



22 April, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

## **SCOTLAND'S EMPLOYABILITY SERVICES - RESPONSE TO COVID 19**

Since our last communication on 28 February, there has been an exceptional and unprecedented change within the employability landscape as we deal with the health, wellbeing and economic shocks of Covid 19 on those who both provide and access employability services across Scotland. We would like to thank our employability partners for the ongoing support being provided during this time of unprecedented challenge and uncertainty. We appreciate this is an extremely difficult time, and do not underestimate the huge impact on everyday life, as well as on the ability to deliver services and plan for the future when we emerge from this crisis, and begin the recovery process in the months ahead.

The role of employability services is pivotal in supporting those who are most vulnerable to the adverse impacts of this crisis, and will be essential in supporting Scotland's economic recovery. We recognise the vital role that organisations across the employability landscape play, and are committed to protecting provision and ensuring that the right support is put into place for organisations, and for those who rely on these services.

We are actively engaging with both local and national partners, and are encouraged by the commitment shown in continuing to support those who are most vulnerable, and by the innovative approaches organisations are taking to ensure services remain available. We would like to reassure you that Scottish and Local Government are also working proactively, listening to difficulties on the ground and working with partners to identify the most effective way forward to support organisations across the public, third and private sectors.

### **What is our response?**

A collaborative response is needed for this rapidly changing and complex situation and we are working closely across sectors, to ensure that appropriate and flexible support is available, both now and as we move towards and into recovery;

- We will use the full powers available to minimise the negative impact of the pandemic on our economy, working tirelessly to ensure organisations receive as much support as possible. We have strengthened our assistance for businesses and third sector organisations, and continue to remain alert to inequalities in the labour market.

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- An Employability COVID-19 Operational Response Group has been formed, bringing together key partners from Scottish Government, Skills Development Scotland, DWP, Local Government and the Third Sector. This group will develop a shared understanding of the impact of the crisis, providing collective leadership, sharing information and developing a co-ordinated response to the labour market impact on individuals, employers and sectors. Meetings will take place regularly to ensure ongoing leadership with a focus on existing funded programmes, considering how these can be flexed to provide people and organisations with the support they need in the short and medium term. Details can be found via the Employability in Scotland website [www.employabilityinscotland.com](http://www.employabilityinscotland.com)
- Employability service providers in all areas including Fair Start Scotland and local government are continuing to offer a service to existing and new participants, working remotely to ensure that support is still available to those who need it. Providers are also working closely with employers and stakeholders, offering ongoing support.
- We will continue to support our service providers throughout this difficult time and are considering how support can be further developed to ensure that the services including Fair Start Scotland remain available and are effectively tailored going forward to meet the needs of participants in what is likely to be an altered landscape.
- Individuals who are unable to attend programmes supported by Scottish and Local Government (including Employability Fund, Community Jobs Scotland, and No One Left Behind) due to the crisis will continue to receive the allowances to which they would have been entitled. We are considering how we can develop this support in the longer term, but our priority remains serving the needs of participants and learners.
- We have developed an Employability Resource Hub for COVID-19, which can be found on the Employability In Scotland website: [Employability Resource Hub for COVID-19](#). This will be regularly updated with information on further measures of support for organisations, partners and service users, providing links to other resources.
- The Third Sector Resilience Fund is a £20m emergency fund for charities, community groups, social enterprises and voluntary organisations working in Scotland. It will support organisations that already deliver services who are facing financial difficulties directly as a result of COVID-19. Further information and details can be found at: [scvo.org/support/coronavirus/funding/for-organisations/third-sector-resilience-fund/](http://scvo.org/support/coronavirus/funding/for-organisations/third-sector-resilience-fund/)
- We will continue to work to the principles of No One Left Behind, working collaboratively with partners across sectors to ensure services can adapt to this time of challenge and change and to plan for recovery and the support that will be needed by individuals going forward.

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The road ahead may be unpredictable and will require a strong, collective and flexible response in order to stand up to the challenges that lie before us. We would like again to offer reassurance that Scottish and Local Governments will do everything in their power to continue to respond and adapt to the evolving health and economic crisis, and that by working with our partners across sectors, we will get through this together.



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