

## **Note of the Joint Employability, Health and Social Care Forum**

**Wednesday 08 February 2017, Rothes Halls Glenrothes**

Fife Voluntary Action welcomed 70 attendees from across sectors to the February Joint Forum. This Forum brought together the 'Fife Employability Forum' and the 'Third Sector Health and Social Care Forum' both of which FVA facilitate and organise. The aim of the Forum was to improve understanding in Fife of the co-relationship between health and employment outcomes.

69% of attendees were from the third sector with the other 31% being from the public or private sectors.

### **Decent Work for Scotland's low-paid workers: A job to be done - Francis Stuart, Research and Policy Adviser, Oxfam Scotland**

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Francis spoke about the [global sustainable development goals](#), of which the Decent Work report was inspired by sustainable development goal eight "[decent work and economic growth](#)".

He gave an overview of employment figures for the UK and Scotland and highlighted that across the UK, in-work poverty is a core concern. In Scotland, more than half of households in poverty are working households. This comes amid reductions in real wages, concerns around job security, and rising self-employment. He concluded that while we understand how to get people into work, it seems we've yet to ensure that it moves them out of poverty.

Decent work matters because as well as in-work poverty which has been increasing in recent years, there are problems with a low-pay/no-pay cycle and a low-pay trap where workers are not able to progress into better paid work over time. There is strong evidence around the negative health impacts of low-paid, insecure work and some evidence to suggest that in many cases moving from unemployment into low-paid, precarious work can actually be worse for individuals' health outcomes than remaining in unemployment.

Underlining a lot of this is the changing nature of the labour market and how headline employment rates are no longer sufficient to gauge the real health of the labour market. This research was conceived partly in response to this – in terms of better understanding some of those problems and the impact they have on people's lives.

There were two main aims to the research. The first was to come up with a set of weighted priorities that low-paid workers think is important for decent work. The second was to assess through hearing participants personal stories but also through a more objective assessment of Scotland's labour market was to whether Scotland is delivering on decent work.

While adopting slightly different approaches, each of the engagement methods used produced consistent results in terms of what people said are the most important ‘factors’ for decent work.

The top 5 ‘factors’ are:

1. A decent hourly rate;
2. Job security;
3. Paid holidays and paid sick leave;
4. A safe working environment; and
5. A supportive line manager.

So what are the overarching conclusions from the report? Money is important but decent work involves more than this – and includes issues around security, safety and support.

The things that low-paid workers prioritise are fairly basic conditions which people should be able to expect in 21<sup>st</sup> century Scotland. Yet the research shows significant numbers aren’t getting these basic protection and that the labour market is failing too many people. These are however things that the Government and employers can practically address.

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**Fife Health and Wellbeing Alliance: The Connection between health inequalities and employment – Gill Musk, Policy Officer, Fife Council, Jo-Anne Valentine, Public Health Manager, NHS Fife, and Alan Gow, Regional OHS Adviser, Health and Social Care Partnership**

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Jo-Anne started by outlining that Health Inequalities are:

- The unjust differences in health experienced by different groups of people;
- The result of fundamental unequal distribution of income, resources and power; and
- Created by inequalities in life circumstances - poverty, unemployment, educational

She provided a number of statistics that compared the most and least deprived areas of Fife against the Fife average. These figures gave a stark contrast between Fife’s most and least deprived communities with the most deprived areas much worse off in several areas.

So what works in reducing health inequalities?

- Focus on early intervention;
- Improving accessibility of services and support;
- Targeting those most at risk of poor health;
- Sensitive, flexible responses;
- Building ‘protective’ factors e.g. social and community networks, and good quality work; and
- Structural changes to the environment, legislation and regulatory controls, fiscal policies, reducing price barriers.

Fife Health and Wellbeing Alliance have their ‘three themes approach’ to reducing Health Inequalities. To showcase these themes in action they showed the Forum their [fairer health in Fife video](#).

Gill lead the Forum through an exercise where participants used learning from the video and their own work using the Fife Health and Wellbeing Alliances [Health Inequalities checklist](#).

Alan gave a brief overview of the work the Health Promotion – Workplace Team (previously Healthy Working Lives) do across Fife with employers. The team work across several partnerships to deliver a

range of services for workers and employers to improve health and wellbeing in the workplace. They offer free information and advice on a range of topics and can refer organisations to services such as Working Health Services and Fit for Work Scotland.

### **DWP Work & Health Unit Update and Green Paper Consultation - Adrian Martin, Work & Health Unit, DWP**

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In response to a wide employment gap between those without a disability and those with a disability the UK government have launched a consultation about work, health and disability.

The consultation is looking at:

- Assessments for benefits for people with health conditions;
- Supporting employers to recruit with confidence and create healthy workplaces;
- Supporting employment through health and high quality care for all; and
- Building a movement for change: taking action together.

Consultation runs from Monday 31 October 2016 to Friday 17 February 2017.

Attendees were encouraged to submit a response.

### **Fife Economic Strategy: new mental health employability target – Robin Presswood, Head of Service, Fife Council**

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Robin gave an overview of the work Opportunities Fife Partnership (OFP) had done so far regarding addressing mental health and employability in Fife.

His message was that although OFP had invested heavily in employability in Fife, less than 10% of the budget had been spent on mental health, this is despite 42% of people claiming benefits saying they are doing so because of mental health reasons.

In response to this the following target has been included in Fife's Economic Strategy 2017 – 2027 in the section: Achieving Fairer, More Inclusive Growth, priority 1:

*“Work with NHS Fife, The Fife Health & Social Care Partnership and Scottish Government to double the number of positive outcomes for people claiming benefits due to mental health issues.”*

The Forum then discussed, in groups, changes they would like to see in place to help make this target a reality.