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| Summary Report |
| 5th Annual Summit on Employability |
| *Employability: Tackling child poverty, inequality and supporting a fairer future* |
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| **30 November 2021** |

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# Introduction

**Aims, Objectives of the Summit**

The 5th Annual Summit on Employability took place on Tuesday 30 November 2021, entitled ‘***Employability: Tackling child poverty, inequality and supporting a fairer future****’* and delivered in partnership with COSLA and SLAED.

The summit was well attended, with over 100 attendees from a variety of sectors with over 80 organisations including Local Authorities, Third Sector, Health and DWP.

The event’s purpose was to engage with stakeholders from the public, third and private sectors to discuss the step change which is required in both policy and practice in supporting those most at risk of poverty whilst addressing structural inequalities in the labour market with key delivery partners engaged in employability and broader support services.

Chaired by Satwat Rehman, Director of One Parent Families Scotland, the event brought together partners who are delivering or involved in supporting the delivery of employability services across Scotland.

The programme of the Summit reflected the collective and collaborative approach required to address child poverty and wider labour market inequalities in Scotland. This included how to improve the reach of our services and overcome barriers to better integrate employability support with other local support services.

The Summit offered a mix of speakers, presentations and breakout discussion groups. The Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work set the scene for the summit with his opening remarks. Mr Lochhead MSP explained

* that tackling child poverty is vital if we are to deliver a fairer future for people in Scotland
* Scottish Government’s focus on tackling inequality and disadvantage, is set out in the Covid Recovery Strategy and in the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan.
* that employability support is pivotal to supporting fair and inclusive economic recovery and stressed the need to look at support in a more holistic way, one that removes barriers and provides the wraparound services that allow people to realise their full potential.
* through working in partnership to support those from low income households into fair and flexible employment, we can make huge strides to reducing, and ultimately eradicating, child poverty in Scotland.

Offering a local government perspective, Councillor Kelly Parry, COSLA’s Community Wellbeing Spokesperson spoke about the collaborative work on the No One Left Behind approach and the shared ambition to join up services and place people at the centre of the design and delivery of employment support.

Informative and insightful presentations from our expert speakers from Glasgow Caledonian University and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation provided delegates with thought provoking statistics and perspectives on the key issues. This set the scene for the breakout groups to discuss what they had heard, the key issues and share experiences on how to overcome the challenges faced and identifying potential actions.

**(See full list of organisations at Annex A)**

# Summit Agenda

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| **Time** | **Schedule** |
| **10.00 am** | **Welcome** – Chair, Satwat Rehman, Director, One Parent, Families Scotland |
| **10:05 am** | **Opening remarks** by Mr Richard Lochhead MSP, Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work |
| **10:15 am** | **Speech by Councillor Kelly Parry**, COSLA’s Community Wellbeing Spokesperson |
| ***Minister and Councillor Parry departs at 10.25 am*** | |
| **10:25 am** | **Presentation by Professor John McKendrick, Glasgow Caledonian University**:  The business of poverty: reflections on the role of labour market policy in tackling child poverty |
| **10:40 am** | **Presentation by Chris Birt, Scotland Director at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation:**  Creating a system that is responsive to the needs of individuals and their families – extending the reach of existing employability services |
| **10:55 am** | **Discussion groups:** Embedding employability within a broad range of public sector funded service delivery |
| **11:40 am** | **Discussion groups:** Supporting low income families and addressing in-work poverty |
| **12:20 pm** | Closing remarks from Chair |
| **12.30 pm** | Close |

# Summary of Presentations

**Presentation by Professor John McKendrick, Glasgow Caledonian University**: **The business of poverty: reflections on the role of labour market policy in tackling child poverty.**

Professor McKendrick began by providing a sense of the scale of the challenge, with an estimated 240,000 children in poverty in Scotland for the period 2017-2020. Digging into further detail, Prof. McKendrick outlined the priority groups in efforts to tackle child poverty as lone parent families, families where an adult and/or child is disabled, families with 3 or more children, minority ethnic families, families with a child under one year old, and mothers under 25 years old.

To tackle the challenge of child poverty, Prof. McKendrick spoke of the importance of collaboration between sectors, the value of active engagement with employers to promote fair work and Real Living Wage, the need to target priority groups, the vital role of childcare and transport in access to work, and the importance of effective engagement with low-income families.

Presentation: [**The Business of Poverty: Reflections on the role of labour market policy in tackling child poverty**](https://www.employabilityinscotland.com/media/a0mdcznz/mckendrick-sg-211130.pptx)

**Presentation by Chris Birt, Scotland Director at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation: Employability: building the best service, where it’s needed most**

Chris Birt of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation spoke about the importance of worklessness as a poverty driver, and of the vital role of robust evidence in providing detail on child poverty. Evidence is more than statistical data alone, stressing the importance of listening to the lived experience of poverty. The presentation drew out the themes of childcare, the importance of flexibility in work, as well as the role of sickness and care duties in creating barriers to routes out of poverty.

Presentation: [**Employability: Building the best service, where it’s needed most**](https://www.employabilityinscotland.com/media/ylvhgvep/employability-summit-30-nov-chris-birt-presentation.pptx)

# Breakout Group Discussion

**GROUP DISCUSSION 1**

**Embedding employability within a broad range of public sector funded service delivery**

* What can we do differently to provide the holistic support that parents in the priority groups\* need, ensuring that employability is an essential part of that?
* What are the barriers to better local alignment and how could these be overcome?
* How do we best support parents to identify, access and sustain engagement with support services that meet their needs?
* What’s your **one ask** of national and /or local government that could improve the reach and impact of employability services for parents?

\*Priority Family Groups are:

* Lone parent families
* Families with a disabled adult or child
* Larger families (with 3 or more children)
* Minority ethnic families
* Families with children under the age of 1
* Families with mothers under the age of 25

**GROUP DISCUSSION 2**

**Supporting low income families and addressing in-work poverty**:

* How do we better engage with Parents experiencing in-work poverty and who is best placed to do this?
* What role do employers and trade unions have, and how could that role be promoted with them?
* Who else has a role in supporting employed parents to progress in employment and increase their earnings and in what way ?

# Discussion Groups – Summary of breakout discussions

Discussion groups were set questions focused on ‘Embedding employability within a broad range of public sector funded service delivery’ and ‘Supporting low income families and addressing in-work poverty’.

Each group consisted of a mix of representatives from Scottish Government, local government, third sector, NHS, DWP and private sector. Google Jamboards were used for each group to capture key points from each discussion. Below is a summary of the key points raised across each of the breakout groups.

**Summary:**

All groups discussed the importance of listening tothose with **Lived Experience** including people with disabilities and black and minority ethnic communities. Also creating better local **community engagement** and **partnership working** the importance of going out to where people are, using outreach services rather than asking people to come to us, was common across groups. This could include places like schools, colleges, nurseries, local libraries and GP practices.

**Simplifying the landscape** and providing clear, understandable and accessible information is vital if we are to engage communities in employability support and knowing where to find support was a recurring theme with **national and local campaigns** suggested to **raise awareness** of the support available, particularly local support. There was some support for a portal serving as a ‘one-stop shop’ on employability support and opportunities to help parents and others navigate the support available.

**Upskilling of advisers** particularly front line staff to support signposting, referrals and warm handovers was highlighted as key. **Sharing of data** between partners and agencies was cited as a barrier in some cases. It was noted that employability was often seen as the last piece of the jigsaw in relation to other support services.

Providing **person-centred services, whole system approach, based on need**, providing wraparound services and in-work support was raised by most groups. This included transport, health and housing support. It was felt that the way services are currently funded does not enable alignment of services. Other points raised included more funding and resources required for specialist services and the need for multi-year funding to allow for planning.

There were concerns about the **impact of employment on individual’s benefits** as a key issue in supporting parents to move towards employment. To improve and sustain engagement with families, their financial needs have to be addressed. Whether in work or not by identifying and supporting their financial needs such as transport and childcare early it will prolong participation.

**Childcare** was identified as a major barrier in preventing individuals from moving into work and out of poverty. It was noted that childcare needs to be sustainable, **flexible, and well-resourced**, and that we listen and learn from parents about what they need especially for those who face additional barriers such as lone parents or families with disabled children or carers. Finding **affordable and sustainable childcare** can be challenging for employees in specific sectors due to shift work.

During the discussions on barriers to aligning wraparound services with employability services, points were raised about barriers to employment including:

* Health barriers – both mental health and physical health;
* Digital connectivity and accessibility of services;
* Stigma and discrimination in relation to poverty; and
* Structural racism.

The **role of employers** was discussed in relation to both discussion topics.Most groups noted the importance of **promoting support services** available to employers, broadening the range of **in-work support** available to employers to include, for example, pastoral support for employees. It was felt that more could be done to advise employers about the **benefits of flexible working** to support potential employees overcome barriers to find sustainable and fair work and they may be more receptive given the labour market conditions. Groups discussed the importance of **training being made available for inclusive working**, to encourage employers to create inclusive workplaces, for example by improving accessibility or by having dedicated prayer rooms. Groups discussed the importance of building on the engagement work that has taken place with employers to **tackle barriers faced by disabled people in the workplace**.

The **Scottish Union Learning Fund** was raised as a good example of engaging low wage employees and **supporting their learning and progression**. **Community Learning and Development** and **third sector community organisations** are working with parents in communities and would be well placed to support and signpost parents to employment and support their progression.

It was felt that organisations such as Skills Development Scotland, DWP, trade unions and HMRC have a role to play in supporting progression and addressing in-work poverty. The **public sector as a whole** was seen to have a role to play both in leading by example through its role as an **employe**r and as a **procurer of services**.

# Next steps

The summary of the discussion groups will be shared with policy colleagues to help shape policy development relating to No One Left Behind, Parental Employability Support Fund and the Tackling Child Poverty Action Plan 2022-26.

The summary document will be published on the Employability in Scotland website along with the presentations from Chris Birt and Professor John H McKendrick.

# What worked/ What could be improved

Feedback from the evaluation form attendees completed has given us some insight into how they felt the day went in addition to comments from staff helping out on the day:

**What worked (virtual):**

* The venue – it was a virtual event on Microsoft Teams.
* All guests were accepted into the main room in a timely manner.
* Spotlight function allowed people to see the presenters and presentations clearly.
* Timing of 2 hours was long enough for a virtual event

**What worked (Summit – format of day):**

* Feedback regarding the breakout discussions was good and offered an opportunity to network, share best practice, etc..
* Good diversity in the group for different opinions and talking points.
* Facilitators kept the conversation flowing.
* Good use of the Google Jam boards.
* Attendees commented on how useful the presentations were

**What could be improved (virtual):**

* Some delegates would have preferred to have the event in person. Although delegates recognised that for public health reasons, a virtual event was the only option, if possible future events should be in person.
* The chat option was switched off in the main room for the duration and there wasn’t the opportunity to speak or ask questions out with the breakout discussions. This will be taken into consideration for future events.
* There was a small IT issue with moving some attendees to their breakout room, this was resolved quickly.

**What could be improved (Summit – format of the day):**

* Not enough time spent on the breakout discussions– felt a little rushed but it was noted that there never seems to be quite enough time for discussion sessions in events.
* The speakers overran slightly however, the Chair managed to get back this time over all without impacting the discussion sessions.
* Would have liked to hear from individuals who were receiving employability support – speaking, case studies or video testimony.
* Would have liked more opportunity to discuss progress being made.

# Feedback

At the end of the event, evaluation forms were given to delegates to complete with their opinions of the event. **10% of attendees completed the evaluation form (12 returns).** This is much lower than in previous years when the event has been held in a venue. The feedback forms were sent after the event and this potentially had an impact on the completion rate. If future events are to be held virtually or hybrid, we will undertake to ensure we get better returns to help inform future events. The feedback received was relatively positive and this has been collated on **page 8 under ‘What worked / What could be improved.**

# Conclusion

Overall the first virtual employability was successfully delivered and was well attended by a range of stakeholders representing a variety of organisations from public, third and private sectors. Based on the limited feedback, we have some valuable insight to help inform future summits whether virtual, hybrid or in person.

This document including links to the speakers presentations will be published on the Employability in Scotland website.

# Appendix A

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| Chair and speakers | |
| Satwat Rehman - Chair | One Parent Families |
| Richard Lochhead MSP | Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work |
| Councillor Kelly Parry | COSLA’s Community Wellbeing Spokesperson |
| Professor John H. McKendrick | Co-director of The Scottish Poverty & Inequality Research Unit (SPIRU) at Glasgow Caledonian University |
| Chris Birt | Scotland Director at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation |

## Organisational attendee list

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| North Lanarkshire Council |
| Argyll and Bute Council |
| Remploy |
| PeoplePlus |
| DWP |
| West Lothian Council |
| Inclusion Scotland |
| Scottish Government |
| Fife Voluntary Action |
| Stirling Council |
| Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway |
| Renfrewshire Council |
| TSI Moray |
| Scottish Government |
| NHS |
| West Dunbartonshire Council (Working 4 U) |
| SDCI |
| Youthlink |
| Voluntary Action East Renfrewshire |
| L&G Learning |
| Skills Development Scotland |
| South Ayrshire Council |
| SCVO |
| Routes To Work |
| Dundee City Council |
| The Wise Group |
| CPAG Scotland |
| Fedcap Employment |
| Public Health Scotland |
| Move On |
| DWP |
| Highland Council |
| CTSI |
| CVS Falkirk |
| Edinburgh City Council |
| Scottish Government |
| Public Health Scotland |
| Barnardos |
| Fife Council |
| Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector |
| SCLD |
| CVS Inverclyde |
| East Lothian Council |
| CVS Falkirk |
| Voluntary Action East Renfrewshire |
| SUSE |
| North Lanarkshire Council |
| Dumfries and Galloway |
| DWP |
| Scottish Government |
| Public Health Scotland |
| Scottish Government |
| The Lennox Partnership |
| Senscot |
| Cyrenians |
| SAMH |
| West Dunbartonshire Council |
| CEMVO |
| Capital City Partnership |
| Aberdeen City Council |
| Youthlink Scotland |
| Falkirk Council |
| Glasgow City Health And Social Care Partnership |
| Enable |
| Scottish Borders Council |
| Clackmannanshire Council |
| Princes Trust |
| Aberdeen Foyer |
| APEX Scotland |
| Aberdeen Kickstart |
| Poverty And Inequality Commission Secretariat |
| Glasgow City Region |
| Improvement Service |
| West Dunbartonshire Council |
| Voluntary Action East Ren |
| Perth And Kinross Council |
| Clackmannanshire Council |
| Improvement Service |
| Angus Council |
| Citizens Advice And Rights Fife |
| New College Lanarkshire |
| Aberdeenshire Council |
| Glasgow Caledonian University |
| Shetland Council |
| NHS Borders |
| East Renfrewshire Health And Social Care Partnership |
| Glasgow City Council |
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