

Minutes of Meeting 26<sup>th</sup> October 2011  
Cross Party Group on Skills

Date: 26<sup>th</sup> October 2011  
Location: Holyrood, Committee Room 2  
Present:

<b>Association of Accounting Technicians</b>	Helen McGougan	<b>SCQF</b>	Julie Cavanagh
<b>Barnardo's Scotland</b>	Helen Brown / Simon Warr	<b>SECTT</b>	Anne Galbraith
<b>Chartered Institute of Bankers in Scotland</b>	Shona Matthews / Simon Thomson	<b>Scottish Enterprise</b>	Brian McLeish/Linda Murray
<b>Construction Skills Scotland</b>	Graeme Ogilvy	<b>Scottish Labour Party</b>	Margaret McCulloch MSP
<b>Creative Scotland</b>	Helena Ward	<b>Scottish Labour Party</b>	John Park MSP
<b>Education Scotland</b>	Ruth Ohdlag	<b>Scottish Labour Party</b>	David Whitton
<b>Improve Scotland</b>	Kelvin Thomson	<b>SQA</b>	Joe Wilson
<b>Investors in People</b>	Vicki Maclean	<b>STUC</b>	Sylvia O'Grady / Emma Ritch
<b>NHS Education for Scotland</b>	Simon Williams	<b>Scottish Youth Parliament</b>	Andrew McGowan MYSP
<b>OU Scotland</b>	Úna Bartley	<b>Skills Development Scotland</b>	Fiona Stewart
<b>Pagoda</b>	Keith Geddes	<b>Unite the Union</b>	Walton Pantland
<b>RBS</b>	Omar Mohammed	<b>Universities Scotland</b>	James Wilson
<b>Remploy</b>	Margaret Barton	<b>Working Links</b>	Ian McAvoy

Guests:

<b>Scottish National Party</b>	Dr Alasdair Allan MSP	<b>Scottish Government</b>	Hugh McAloon
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Apologies received:

<b>Construction Skills Scotland</b>	Philip Ford	<b>NSCC</b>	John McKinney
<b>Economic Development Association [Scotland]</b>	Anne Meikle, Irene Bell	<b>OPITO</b>	Gillian Black
<b>Federation of Small Businesses</b>	Mary Goodman	<b>SCQF</b>	Aileen Ponton
<b>Fife Council</b>	Lucinda McAllister	<b>SIO</b>	Alan Thornborrow
<b>Investors in People</b>	Judith Ackerman	<b>Skills for Logistics</b>	Chris Campbell
<b>IRISS</b>	Sarah Cockburn	<b>Working Links</b>	Nick Young
<b>Loch Lomond &amp; Trossachs Community Partnership</b>	Kate Sankey		

## **Agenda Items:**

### **1 Welcome:**

John Park MSP [JP] welcomed all and thanked in particular Margaret Barton of Remploy for sponsoring the lunch. He proposed that, to maximise the time available with the Minister, that item 3 of the Agenda be brought forward. This was agreed and Mr Park introduced Dr Alasdair Allan MSP, Minister for Learning and Skills.

### **2 Ministerial Update**

**2.1** Dr Allan thanks Mr Park stating that he was delighted to make this first visit to the Cross Party Group on Skills. He viewed the meeting as a chance to work together to improve life chances in Scotland. Dr Allan noted the need to be ambitious with what is offered to support skills and through this the economy. There was a duty to investment in people and business but to make sure more benefit was gained for each point spent. The Minister proceeded to restate the Government's commitment to free education and went on to outline the steps being taken to provide additional training places over the next 5 years, including guaranteed learning or training places for 16-19 age group.

Dr Allan also noted the need to protect university place for Scottish students going on to add that universities should not operate in isolation. There is a need for clear articulation into the workforce. Here and with the Post 16 reform agenda, lifelong learning is key.

There is a need to protect priority sectors and the measures taken must be far reaching creating jobs and growth. The Minister stated that the Government had a strong record on support of training but wished to widen this. Dr Allan welcomed the opportunity to return to the Group early in 2012.

**2.2** Mr Park thanks the Minister and opened the Q&A session with a question submitted by Irene Bell of Economic Development Association Scotland. EDAS had recently held an event on Leadership and Productivity in Scotland. One of the main issues to emerge from the discussion was that managers could 'get away' with poor performance because they are disincentivised from managing their people well. Two suggested reasons for this were:

1. The focus on 'results' in the short term, rather than long term goals or growth, including people development;
2. Few senior managers know how their goods are produced or how their services are delivered, because they know next to nothing about what their employees are doing in the workplace and henceforth how productive they are.

EDAS wished to ask the Minister how will the Scottish Government change the ways in which current/future managers perform in the private, public and third sector in Scotland?"

Dr Allan responded by stating that the Government recognised that short-termism existed, but was focused on supporting longer term recovery. As far as the levers available to change attitudes and behaviours, these are limited. However, dialogue, apprenticeships outside of the normal trade areas, graduate apprenticeships, and technical apprenticeship may help to reduce knowledge gaps.

Mr Park proposed that questions from the floor be put to the Minister in groups of three.

- 2.3** Grahams Ogilvy of Construction Skills Scotland asked the Minister about the guaranteed training places. CSS widely supports this policy but Mr Ogilvy was concerned that it needed wider support from business, citing success stories from counterparts in England. The Minister noted that there are high completion rates so something is right. That said the Government was committed to achieving its targets and to do so needed to look at the quality of what is offered to ensure that both parties are gaining.
- 2.4** Helena Ward of Creative Scotland asked about the availability of paid internships to help establish links with learners and the industry. Dr Allan stated that this was not currently supported with the main vehicles being work experience and apprenticeships.
- 2.5** Margaret McCulloch MSP noted that in her experience the Modern Apprenticeship programme has revealed a real benefit in the 20+ age group. The introduction last year of Level 2 was seen positively by various sectors and she wished to know how successful it had been in uptake? The Minister responded that the introduction of the level 2 programme had been in response to feedback from the various sectors. The Government was keen to have the majority achieve a level 3 qualification to maintain the character of the programme. Ms Barton noted that the issue was that many roles did not allow application at level 3 and felt that level 2 would not devalue the MA programme. Hugh McAloon, of the Scottish Government added that the relevant statistics would be available from the Skills Development Scotland website by the end of the year. Graham Ogilvy sought to reinforce the point that the scheme would respond to sector demands, noted that Construction Skills Scotland had both Level 2 and 3 MA's available; where there is a need the right solution should be developed. Mr McAloon noted the benefit of having this model.
- 2.6** Simon Warr of Barnardo's referred to the proposals he had seen for apprenticeships in England, where there was to be a decoupling from qualifications and becoming more akin to a contract of skills and with payment by results. He asked if the Scottish Government was looking at this model or investigating lessons learned from it. The Minister noted that there needed to be a link to qualifications and that some schemes are offering results payments. Mr

McAloon added that the contracts offered mean that payment is made on completion. He agreed that a move to outcome focused payments could drive up attainment.

- 2.7** Kelvin Thomson of Improve Scotland noted the Minister's earlier reference to university and technical apprenticeships and asked about the timescales being looked at for their introduction. Mr McAloon advised that level 4 frameworks are already in some existing programmes however these apprenticeships will be considered in April 2012.
- 2.8** Úna Bartley of Open University Scotland noted that it is likely there will be a drop in the demographic targeted by the Post 16-19 reform agenda. The real need is to build the skills of those already in the workplace and asked about how the Scottish Government was addressing availability / access to part-time study. Mr McAloon advised that the Post 16-19 Reform Agenda was looking at funding but currently it is discretionary.
- 2.9** Margaret Barton of Remploy noted that participation of the disabled people in the Modern Apprenticeship programme was as low as 1.2% and asked how the Scottish Government's might address this to significantly increase the opportunities for this under represented group. The Minister responded that that it was impossible to defend the current low rate of participation. 'Making Training Work' welcomed all evidence and available information which he would review to establish whether courses adequately reflect the needs of all learners and whether there is additional need to challenge attitudes in the workplace via the schemes available.
- 2.10** David Whitton MSP asked about where the 100,000 training places were and what availability would there be for the age 24+ population? Graham Ogilvy noted that funding for adult apprenticeship needed to be flexible citing cases where highly specialised skills would require more expensive training but funding for the apprenticeships is the same. The Minister noted that demand was high and therefore very competitive to get on some schemes. With a spike in joblessness at present it is also important not to write off older groups. The Minister thanked Mr Ogilvy for his interesting point and would take this away. Mr McAloon added that there is a need to balance the investment by the employer and the number of jobs available and conceded that it is hard to arrive at a suitable price. Mr Ogilvy added that it was possible to evidence the need to support additional funding. Fiona Stewart of Skills Development Scotland added that public funding was only part of the equation and that this was supposed to help leverage other funding. John Park noted that so many small businesses do not have the capacity to engage in that way and relied on the link between larger firms and smaller businesses. This needed to be looked at going forward. There was an incentive fund available but the Minister noted the constraints felt by the smaller businesses.

John Park thanked the Minister for sharing his views with the Group and welcomed him back. Dr Allan stated that he looked forward to meeting the Group again in 2012.

*The Minister and Mr McAloon leave the meeting.*

### **3 Remploy presentation**

- 3.1** On behalf of the Group, John Park thanked Austin Hardie of Remploy for sponsoring the lunch and welcomed Margaret Barton, attending on behalf of Mr Hardie at short notice, inviting her to say a few words about the work of the organisation.

Remploy is a non departmental public body, funded by Department of Work and Pensions and exists to increase the opportunities for disabled people, those with health conditions and/or facing complex barriers to work. Working out of high street branches [details can be obtained from the Remploy website], offices and field based operations to support individuals into mainstream employment supported by Grant-in Aid funding. The sustainability rate in Scotland currently stands at around 68%. With a team of focused employer account teams, a team of specialists and occupational therapists to support client groups, Remploy is seeking to expand and to increase numbers participating in apprenticeships and gaining sustainable employment. However there is difficulty in reaching employers and it is hoped that the Group may be able to link employers with Remploy to find out more about the social and economic benefits of seeing beyond disabilities when recruiting.

John Park thanked Margaret and Remploy again, and looked forward to their input to the work of the CPG.

### **4 Matters Arising**

- 4.1** John Park noted that the main action arising from the last meeting was to invite the Minister to attend the Group. The remaining matter pertained to the review of the Group's workplan which would be covered under the next agenda item. The Minutes of the last meeting were approved.

### **5 Workplan**

- 5.1** John Park thanked Members that had provided feedback to the workplan. All feedback had been collated by the Secretary and would be circulated with the Minutes. However, this had not provided a clear indication for prioritisation and encouraged the Group for more views.
- 5.2** Linda Murray of Scottish Enterprise suggested that the primary focus be on leadership. Graham Ogilvy noted that Future Skills were leading on this and there were cases of best practice coming from work done in Scotland's universities, referring to recent meetings he had attended on the theme of bridging the gap education and the workplace. Julie Cavanagh of SCQF added that the new Chief of Education had been tasked with 'Bridging the Gap' and Joe Wilson of SQA offered to share with the group the latest developments in the Curriculum for Excellence in the New Year.
- 5.3** Úna Bartley of OU Scotland asked that consideration be given to those already in the workplace. Helena Ward of Creative Scotland added that this should also not overlook those who work freelance and in other non traditional, portfolio careers. Simon Thompson of the

Chartered Banker Institute requested that the Group not restrict their discussions to formal education and to bear in mind the work of other organisation working in this space – it should not just be about how to link the workplace with universities – whilst important in some areas, other possibilities exist and may be more appropriate.

- 5.4** Simon Williams of NHS Education for Scotland felt the Group should be asking how the impacts of skills initiatives were being measured; there is a need to understand what is looked for and to ensure these measures are considered before decisions are made to reinvest or to disinvest. John Park noted that this would vary depending on the nature of the incentive but thanked Simon and others for raising the points. These would be considered by the Convenors and the workplan revisited. It felt however that looking at the needs of those already in the workplace should be considered as a first priority and he would aim to take this forward to the next meeting. Any further comments could be submitted to the Convenors or the Secretary prior to that meeting.

**6 A.O.C.B**

- 6.1** There were no matters of common business raised.

**7 Close and date of next meeting:**

As there was no further business for the Group to discuss the Convenor thanked all members for their contributions and closed the meeting. The next meeting would take place on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> December at the slightly earlier time of 12.45pm.

**Appendix 1.**

**Cross Party Group on Skills**

**AGENDA**

**1pm. Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2011**

**Committee Room 2, The Scottish Parliament.**

- 1. Welcome**
- 2. Matters arising from the Minutes of the meeting of 28<sup>th</sup> June 2011**
  - To invite the Minister to attend a Group meeting [Item 3]
  - To review issues raised, develop and prioritise workplan [Item 4]
- 3. Dr Alasdair Allan MSP – Minister for Learning and Skills**
  - A short presentation followed by questions
- 4. Workplan prioritisation**
- 5. A.O.C.B**
  - **Close and date of next meeting** - Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> December – 12.45pm