

Cross-Party Group on Skills

Friday 13 February 2026 (0930-1040)

Minute

Present

MSPs

Dr Pam Gosal MBE MSP
Sharon Dowey MSP
Stephen Kerr MSP
Michelle Thomson MSP
Paul Sweeney MSP

Invited Guests

James Russell, Co-Chair, Scottish Careers Collaborative
Elma Murray CBE, Co-Chair, Scottish Careers Collaborative
Suzanne Steel, Area Manager, Skills Development Scotland
Lesley English, Regional Lead, DYW Tay Cities

Non-MSP Group Members

Tom Hall, Colleges Scotland
Anastasia Kourtis, Scottish Conservatives
Joanne Buchan, Colleges Scotland
John McKinney, National Federation of Roofing Contractors
Wendy Burton, Scottish Trades Union Congress
Stuart Farmer, Institute of Physics
Yvonne Wilson, Select
Ishabel Bremner, Economic Development Association Scotland
Kellie Zdanowicz, JBM Training
Stuart McKenna, Scottish Training Federation
Robert Bruce, Enginuity
Nic MacLeod, Scottish Land and Estates
Fiona Stewart, Skills Development Scotland
Steven McLennan, CLD Standards Council Scotland
Keith Robson, Open University
Niall Evans, Lantra Scotland
Rachael Nicholls, University of Strathclyde
Jason Miles-Campbell, Jisc
Amina Chowdhury, Enginuity
Kate Young, Enginuity
Georgia Marks, UCAS
Rebecca.Boyd, Open University

Graeme Hendry, Skills Development Scotland
Fiona Harper, Scottish Electrical Charitable Training Trust
Derek Young, Institute of Physics
Tommy Breslin, Scottish Trades Union Congress
Sean Cameron, Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland
Ian Rogers, Scottish Decorators' Federation
Ibiyemi Omeihe, University of the West of Scotland

Apologies

Vikki Manson, Federation of Small Businesses
Dr Liz-Barron Majerik MBE, Lantra Scotland
Lauren Pennycook, Construction Industry Training Board
Dale Thomson, SNIPEF
Miles Briggs MSP, Scottish Conservatives
James Owens, i3t Institute of Intelligent Infrastructure Technologies
Kevin Kelman, NHS Education for Scotland

Welcome

The group's Convener, Dr Pam Gosal MBE MSP, opened the meeting and noted apologies.

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2025 were approved.

Presentations

The topic for this meeting was Careers Information, Advice and Guidance and presentations were heard from:

- Elma Murray CBE, Co-Chair, Scottish Careers Collaborative and James Russell, Co-Chair, Scottish Careers Collaborative
- Suzanne Steel, Area Manager, Skills Development Scotland and Lesley English, Regional Lead, DYW Tay Cities

Discussion

James Russell covered the role and remit of the Scottish Careers Collaborative and how this was building on the recommendations outlined within the Career Review Final Report as published in 2023 and which had been informed by extensive engagement with young people. James also outlined the wider vision for the Collaborative of a cohesive, accessible and unavoidable infrastructure for lifelong careers support, harnessing public and private investment which leveraged resources for maximum impact to create a powerful, adaptable, and collaborative

system which was universally available, with everyone playing a role—directly or indirectly.

The role of the Collaborative in enabling system coherence across Education and Skills partners was also discussed, with members advised that the Collaborative was aiming to coordinate 24 separate policy streams related to Careers Information, Advice & Guidance (CIAG). Members were advised that Scotland had strong foundations with which to deliver the ambitions of the Collaborative, with a national careers service and multiple high-quality interventions, but that the Collaborative was in place to lead the co-creation of an improved system as part of the ongoing Education Reform agenda. James concluded in advising that the former Minister for Higher and Further Education and Minister for Veterans had appointed himself and Elma Murray CBE as Collaborative Co-Chairs to strengthen the strategic influence of the Collaborative in building a more cohesive system for the benefit of learners and employers.

Elma built on James's remarks by outlining the intended aims of the Collaborative in creating an accessible and integrated careers service for individuals, which would build on the key roles of public institutions like schools, colleges, universities and Skills Development Scotland by tapping into the role of business and employer engagement in supporting CIAG service delivery. In doing so the Collaborative would look to harness the existing levels of investment within the system and make best use of this resource by enhanced and inclusive partnership working, welcoming additional partners. Whilst the Collaborative did have a particular focus on young people, this would be complemented by a broader all-ages focus and ensuring the provision of CIAG support for those individuals returning to the workforce or from low-income households or those with caring responsibilities so as to enable work.

Suzanne Steel provided an overview of current CIAG delivery through Skills Development Scotland working through a Dundee/Tayside Partnership Model, employing a strong place-based approach across Dundee City Council, Dundee and Angus College, and CLD partners to enable individuals to access meaningful opportunities. Suzanne evidenced the reach of SDS services through schools and parental engagement alongside the services provided through PACE (Partnership Action for Continuing Employment) to support employability.

Across all of this work the focus was on ensuring that local approaches reflected national policy aims whilst being responsive to local need and supporting key customer groups. Members were also advised of the complexity in the lives of individuals which required genuine and effective cross-system collaboration to overcome barriers for these individuals to move successfully into the world of work.

Lesley English complemented this presentation by giving an overview of current Developing Young Workforce (DYW) led delivery across Perth and Kinross and the vital role this was playing in connecting employers to education, and through school-co-ordinators designing employability interventions for young people. Lesley provided insight into how DYW was analysing school leaver destination data to inform employer engagement and inform partnership activity through senior phase interventions. The role of the DYW Pledge was also touched on alongside outreach to engage schools and facilitate partnership working.

A Q&A followed with Stuart McKenna making the ask of Elma regarding partnership and collaboration through the Collaborative and whether any stakeholders were less willing to collaborate and could increase their engagement, with Elma advising that part of the role of the Collaborative was around evidencing the benefits to be gained by all stakeholders in supporting young people to achieve and move into successful destinations, and especially through transitions from school and/or college into employment, alongside addressing particular challenges for those older members of the workforce or out of work individuals retraining or re-entering the workforce by providing the rights connections and support.

Stuart McKenna provided a follow up regarding regional good practice and how to ensure consistency of support, with James advising this required all partners contributing so as to shift mindsets and avoid barriers to collaboration such as funding conditions. Consistency of resources whilst ensuring the delivery of localised and responsive services was identified as the way to ensure consistent support, with the Collaborative looking at the role of place-based initiatives in overcoming barriers to collaboration.

The Convenor asked how postcode lotteries could be avoided to ensure consistency of the CIAG offer across the country and consistent quality of advice. James agreed that consistency of support was key, with SDS employing CPD approaches across their staff team to help direct and shape CIAG practitioner best practice and ensure that local opportunities connected with individual choices, whilst realising the ambition that every individual receives the support that they require.

Rachael Nicholls raised a query regarding limited information on Hospitality opportunities via Apprenticeship.Scot despite her personal awareness of college course provision and asked as to how to ensure that information is readily available and up to date. James advised that work was underway across organisations around consolidating information, including work regarding a Learner Profile between Education Scotland and SDS.

Georgia Marks made the ask as to how SDS married a mixture of in-person and online CIAG, with James advising that SDS services aimed to be responsive to demand and focused on this closely by monitoring engagement and Suzanne emphasising the importance of listening to customer voices, whilst employing a mix of different platforms, whilst making clear the importance of establishing and maintaining face-to-face relationships in engaging with hard to reach audiences and especially digitally excluded audiences and those individuals who were careers returners.

John McKinney queried when CIAG approaches actually began to be delivered, with James advising that this took place from S1 onwards as offered by SDS, employing a blended approach of individual, group based and digital support. Elma also highlighted the work of DYW in Primary Schools, whilst emphasising that CIAG should be embedded within the school curriculum alongside those skills required for entering the world of work. Suzanne added that My World of Work enabled engagement at primary school level supporting the embedding of metaskills understanding from young ages, with SDS working closely with Directors of Education to embed careers education across Primary and Secondary level delivery.

Ian Rogers queried how CIAG services could maintain engagement and collaboration with other sectors given the potential complexity of mapping out pathways into employment. The Convenor reiterated the importance of there being “no right pathway” and the range of routes people could take into the workplace, alongside the need to collectively ensure the system supported individuals into sectors requiring skills, including construction. Fiona Stewart from SDS provided an update on current Apprenticeship statistics and ability of employers to take on apprentices being impacted due to changes in employer NICs, but that there was an increase in Construction MA provision as a priority sector for Scotland given wider industrial and infrastructure developments. Fiona also took the opportunity to update the group on the upcoming Scottish Apprenticeship Week from Monday 2 March to Friday 6 March which would evidence the impact of Apprenticeships.

Close

In closing the meeting the Convenor shared her reflections on the value and work of the Cross Party Group across the Parliamentary term in focusing on a wide range of topics including Health and Social Care, Apprenticeships, Offshore Wind, AI and Innovation before providing her thanks to all stakeholders and MSPs for their continued commitment to the group.

The Deputy Convenor also offered his reflections on discussions which had always been hugely informative and educational before offering his thanks for the continued expertise and insight provided by the CPG which informed the debate and deliberations of MSPs.

With no other business to conduct, the meeting was brought to a close.