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NO ONE LEFT BEHIND

Review of
Employability Services



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MINISTERIAL FOREWORD

In March this year I launched *No One Left Behind: Next Steps for Employability Support in Scotland*, our plan to deliver more effective and joined-up employability support across Scotland, and ultimately better employment outcomes for the people we serve.

In that plan I initiated a discussion with people who use services, providers, commissioners of services and other partners, to understand how we can continue to improve our employability system – placing people at the centre of its design and delivery, to help us meet the aims set out in *No One Left Behind* and in the *National Performance Framework*.

My ambition is for a Scottish approach to employability that focuses on the needs of the individual first and foremost. A system that builds on an individual's strengths and capabilities; is more joined-up, flexible and responsive to the needs of each person; and enables everyone to fulfil their potential. The evidence we have gathered during this review, and from recent reports, highlights the need to continue to reform the system to realise these ambitions. It has also demonstrated the collective will and opportunity to work together to deliver better outcomes for people.

At its heart, our approach will require more effective integration and alignment of support and services which fully recognises the wide range of barriers some people can face when seeking employment. Although Scotland's labour market performs well for many people, we know that too many people continue to face significant barriers to accessing sustainable work. Tackling these challenges will need all those involved to work more closely together – to develop more straightforward pathways into fair work and to continue to join up employability services with housing, justice, health and other provision. I want our employability system to be able to evidence this collaborative working and share success across partners.

The actions we are setting out in this plan have been shaped by the many people and organisations we have talked to during the review, as well as the evidence that has built up over recent years. This is an exciting time for employability in Scotland. I am grateful to everyone who has taken the time to contribute to this process and I look forward to working in partnership with you to develop and deliver the actions in this plan.



Jamie Hepburn
Minister for
Business, Fair Work
and Skills



Introduction

Scotland's new **National Performance Framework** sets out our purpose and vision for a more inclusive society. We want Scotland to be a successful country with opportunities that enable everyone to fulfil their potential through increased wellbeing, and sustainable and inclusive economic growth. At the heart of our purpose lies our values for a society that treats all our people with kindness, dignity, compassion and respect.

A critical aspect of inclusive growth is ensuring that as many people as possible have the opportunity to access and sustain fair work. We want all people, especially those further from the labour market or facing complex and challenging circumstances, to have the right support so that they can take advantage of the opportunities within the labour market - today and in the future.

As the world of work changes, we want to ensure we have the right support in place for people making their first steps into the labour market, for disabled people and those experiencing disadvantage in the labour market, and for workers who need a second chance to find and sustain work. We believe that delivering this agenda is vital for Scotland's future social and economic prosperity, and to deliver a more diverse and inclusive workforce.

To ensure we can deliver on these ambitions, we need to develop an employability system that is more flexible, joined-up and responsive to the needs of people using services. These were the ambitions that lay at the heart of **No One Left Behind** and to launch a review of the employability programmes directly funded by the Scottish Government. Alongside the review, **No One Left Behind** set out actions which are being taken forward with a range of local and regional partners. Our shared ambition is to design - together with the communities we serve - an employability system in Scotland that:

- provides **flexible and person-centred** support including aligning the Activity Agreements and SERI programmes to begin to establish a new local employability delivery model from April 2019;
- is more **straightforward** for people to navigate;
- is better **integrated and aligned with other services**, particularly with health, justice and housing provision;
- provides **pathways into sustainable and fair work**;
- is driven by **evidence, including data and the experience of users**; and
- supports more people - particularly those facing multiple barriers - to move into the **right job, at the right time**.

Changing Priorities

These ambitions are set in an ever changing context. Overall, Scotland's labour market is performing well and the employability interventions delivered at both local and national level have contributed to that success. For example, our **Developing the Young Workforce strategy delivered a 40% reduction in youth unemployment four years ahead of schedule, and our latest labour market statistics (November 2018) show women and young people continue to have better employment and unemployment outcomes in Scotland than in the UK.**

However, we know that many groups continue to face real challenges in the labour market. For example, we have a persistent disability employment gap in Scotland, and other groups such as people experiencing homelessness continue to struggle to find sustainable work. Given changes in the labour market, the devolution of more employability powers, and the successful launch of Fair Start Scotland, this review provided an opportunity to look again at our employability system and work with our partners to develop a new delivery model that can deliver better outcomes for all.

Our aim is to build on the successes we have had and the knowledge we have gained to ensure our purpose, values, and the principles of dignity, fairness and respect, which are embedded in Fair Start Scotland, underpin how we help people develop their skills, find and sustain work, and move into the career of their choice.

At the same time, we must ensure that we have a system which is flexible enough to meet changing demands over time, for example to deal with the continued uncertainty being caused by Britain's exit from the European Union.

From all that we have heard through the review, we believe there is an opportunity, by working together, to deliver, change and develop the next phase of a more integrated and better aligned employability system in Scotland that helps everyone to fulfil their potential in the labour market.

The Evidence for Change

“It is certainly true that, as the depth and complexity of disadvantage increases, responses need to be tailored to individual need...”¹

- Naomi Eisenstadt CB

‘The Life Chances of Young People in Scotland: Report to the First Minister’

Whilst we have set out the values and principles that will underpin our employability system, we have drawn on existing research and listened carefully to the views of service users, training providers and other partners to understand how the system can work better, especially for those who need additional help and support.

Many of the challenges faced by the people who use services within the current system have been clearly and succinctly set out through the significant body of available research and reports from both the Independent Advisor on **Poverty and Inequality** and **Race Equality Framework Advisor**, as well as the **Cambridge Policy Consultants report: Review of the Allocation of Employability Resources in Scotland**

This work challenged us to look at how we develop a system that is more straightforward for people to navigate; that channels resources into where they are needed most; and that enables us to better measure the effectiveness of what we do.

With this in mind, over the summer 2018, the Scottish Government held nine engagement sessions across Scotland with key partners. These events provided opportunities to discuss current challenges with the system and explore what can collectively be done to improve employability services.

In **No One Left Behind** we made clear that there are a significant number of organisations involved in the employability landscape: as assessment and referral organisations;

as deliverers of skills and training; funding providers, or a combination of these. It was important that we engaged with all these organisations during the review process and we have. In addition to the nine roundtable events, we have spoken to many organisations at other events, and received a number of written submissions.

The roundtable events took place between May and August and were held in Glasgow, Stirling, Inverness, Edinburgh, Lanark and Ayr. They were attended by more than 100 people, including: Local Authority and Third Sector employability providers, representatives from Developing the Young Workforce Regional Groups, and representatives from national organisations, such as COSLA, the Scottish Funding Council and Colleges Scotland, to name only a few.

Sessions were well-attended and participants were candid with their views, positively engaging with the process and welcoming the opportunity to be involved in shaping the future delivery of employability services.

We also **commissioned research** which engaged both service users and providers seeking their views, to help us develop our understanding of the range of user journeys. Examples of these journeys are set out at **Figures 1** and **2**. That report, setting out findings from the research, will be published alongside this plan.

We have highlighted below the main issues raised in the sessions, as well as several best practice approaches that were discussed, identifying a range of possible ways to improve the delivery of employability services in Scotland.

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/independent-advisor-poverty-inequality-life-chances-young-people-scotland-report/>

Figure 1

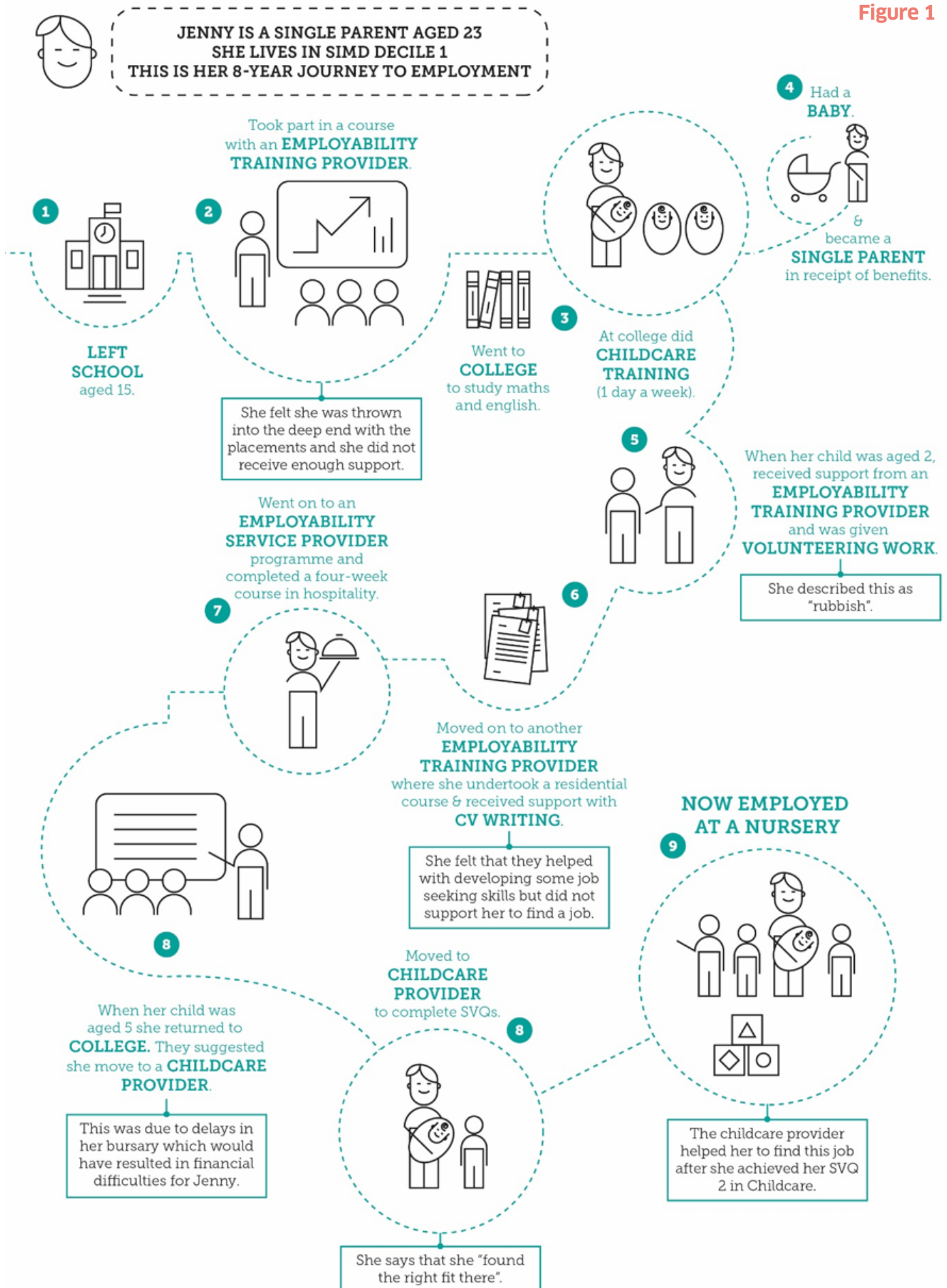
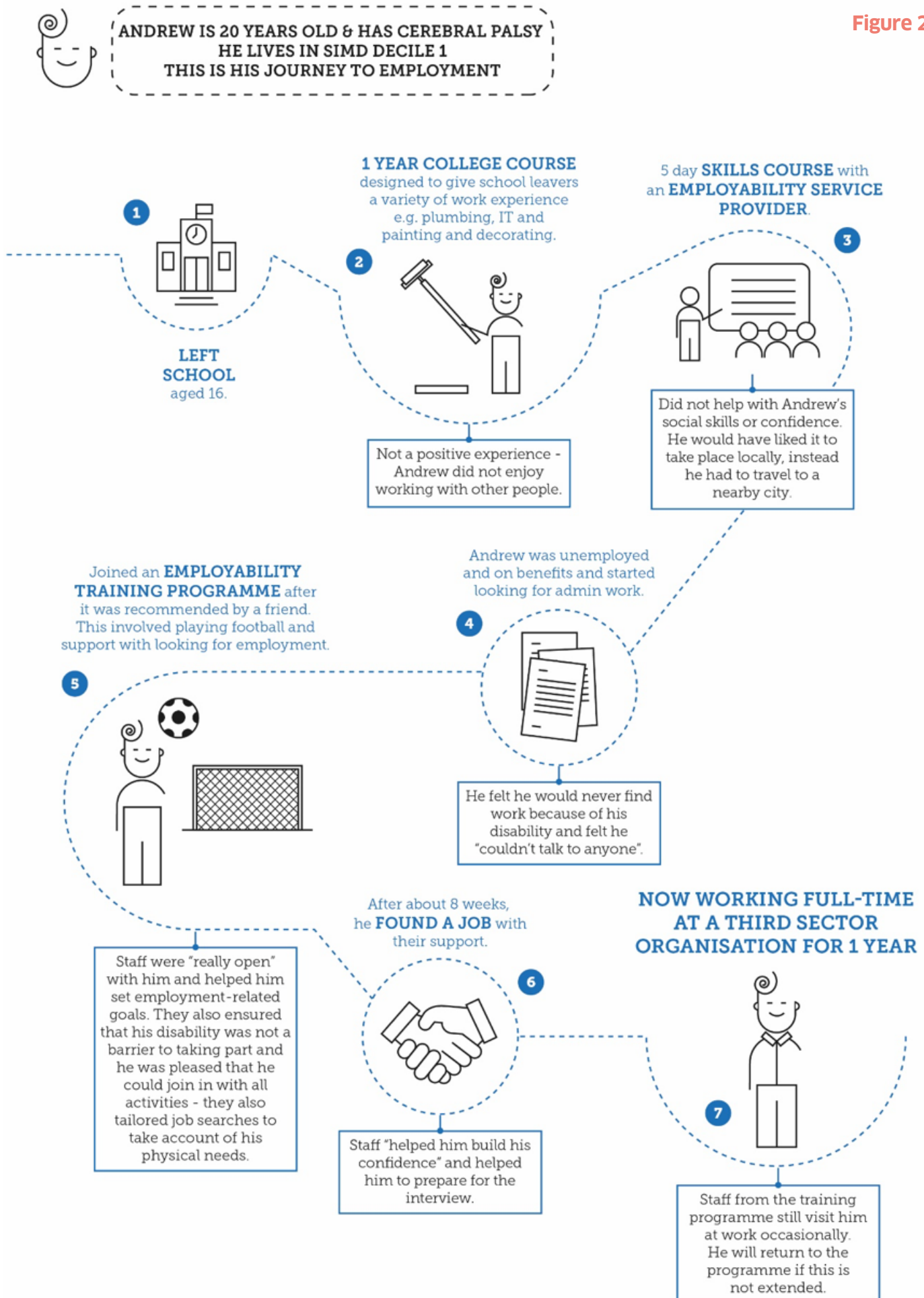


Figure 2



- We heard that the **flexibility of provision and funding** should be able to reflect the varied needs of users and their different rates of progress towards work. Those in more complex circumstances are more likely to experience significant setbacks in their personal lives and the employability system should be able to adapt to provide the support required regardless of whether the user is in work or just beginning to develop their employability skills.
- Many stakeholders suggested that the Scottish Government needed to enable more **joined-up approach to funding employability services**, for example, by acting as an enabler for the delivery of regionally aligned services. Aligning spend across organisations could improve the delivery of objectives and outcomes, bring about greater consistency of administration practices and ultimately benefit service users.
- The importance of the **Trusted Professional or mentor** was highlighted as a vital way to gain the confidence and trust of many service users. Having a dependable relationship between a user and mentor can build trust with service providers, helping users to articulate the specific services they need that reflect their capabilities. Mentors were specifically mentioned as a role that helps maintain a continuous relationship and can provide initial soft skill support, on-going assessment of progression, and in-work advice to both the user and also the employer, ensuring a smooth transition through each stage of support.
- The role of **Third Sector provision** was viewed as vital for the success of the employability system. It was felt that a closer working relationship between national, public sector and third sector bodies was fundamental to ensuring coherent delivery of local services.
- Participants noted that further discussion is needed to develop a shared view of effective **delivery geographies**.
- A key issue raised during the conversations was the needs of **rural** employability services. There are fewer services available when compared to cities, as well as a reliance on smaller charities and locally based social enterprises. Many stakeholders noted that how resources are allocated should reflect the increased cost of delivering services and the specific barriers service users in rural areas face, including travel.
- Better integration of the employability system with other services, including mapping the impact on eligibility for different services, with **wider support including health and housing services** was seen by many as a crucial step forward.
- It was felt that the employability system would benefit from a national approach to **measurement and outcomes** which would improve data quality and consistency. Whilst the importance of retaining a focus on helping people into sustained work is clear, there was support for measuring and rewarding labour market progress, such as 'confidence gained' or 'engagement with others'.
- Participants indicated that the **skills needs** of both individuals and employers should be better aligned to inform the employability training available in specific areas. A more joined-up approach could enable users to gain the confidence and transferable skills needed for a variety of jobs helping them move between jobs and progress in their chosen field regardless of age.
- Participants pointed out the variety of approaches to **planning and resourcing** employability services and provision

that takes place across local areas. For example in some areas staff are recruited to deliver services directly while in other areas, provision is purchased from the third sector. It was felt that Local Employability Partnerships were the best mechanism through which to effectively align services and identify local area needs.

- It was noted that there are considerable differences in the approaches to **administration** of the various employability programmes currently available in terms of eligibility criteria and the evidence required to be submitted in support of outcomes, as well as performance requirements. The variety of approaches intensified the resource requirements and many people suggested that a standard, lighter touch approach would be more beneficial.
- We heard that partners would welcome further dialogue on how to develop a more co-ordinated and effective approach to **working with employers**.
- A focus of participants concern was the **long term funding** plans following the anticipated end of European Structural Funding in 2022. There is a call on Scottish Government to work with partners to ensure future employability funding is sustainable and that employability services are resourced to deliver for service users.
- Stakeholders sighted the challenges around the availability, quality and the limited opportunity to share **data** across the employability system. A system response is required to make the best of the data available and to consider what data is needed to help deliver the employability system we need. This would include information that would support providers to work more collaboratively across sectors to achieve goals and outcomes and create a culture of **continuous improvement**.

Continuing the Alignment of Scotland's Employability System

“...by developing and improving on the structures and systems which we already have in Scotland, we can have an integrated, and cohesive system...”²

– Scottish Government's Independent Adviser on Race Equality in Scotland
'Addressing Race Inequality in Scotland: The Way Forward'

The Scotland Act 2016 devolved employment support powers to Scotland, which are now being delivered from April 2018 through Fair Start Scotland (FSS). FSS is a voluntary service focused on people who are further removed from the labour market, and has core values of treating people with fairness, dignity and respect. FSS is an important first step towards the Scottish Government's vision of joined-up, flexible and responsive employability support in Scotland. Delivering devolved employability services on an ongoing basis is now a cornerstone of employability support in Scotland.

Together with our partners we want to build on the successful implementation of Fair Start Scotland by taking a new approach to our other employability provision to deliver the objectives we outlined in *No One Left Behind* and to respond to what we have heard during the review and over recent years. Our evidence base tells us that to deliver on our overarching purpose, our employability system must be shaped so that it:

- provides flexible and person-centred support;
- is more straightforward for people to navigate;
- is better integrated and aligned with other services, in particular, with health, justice and housing provision;

- provides pathways into sustainable and fair work;
- is funded in a simple and co-ordinated way;
- is driven by evidence, including data and the experience of users; and
- supports more people – particularly those facing multiple barriers – to move into the right job, at the right time.

This review, and the publication of *No One Left Behind*, gives us the opportunity to work collectively with service users, Local Government, the Third Sector, private providers and employers to design, develop and deliver improvements to the system.

In reviewing Scottish Government funded Employability programmes over the last few months, we have listened to a range of people and organisations, including people who rely on employability support, about the importance of developing a flexible and responsive system, capable of supporting people in ways that work for them. We believe change in this direction, developed within a national framework, but designed and delivered to reflect local need, is vital to more effectively tackle the challenges of long-term unemployment and inactivity, as well as building an employment support system that is responsive and flexible enough to meet future labour market challenges.

² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/addressing-race-inequality-scotland-way-forward/>

FSS will provide tailored, person centred support to a minimum of 38,000 people over its three year referral period (2018-2021). FSS is the first step towards a much wider Scottish Government vision of a more aligned, effective and responsive employability support in Scotland. To take FSS beyond 2021, the Scottish Government aims to build policy, programme, partnership and funding alignment with its employability delivery partners in Scotland.

Next Steps

Our intention, building on what we've heard through the experience of delivering FSS and the employability review, and the evidence that has built up over the last few years, is to make the following improvements to the system:

- We will work with local authorities to integrate investment in Activity Agreements and the Scottish Employer Recruitment Incentive, into a **new local employability delivery model managed collaboratively between Scottish Government and Local Government from April 2019**.
- A comprehensive delivery and funding arrangement, with clear governance and accountability structures, will take more time to deliver, but over time, funding for other programmes, such as the Employability Fund and Community Jobs Scotland will be integrated into this model, through a process which will involve other partners in the planning and delivery of services.
- We will work with local authorities and partners to develop and introduce a collectively agreed **national outcomes and measurement framework** that enables front line service providers – public, private and third sector – to align their activity and

deliver more flexible services to the people that need them most and enable consistent measurement of their effectiveness.

Alongside this framework, we will develop the thinking on how people who rely on these services can influence how they are developed, and how they are delivered.

- Working with Skills Development Scotland, Local Government and other partners, we will explore the feasibility of developing the **national all-age employment support offer, developing existing digital careers and employability platforms, alongside improved alignment with health and other services**.
- Building on the employability innovation and integration fund and integration activity in **No One Left Behind**, we will continue to work at local, regional and national level to improve the **join up between employability services and other provision**, focussing on health (including mental health), housing and justice.
- Building on the success of improvement collaboratives across the public sector, we will invest in, and build, a similar commitment to **collaborative improvement, innovation and user-led design across the employability sector**.

This is an important and ambitious agenda for the future prosperity of Scotland. Constructive and effective partnership working across the employability system is essential for us to deliver on our ambitions, and the ambitions of our delivery partners and stakeholders. It will be important that throughout the design and development of this new delivery model, we are clear on what success will look like, how it can be achieved given the complex and interconnected nature of this work, and how we can best support people looking to find work, and to stay in work.

As a key first step, we will work with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) to collectively agree a new Partnership Working Agreement in Employability to positively shape and join up employability provision nationally and to deliver it locally. We will work jointly with local authorities and other key partners, including the third sector, other employability providers and communities, to collaborate more closely to design services so that the people we collectively serve are better placed to realise their potential in the labour market.

Active and ongoing consultation and engagement with partners has underpinned the development and delivery of FSS. This will continue, and we will consult and engage with stakeholders including service providers, delivery partners, third sector organisations and service users to inform and influence policy direction in the next steps of design and delivery of future provision of employability services in Scotland.

In addition to current and ongoing mechanisms of engagement, we will bring together a new stakeholder group early next year to provide external expertise, advice, challenge and leadership on the direction of employment support in Scotland. This will ensure the views of service users and other experts are accurately captured and listened to, and provide challenge on the aims and outcomes of Fair Start Scotland, but also in influencing the design and development of our future employability provision in Scotland.

In the following section we set out in further detail the main recommendations we – together with our partners – will be taking forward through this review.

Developing a Local Delivery Model - Collaboration to Deliver Person Centred Approaches

The investments we have made in national services such as the Employability Fund have made an important contribution in helping to deliver significant improvements for many groups, such as young people. We now have one of the lowest youth unemployment rates in Europe and met our Developing Scotland Young Workforce target four years early. Given these changes, but also the enduring labour market challenges that remain for many equality groups, it is right that our system continues to evolve.

As we set out in the **Programme for Government** (2018), we will develop a new delivery model built around funding provided to local areas to enable resources to be deployed to better meet service user needs and complement local investment.

This new approach will learn from our previous experiences and build on these, enabling us to better align national and local government funding and in doing so simplify how resources enter the system. We will achieve this by working together with local partners to develop a new local delivery model which will, over time, integrate current national programmes into one funding stream which will be managed collaboratively between Scottish Government and Local Government and involve other partners, including the third sector and private training providers, in the planning and delivery of services. The development of this new model will then be aligned to the process of future development of Fair Start Scotland.

This reform of employability funding will take time to deliver. It must be developed in collaboration with Local Government and partners, managed carefully to ensure continuation of support and stability within the sector, and effectively aligned with other funding streams. We will take a phased approach to aligning current national programmes, giving us time to develop a model of delivery that balances national coherence with local flexibility and provides transparency and accountability for delivery whilst maintaining our drive to align funding. The programmes that are in scope for inclusion in these discussions are:

- Scottish Employer Recruitment Incentive
- Activity Agreements
- Community Jobs Scotland
- 14-19 Fund
- Discovering Your Potential
- Employability Fund

To ensure the new model delivers on our shared ambition for an employability system that is more joined up, flexible, and responsive, we will work towards developing a partnership working agreement with Local Government, through which we can:

- develop and agree delivery geographies, along with a transition plan;
- develop a funding methodology that reflects an overall national coherence and availability, the evidenced user demand, and geographical issues;
- develop a proportionate and delivery focussed approach to governance and success measures that will ensure the new model delivers value for money and that resources are deployed based on service needs;

- develop a collaborative approach to designing and delivering the new model that brings together the best public, third and private sector expertise; and
- explore how Scottish Government could commit to multi-year funding levels to bring added stability, continue to develop the skilled employability workforce, and simplify administrative and reporting requirements.

National Outcomes and Measurement Framework

“So much policy delivery in this area is devolved to different agencies, with their own mechanisms, systems and processes. It is unclear to me just what levers and support structures are available to address barriers and to take advantage of any opportunities there may be...”³

– Scottish Government’s Independent Adviser on Race Equality in Scotland
‘Addressing Race Inequality in Scotland: The Way Forward’

If our ambition is to deliver more joined-up, flexible and responsive services, particularly for those further away from the labour market, then it will be important to develop an outcomes framework (essentially a tool that helps us to articulate and measure success) that enables this ambition – and our wider shared Purpose as set out in the **National Performance Framework – to be achieved.**

The evidence we have heard during the review suggests that the success of an employability system should be measured in more than job outcomes. Success should include how well the system helps people develop the skills and capabilities they need – that may extend beyond core employability skills – to progress towards employment. Such an approach could also consider wider issues around health and well-being. We will explore with partners how we can embed measures that can evidence whether employability services reflect the values of fairness, dignity and respect – those values that have underpinned the design of Fair Start Scotland.

We will work with partners to build on the gateway work already underway through **No One Left Behind**, SDS’s Next Steps service,

and in local authorities, to ensure people can access support quickly and begin the right conversation about what help they need to get in to work. We will use this opportunity to work with the sector to explore how to support a shared approach to assessing and articulating user needs, supporting the referral process, providing consistency for the service user and supporting the creation of benchmarks through which the development and skills growth of the service user can be determined.

Crucially, a new framework must provide a vehicle for more consistent measurement of the effectiveness of services and greater transparency of performance data across the system.

A national outcomes and measurement approach, embedded in the principles of the **National Performance Framework** is an important way of setting strategic priorities and articulating success, but if it’s going to be successful it must support the work of local delivery partners – providing the space for frontline professionals to innovate, improve and deliver local priorities. Fundamentally,

³ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/addressing-race-inequality-scotland-way-forward/>

a focus on measurable outcomes – whilst essential as a way of driving performance – must not stifle the development of effective relationships between the people providing services and those using them.

It is the quality of these relationships – particularly for a system that is focused on those struggling in the labour market or facing more complex circumstances – that will be a key determinant of the success of Scotland’s employability system, and we must do everything we can to enable those relationships to flourish.⁴

Alongside establishing a new outcomes and measurement framework, we would like to build on the user-focused work we have been developing as part of Fair Start Scotland, and enable people to play a more meaningful role in the design and delivery of services. In part this will be about putting people using employability provision at the heart of the service design process, ensuring provision is designed with people, considering their capabilities and needs.

We would also like to explore how we might better articulate people’s rights and responsibilities so that these are more effectively embodied in everyday practice and service design. Reflecting the approach taken to deliver Social Security policy and the support for this approach which has been recognised by the UN’s special rapporteur to help those living in poverty fulfil their potential. This will be part of a wider discussion that we would like to encourage about how we put people, particularly the experience of those using employability services, at the heart of what we do – as

strategic planners, commissioners, and delivery partners – across the employability system.

National Gateway and Digital Platform

There are a number of points through which people, seeking help to find work and begin their career, can access the employability system. We view this as a positive as it is necessary to ensure that people regardless of their situation or circumstance can speak with providers of employability services in a setting that works best for them. We want to make sure that regardless of the point at which people begin using the system it is structured in a way that supports them to move seamlessly to the provider or service that is best placed to help them as their skills and confidence grow. The Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board Strategic Plan reinforces this approach and we will align our work with these approaches.

To enable this we will work with Skills Development Scotland, Local Government and other partners to explore how we can align and enhance our existing digital platforms, including MyWorld of Work, so our digital offer in Scotland is appropriate and effective for users of all ages, whether people are setting out on their career or navigating through it.

We will work with partners to build on the gateway work already underway through **No One Left Behind**, SDS’s Next Steps service, and in local authorities, to ensure people can access support quickly and begin the right conversation about what help they need to get in to work. We will use this opportunity to work with the sector to explore how to

⁴ IPPR, The Relational State (2014)

https://www.ippr.org/files/images/media/files/publication/2012/11/relational-state_Nov2012_9888.pdf?noredirect=1

support a shared approach to assessing and articulating user needs, supporting the referral process, providing consistency for the service user and supporting the creation of benchmarks through which the development and skills growth of the service user can be determined.

Building on SDS' Next Steps service, and experience from Local Government and other delivery partners we will also explore options to develop a 'key worker' model of support for those who face the most complex circumstances.

We will explore how the 'key worker' role could link with wider services such as careers, further education, health, housing and justice, and could also be the point of contact for the whole family to monitor progression towards employment. We will work closely with partners to draw on existing best practice for this model of support, continually seeking to build on what good practice already exists and to consider options for how this support more in-work support.

Integration with Other Services

We know that tackling the challenges of long-term unemployment and supporting those groups who continue to struggle in the labour market, means doing far more than developing employability skills. It requires us to work across service and policy boundaries and join-up employability provision with other key statutory services such as health (including mental health), housing, justice and other areas. This will help simplify the journey to employment for people who are experiencing significant barriers to accessing work and it will help deliver better outcomes.

In **No One Left Behind** we set out a range of activity designed to better integrate employability provision with other key statutory services including health, justice and housing as we know these areas are critical to those facing severe labour market inequalities. The activities in **No One Left Behind** include:

- working together with partners including Health and Social Care Partnerships, DWP, wider third sector bodies, and employers to pilot a Health and Work Support service in Fife and Dundee (launched in summer 2018) to help more disabled people, and people with health conditions access early support to help them sustain or return quickly to work;
- we know that a person released from prison without a job is much more likely to re-offend as someone released with opportunities. We are collaborating with the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) to support people leaving custody to access local and national employability services;
- we recognise that people experiencing homelessness may have a number of barriers that could impact on their chances of finding and sustaining work. We want to make sure that frontline housing staff are equipped with information about employability services so we are supporting the development of a Housing Options Toolkit. The toolkit will be available to local authority and registered social landlord frontline staff involved in supporting people considering their housing options. It will include employability information which will help signpost more people to the most appropriate local and national employability services.

In addition to these projects we have been testing the integration of employability support with other health and social care, justice and housing services through 13 projects under the Employability Innovation and Integration Fund.⁵ For example, EmployabiliTAY is the first regional employability course developed as a partnership across three local authorities (Dundee, Angus and Perth and Kinross) with the aim of improving the quality and integration of services. These services include housing, criminal justice, health and money/debt support, as well as employability.

Having a more joined up and co-ordinated approach helps a person to access services more easily, tackle barriers to employment and improves labour market outcomes.

These projects are on-going and work to evaluate them will be completed by autumn 2019. We will take the learning from these projects to assist us with the development of any new local delivery model.

We recognise that integration of employability with a range of other statutory services such as health, justice and housing is vital to tackling labour market inequalities. Working with our local authority partners, we will explore how statutory services can better align with employability provision so that those people who are further from the labour market can be supported into work in a more effective and joined up way.

⁵ https://www.ippr.org/files/images/media/files/publication/2012/11/relational-state_Nov2012_9888.pdf?noredirect=1

Improvement, Collaboration and Design Thinking

The workforce delivering employability services, alongside those using provision, are clearly the key people that will determine the effectiveness of the system.

We recognise that all partners in the employability system are operating at full capacity to deliver the support, services and provision for current service users. The improvements identified through the review require new approaches to be developed to understand user needs in a way that can support strategic planning and provide the information we need to evidence the impact of the employability system and demonstrate value for money.

As noted earlier, if we are going to develop more joined-up services, responsive to user needs, we need to give the space to frontline professionals to build empathy and effective relationships with the people they are working with – enabling them to deliver support and advice based on a full understanding and appreciation of user capability and need. Building on approaches already in place in many areas we would like to do more to help embed innovation and approaches that focus on the ongoing improvement of services.

We have signalled our intention to build on the success of improvement collaboratives across the public sector, and invest in and build a similar commitment to improvement, innovation and user-led design across the employability sector. Greater investment in improvement approaches and design thinking will be a key focus of our work to build more joined-up, flexible and responsive services.

We will therefore work with Local Government and partners and providers in the Third and Private Sectors to determine where additional capacity can be provided within the system at the outset to help collaboratively design, implement and continuously improve our new delivery model.

As a key first step, we will work with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) to collectively agree a new Partnership Working Agreement in Employability to create a framework which can positively shape and join up employability provision nationally and deliver it locally.

Under this agreement we will work jointly with local authorities to agree a shared action plan that will set out how we will work collaboratively with other key partners, including the third sector, other employability providers, SDS and communities to create a new funding model that will deliver the more person-centred vision we all want to see.

Among other things, the plan will set out how we will address the challenge of designing and delivering more integrated services, how we look at measurement and outcomes and how we design a funding approach, with the right levels of governance and accountability that will facilitate the changes we want to see. This will ensure that our employability system is flexible and responsive enough to deliver local and national priorities and give people the support they need to get into and stay in work now and in years to come.



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
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