

## Note of the Fife Employability Forum

**Wednesday 24 February 2016, Fife Renewables Innovation Centre, Methil**

---

49 people attended the Fife Employability Forum from across the public and third sectors.

The Forum focused on two key, recently published reports:

- Fairness Matters: The Fairer Fife Commission and;
- Working for Fife: A Survey of Third Sector Employability Pathway Services in Fife 2015

Both of these reports have a Fife focus and will impact on Employability delivery both directly and indirectly.

Following presentations on these reports, attendees discussed various themes which crossed over both the reports. A summary of these table discussions are included in this note.

### **Fairer Fife Commission**

---

Robert McGregor presented on the Fairer Fife Commission. The Commission was established by Fife Council in September 2014 to take a strategic overview of the scale, scope and nature of poverty in Fife and the effectiveness of activity currently undertaken to address such poverty. This Commission and report is the first of its kind in Scotland, with the report being written and published by an independent body, with the Fife Partnership Board overseeing the work. The Commission was chaired by Martyn Evans, Chief Executive, Carnegie UK Trust and included experts from across a range of organisations and specialities.

The Report 'Fairness Matters' has 40 challenging recommendations for Fife. The first five 'Ambitious' challenges have already been agreed by the Fife Partnership.

Leads have been assigned to each of the recommendations, and an action plan is in development to measure progress towards a 'Fairer Fife'.

It is acknowledged in the report that there is strong support for an increased focus of employability services towards those with a disability or health barrier to employment.

There are also strong links identified between poorly paid work and poor health/wellbeing outcomes.

**Link to Fairness Matters** - <http://www.fivevoluntaryaction.org.uk/news.asp?id=6818>

### **Working for Fife: A Survey of Third Sector Employability Pathway Services in Fife 2015**

---

Pegs Bailey and Christine Davison presented on the Working for Fife 2015 report. The report contains information on 29 third sector organisations and 43 projects delivering employability services.

Working for Fife 2015 celebrates the significant scale and scope of third sector employability activity here in Fife. The report includes:

- Information on over 40 projects operating here in Fife;
- Analysis of how provision maps against Fife's demographics of unemployment; and
- Recommendations to address key barriers and challenges identified within the sector.

The 14 recommendations look at:

- Funding;
- Commissioning;
- Supporting;
- Delivering.

**Link to Working for Fife: A Survey of Third Sector Employability Pathway Services in Fife 2015 -**  
<http://www.fivevoluntaryaction.org.uk/employability.asp>

### **Summary of table discussions**

---

The following topics were discussed in small groups:

1. Rebalancing employability services towards health and disabilities
2. 'Good jobs' not just any job
3. Investing in frontline staff
4. A knowledge hub for Fife
5. Better connecting local and Fife-wide priorities for employment support
6. Client informed service design
7. Any topic goes

The topics represented cross-over themes between the Fairer Fife Commission and Working for Fife 2015. Attendees were invited to select which three (out of seven) topics they would like to discuss.

All tables agreed that the challenges set out were fair and went on to discuss the opportunities and obstacles around achieving these challenges.

Once the discussions had finished attendees were invited to vote for their top ideas identified from these discussions.

A summary of the top selected items per topic is below:

Rebalancing employability services towards health and disabilities	
<b>Strategic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longer term and increased funding. Decision makers in commissioning recognise time investment required (alternative performance/payment model recognising wider outcomes).</li> <li>• Current services are not designed to support those with multiple health issues – use evidence base to inform planning of services.</li> <li>• Job retention services to prevent employed becoming unemployed due to health issue – improve and expand these.</li> <li>• Apprenticeship programmes for the over 25 age group</li> <li>• NHS key role to identify/engage target groups out-with direct employment area. Have a stronger connection between NHS, GP's and employability services.</li> </ul>
<b>Operational</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frontline staff training to ensure quality of service delivered: understanding of health issues (wide ranging/specialist) (e.g. NIDMAR).</li> </ul>

'Good jobs' not just any job	
<b>Strategic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel/transport so people can access better work opportunities.</li> <li>• Leading culture change:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Have less stressful environments be part of the agenda, not just an optional extra.</li> <li>○ Support towards a better work/life balance.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Operational</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DWP – being able to work more closely with advisors. At the moment people have to accept any job offer.</li> <li>• Working with employers towards better working environments and providing support to achieve this.</li> </ul>

Investing in frontline staff	
<b>Strategic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approach to tendering needs to be agreed at a higher level for longer term contracts.</li> <li>• Provision to make jobs more secure.</li> </ul>
<b>Operational</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make training more accessible – how do we let people know what's available?</li> <li>• Training not just about qualifications, also about experience leading to competence in job role.</li> </ul>

A knowledge hub for Fife	
<b>Strategic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Events for employers to promote their organisation to third sector organisations.</li> <li>• Work more strategically with other organisations.</li> <li>• Know more about what data, information and resources are available.</li> </ul>
<b>Operational</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to know what is going on.</li> </ul>

Better connecting local and Fife-wide priorities for employment support	
<b>Strategic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longer term planning.</li> </ul>
<b>Operational</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area specific information.</li> <li>• Details of existing provision.</li> </ul>

Client informed service design	
<b>Strategic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve people as equal partners in strategic decision making not simply consulting them.</li> <li>• Employability service re-design needs to be influenced by Fairness Matters and should involve both clients and employers.</li> </ul>
<b>Operational</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start where people are already attending to engage with them e.g. in schools, shops etc.</li> <li>• Recognising a person's journey has 'up's' &amp; 'down's' so make it easy for them to re-engage with support.</li> <li>• Consider what barriers are 'in work' and how these are different from pre-work.</li> </ul>

Fife Voluntary Action would like to thank those who attended the Forum and contributed to the discussions. We would like to also thank the organisations who provided us with the valuable data we needed to write Working for Fife 2015.