerce

Alastair Cameron, Chair of TSEF

Neville Prentice, Senior Director of Service Development & Delivery, Skills Development Scotland

Sally Witcher, Chief Executive, Inclusion Scotland

Stephen McConnachie, Group Partnership Manager, Jobcentre Plus (Scotland)

David Coyne, Policy Advisor, Skills Development Scotland

Stuart McKenna, Scottish Training Federation

Laurie Russell, Co- Chair ERSA Scotland

Apologies:

John Kemp, Director of Strategic Development , Scottish Funding Council

Ross Martin, Chief Executive, The Scottish Council for Development and Industry

Dave Moxham, Deputy General Secretary, The Scottish Trades Union Congress

Kirsty McHugh, Chief Executive, Employment Related Services Association (ERSA)

Welcome and Introductions

Prof. Alan McGregor welcomed everyone to the second meeting of the Future Employment Services Advisory Group.

Minute and Actions from Last Meeting

Prof McGregor received confirmation from the group that there were no issues arising from the previous minute (of 28th July 2015).

In terms of actions from the last meeting, Joanne Farrow confirmed that DWP information pertaining to the journey for individuals on Work Programme/Choice had now been circulated. It was noted that Scottish Government had agreed to share the draft work plan and vision statement. Mike McElhinney explained that the vision statement is part of the overall programme management approach, and is currently in draft state. The group commented as follows in relation to the vision statement:

- Clarification on who is it aimed at?

- How quickly can it be circulated?
- If targeted at disabled people, the language is not very accessible.
- Vision Statement could be more concise.

Mike confirmed that the statement is aimed primarily at external stakeholders but could be used by internal stakeholders if applicable. The statement will be circulated by e mail to Advisory Group members for further consideration and comment.

Action

- Prof McGregor asked the group to pass comments regarding the vision statement to Joanne Farrow by Thursday 1st October.
- Mike McElhinney to investigate accessibility issues for disabled stakeholders regarding the vision statement.
- Vision Statement to be refined based on feedback received from the group.

Update on Consultation Activity

It was noted that most Advisory Group members have already participated in some kind of consultation activity, as events have been taking place the length and breadth of the country. Joanne suggested that it would be useful if the group assist the consultation process by involving members of the business community in the consultation so that feedback is received from an employer perspective. She also highlighted that there has been a lot of ministerial activity and support for the consultation process. Joanne advised that a targeted approach has also been taken for groups of people that may face specific challenges in accessing the labour market.

Joanne also advised that Rocket Science (consultants) have now been appointed to undertake independent analysis of the consultation responses.

Action

- Alan requested that we summarise and circulate where we have been and who we have met with in relation to consultation events.
- Advisory Group members to contact business contacts and encourage them to participate in the consultation.
- Rocket Science to be invited to a future Advisory Group meeting.

Commissioned Research

Alan updated members that the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (CESI) have been appointed by Scottish Government to undertake some research to consider domestic and international examples of good practice in relation to the delivery of employability services. This work will be complete by beginning November.

The results of this research – along with the consultation analysis – will assist in informing policy options to Scottish Ministers, which in turn will help inform future service delivery models.

An inception meeting was held with CESI on 28th July 2015. Key points from this discussion included the need for CESI to deliver a small number of well-evidenced evaluations not a

comprehensive academic-style literature review, to consider only robust independent evaluations of practice that could be used in Scotland, and to determine any specific conditions required in terms of transferability to Scotland.

Laurence Martindale agreed to discuss with DWP policy colleagues and forward any available information he has on data collected to date in order to try and assess what is working well and what is not.

Advisory Group members discussed local evaluations/reports which they thought would be relevant, and considered the most significant report/study has influenced and is relevant to this work? Comments included:

- Client Assessment is critical - useful work has been completed in Structural Funds and also on their management and information systems.
- Revenue Scotland, Data Analytics and DWP may help us to collect or retrieve information that will help us to better assess what we can do better and help us understand fluctuating conditions of employment.
- Significant amount of historical DWP information exists in this area.
- Work carried out by Skills Development Scotland and SQW on the Employability Fund could be useful.

Action

- CESI to be invited to the Advisory Group once research has been completed.
- Laurence Martindale to discuss with DWP policy colleagues and forward any available information he has on data collected to date in order to try and assess what is working well and what is not.
- Alan asked that any further contributions be sent to Joanne.

Advisory Group Discussion

The last agenda items focused on some key questions from the consultation.

Q1. Currently most Work Programme clients are long term unemployed JSA. Which group(s) should be the focus going forward – and why?

- It was highlighted that the movement to Universal Credit will result in an increase in people becoming involved in employability initiatives, therefore, our policies must recognise this.
- Skills Development Scotland has investigated Universal Credit and they have concluded that benefit category is not an effective indicator for identifying need.
- OBR forecasting information should be included the developing resource library.
- Given that we do not currently know the funding envelope for future service delivery, should the focus be on high/low funding or the hardest/easiest cases to help? It was mentioned that those who are hardest to help are often in receipt of other services. This presents a good opportunity for alignment and a chance to look at resources from other parts of the system.
- We should look at a preventative approach and not lose sight of this. Sally mentioned that she knows of a new joint unit that has been set up between DWP and the Department of Health – could there be integration of budgets?
- Sally queried how we could get the emphasis on employers and how we could get them to look at sectors where need is greatest for individuals?

- Professor McGregor mentioned the priorities for reprioritising – for those people further from the labour market, we need to recognise that will need to spend more per person to get fewer people into work - as we currently spend money on people who would gain employment anyway.

Q2 How do we get flexibility of service to meet individual client needs and at the same time a consistency of service across Scotland?

- We need an effective assessment, therefore, we must have a framework as we won't have alignment without it. Assessment process needs to be consistent.
- There is a Glasgow Project that shares information between agencies in order to meet the needs of individuals. We must recognise that not everyone will have access to the same services in different areas.
- National Standards are important for consistency and accountability.
- Services need flexibility and to be balanced, currently individuals can be stopped undertaking certain initiatives before they should due to rigidity of the system.
- Education Scotland have a benchmark of what people should reach by certain ages, maybe something like this could be implemented for employability?
- To save costs and deliver more effective services, colocation with other partners - bringing advice, information and guidance together – should be considered.
- The spending review drives efficiencies and best value for money must be achieved.
- We need to develop a funding model that incentivises providers.
- Need to de-clutter and ensure money goes to delivery rather than admin and management.
- Flexibility depends on outcome and consistency of service. Can vary both but this reduces flexibility.
- Could consider either an inspectorate or outcome based model based on results.
- It was noted that difficulty around providers not being able to estimate referrals affects delivery of service, but this is inherent within the system.

Action

- Prof McGregor would like OBR information added to resource library
- Laurence to forward relevant UC information to the group by next week.

AOB

It was noted that the date of the next meeting is 4th November 2015. Advisory Group members were asked to consider whether they would be interested in a future meeting being held in one of the employability 'hubs'. It was agreed that this would be useful, and members agreed to consider venues, etc.

Action

- All to consider 'hub' venues for hosting a future Advisory Group Meeting, and feedback to Joanne.