



THIRD SECTOR
Dumfries and Galloway

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REPORT OF MEETINGS

Education and Skills Coordination Group ESSCG Meeting

1st February 2022

THIRD SECTOR DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY SUMMARY

KEY POINTS

PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS A PERSONAL RECORD BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF TSDG, NORMA AUSTIN HART. IT IS BASED ON MY OWN OBSERVATIONS. IT IS NOT A FORMAL MINUTE OF THE MEETING.

1. The ESSCG heard a presentation by Seamus Spencer of the Scottish Funding Council.
2. South of Scotland is designated as a **tertiary education regional pathfinder** by the Scottish Funding Council.
3. SFC was tasked with taking a more strategic approach to tertiary education at regional level, allowing more people to achieve goals. Pathfinders were identified as a means to this end. SDS provided the detail of what the SoS pathfinder will look like.
4. Three core goals; simpler pathways and improved outcomes for learners; alignment of provision against societal and employer need; enhanced coherence and sustainability across provision.
5. Purpose of scope is to look at college and university provision to enable a talent pipeline – ‘skills through careers’.
6. Will try to determine the degree of non-alignment and mismatch of provision. Will move away from a traditional numbers-based approach.
7. Deliverables: a comprehensive analysis of provision - a mix and curricula adjustment to meet needs of employers (by working with existing research plans), students and regional economic and well-being objectives; improved partnership working; enhanced use of resources
8. Work has begun on first phase by creating workplans, stakeholder engagement, setting up an advisory group.
9. This should lead to a more holistic approach to higher education.
10. SDS rep said, ‘There is work to be done to articulate what this work will actually involve’. Perhaps there had not been enough conversation between SDS and SFC before today’s meeting? SFC agreed that there is work to be done to clarify the project, it a complex piece of work.
11. SFC were asked to bring a plan back to the ESSCG which will clarify the role of this group and its relationship with the regional economic strategy.
12. The next item on the ESSCG agenda was **regional labour market insights**: Nationally GDP is starting to get into low growth though there are still worrying signs of GDP slowing down by end of 2021. Omicron may impact on this further.

13. Jobs posting data remains strong and are likely to remain high. We are likely to have recruitment difficulties due to workforce move home to EU.
14. About a third of jobs are in the public sector.
15. Claimant count is beginning to plateau which is worrying
16. 16-24 group is almost back to pre-pandemic levels of claimant count as is 50+ age group
17. The middle group 25-49 is still some way away from its pre Covid level. This has implications about where policy, actions and resources should be targeted.
18. There is a lot of uncertainty about how Covid recovery will affect claimant count. This will be determined by consumers and amount they spend in economy.
19. Skills assessments will be in April so another look at this information after then would be useful.
20. This information is very useful and should be available to and discussed by the LEP and our own Employability Forum.
21. Update on **Shared Apprenticeships pilot project**: 12-18month apprenticeships for 10 young people.
22. Employer will pay 25% of wages - councils come in with 50% and rest from SDS.
23. SoSE will be the host employer. Councils will be advertising these jobs shortly.
24. This is a key area for making simpler and easier- by removing bureaucratic barriers.
25. There are also **labour shortages** in SoS. SDS identified supply and demand side of this issue.
26. Support will be provided to employers to recruit more effectively. An agency will be commissioned to create streamlined 'marketing collateral'. Also looking at fair wages; attractive adverts and alternative ways to advertise. They will also develop a recruitment toolkit. Project will start in March with updates to this group.
27. There was a review of the **skills/ training aspects of the RES delivery plan review**: I pointed out again that TSDG is undertaking primary research into digital exclusion and I would be happy to discuss this with SDS and SoSE. Grieg Robson said he would do that.
28. I also reminded this group that D&G College is conducting research into digital skills provision at the moment, it might be useful to map what is already going on in terms of research. There was support for the mapping and gapping work.
29. Grieg and Bill to come back to ESSCG with a summary of the existing evidential base before mapping and gapping.
30. It will be important to make sure the voice of employers is not lost.

31. There was a short presentation on the **ten-year strategy for economic transformation**.
32. Vision is of a well-being economy thriving across economic, social and environmental dimensions, being fairer, wealthier and greener. These align well with our own RES.
33. The focus of the national priorities are similar to the six RES themes.
34. There will be five programmes to deliver vision and strategy; entrepreneurial people and culture; new markets and opportunities, productive businesses, skilled workforce, a fairer greener Scotland.

