

Note of the Fife Employability Forum

Wednesday 23 November 2016, Fife Renewables Innovation Centre, Methil

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

70% of attendees found the Forum very productive or productive, with 95% saying they would attend, or aim to attend, the next Forum.

The Forum had several key updates from partners and ourselves. A summary of the key presentations can be found below.

Know Your Network and Employability Services Directory, Pegs Bailey, Fife Voluntary Action

Pegs provided an overview of the support Fife Voluntary Action (FVA) has provided over the past few months. Highlights include:

- Feedback from the May 2016 Fife Employability Forum shows that people feel more connected to other organisations and better able to influence policy. Attendees also felt that FVA brought an extensive knowledge of the third sector and their views to partnerships.
- There has been positive feedback from Know Your Network 2016 with 99% of attendees wanting to see more events like this.
- FVA's employability e-bulletin is doing well with above average 'opens' and 'clicks'. The team are looking to refresh the e-bulletin format for 2017.
- The Employability Services Directory has received much positive feedback. Over 1000 are now in circulation. FVA are working to launch an online version in the new year.
- FVA continues to support Fife-ETC – Fife's third sector employability consortium.
- FVA has also provided 1:1 support to six organisations between April – September 2016, both local and national and through the OFP Governance health check.

DWP Dynamic Purchasing System, Lindsay Geddes, DWP

The new Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) is being introduced to replace the current Flexible Support Fund (FSF). It will be quicker and more flexible than FSF. Currently it takes three to four months to put funding and provision in place, with DPS this is moving to weeks.

The purpose of the DPS is for local Job Centres to identify and evidence need for a specific services which will then be procured through the central DPS system. Services will be 'purchased' using the information provider organisations have entered onto the DPS system.

The District Manager holds the budget for DPS. In Fife, Lindsay will be responsible for approving requests to commission new services (with support from DWP staff and partners). Lindsay's team will then feed this information into DPS to commission the activity. Lindsay and Janet McQueen cannot see what information organisations have put into the DPS system.

The DPS system will not use a 'cheapest option first' approach, but will instead use a return on investment calculation to ensure that provision is both appropriate to need and good value for money.

Of key note for providers looking to use DPS are:

- The process of registering is labour intensive but registering will be worth it (Fife Voluntary Action are offering one to one support for organisations requiring help with registering, contact Christine@fifevoluntaryaction.org.uk for more info).
- Key information needed on the system is who you are, where you deliver and what you deliver.
- In terms of accuracy of information on the system there is no 'wobble room' – services your organisation offer and no longer offer, contact details etc. must be kept up to date on the system.
- When DWP are searching the DPS for services the top three services which most match the criteria submitted will be identified.
- DPS funding will be treated as a commercial contract (unlike FSF funding which is restricted grant funding). There will also be implications on VAT.

Q&A

Q: Are there opportunities for micro-providers to come under larger organisations to bid for provision?

A: Yes, micro-providers can team-up with larger organisations to offer services through the DPS system, however this would need to be kept up-to-date.

Q: As a Stage 1 provider how will the system work with no job outcome for the organisation?

A: There will be no job outcome for work commissioned at Category 1-3 (equivalent of Stages 1 & 2). Categories 4-8 (equivalent of Stages 3-5) will have a job outcome target.

Q: As part of a national organisation the cost of delivering services varies greatly across different areas, how do we reflect this in our DPS offer?

A: Put into the system the areas you work and how much it will cost to deliver. This is part of the return on investment calculation and the top three organisations will be negotiated with.

Volunteering and Benefits, Stephen Adamson, Fife Voluntary Action

In partnership with DWP and others Fife Voluntary Action (FVA) have created a 'volunteering and benefits' leaflet.

The leaflet will be available in the new year and will be distributed to Job Centres, other locations and will be available on the FVA website.

Opportunities Fife Partnership Panel

The Opportunities Fife Partnership (OFP) Panel consisted of:

- Pegs Bailey - Fife Voluntary Action, Employability Development Manager and Chair of the OFP Health and Disabilities Delivery Group;
- Adam Dunkerley - OFP Manager and Developing Young Workforce Lead;
- Heather Tytler - Skills Development Scotland, Area Manager and Chair of the OFP Youth Delivery Group; and
- Martin Novakovski - DWP, Customer Services Operations Manager and Chair of the OFP Adult Delivery Group.

The Panel introduced themselves including a bit about their day job and their role within the partnership. Christine then opened the floor to questions.

Q. Andrew Aldous, Prince's Trust asked that in the wake of Brexit and with the UK no longer eligible for the European Social Fund what provisions would be available in the future?

A. All funding available to employability provisions are underwritten by the Scottish Government, nothing should change going forward until 2019. As far as the panel are aware there will always be an allocation of funding made available for employability provisions to use.

Q. A representative from DEAP asked for a progress update on the European Funding.

A. OFP are currently undergoing their audit. They plan to update with more information in January 2017. They are looking over financial and client information and have already completed an updated programme management structure. They are hoping that they will be able to start making a claim for money by January 2017.

Q. David Paterson, Fife Council asked who is ultimately responsible for employer engagement in Fife.

A. It is a partnership responsibility and we need everybody moving in the same direction for it to work. A key priority right now is employer engagement in schools through Developing Young

Workforce. OFP want to make sure that everybody is sharing the same knowledge so that no matter who it is that's engaging with the employer, that employer will be aware of everything the partnership offers, rather than just what a single organisation. This is a work in progress.

Q. Gayle Penman, Fife-ETC asked that due to everybody having their own aims and targets that they need to achieve in order to acquire funding, how do we ensure that all the employability provisions are keeping the bigger picture in mind going forward?

A. We need to make sure everybody works together instead of competing with each other for funding. One way OFP hope to achieve this is to make all resources available to all providers in one place through the OFP website.

Q. Duncan Mitchell, FEAT asked that because some organisations have feet in different camps, does the OFP share information with the Health and Social Care Partnership and vice versa? And could there be any overlap of funds available?

A. Communication between the two partnerships has improved recently and they hope to continue that trend with the joint Employability/Health and Social Care forum taking place on Wednesday 08 February 2017, the objective of the Forum will be to try and align the conversations going forward. However, aligning budgets between the two partnerships is still a long way off.

DWP Support for Travel Costs, Janet McQueen, DWP

In order to reduce barriers to access interviews and work the DWP have partnered with travel providers to provide people with reduced travel costs.

From week 13 of a claim a job seeker can access funding to help them attend interviews for free and for up to 50% travel discount for three months following getting a job. Funding for attending interviews can also cover accommodation costs.

Full offers are available on the DWP website and the Stagecoach website.

Customers can claim back their travel fare if asked to attend the Job Centre out with their normal sign-in day. Customers should keep travel receipts.

A special travel deal has been created for people who get jobs at Edinburgh Airport. People can access a 50% discount for the airport bus from Fife.

Q. A question was asked if this funding was exclusive to train travel or if it included people commuting by Stagecoach as well?

A. The offer applies to people travelling by stagecoach as well, full details can be found on the Stagecoach website. Additionally, overnight stays for people who have to travel long distances for an interview can be provided. This funding can also apply to people who travel using their own car, the DWP can help reimburse the cost of petrol for people travelling to job interviews.

CARF's Role in Welfare Reform, David Redpath, CARF

David Redpath gave a presentation on the changes we have already seen regarding the new welfare reform changes. These include bedroom tax, the implementation of two benefit caps, the introduction of Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payment and sanctions.

It is expected that by 2020 £150 million will be lost to the Fife area on account of welfare reform. The role that CARF are playing includes setting up a dedicated welfare reform line to give people help and advice as well as delivering awareness raising sessions across Fife. They hope to further raise awareness through their website and an increased use of social media.

CARF also contributed to the "[Keeping your full benefit payment](#)" booklet and the Fife report entitled "[Bairns Come First – Fairness for the Future](#)".

There are seven community planning areas in Fife and seven WRAP Groups (Welfare Reform Action Planning) in Fife. This is the arena to influence the welfare reform agenda locally. Fife Council want this agenda to be pushed locally and not by the Local Authority.

David encouraged the Forum to take advantage of the DWP's open door policy.

Q. How is welfare reform and the Opportunities Fife Partnership tied together?

A. There is not a formal link at present, however, there is an overlap in representation through DWP colleagues. The introduction of Universal Credit should increase interaction between the two.

My Shout

Kathy Hamilton, Fife Voluntary Action

FVA have received funding to develop a 'Mentors in Work' programme in the Cowdenbeath area. The project is for Fife-ETC customers who have just got their first job. The programme will match these customers with a mentor who will offer peer support.

The project is a one year pilot funded by Fife Council and the Health and Wellbeing Alliance.

Andrew Aldous, Prince's Trust

Andrew updated the Forum that although The Prince's Trust are listed as running the 'Get into Marks and Spencer' in the Employability Services Directory, they also deliver the 'Get into' courses in Asda, Tesco and other retailers.

You can search their database on the Princes Trust [Website](#).

Laura O'Malley is the best person to contact regarding these courses – Laura's contact details are on page 25 of the directory.

Bruce Henderson, CLEAR Buckhaven

CLEAR Buckhaven are working with their clients to develop work around Digital Media. Clients can use this work to showcase their skills and build portfolio items.

Karen Pryde, APEX Scotland

Introduced herself to the Forum. Apex Scotland have a full time service running in Levenmouth Academy and Dunfermline High School, while Karen is based in the Brag Enterprises building in Crosshill. Apex offers an early intervention service for young people at risk of exclusion or requiring additional support to have a more positive future.

Katy Sinclair, Venture Trust

Updated the Forum on the work of the Venture Trust and outlined that they deliver a 16+ women's programme. This programme is for any women who has substance misuse barriers, experienced domestic abuse etc. – the programme is open to more barriers than just an offending background.

The Venture Trust programmes consist of wilderness and community based supports.

Pegs Bailey, Fife Voluntary Action

Updated that Dominique Robertson and David McGrath have been developing an event in Levenmouth that will look at the current employability offer in the area, and if any gaps could be identified. This will be held on Monday 12 December 2016.

Accessible Fife will soon be recruiting for a pre-apprenticeship academy targeted at people with health issues or disabilities. The pre-apprenticeship academy will finish with a guaranteed interview for one of three apprenticeships.