

11 March 2021

Dear Colleague

## **NO ONE LEFT BEHIND – STRENGTHENING LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS.**

It has been almost a year since COVID-19 changed all our lives. The impact on our society and economy is unprecedented. Our collective approach to overcoming the virus continues with both the personal challenge of keeping each other safe and responding to the wider socio-economic challenges. This includes the impact on the labour market with a disproportionate effect on sectors, communities and individuals. Unemployment is projected to peak once business support is tapered down and furlough arrangements end.

Although some uncertainty remains, not only with the virus and the impact of EU Exit, there is also hope and with that, opportunity. More than one and a half million people (almost one third of the adult population of Scotland) have now received their first dose of vaccination and the updated Coronavirus (COVID-19) Strategic Framework<sup>1</sup> sets out the overall approach and indicative timescale for easing restrictions over the coming weeks, with a view to more substantial re-opening, particularly of the economy, from late April.

As you may know, the Scottish Government has proposed investment of over £1 billion for jobs and skills in the latest Budget. The investment in employability support is for all ages, meeting the needs of individuals and building on the well-established services managed by Scottish and Local Government and others and delivered by a wide range of partners across the employability landscape.

Young people, those made redundant, people who have been unemployed for a long time and those with specific barriers to entering employment, will be able to access more support in 2021-2022 through an investment of £125 million, comprising:

- £70 million for the Young Person's Guarantee – continuing to provide work, education or training opportunities for every 16 to 24-year-old who needs support across Scotland.
- £35 million for skills and retraining, including for the National Transition Training Fund, which supports people who are unemployed or at risk of redundancy due to COVID-19.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-strategic-framework-update-february-2021/>

- £20 million for No One Left Behind – helping people, out with the guarantee group, who are long-term unemployed move towards and into work.

As we prepare for further implementation of No One Left Behind, we will continue to deliver through our existing, enhanced and additional targeted services. This includes extending the contracts for delivery of Fair Start Scotland for a further two years to 2023. We are also making progress on the implementation of the Young Person's Guarantee with local partnerships having a significant role in design and delivery of a range of local support measures including support to employers to help create new and additional employment opportunities including apprenticeships. A national Employer Recruitment Incentive Framework, setting out the minimum standards for new publicly funded incentives will be published shortly and will help create more sustainable opportunities. We will also provide additional wrap around support to the UK Government's Kickstart programme through the delivery of the Young Person's Guarantee.

There will be a continued investment from the Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty Fund to the Parental Employment Support Fund to support low income families and delivered through local partnerships. That investment will be boosted by £5 million in 2021/22 to support unemployed disabled parents experiencing poverty to progress towards and move into work, as we continue the delivery of our commitments set out in *A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People – Employment Action Plan* and Year 2 Progress report<sup>2</sup> to halve the disability employment gap by 2038. Taken together, this is reflective of the strong partnership commitment which underpins No One Left Behind, recognising the wide network of public, third and private sector providers, advocacy bodies, agencies and employers working together to ensure individuals have access to tailored support appropriate to their needs.

No One Left Behind is more important now than ever. The Social Renewal Advisory Board Report – “If not now, when?”<sup>3</sup> Published in January this year, calls for, “a fair and equal society, underpinned by a strong commitment to human rights and economic justice,” and recognises the “need to get there faster, using existing levers and creating new enablers”. It also challenges national and local government, the third sector and employers to join forces with people and communities to deliver real change and transformation as Scotland embarks on its journey of renewal after the pandemic, aligning directly with the principles and ambition of No One Left Behind.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/fairer-scotland-disabled-people-employment-action-plan-year-2-progress-report/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/not-now-social-renewal-advisory-board-report-january-2021/pages/1/>

We have made progress since we last wrote to you on 28 October 2020 outlining our approach to working in partnership to deliver No One Left Behind. We recognise there is still a lot to do as we move towards a more joined up and aligned employability system in Scotland and that a continued focus on partnership and collaboration will be crucial as we look to tackle the significant challenges ahead. The No One Left Behind Delivery Plan<sup>4</sup> was published in November 2020 reflected this shared ambition.

There is already evidence of the No One Left Behind approach working in practice with employability support provided to individuals of all ages. The first set of statistics, reporting on those receiving support through No One Left Behind in the first year shows 3,824 individuals benefiting directly from No One Left Behind Employability delivery. This is part of a much wider range of local employability support activity, with the SLAED Indicators Report 2019/20<sup>5</sup> reporting that over 36,000 unemployed people participated in local authority funded or operated employability activities over the same period. Our jointly managed partnership approach is helping remove the barriers to engaging and participating in support and helping to increase confidence, skills and experience, assisting people to progress towards or enter employment.

This is a sound basis on which to make progress on the need to simplify and reduce complexity in the system. There have been constructive discussions to embed the partnership approach outlined in the Delivery Plan and to take forward planning for and development of a critical path which maps the route to the next stage of delivery we are collectively working towards implementing from April 2022. We are also working collectively to deliver on key actions to support the strengthening of local, regional and national partnerships that are so important in realising our shared ambition for more effective and joined-up support across Scotland for individuals of all ages.

We are of course taking a strategic approach to achieve national coherence but the further strengthening of local employability partnerships is a key mechanism for better joined up planning and delivery of services, enabling collective leadership amongst partners at a local level to respond to local needs. The Framework for Local Employability Partnerships provides a context for developing enhanced local partnership working for both strategic and delivery partners. To support this, local partners are jointly undertaking a self-assessment on the current functionality and effectiveness of local partnerships which will support ongoing development actions to

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/no-one-left-behind-delivery-plan/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.slaed.org.uk/documents/SLAED-indicators-report-2019-20.pdf>

ensure readiness for effective implementation of the next stage of No One Left Behind.

We fully expect local employability partnerships to build on the strengths of existing national and local services, to better align funding and to support a mixed economy of provision. It is also important to improve the integration of employability with other services – particularly health, advice, housing and justice – to ensure best outcomes for those most disadvantaged.

The coming months will continue to bring change and uncertainty to the labour market. However, progress on No One Left Behind will continue.

Our shared commitment to partnership and collective leadership at national, regional and local levels is essential to deliver the transformation required to ensure people of all ages and in all our communities have access to the person-centred services that will help them achieve their full potential. Over the coming months, we will support local collaboration through delivery of roundtable discussions which will help strengthen participation from partners at regional and local level.

Only by working together and trusting each other to put person centred principles at the forefront and thinking beyond organisational boundaries, can we create the environment for service redesign that makes a lasting impact for those who face inequalities and remain furthest from Scotland's labour market.



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