

Minute of the Employability Strategic Group meeting held on 11 October 2012 at Job Centre Plus, Kirkwall

1. Welcome and apologies

Present:

Karen Johnstone	Jobcentre plus (<i>Chair</i>)
Linda Russell	Orkney College
Sue Dutton	All Age disabilities, Orkney Health & Care
Karen Greaves	Education, Council
Amy Thomson	Employability Orkney
Doreen Rendall	Skills Development Scotland
Maggie Berston	Human Resources, NHS
Suzanne Baird	Health Promotions, NHS
Fraser Devine	Voluntary Action Orkney
Hannah Thomson	Community Planning Officer (<i>Secretary</i>)

In attendance:

Karen Currie for item 2	Employability Orkney
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Not present:

John Maclellan	Life Skills Centre
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1. Welcome and apologies

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Jackie Thomson (Economic Development, Council), Chessa Llewellyn White (Highlands and Islands Enterprise), Alistair Ferrier (Skills Development Scotland), Joe Horrocks (All Age Disabilities, Orkney Health & Care) and Frazer Campbell (Orkney Blide Trust).
- 1.2 KJ welcomed Suzanne Baird to the group. Suzanne is the Health Promotions Manager and had newly taken up the post, before that had worked within the Health Promotions Team on health and nutrition.
- 1.3 KJ also welcomed Karen Currie to the meeting. Karen had taken up post as the Employment Worker towards the end of August.

2.0 Employment Worker Action Plan

- 2.1 The Employment Worker post is funded from April 2012 to March 2013 by LEADER, NHS Orkney, Orkney Islands Council, Jobcentre Plus, Healthy Working Lives, Skills Development Scotland, Lifeskills Centre and Employability Orkney. The post was created to make meaningful engagement with employers and supporting them to take on paid or unpaid placements with clients facing barriers to employment. It was also to make communication easier for employers with a central point of contact, rather than several different agencies.
- 2.2 KC distributed a progress report up to 11 October which showed that since taking over the job from her predecessor, she had secured four work placements and has engaged with 70 employers either by phone or in person.

2.3 KC noted that although she had positive responses, it was a quiet time of year for employers, many of whom did not have enough work available to take on placements.

2.4 KJ encouraged all agencies to make best use of the resource by making referrals to KC. It was agreed that DR would speak to Claire Sim at Skills Development Scotland about having KC along to a staff meeting to encourage uptake from SDS.

Action: DR

2.5 KC had a target of securing five voluntary placements by the end of December. It was felt that this was already happening between the Jobcentre and Voluntary Action Orkney but that FD would track referrals through KC.

Action: FD

2.6 It was noted that NHS were successful in taking on placements and had a particularly successful one with no set end date operating within Human Resources.

2.7 The Education, Leisure and Housing was the section within the Council with responsibility for youth employment. It was agreed that KC would meet to look further at what the Council can do with placements.

Action: KC

3.0 Minutes of the last meeting held on 28 August 2012

3.1 It was noted that Fraser Devine had sent his apologies and the minutes would be amended accordingly. The minutes were accepted as accurate.

4.0 Matters arising and action points from the last meeting

4.1 There was no clarity on the action at 5.4 around Contribution based benefits however KJ reported that Universal Credit was unlikely to affect Orkney until December 2013.

4.2 The opening date of the Lifestyle project is set to be January 2014 and any the group would be kept informed of any slippage on this date.

4.3 Regarding the skills and employment events in Kirkwall and Stromness, Karen Currie had been working with AF on this and would continue to work with DR.

5.0 Gaps in provision

5.1 The Employment Worker was greatly valued by all partners and agreed that all attempts should be made to continue funding the post beyond April 2013, when the current funding would run out.

- 5.2 It was felt that the post would benefit from a job coaching element or a separate post specifically for job coaching to support the Employment Worker.
- 5.3 SD noted that some partners may be able to commit a post or part of a post as opposed to a financial contribution.
- 5.4 Although LEADER funds had been successfully secured last year, there was uncertainty around whether the post had changed enough to be considered new and innovative and therefore relevant for the fund. It was agreed that KJ and HT would discuss with Alister Brown, LEADER Development Officer.

Action: KJ & HT

- 5.5 FD suggested that the Young Start Fund may be suitable for funding this post and it was agreed that this would be looked at.

Action: KJ & HT

- 5.6 KJ asked that each partner make tentative enquiries about whether financial commitment could be made to this post beyond April 2013 and feed these responses, along with any other feedback or suggestions back to HT.

Action: all

- 5.7 It was agreed that KG, HT and SD would consider the best way to make a collective Council proposal for financial and/or another type of resource to support this.

Action: KG, HT & SD

6.0 Welfare Reform/Universal Credit

- 6.1 The Welfare Reform Working Group had not met since the last meeting of the ESG and its next meeting date was set for 12 November.

7.0 Pipeline

- 7.1 KJ welcomed agencies to update relevant parts of the Pipeline. She explained that in the future the Pipeline may be used for sharing resources by looking at areas of over or under provision. She hoped to reduce the length of it to 2-3 pages to make it a more summarised document.

Action KJ

- 7.2 The Supported Volunteering Service at Voluntary Action Orkney was temporarily closed and therefore no longer able to provide the same level of service. The pipeline would need to be changed to reflect this.

Action KJ

- 7.3 Some changes required from AF once he is back to work on the changes of services provided by Skills Development Scotland.

Action: AF

8.0 Youth Employment

- 8.1 KG explained that the Council had raised the profile of youth employment and Education, Leisure and Housing Service had a specific responsibility for youth employment. A meeting had taken place with KJ, KG and Leslie Manson and it was agreed that it would be useful to take forward a specific piece of work around youth employment through a subgroup of the ESG.
- 8.2 The Council were committed to improving outcomes for looked after children in particular through their corporate parenting duties. Danny Logue, Operations Director in Skills Development Scotland had met with Albert Tait and suggested pulling together an Orkney offer, in a similar way to what Renfrewshire had done.
- 8.3 KJ reported that the Jobcentre were seeing more 16 and 17 year olds. DR reported that more of this age group were staying on at school but that an increasing number were leaving school at the age of 18 and would benefit from Get Ready For Work but no longer qualify.
- 8.4 The 16+ post at the Council had been reduced to half time hours and there are plans to gear up the work of 16+ within the Council.
- 8.4 It was agreed that a short life subgroup of the ESG would be set up to create a work plan focussed on looked after children and other young people. The work plan would then be taken back to the full ESG.
- 8.5 The group were in agreement with the suggestion of a short life group being formed and it was agreed that membership would include a Jobcentre Plus representative, a Skills Development Scotland representative and Lindsey Johnson from Connect. Other members may be required to be pulled in as and when required and they may not necessarily be members of the ESG. A meeting would be set up after the October break.

Action: KG

9.0 Closer Working group update

- 9.1 Another meeting of the group had been held on 5 September which looked at the physical requirements of partners. The Jobcentre Plus and Skills Development Scotland have unused office space and are in discussions about potential sharing of accommodation.
- 9.2 The Welfare Reform would make significant changes to service delivery of partners and this is an important consideration in the Employability Hub.
- 9.3 The key partners are still involved and these are Jobcentre plus, VAO, Orkney Health & Care, Skills Development Scotland and the Council.

10. Unemployment statistics

- 10.1 There were no statistics available for the meeting however it was noted that there had been a significant drop in the number of unemployed 18-24 year olds but that seasonal patterns meant that an overall increase

in unemployment would be expected. KJ agreed to circulate statistics once published.

Action: KJ

11. Feedback from Partnership Liaison Group

11.1 An Armed Forces Covenant had been signed up between the Partnership and the Armed Forces on 4 October. KJ had signed up to it as Chair of the Employment Strategic Group. The Covenant was a statement of voluntary support towards the Armed Forces community. In relation to employability, the Covenant states that the Partnership will take specific targeted measures which might improve employability outcomes for veterans. Around 18,000 armed forces personnel were to be made redundant over the next five years. It was suggested at the Steering Group that the oil and gas industry were expecting there to be skills shortages over the coming years due to experienced staff retiring. This was one area where skills and vacancies could be matched by the Armed Forces. It was noted that organisations such as NHS have things happening already for veterans and already have a veteran volunteering. At a future meeting, ESG could formalise what is available in terms of employment support to veterans locally.

Action: HT

11.2 The Single Outcome Agreement Annual Report for 2011-12 had been approved by the Partnership Liaison Group and the Steering Group. HT issued the 'Employment' section to the group and the Report would be available on the Orkney CPP and Council websites soon.

12. Agency updates

12.1 The Connect service had received funding for three years from the Scottish Autism Fund for a 15 hour per week post to work with "pre-Connect" young people.

13. AOCB

13.1 Orkney College were to be starting a 'Fresh Start in Learning' course for anyone who not been in the workplace for some time. It would be a free course run over 20 weeks covering topics such as computing. The course would begin after the October break and partners were asked to consider and encourage clients who may benefit from this course to get in contact with the College.

13.2 The College was also to deliver a 'New College Learning Programme' for 16-19 year olds and a separate session for 19-24 year olds. The course was to start in semester two of 2012-13 (after festive break). The course would be similar to Get Ready For Work but would have a SQA employability award at the end and therefore this course would be at a higher level than GRFW. It would involve four weeks at College full time and then ten weeks placement (four days per week placement and one day per week at College). It was described by LR as an intensive course which would get participants used to the work environment. LR encouraged partners to consider clients who may benefit from this

course to contact the College. MB would see whether NHS had any placements available to support this course.

- 13.3 KJ informed the group about sanctions and conditionality coming into force on 22 October. These stringent conditions on Job Seekers Allowance or Employment Support Allowance claimants mean that job searching must be evidenced and claimants could lose allowances for up to a year. Partners were encouraged to get message across to clients that the allowance paid on job searching and not on being unemployed.
- 13.4 The digital universal job match would go live on 19 November and would replace direct.gov searches. The website would allow employers to upload vacancies and also view profiles of people looking for work, in a similar way to other job matching websites. All employers would be required to enter vacancies on this website. Full details on the website and how it would work were yet to be issued to Jobcentres and KJ would share relevant information with partners as and when it became available. A culture change would be required whereby clients would be expected to have a profile and may be expected to justify reasons for not having one.
- 14. Date of next meeting** – to be set after KG's subgroup meeting