

Education and Culture Committee
Scrutiny of the 2013-14 Draft Budget

Skills Development Scotland

Introduction

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is Scotland's skills body, focused on contributing to the delivery of the Scottish Government's Economic and Skills Strategies. Our services are further shaped in response to the Scottish Government's Career Information, Advice and Guidance Strategy and more recently, the Youth Employment Strategy. We set our vision and future development and delivery plans in our Corporate Strategy (2012-15) and annual Operating Plan (2012-13)¹.

The large majority of our annual budget is allocated to the National Training Programmes (NTP). Our delivery targets for the current year are:

- Modern Apprenticeships – 25,000 starts
- Get Ready for Work (GRFW), and Training for Work (TFW) - 14,500 starts
- New College Learning Programme – 5,800 starts

Staff costs form the second largest proportion of our expenditure, with the majority of our employees working in communities at a local level delivering our careers information, advice and guidance, and employability support services. We work with partners to deliver our services across Scotland:

- through over 100 public access locations, including our centres, and
- outreach locations in Scotland's 41 colleges and other partner sites
- in nearly 400 secondary schools

SDS's key aim is to deliver support to those who need it most, particularly young people. SDS is working collaboratively with colleges throughout Scotland to raise young peoples' aspirations and move more successfully between learning and work opportunities. This submission provides an overview of the work we are doing in this area to contribute to the Scottish Government's overarching purpose of increasing sustainable economic growth.

New College Learning Programme (NCLP)

The Government announced £13.1 million for the NCLP in March 2012 to assist in delivering its commitment to protect student places in 2012-13. The programme, managed by SDS throughout 2012-13, prioritises young people and aims to support learners to move into jobs or more advanced learning. The funding model focuses on learner outcomes, the needs of employers and the wider economy and continues the process of change being taken forward through the reform of post-16 education in Scotland. The aims of the programme are to:

- develop the employability skills or work readiness of individuals linked to local regional or national labour market opportunities
- provide vocational learning, which meets the needs of employers and which leads to employment or other forms of progression for the individual

¹ <http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/our-story/our-achievements-and-ambitions.aspx>

- maximise the opportunity for individuals to have valuable work experience, which will enhance their learning and understanding of the workplace.

The NCLP targets those aged 16 to 24 years not in full time employment. Priority is given to 16-19 year olds (consistent with Opportunities for All) in line with Scottish Government Policy². Provision also supports the needs of older learners in key sectors within and outwith local and regional boundaries. It focuses on the long-term employability of learners, preparing them for the workplace, with all courses featuring work experience placements. Colleges that are experienced in delivering SDS NTPs have been asked to volunteer to “buddy” Colleges that are new to this kind of activity. The programme links directly to further study opportunities in the Colleges. SDS invited joint and individual bids from Further Education (FE) colleges to deliver vocational and work experience places in Academic Year (AY) 2012-13. All funded programmes should encompass the following:

- A minimum of 192 taught learning hours for each Learner
- A minimum of 192 work experience hours
- Certification, including mandatory certification of employability or work readiness

Colleges are planning to recruit the majority of their starts from August to November, with a small number planned from January to March. The programme places a very clear focus on securing successful outcomes and achievements. SDS is closely monitoring achievement towards the 5,800 start target and there will be a formative evaluation of the programme between SDS and Scottish Government in the coming year.

National Training Programmes

Spend 2011-12

Modern Apprenticeships	£73,097,000
Get Ready for Work	£25,402,000
Training for Work (inc Allowances)	£9,981,000

In 2011-12 we achieved our target of 25,000 Modern Apprenticeship (MA) starts and this coming year (2012-2013) we will part-fund at least 25,000 MA starts, as committed to by Scottish Government for each year of this parliamentary term. The volume of places has increased markedly in recent years, from 9,800 in 2008-09 to 25,000 this year and for the next three years.

In 2011-12 we provided over 16,000 new opportunities for individuals to prepare for, and improve their chances of entering the labour market through employability programmes Get Ready for Work (GRfW), Lifeskills, Training for Work (TfW) and Targeted Pathways to Apprenticeships.

We contract for Modern Apprenticeship places nationally at the beginning of the financial year, using demand information from the Sector Skills Councils. We work closely with Local Authorities and other Local Employability/Community Planning Partners (CPPs) to ‘co-commission’ our employability programmes GRfW and TfW.

² 74 per cent for 16-19 year olds, 20 per cent for 20-24 year olds and six per cent for 25 years plus.

Through this approach we are able to make the best use of local intelligence and to plan and commission appropriately to meet local needs.

Responding to youth employment

We have a central role in delivering the Scottish Government's ambitions of '*Opportunities for All*' (OFA) to support young people. OFA is an explicit commitment to offer a place in learning or training to every 16-19 year old who is not currently in employment, education or training. It will ensure that the post-16 system focuses on supporting those at risk of disengaging and those who have already done so. It will also seek to re-engage all young people appropriately with an offer of learning or training between their 16th and 20th birthdays and enable support to be offered to young people more effectively beyond that age.

SDS delivers a wide range of services to young people and has a key role to play in the delivery of OFA through the modernisation of careers services, development of new services, and augmentation of existing provision including:

- Providing a single phone number for advice via our Contact Centre which helps to ensure all our young people can readily access support to help them move into positive destinations;
- Developing frontline services including the introduction of a 'work coach' role, providing 1:1 intensive coaching, mentoring and employability support to work alongside Jobcentre Plus to ensure joined up advice to young people;
- Supporting all local authorities (LAs) to facilitate access to our web-based careers service My World of Work and ensure all young people develop career management skills³;
- Using data tracking and monitoring mechanisms through the 16+ Learning Choices Data Hub and improving data sharing with strategic partners including Jobcentre Plus, schools and LAs, colleges, Higher Education Institutions and the Student Awards Agency for Scotland;
- Developing Youth Employment Action Plans with each LA area as the basis for agreeing the nature and size of the priority cohort locally and to develop a shared pipeline approach to manage the process;
- Partnering with SQA and employers to develop a recognised national certificate of work readiness for 16-19 year olds which is valued by employers;
- Sign-posting advice and guidance, in liaison with LAs and Jobcentre Plus, to 18 and 19 year olds who make contact with a local SDS Centre;
- Maximising opportunities for 16-19 year olds through MA funding.

Regionalisation

SDS is working with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) to support the development of regional outcome agreements in 2012-13. Discussions are underway to ensure that intelligence is shared and to support the evidence base underpinning the agreements. This includes information and intelligence on both individual and sector demand. Through the Joint Skills Committee, SDS and the SFC aim to develop an increasingly more joined up approach to their investment in post-16 education at a regional and local level.

³ <http://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/>

Working with Partners to Join-up Service Delivery, Planning and Investment

SDS will continue to engage with the colleges as part of the Better Alignment of Skills and Employability Services (BASES) customer journey and employer offer workstreams during 2012-13. This includes working with colleges and a range of other partners to promote the use of our web-based careers service, My World of Work.

SDS has been working closely with Scotland's Colleges (SC) to cascade information to its members on the NCLP, and most recently held a training day on 24th August for all colleges involved in the programme.

SDS and Scotland's Colleges hold joint forum meetings on a regular basis to discuss areas of mutual interest and this involves joint working on key industry engagement.

SDS is working to support *Opportunities for All* in contributing to the youth employment challenge through the development of the 16+ Learning Choices Data Hub. Developed by SDS in partnership with Local Authorities and colleges in Scotland, the Data Hub provides a mechanism for sharing information on individuals as they move through the skills and learning system. The continued development of the Data Hub will help the skills and learning system to better plan for the needs of individuals, and target resources appropriately.

Equalities Commitment

The nature of our delivery, with its strong focus on careers information, advice and guidance, is related to ensuring equality and fairness, an emphasis on supporting disadvantaged client groups and delivering employability support. National Training Programmes and supporting initiatives, all of which have clearly defined operating rules, are designed to support equalities commitments. The SDS Board, Senior Management Team and senior managers have all received equality and diversity training in order to ensure cognisance of equalities obligations from recent legislation.⁴

Looking forward

SDS is keen to work with the College sector to learn from delivery as it occurs, especially in terms of the NCLP which is essentially "action based learning". It may be appropriate to refine service delivery to address specific challenges as they appear. SDS will use ongoing monitoring discussions and the formative evaluation process to assist in identifying good practice and any issues to be addressed.

⁴ http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4/EqualOpportunitiesCommittee/Inquiries/Skills_Development_Scotland.pdf