

Minute of the Employability Strategic Group meeting held on 28 August 2012 at Job Centre Plus, Kirkwall

1. Welcome and apologies

Present:

Karen Johnstone	Jobcentreplus (<i>Chair</i>)
Joe Horrocks	All Age Disabilities, Orkney Health & Care
Linda Russell	Orkney College
Sue Dutton	All Age disabilities, Orkney Health & Care
Frazer Campbell	Blide Trust
Alistair Ferrier	Skills Development Scotland
Karen Greaves	Education, Council
Hannah Thomson	Community Planning Officer (<i>Secretary</i>)

Not present

Amy Thomson	Employability Orkney
John Maclellan	Life Skills Centre

1. Welcome and apologies

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Jackie Thomson (Economic Development, Council), Chessa Llewellyn White (Highlands and Islands Enterprise), Maggie Berston (Human Resources, NHS), Fraser Devine (Voluntary Action Orkney) and Doreen Rendall (Skills Development Scotland).
- 1.2 New to the group, KJ welcomed Karen Greaves (Education at the Council) Sue Dutton and Joe Horrocks (both of All Age Disabilities, Orkney Health & Care) and Frazer Campbell (new manager at Blide Trust). Sue and Joe would both be on the group until a new Service Manager was appointed.
- 1.3 KJ noted that she had been in contact with Health Promotions and hoped that the new manager, Suzanne Baird would be able to attend in future.

2.0 Minutes of the last meeting held on 24 May 2012

- 2.1 The minutes were accepted as accurate.

3.0 Matters arising and action points from the last meeting

- 3.1 The action around Sector Based Work Academies (SBWA)/Training for Work (TFW) had been completed. This resulted in the Job Centre Plus and Lifeskills running a SBWA through TFW. 'Dealz' had input into the training and were able to guarantee an interview at the end of the process. Out of the nine put through the programme, four were successful in gaining jobs with Dealz. KJ suggested that a SBWA could be run in the future for a particular industry, for example hospitality.

4.0 Membership

4.1 This had been covered through item 1.

5. Welfare Reform/Universal Credit

5.1 KJ explained that a community planning Welfare Reform Working Group had been established. Leslie Rendall (Revenues Manager, Council) had prepared a Welfare Reform Update paper which provided a summary of the changes. This paper was circulated to the group. The Update Paper would become a working document managed by Leslie and KJ would continue to share the information within this with the ESG.

5.2 KJ encouraged the group to share information with clients about the impending changes and what the implications may be for them.

5.3 Some of the changes noted through Welfare Reform/Universal Credit are listed below:

- The housing benefit reduction will mean that some households will be in properties too large for their needs and will need to pay a proportion of the rent. With a shortage of one and two bedroom houses in Orkney (particularly in the isles), partners should ensure that clients receive a clear message that if they are affected, they will need to have income to pay this rent shortfall.
- The benefit cap will affect five families in Orkney. The Job Centre Plus is already working with these families about these changes.
- The conditions for receipt of Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) are becoming tougher with claimants requiring to undertake 30 hours of job related searching per week. These hours could include skills development, such as working at the Blide Trust Clubhouse or volunteering. Although such activities alone would not be sufficient to receive JSA and a mix of job searching and applying for jobs would be required in addition. Clients need to understand the steps they need to take in order to remain entitled to JSA. KJ offered support to partners in this area. The message for partners to pass on to clients is that clients are only entitled to JSA if they are looking for work, it is not an entitlement because unemployed.
- The changes will be coming in on staged approaches between April 2013 and 2017.
- Benefits will be paid directly to the claimant through one bulk payment per month to cover all benefits. Due to change, clients will need to learn budgeting skills and how to manage money.
- Those in receipt of Universal Credit will be required to use the internet for all claims and applications. Job Centre Plus had undertaken a survey for clients outwith Kirkwall or Stromness to assess their access to the internet. This found that out of the 57 clients, only 3 did not have access to the internet. They plan to undertake this same survey with Kirkwall and Stromness clients also. The Job Centre Plus and Learning Link plan to run workshops for clients aimed at supporting them with

their computer skills for use of the internet. It is hoped that these workshops will be ongoing and will also help the Learning Link to identify people who need help with literacy and numeracy. KJ agreed to share information from Rhona Shearer of the Job Centre Plus about online support available to clients.

Action: KJ

- Those claiming Employment Support Allowance (ESA) do not have the same requirements as those claiming JSA but will need to engage with Job Centre Plus at a level which is suitable for them.

5.4 AF asked whether Contribution based benefits would remain paid fortnightly or whether they would also be monthly payments. KJ would look into this. She also agreed to look into the implications for clients who currently receive housing benefit, but no other benefits – and whether their payment will be through Universal Credit.

Action: KJ

5.5 It was agreed to keep this item on the agenda with a focus on employability. The Job Centre Plus were able to answer questions and support in relation to employment issues as part of the changes.

6. Employment Worker Action Plan

6.1 Since Ian Robertson had left the post, Karen Currie had been appointed as the new Employment Worker and started the job on 27 August. KJ would request an update from Ian on the Action Plan (which expired in July) and circulate it to the group.

6.2 The Employment Worker post had been successful in meeting job outcomes and had proved to be good value for money for partners. It was funded for April 2012 – March 2013 by Leader funding matched by contributions from NHS Orkney, Orkney Islands Council, Department of Work and Pensions, Skills Development Scotland, Life Skills Centre and Employability Orkney. KJ asked partners to consider the next financial year and whether there would be willingness to continue the arrangement if money were available. It was agreed that this would be considered at the next meeting. In the meantime, KJ encouraged partners to make best use of the service.

Action: All

7. Pipeline update

7.1 The Pipeline was due to be refreshed with changes since it was last updated such as the Employment Worker to be included. It was agreed that this would be considered at the next meeting in line with the action at 6.2.

8. Lifestyle project

8.1 The opening of the Lifestyle Base was dependant on the timescales involved with the new swimming pool, which had been delayed. It was hoped that a firmer date could be agreed at a meeting with contractors the following week.

9. Closer Working Group update

- 9.1 The last meeting of the Closer Working Group was on 21 July. The group are looking at the next stages of closer working and the Hub proposal. The overall aim is to make employability service provision clearer and better for clients. The group had looked at accommodation and found that buildings are being under-utilised, although there were no firm plans around a way forward.
- 9.2 Derek Aiken had been taking forward plans for future use of St Colms building and it was proposed that it could be used as an employability centre for disabled clients.

10. Unemployment statistics

- 10.1 KJ circulated unemployment charts for July 2012. These showed that in comparison to the same period in 2011, unemployment was decreasing and off-flows were higher. There had been six Community Job Scotland places allocated and the total number of unemployed 18-24 year olds was between 40 and 50. KJ agreed to provide this figure to AF.

Action: KJ

11. Feedback from Strategic Economic Forum

- 11.1 The last meeting of the Strategic Economic Forum had been on 6 July 2012 however KJ had not been present and therefore there was no update.

12. Feedback from Partnership Liaison Group

- 12.1 The Partnership Liaison Group had a representative from the HI-Scot Credit Union at the meeting. This is the local Credit Union offering affordable loans and competitive savings for anyone within the Highlands and Islands. More information could be found from their website and local people can receive applications forms and support in completing these from Voluntary Action Orkney and Orkney Housing Association.

13. Agency update

- 13.1 Education, Leisure and Housing at the Council have responsibility for the Council's youth employment requirements. A Council group had been set up to gain an understanding of pockets of work undertaken by the Council and Orkney College in relation to youth employment. The group were also considering Modern Apprenticeships and work placements. KG believed that this would extend further to include partners in the future. HT noted that in relation to work placements, Human Resources had drafted a policy on work placements which was yet to be submitted to Committee. KJ also asked that this group be made aware that significant work taking place with young people between the Job Centre Plus and Skills Development Scotland.

- 13.2 AF provided an update on modernisation changes due to take place with Skills Development Scotland. These would be communicated to the group once they are formalised.
- 13.3 AF had been tasked with delivering future skills and employment events at Kirkwall and Stromness. The Stromness event was planned for November and would be focussed upon the renewables industry. AF welcomed any support partners could offer in the planning stages of this and in attending the event on the day. It was agreed that KJ, AF and Karen Currie would meet to consider KC's role in the event.
- Action: KJ & AF**
- 13.4 The Kirkwall event would be likely to take place in 2013 and be focussed on a broader range of industries including agriculture and tourism. Orkney College expressed interest in being involved with this.

14. AOCB

- 14.1 There was no other business.

15. Date of next meeting

- 15.1 Thursday 11 October at 10am in the Job Centre Plus.