

Meeting of:

Working Together
for Employment and Inclusion in Edinburgh

STEERING GROUP

Held at: Capital City Partnership offices, 1 Canon Street, Canonmills, Edinburgh

Date: **Wednesday 15th December 2004**

1. Present:	Matthew Crighton	Capital City Partnership	
	Brian Martin	City of Edinburgh Council	
	Christine Fitton	Edinburgh Lifelong Learning Partnership	
	Bruce Penman	West Edinburgh Action/Stevenson College	
	Mark Crawford	Edinburgh Retail Academy	
	Sally McGreevy	SEEL	
	Stephen McMurray	Capital City Partnership	
	Julie Bilotti	Scottish Executive	
	Vickie Hobson	Workers Education Association	
	Julie Skelton	Jobcentre Plus	
	Apologies:	Cllr. Ian Perry	City of Edinburgh Council
		Sam Hardie	Women Onto Work
		Peter Purves	Into Work
		Ken Shaw	City of Edinburgh Council
Jim Rafferty		Capital City Partnership	
	Kenneth Wardrop	City of Edinburgh Council	

Action

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 03 November 2004

These were agreed as a correct record.

3. Mapping local strategy against the EES

3.1 Adaptability

Vicki Hobson from the Workers Education Association introduced the work her organisation is doing in Edinburgh which contributes to the objectives of the Adaptability Pillar of the EES and the Scottish Executive through the aims of Life Long Learning. The three aims are to increase the numbers of people confident about using English and Maths in their everyday lives, increase choice for learners and improve the quality of learning opportunities in the city of Edinburgh.

The project hopes to engage with employers and promote courses designed to build confidence in literacy and numeracy skills in the workplace. Vickie has carried out some work with the Deal Me In trainees, the Edinburgh Retail Academy and Childcare Academy.

Vickie referred to the definition of literacy and numeracy from a 2001 Report. "The definition to read, write and use numeracy to handle information, to

express ideas and opinions, to make decisions and solve problems, as family members, workers, citizens and lifelong learners.” (Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland Report, 2001)

Vickie added that this work is informed and follows the Social Justice Milestones contained in the Closing the Opportunity Gap. The level of literacy skills has been identified as the single most important factor in determining pay. (Herald newspaper).

Vickie informed the meeting that she had began work with a number of employers including the City Council in relation to accrediting prior learning for people currently ‘doing the job’ but needing to gain a formal qualification. She has also begun to work with the Royal Mail and the National Library of Scotland through contact with Trade Union representatives. All development work is provided free assuming only that there will be literacy-related outcomes.

Vickie closed her presentation by seeking views and suggestions on ways to work together in the future.

Bruce Penman raised a point about whether the process of starting basic skills training in the work place resulted in generating any further demand? He qualified this by stating that in his experience it was difficult to upskill once the client was with an employer i.e in work. Vickie replied by saying that a prime objective is to improve confidence in order that individuals see the benefit of work place learning. The aim is to raise individuals’ horizons and empower them to move out of the low pay cycle.

Julie Skelton asked how clients’ literacy/numeracy skills were assessed. This is done through individual interviews with clients assessing confidence in picking up a pen or reading.

Matthew asked if there was a problem with the definition of literacy/numeracy and the way the issue is introduced? I.e. do questions about literacy/numeracy put people off?

Vickie hoped not and explained that by setting the questions in the work context with the support of employers would remove some of the stigma attached to the issue. She accepted that people were not always happy to seek help, particularly in the work place, therefore emphasising the need to make literacy/numeracy support a positive experience.

Mark asked if there had been contact or work done with the Sector Skills Councils?

Vickie responded that there hadn’t been as yet but that she would like to establish some contact and would welcome a way of making that happen. Mark commented that they should have a role if people in employment perceive seeking help as a barrier. Julie Bilotti stated that there were differences between the Scottish and English experiences of the Sector Skills Council, being UK wide bodies with Scottish reps Christine felt that services were more joined up in England. Julie Bilotti said she would find out who the Scottish contact with the Sector Skills Council was and pass it on to Vickie.

JB

3.1 Employability Framework

Julie Bilotti gave a brief outline on the current development of an Employability Framework by the Scottish Executive.

The framework is being developed as part of the work on Closing the Opportunity Gap (CtOG), which is underway in the Executive. It is an opportunity to take stock of the interventions already in place across

Scotland, and go on to plan and implement future Executive direction.

Employability remains at the heart of the UK Government's skills and employment policy agendas, most tellingly in the Welfare to Work policies and programmes. Determining how the Executive can best complement and influence UK policies will play a major part in developing the Framework for Scotland.

The Framework must address the connectivity between initiatives to ensure that there is a "pipeline" approach that keeps individuals engaged. This will involve having three client group themes:

- Helping the most disadvantaged move towards work,
- Encouraging those closest to the job market into sustained employment and
- Helping those in low paid, low skilled jobs to develop their skills.

Overall, this work is seen as an opportunity for Scottish Ministers to drive forward action on the devolved areas of employability in Scotland, and to have a closely informed influence on the direction of UK policies and programmes on benefits and Welfare to Work.

To inform and take forward the development of the Framework, a number of national and local workstreams have been formed. Nationally, short life working groups will report by the end of March on; a shared definition of the key client groups; a shared picture of the employment demand side; and a view at national level of the kind of interventions that can be most beneficial in helping people make the transition towards and into work. These groups are led by Gill Scott of Caledonian University, Tom Laidlaw of Scottish gas, and Richard Scothorne of Rocket Science.

A separate set of workstreams (recognising a different group of clients and stakeholders) to look at services and strategies, including early intervention, for the NEET group and young people at risk of becoming NEET is also being developed.

Locally, 7 District Council areas, identified in the CtOG targets announced in December by Malcolm Chisholm, will be asked to develop, and build on existing, local strategies and action plans between agencies (local authorities, JC Plus districts, LECs etc) to define client groups, needs, and locally flexible delivery arrangements designed for and with their client.

We aim to produce the first Framework conclusions and action plan in late summer 2005.

The workstream groups will report to an overall project group chaired by Mark Batho, which in turn will keep ETLLD Ministers informed of progress. The CtOG Cabinet Delivery Group will ultimately oversee the development of the Framework, which is due to meet next in November.

Matthew thanked Julie for a very comprehensive overview of the current situation with the Scottish Executive. He added that a lot of what she described could be seen as a reflection of the Joined Up For Jobs partnership in Edinburgh being promoted at a Scottish level.

Julie agreed with that assessment and reaffirmed the importance of partnership in achieving progress in this area.

Matthew referred to the seven areas mentioned by Julie and the partnerships operating in these areas. He stated that there appears to be no parallels to JU4J elsewhere and if there are what can we learn from them? But it may also be that some of those partnerships are not working? Julie outlined the key stakeholders round the partnership tables in these other areas that are broadly similar across all areas. The core of these agencies will continue working together to develop the Regeneration Outcome Agreements (ROA) under Community Planning. However, she did concede that some partnerships are not as affective as others.

Matthew added the importance of an inclusion focus as a priority as without such a focus achieving targets will be all the more difficult.

Julie hopes that the role out of Community Planning will help in retaining an inclusion focus and also get more out of the resources that go into some of the worst areas.

Julie added that dialogue with COSLA is at an advanced stage in reaching agreement on a Partnership Accord, which includes Jobcentre Plus. Current and future development of the Employability Framework will incorporate this commitment to partnership.

Brian mentioned a presentation delivered by Kay Barton of the Scottish Executive on the Employability Framework and agreed to provide details on how to access the slides.
<http://www.social-justice.net/equalaccess/November.htm>

Matthew mentioned the forthcoming JU4J Partnership Forum session on Employability to be held in the Council Business Centre on the 3rd February 2005.

BM

Implementation Issues/Secretariat Report

4.1 Evaluation Framework

Previously circulated. No further comments from meeting.

4.

4.2 Conference Update – No update.

Next meeting in January will hold a fuller discussion on themes for conference in November 2005.

4.3 Interim Report

Interim Report has been completed and sent to Commission. The main body of the report has been circulated to the group for their information. It was agreed to circulate the report to other relevant networks i.e. MEPs, COSLA, DWP and New Policy Institute. Other members can forward it to other relevant networks that they are familiar with. Brian agreed to circulate the 3 page Executive Summary to the group.

4.4 Regeneration Outcome Agreements

Matthew informed meeting of the progress of the city's ROA, which deals with funding of social inclusion issues including employability on a city wide basis. The process is to now agree targets at both an Edinburgh and local level.

BM

4.5 Staff Exchange Scheme

Brian informed meeting that work was ongoing to host a role play exercise that will promote the benefits of a staff exchange. From the few notes of interest recorded so far discussions have begun to take this forward. Brian tabled a Staff Exchange Application form for comment, which will be used to formally record notes of interest. The meeting made some helpful comments

for alterations to the form before it is circulated more widely.

In relation to the Staff Exchange objectives Matthew informed meeting that the Secretariat had been discussing holding a series of training or briefing sessions on a range of topics that will contribute to the development of the Working Together strategy. Themes identified include the Use of ICT, Benefits Advice, Disclosure, Data Protection and the Disability Discrimination Act.

It was agreed to seek interest from the Joined Up for Jobs Partners Forum on any of these topics or any suggestions they care to offer.

Bruce suggested that some work to tie all these threads together and develop common methodologies for measuring some of the strategies. Exploring ways to promote common strategies that foster more effective partnership working.

Christine raised the issue of bureaucracy or red tape that acts as a constraint for small business growth. Perhaps some training could be delivered that tackles this issue for SMEs, i.e developing skills do paperwork.

The discussion moved on to the role employers themselves had in improving their recruitment practices through advertising their vacancies. It was agreed that more work with employers to enable them to improve how they write vacancies could also be offered. It was felt worthwhile to review this particular issue and look at what support currently exists through SEE&L and their networks.

Sally

Julie mentioned practices in other cities in England, which take vacancies from employers and deconstructs what it is they require and then transmit the key information to various groups via a database system. It was agreed to look at arranging study visits to look at this in operation. Julie agreed to advise on which cities operate successful systems.

JB

4.6 Website

The brief for the development of a Website has been prepared and is ready to be sent out. The Website will have 2 distinct parts; one element will be hosting a directory of provider agencies; the other element will be general information on Working Together for Employment and Inclusion and Joined Up for Jobs. Matthew informed the meeting that due to this distinction invites to tender could be made for each element separately.

A brief discussion took place identifying other functions that would be of benefit to users of the site. It was agreed that these suggestions could be taken up directly with whoever wins the contract to build the site.

5. Any Other Business
There was no other business.

6. Date of Future Meetings

26th January 2005 – Format and Themes for the conference.

9th March 2005 Edinburgh Life Long Learning Partnership on their strategy.

20th April 2005 – To be confirmed.

