

NEWS RELEASE: For Immediate Use

**Getting 'Joined Up For Success' –
Minister of State praises new steps to get more into work and hears of
new city employability projects**

Edinburgh's ambitious programme to get more people into work was praised during a visit from the Work and Pensions Minister, Stephen Timms, on Wednesday 28th May.

At a breakfast event at the Glasshouse Hotel he heard about two new initiatives for the city and some exciting projects funded by the Pathfinder. The Offer to Jobseekers will ensure that all jobseekers can easily get employability services appropriate to their needs and guarantees a high standard for those with greatest need. The Employer Offer will mean that they can get a common menu of assistance from any of the organisations involved, reducing duplication and confusion. The implementation of these offers will join up jobseekers and employers, creating a pathway to work that is both client-centred and demand-led.

Funding for several innovative projects from the Pathfinder Grant, which the DWP has made available to help implement the Business Plan, will be announced. These include:

- an area focus pilot in the Muirhouse area which concentrates the activities of voluntary and public sector organisations on motivating a small community to consider getting back to work (delivered by Community Renewal; £180,000);
- an employability case management system for prison leavers ensuring that their efforts in education and training in prison translate into employment beyond the prison gates (delivered by Four Square; £15,000);
- a voluntary work coach initiative, enhancing the contribution of volunteering to getting people who have been on long term sickness back into the workplace and ultimately into jobs (delivered by the Volunteer Centre; £30,000);
- funding for skills training by two of Edinburgh's employer-led employment academies, the Social Care Academy and the Academy at St James Shopping (£14,950 and £19,000 respectively).

Stephen Timms MP said: "I'm encouraged by the progress that Edinburgh's Job Strategy Partners have made in implementing their business plan to get more people back into work. They have an ambitious goal of reaching an employment rate which goes beyond the government's aspiration of 80%. Regeneration developments

across the city will provide many new job opportunities and I'm pleased to have heard how the partners will ensure that unemployed people will benefit".

David Metcalfe, Chair of the Job Strategy Group said: "I am delighted with the way the partnership has developed and partners have worked together over the past year; and we look forward to both meeting our targets and to helping Edinburgh jobseekers access the opportunities in the city."

Cllr Tom Buchanan, Economic Development Convenor for the City of Edinburgh Council said: "The Strategy clearly highlights the importance of the private and public sectors working together. Edinburgh has a thriving economy, but there are still many historic social issues facing the city in terms of unemployment and access to job opportunities and training. We are tackling those issues head on and creating opportunities that enable everyone to fulfil their potential. This is essential if we are to have a truly successful city."

Ron Hewitt, Chief Executive of Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce said: "I am delighted the Minister has joined us today to recognize the City's innovative approach to helping individuals discover their employability. These projects reflect an approach that shows all our citizens are valuable people and can be helped to build their self esteem through that discovery. At the other end of the scale it shows how more capable people can be found to continue to build our economy. What could better vindicate the strategy?"

The Edinburgh City Jobs Strategy, which is one of the Government's Cities Strategy Pathfinders, aims to increase employment levels in the City to 82%. It is being supported and implemented by a consortium of Edinburgh organisations: City of Edinburgh Council, Jobcentre Plus, Scottish Enterprise, Careers Scotland, Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, the city's Further Education Colleges, NHS Lothian, and Capital City Partnership. The consortium is aligning funding to drive forward innovative schemes to tackle unemployment, particularly among school leavers and disadvantaged groups.

The Edinburgh City Jobs Strategy partnership aims to reduce the numbers on long-term benefits by 2,755 by May 2009, bringing the capital's employment rate to 80.7% which will continue to rise to 82% by 2014. By comparison, the Scottish employment rate sits at 75.9% - above the UK rate and most other countries within the EU.

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