



THIRD SECTOR
Dumfries and Galloway

Third Sector Employability Forum

Note of the meeting

21 September 2021 (2pm – 3.30pm)

Via ZOOM

Working together to put our sector first
Dumfries and Galloway's Third Sector Interface

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ATTENDANCE

Mhairi Ross	(MR)	Apex Scotland (Dumfries and Galloway)
Sharee Rennie	(SR)	Care Training Consortium
Julia Muir-Watt	(JM)	The Whithorn Trust
Carolyn Kennedy	(CK)	Better Lives Partnership
Allison McCourt	(AM)	Visibility (Dumfries and Galloway)
Terri Elson	(TE)	Fedcap Employment (from 3pm)

In attendance

Norma Austin-Hart	(NAH)	CEO, Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway
Ann Gordon	(AG)	Volunteering Officer, TSDG
Phil Ford	(PF)	Skills Planning Lead for South of Scotland, Skills Development Scotland

Apologies

Claire Simmonds	Project Scotland
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1 WELCOME

Norma Austin Hart welcomed everyone to the forum and attendees introduced themselves.

2 NOTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING (23 JUNE 2021)

The notes of the previous meeting were agreed by all present.

NAH noted that she has raised the issue of employability funds at the LESP, however, no definitive answer was received. NAH will raise the question again. It was noted that other local authorities have made plans for No One Left Behind funding – NAH will request information from the LESP.

NAH noted that the Education and Skills Strategy Co-ordination Group was making progress on apprenticeships and the possibility of anchor organisations supporting shared apprenticeships.

3 SOUTH OF SCOTLAND REGIONAL SKILLS INVESTMENT PLAN REVIEW

NAH welcomed Phil Ford from Skills Development Scotland to the meeting. PF gave an informative presentation on the refresh of the South of Scotland Regional Skills Investment Plan

which was originally developed to cover the period 2019 – 2022. The review of the plan will ensure that the voice of the third sector is included. The plan covers 6 main themes:

- Improving access to skills and training
- Needs of employers
- Growing and developing the workforce
- A region for young people
- Creating a culture of enterprise and innovation
- Future proofing the skills system.

The plan identifies areas within each theme where third sector organisations can be included.

Members welcomed PF's presentation and the opportunity for the sector to be fully included in the review. It was confirmed that the main way for third sector organisations to feed into the plan is via NAH and TSDG.

MR noted that there had been little careers advice for school pupils over the past 18 months, however, Phil confirmed that advisors are now going into schools again. SR noted that it is necessary to address the gaps where there are skills shortages – although programmes are being run to support people into work uptake is poor. There appears to be no incentives for people to come off benefits and into works. PF noted that young people appear to be waiting to see what's happening post Covid19, that often they are unaware of the opportunities available to them and that in some cases people are reluctant to change roles whilst on furlough.

NAH noted a significant link between lack of transport and employability. There is also a disparity in pay scales between the public and third sectors which makes it more difficult to recruit in the third sector. MR agreed that in addition the lack of long-term funding is part of the reason for poor salary scales in the third sector. KR stated that government programmes such as Kickstart do not meet living wage criteria, therefore, third sector organisations supporting these placements must find "top up" funds to meet their living wage values.

CK stated that many of government schemes do not meet the needs of young people with additional needs. Even young people who are work ready can find it difficult going straight into a role with a 25-hour contract – there needs to be more flexibility. There also requires to be more funding available for support workers to help young people succeed in the workplace.

4 SHORT LIFE WORKING GROUP UPDATE

AG gave a summary of short life working group's mapping exercise on employability within the third sector. Discussions have been had with 20 organisations, with a couple more to be undertaken.

Many third sector organisations offer work placements for school pupils and support their local secondary pupils with interview skills and completing applications forms/CVs. Sixty-five percent of organisations offer volunteering opportunities. Most organisations support their people with both formal and informal training opportunities.

There are aspirations within the third sector to have more apprenticeships and Kickstart style placements, however, lack of capacity makes supporting these roles difficult including the associated paperwork.

5 FORUM PRIORITIES FOR NEXT 12 MONTHS

After discussion it was agreed that the forum should focus on the following over the next 6 to 12 months:

- Regional skills investment plan
- Modern apprenticeships
- DWP re Kickstart

Time should also be spent on looking at “no one left behind”. It was agreed that the current short life working group should focus on this and report back to the main forum. CK and MR agreed to join the short life working group for this purpose.

6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

7 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 14 December 2021, 2pm

Post meeting note – date changed to Monday 1 November 2021, 2.30pm

The meeting will be held via ZOOM

ACTIONS

- Distribute copy of PF’s presentation to forum.
- Distribute update on short life working group mapping exercise.
- NAH to invite PF to a future forum meeting for a conversation around the delivery of the investment plan.
- NAH to raise question of employability funding and procurement process with LESP.
- NAH to invite representative from DWP to next forum meeting.

