



Briefing 18-09

February 2018

Developing the Young Workforce Annual Progress Report

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and APSE Contacts in Scotland

Key Points

- Third annual progress report of the Developing the Young Workforce programme
- On track to meet the 2020 target for 30,000 apprenticeship starts
- Have already exceeded the 2021 target of reducing youth unemployment by 40%
- School leavers attainment levels have increased
- Slight improvement in college leavers destinations, overall completions for HE and their general preparedness for work
- Commitments made to addressing gender imbalances, improving provisions for the disabled and increasing participation from minority ethnic communities

Introduction

The Scottish Government published the third annual progress report of the Developing the Young Workforce programme in January 2018. This programme intends to increase the opportunities available to young people to get the training and education needed to enter the job market. Of particular interest to Local Authorities are the developments to apprenticeships.

The overall aim of the Scottish Government was to reduce Youth Unemployment by 40% by the year 2021. This has been achieved four years early, with youth unemployment currently sitting at 27,000. The report points out that economic conditions can fluctuate, so continued effort is needed to ensure Youth Unemployment remains low. No new target is set for 2021, the goal is to maintain the improvement achieved.

The report outlines progress made in five areas; Schools, Colleges, Apprenticeships, Employers and Equalities. This briefing will outline the changes, challenges and next steps that are planned for these areas.

Schools

The number of school leavers attaining SCQF level 5 vocational qualifications in 15/16 has increased to 10.7%, which is up by 1.7% from 14/15 and 3.4% since the programme began. The number of young people enrolled in Foundation Apprenticeships has had a large increase in

2017, with over 1200 enrolments compared with 346 in 2016. A survey of all local authorities found that all but two secondary schools reported, there was a senior staff resource engaged with DYW activity.

There has also been an increase in the number of college courses being delivered in High School, particularly of courses SCQF level 5 and above. This is predicted to increase further in 2017/2018, with 3500 pupils undertaking college courses. Colleges are also predicting that they will have a 110% increase in enrolments for 17-18.

Foundation Apprenticeships are also increasing in both availability and popularity, with 1200 pupils across all local authorities enrolling in one. The goal of the Scottish Government is to have 5000 places available by 2019. Foundation Apprenticeships are SCQF level 6, equivalent to a Higher qualification, and pathways to this course have been designed to begin in third and fourth year.

There are a number of services that were piloted by a small number of schools that were rolled out to all schools in 16/17. This includes [My World of Work](#) (MyWoW), and increasing engagement with pupils and parents from a younger age, with one on one coaching being offered from third year.

The Scottish Government also identify a number of challenges to be overcome. The [Career Education Standard](#) has not been implemented across all schools and early years settings. There is also a concern that the delivery of outcomes isn't consistent across the whole system, and there are also improvements needed to ensure work placements are of a quality in line with the Work Placement Standard.

Some Local authorities are still facing uncertainty over their DYW lead Coordinator posts. Within schools it has been noted that secondary schools are beginning to harness opportunities, primary schools have yet to "embrace and embed partnership working with employers and businesses". More also needs to be done to make connections between DYW and other educational priorities e.g. National Improvement Framework and Scottish Attainment Challenge. To address this last point there has been an emergence of Regional Improvement Collaboratives which is hoped will provide a platform for the education system to co-design and deliver a more coherent experience.

It is expected that over the next 4 years there will be an increase in vocational qualifications and Foundation Apprenticeships, with new apprenticeships being offered in Scientific Technologies and Creative Digital Media. This would increase the number of frameworks to ten. The Investors in Young People accolade should encourage the delivery of mentoring support for young people. There will also be further alignment with the STEM Strategy.

College

There have generally been improvements at the college level. Between 13/14 and 15/16, FE success rates have fallen from 74% to 71.4%, however overall completion rates for HE in Colleges have increased from 73.1% to 73.9%. Over this time, college leavers between 16 and 24 progressing to higher study, training or work is up 1% to 83.9%. Employers are broadly positive with college leavers "preparedness for work", with 80% of employers with a Scottish FE college leaver finding them prepared for work in a 2016 survey.

There is a continued effort from Skills Development Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council to prioritise particular courses in particular regions to align skills to economic needs. An executive team, with a head of skills alignment, is to be established to further this agenda. STEM will also continue to be a focus of Colleges across Scotland.

The Annual report found generally good evidence of Colleges engaging with employers, with 85% of colleges establishing employer/industry advisory boards, and these have been useful in ensuring curriculums address both current and projected skills demand.

A number of challenges that need to be overcome have also been identified. There is an expectation that local authorities and colleges will work together to achieve better regional curriculum planning, and in turn grow the volume of higher level vocational pathways. Gender balance at the subject level remains a key challenge, and the impact of Gender Action Plans will be monitored to assess their effectiveness. Finally, evidence will be sought to ensure that there is adequate external engagement and involvement of stakeholders in the development of Outcome Agreements.

Over the next 4 academic years it is expected that all colleges will be offering vocational options to the majority of secondary schools within the region. Improved college quality and performance information will be published, and each year the College outcome agreements will be signed off, which will require evidence of partnerships with local authorities, secondary schools and employers.

Apprenticeships

In 2016/17 there were a little over 26,000 Modern Apprenticeships starts, exceeding the annual target, and is on track to meet the 2020 target of 30,000 starts that year. Of these starts, 76% were aged between 16-24, which is a slight decrease from the year before, and two thirds were Level 3 or above. The achievement rate rose 2% to 78% successfully completing their MA. A quarter of those starting an MA came from the 20% most deprived areas of Scotland.

It is anticipated that there will be an increased focus on STEM Modern Apprenticeships, which have already shown improvements year on year on proportion of new starts being on STEM frameworks. The Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board has encouraged greater Employer support in developing Modern Apprenticeships, to meet the challenge of securing the right type of employer involvement. Foundation Apprenticeships have also been expanded to develop pathways into Modern Apprenticeships, which are relevant to school pupils and are intended to align to future industry demands.

There remains a challenge of increasing participation of under-represented groups in Modern Apprenticeships, and in 2017/18 the Equalities Action Plan was implemented to tackle this. Over the next four years, it is expected for Modern Apprenticeships will increase year on year to meet the 30,000 starts by 2020/21, with a particular focus on STEM and graduate level opportunities.

Employers

Over the last year, engagement between employers, apprentices and young people has improved. 21% of employers offered work placements to School pupils in 2016, compared with 10% in 2014 and a UK Average of 20%.

The report also highlights progress that has been made on Skills Investment Plans and Regional Skill Assessments. These help build a picture of the labour market and identify areas where there are skill shortages and opportunities, and feature involvement from a range of Scottish Bodies including Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scottish Enterprise, the Scottish Funding Council and the Scottish Local Authorities Economic Development Group.

Employers are also able to access the “Marketplace” digital platform, which is described as a digital meeting place for businesses and education, with the aim to allow businesses to become more involved in the School curriculum. This is available in a small number of areas across Scotland, with plans to expand it further through the rest of the programme.

Organisations from the public, private and third sectors are also able to access a £10 million Flexible Workforce Development Fund, if they are subject to the UK Apprenticeship Levy. This is intended to aid in the up-skilling or re-skilling employees of all ages. Employers will be able to access up to £10,000 of college provision through this fund.

Future challenges with regard to employers include maintaining and expanding the network developed between employers and schools/colleges. To this end, it is expected that over the next four years that there will be school/employer partnerships in all high schools in Scotland, and that mentoring support for young people will become more common, driven by the Investors in Young People accolade.

Equalities

The report examines the progress that has been made on a number of equalities issues, such as provision to the disabled, addressing gender equality and in encouraging engagement with those from Minority Ethnic Communities, as well as young people in or leaving care.

In Schools, there has been progress on targeting children who are normally disengaged in education, with best practice being shared on Education Scotland’s National Improvement Hub. Education Scotland has been working with Youthlink and Local Authorities as well to identify best practice. Tailored support has also been offered to address issues of Gender balance, and a range of organisations have been working to research the causes of inequality and developing policy to address it. The largest challenge in this area is that there is a large amount of regional variation in implementation.

Within Colleges, the focus has been on addressing gender imbalance, though work is at an early stage. Institutions have been asked to develop gender action plans highlighting areas for improvement and proposing actions to tackle it. Going forward, these will be assessed for their effectiveness and impacts.

Modern apprenticeships have a 40%/60% split between female and male apprenticeships in 16/17, with female starts almost 1% lower than in 15/16. The proportion of female starts in higher level apprenticeships has however been growing. Those who reported having impairments, health conditions or learning difficulties accounted for 8.6% of starts in 16/17. Minority ethnic groups accounted for 1.7% of starts, an increase of 0.1%. There is also support for employers who recruit disadvantaged young people, with up to £4000 available to

employers who recruit young people with a background in care or have disabilities. 1600 employers have been supported by this initiative.

APSE Comment

APSE have been passionate supporters of Apprenticeships across the UK, as they are a key way of attracting talented individuals to work in crucial jobs in Local Authorities. We will be announcing the winners of the APSE Scotland Building and Housing Apprentice awards at the end of February, and the national [APSE Apprentice Awards](#) will be open for submissions shortly. Through these awards, we can celebrate and share best practice across Scotland and the UK as a whole.

APSE welcome the work being done to tailor apprenticeships to the gaps and needs of the industry, but more can be done to ensure that the needs of Local Authorities are also being met, particularly in the longer term. Ideally, apprentices will be entering the council workforce with the skills and education needed to pursue the career paths available in the various services provided by councils.

To achieve this, it is key that local authorities work together to assess how well served they are by apprenticeship programmes and where improvements may be needed. [APSE Advisory Groups](#) are the ideal place where council elected members and officers can come together and discuss issues arising in their service area.

Finally, we would echo the sentiments raised in the foreword from COSLA's Councillor Stephen McCabe about the continuing need to improve equalities issues. It is important for Local Authorities, and the wider industry, to have a diverse workforce that reflects the population as a whole. We would also support Councillor McCabe's call for additional resources. From the perspective of Councils, who are already facing tightening budgets, it is clear for them to offer the best support for apprentices, they in turn need the support of proper funding so that they can invest in the young people at the start of their careers.

Iain Scherr, Research and Coordination Officer