

Note of the Fife Employability Forum

Wednesday 25 May 2016, Fife Renewables Innovation Centre, Methil

46 people attended the Fife Employability Forum from across the public (22%) and third sectors (78%).

93% of attendees found the forum very productive or productive, with 100% saying they would attend the next Forum or aim to attend.

The Forum had several key updates from partners and ourselves.

We were delighted to welcome Councillor Tony Martin, Chair of the Opportunities Fife Partnership (OFP) board. Tony spoke about the challenges and opportunities the OFP Board and the employability sector in Fife face.

A summary of the key presentations can be found below.

Skills Development Scotland, Employability Fund, Heather Tytler

Heather reported that this year Skills Development Scotland have had to implement huge changes to the Employability Fund. This is due to their budget being reduced 40% from the previous year. This is a set budget and nothing has been held back, meaning there is no additional pot of money for 2016/17.

They have 850 places for the year – there will be no additional places beyond this figure. Heather is clear that because of the reduction in places that organisations receiving Employability Fund money must ensure that the provision is filled. Skills Development Scotland will be increasing scrutiny of the Fund.

Stages 2, 3 and 4 have been commissioned. Providers who are funded can be found [here](#) under “EF Referring organisation contacts 2016-17”.

Department of Work and Pensions, Janet McQueen and Martin Nowakowski

Martin Nowakowski briefly introduced himself. He will be replacing Euan Halliday within DWP. Martin has been working in a similar role within Forth Valley but has previously worked in Fife. He is looking forward to the opportunities and challenges his post will bring.

Janet McQueen gave three key updates from DWP:

Universal Credit (UC)

UC came to Fife on 11 April 2016. Fife was the second last area to get UC which has allowed us to learn from other areas. Janet spoke about the learning from Musselburgh job centre which was one of the first job centres to go 'live' with UC, which means all new claimants are registered under UC.

There are dedicated staff for UC in each job centre. General feedback so far has been that UC is more positive than Job Seekers Allowance (JSA). UC claimants come in as and when required, they don't have set 'sign-in days'.

UC is paid monthly and any earnings in that calendar month will be taken into account. If someone has been in temporary work, they only have to make a telephone call to re-register with UC. Housing benefit is included in UC payments and this is paid to the claimant not to the landlord. Budget support is available. Short term benefit advances are available but these can be recovered from future benefit payments.

Job Centre Plus have an open door policy, they are keen to have workers visit their premises.

Work Coach Delivery Model

It is planned that each claimant will have a dedicated Work Coach, no matter which benefit they are claiming. They will have this person's name, work telephone number and e-mail address. This approach will be more personalised.

Benefit Cap

The Benefit Cap was introduced across Great Britain to limit how much any one household receives in state benefits. Support will be given towards people entering employment.

Q&A

How many people are affected by the benefit cap?

Janet could not share this information at the time of the Forum. She clarified that the number is in the hundreds and that it is affecting more lone parents and ESA customers.

Where are people being most affected?

Again Janet could not share this information at the time of the Forum.

Flexible Support fund

DWP are moving towards a dynamic purchasing model. There will be a small pot of money available for innovative projects. If anyone is interested they are to contact Janet McQueen:

E-mail - JANET.MCQUEEN1@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK

Telephone - 01383 813879

Fife Voluntary Action, Pegs Bailey

Pegs Bailey and Christine Davison, Fife Voluntary Action presented at the last Fife Employability Forum on the results of mapping report “Working for Fife: A survey of third sector employability pathway services in Fife 2015”. Since then Pegs has presented the results to the OFP board and raised the findings at the National Third Sector Employability Forum.

A key finding from the report was that a low number of third sector providers are measuring a clients ‘distance travelled towards employment. Pegs asked the Forum if anyone would be interested in future training, there was a high demand for this.

Action Christine and Pegs to arrange a training session on measuring distance travelled for employability providers.

Fife Voluntary Action are working on a directory of employability services for Fife. Once approved the directory will be available on the OFP website.

Fife Voluntary Action and Fife-ETC have been successful in their bid to create a new project in the Cowdenbeath area. The project will train volunteer mentors who will support people who have just got into work. Pegs encourages the Forum to consider clients they’re working with in this area for the project.

A research report looking at employability for those with caring responsibilities has been published. There is no further money to fund projects working with this target group but OFP is interested in looking at developing further work in this area.

A bid has been made to the Scottish Government in partnership with Fife Centre for Equalities to research equalities and employability in Fife.

On Thursday 23 June 2016 a symposium will be held to look at a re-balance of employability provision for people with mental health issues.

Developing Young Workforce (DYW) is the employer engagement ‘arm’ of OFP. They are looking into how the third sector can feed information in and hear updates on what’s happening with the DYW.

Steve McCue, Dyslexia Pathways CIC

Steve shared his personal story regarding his journey with dyslexia. This led him to set up Dyslexia Pathways which is a Community Interest Company operating in Fife. They are the first dyslexia focused social enterprise in the world and their main objective is to enable dyslexics to unlock their potential and achieve according to their abilities within education, employment and training for employment.

Steve shared some statistics on dyslexia:

- 20-30% of the prison population are dyslexic
- 60-70% have literacy issues

Steve suggested this is due to non-inclusive learning being the norm in mainstream education. There are few people being diagnosed with dyslexia in school meaning they go through life without the support they need.

Steven shared some of the work Dyslexia Pathways has undertaken and their successes.

Joe McIntyre, FORT

Joe updated the Forum on various new features on FORT including:

- An 'eligibility and evidence checker'. Organisations will need to submit eligibility criteria.
- When a client leaves an organisation or the pipeline their outcome must be recorded within four weeks.
- A texting facility will make it easier to keep in contact with clients – texts sent and received will be logged in the client's case notes section.

Training workshops will be run to update people on these new features.

Gordon Mole, Developing Fife's Young Workforce

Gordon gave an overview of what DFYW is and aims to do. He outlined the key priorities and activity to date.

Gordon spoke about how schools have been 'clustered' into six areas. Area boards support these clusters and chairs are being identified.

The Business Employability Support Service will support the work of Developing Fife's Young Workforce (DFYW) and the themes associated.

The DFYW board is private sector led. Gordon stated that the third sector need to organise their representation on this Board as it is separate from the OFP board.

Action Pegs Bailey, Gordon Mole and Adam Dunkerley to discuss procedure for this.

Ben Cragiesharland, Enable

Ben shared that Enable have their First Steps Programme which supports those furthest removed from the labour market. The programme is person centred and builds on personal assets.

Enable also offer employer disability awareness training.

They also offer a similar fund to Scotland's Employer Recruitment Incentive (SERI):

- Open doors consortium
- £500 per person
- 16-29 years old
- Must be in employment but require assistance whilst in post e.g. work coaching, equipment, travel training

Anyone wanting further information should contact Ben:

E-mail - ben.craigiesharland@enable.org.uk

Telephone - 01592 659295

My Shout

Michael Fong, Link Living are organising 'Discover me Fife' which is a reverse jobs fair where young people (16-24) will showcase their skills and talents to interested employers. If you would like to submit a team (or know an individual who would like to take part) then get in touch with Michael Fong on 07841 986421 or e-mail: Michael.Fong@linkliving.org.uk who is coordinating the event. Details are - Thursday 29 September 2016 at the Adam Smith Theatre, Kirkcaldy.

Emma Campbell, Supported Employment Service have their 'prescription to work' programme which is a unique referral method for individuals who are experiencing difficulty sustaining work due to a health condition or disability. Referral forms should be in each GP practice in Fife. Anyone wanting more information should contact the Supported Employment Service.

Sarah MacLeod, Our Bright Future is a new programme through the Fife Rural Skills Partnership. The programme is for 15-24 year olds. They are keen to engage with a wide range of clients.

Murray Graham, Venture Trust has various programmes. These programmes are wilderness and outdoor based programmes offering a range of personal and skills development.

Christine Davison, Fife Voluntary Action are part of a planning group organising Employ with Confidence. An employer engagement event aimed to raise awareness of the range of support available in Fife to employers to recruit and retain someone with a health issue or disability. Details are – Thursday 20 June 2016, 9.30am to 1.00pm, The Vine Conference Centre, Dunfermline.

Pegs Bailey, Fife Voluntary Action are issuing a save the date for Know Your Network 2016.

Date: Wednesday 24 August 2016

Venue: The Bay Hotel, Kinghorn