

**Perth and Kinross
Employability Strategy
and Action Plan**

(Working for Perth and Kinross)

April 2008

1.0 BACKGROUND

This strategy outlines an approach for tackling worklessness in Perth and Kinross through the development of an 'Employability Strategy and Action Plan' for the Perth and Kinross Employment Partnership.

The development process was closely aligned to the Scottish Government's guidelines, requirements and priorities which are outlined within '*Workforce Plus: An Employability Framework for Scotland*' which encourages the need to recognise that:

- a relationship between national priorities and local targets should be established;
- measures must be tailored to suit specific supply-side issues at a local level with an emphasis on addressing concentrations of worklessness in local areas;
- a good understanding of demand-side issues is a pre-requisite for: planning training interventions; the provision of access to employment opportunities in 'real-time'; and measures designed to achieve sustainable positive outcomes and workforce development;
- local initiatives and programmes can be joined up in a more effective way; and
- public sector reform in the field of 'employability' (Welfare to Work and Community Planning) will drive the planning and delivery of local public services;

1.1 Producing the Employability Strategy

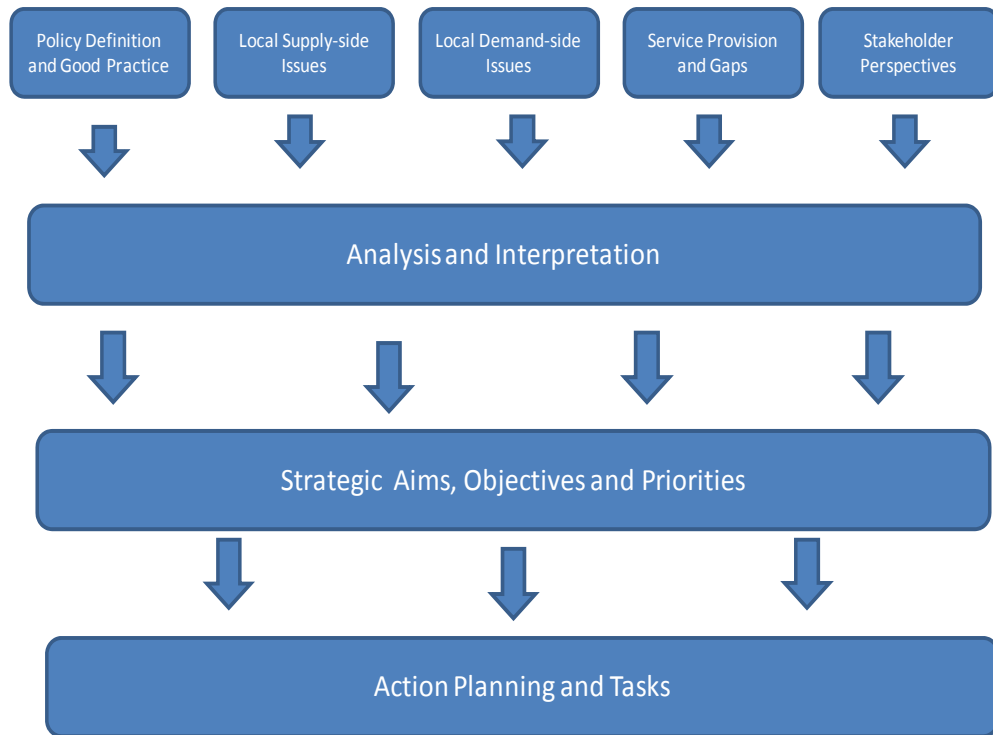
In order to take forward the task of formulating an Employability Strategy in Perth and Kinross a number of key tasks were undertaken. These tasks were designed to gain an understanding of the extent and nature of unemployment and 'worklessness'; the opportunities for people within Perth and Kinross to (re)enter the labour market; and the pattern and focus of services to tackle unemployment and worklessness in Perth and Kinross.

In addition the strategy development process was designed to be inclusive and was therefore firmly based on a broad ranging consultation to identify local priorities for action.

The strategy development process therefore included:

- an employability policy review which was complemented with the benefit of learning from the development of employability strategies in other areas since the publication of '*Workforce Plus: An Employability Framework for Scotland*';
- analysis of socio/economic baseline data to highlight the specific supply-side and demand-side issues in Perth and Kinross and their implications;
- a review of key issues emerging from stakeholder consultations with representatives from strategic partners and service delivery organisations; and
- identification of the key strategic issues that will confront the Perth and Kinross Employment Partnership.

The key components of the approach is illustrated in **Figure 1**.



1.2 Setting the Scene: A Vision for the Employability

The vision for Workforce Plus is firmly set within the context of providing access to employment for people who want to work by developing and reinforcing their relevant skills and knowledge. This is firmly set within the context of 'Closing the Opportunity Gap' Target A which aims to:

'Increase the chances of sustained employment for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in order to lift them out of poverty'

Seven local authorities with high levels of benefit claimants were initially identified and asked to set targets to reduce the number of workless people dependent on benefits. As a result targets were set that represented a reduction in benefit claimants of 26% by 2010 from the 2006 baseline.

Taking this lead, Perth and Kinross Employment Partnership, through its strategic planning process and analysis of local circumstances has agreed that:

'The Perth and Kinross Local Employment Partnership will improve access to employment services and opportunities for sustained employment for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and individuals living in both urban and rural areas'.

Furthermore, the Partnership has agreed that:

'By 2011, the collective action of the Partnership will assist 2,000 people to move off working-age benefits. This represents an approximate reduction of 20% from the January 2008 baseline figure of 9,480'.

The Partnership recognise that it is unlikely to attract significant additional resources, and that this therefore is an ambitious target. It will not only require a strong understanding of local issues, it will also require concerted effort and commitment from all members of the Partnership and the range of local service providers and project staff delivering employability services.

To achieve this, the Partnership has set a number of objectives, these include:

Establishing a Local Employment Partnership that provides second tier support to all employability service providers in Perth and Kinross and single point of contact for the provision of employability services;

Supporting the further development of customer focussed support services which assist people with additional 'employability' needs to progress and sustain participation in the labour market;

Develop and support links between feeder organisations and employability service providers to encourage access to support for those perceived to be 'harder to reach';

Develop and support new links with employers and employer organisations to provide the main contact point for all employability activities;

Ensure that service providers have access to good quality labour market information that allows them to customise their services to meet local labour market needs;

Support the development and implementation of a common performance recording method that will allow all organisations to clearly demonstrate their contribution to the targets developed by the employability partnership .

2. Delivering the Strategy

2.1 Introduction

The broad issues of the employability have been outlined and a number of objectives can be identified. On the basis of the issues identified, the Perth and Kinross Employability Partnership is setting the target of assisting 2,000 people to secure sustained employment during the period 2008 – 2011.

This figure represents approximately 20% of those 9,480 people that are currently in receipt of working-age benefits or 33% of those 6,000 that are currently out of work but want to work.

The target of 2,000 has been based on analysis of the labour market and an assessment of the current employability infrastructure.

This target figure has therefore been developed through a consideration of both demand and supply side issues. Importantly, the target is also based on the assumption that the Employability Partnership and service providers will be proactive in developing working relationships with employers in Perth and Kinross to ensure vacancies are available for the target groups and the service providers will encourage clients to seek employment in areas beyond Perth and Kinross.

In addition, the assessment of the current infrastructure suggests that there is capacity to support an estimated 750 – 770 people into employment each year. This is based on the capacity of organisations, beyond statutory agencies, that provide support for people with wider support needs (category three service providers) and those with specific employability support requirements (category two service providers).

While this suggests the capacity to achieve a target of 2,250 – 2,300 clients into work during the planning period, the figure has been modified to reflect the incidence of double-counting – where clients receive support from more than one agency. Taking into account the issue of sustainability of employment, organisations anticipate that 50% of those that secure employment will remain in employment after 26 weeks, we would anticipate that there will be a minimum 10% reduction in the numbers of people on all benefits at the end of the planning period in 2011.

While recognising that all people should have access to employability services, specific emphasis will be placed on groups and individuals where there is perceived to have been less emphasis in the past. This suggests priority action in supporting:

- people that are aged 25+;
- people living in disadvantaged communities;
- lone parents; and
- engaging with people in rural communities.

This does not suggest that others, such as those in the 16 – 19 age group will be ignored, but rather the Employment Partnership will work with agencies that have specific responsibility for implementing the 'More Choices, More Chances' strategy. It is anticipated that there will be significant crossover and joint activity between the Local Employment Partnership and the More Choices, More Chances Strategy Group.

Achieving the target of 2,000 people into employment during the period 2008 – 2011, while appearing achievable does however pose a number of challenges. These challenges rest on:

- establishing responsibility for supporting the delivery of the employability strategy and facilitating the work of the Local Employment Partnership;
- establishing a clear employability domain for the Employability Partnership
 - incorporating elements of the other linked fields of policy and strategy

where necessary and supporting practitioners in these other related policy areas to mainstream/incorporate employability into their service delivery;

- raising awareness of the services that are available and how these can be accessed among the broad range of practitioners in linked policy fields;
 - ensuring that there are good quality referral protocols established to ensure client progression and tracking;
 - developing strong strategic working partnerships with employers to ensure that opportunities are available for the client group and links made to service delivery organisations;
 - effectively marketing service provision among target groups and engaging with clients that do not normally use employability services;
 - supporting the further development of the service delivery infrastructure, with specific emphasis on developing their capacity to compete for employability service provision contracts and grants that have clear targets for engagement, employability support and sustainability; and
 - monitoring the contribution made by the various programmes/projects and interventions to the overall employability objective.
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2.2 Action Planning

In order to deliver on these issues and objectives, an Action Plan is required to specify the detailed actions.

The Action Plan will be based around four themes to acknowledge the issues that have emerged and will be further developed through delivery of the strategy.

These themes, which are related to the partnership objectives are:

- developing the strategic direction and coordination of partnership activity (governance and management);
- supporting adult training and employability (developing the supply side);
- supporting Youth Training and Employability for Younger People (14-19) and supporting and developing local School/College Programmes (developing the supply side with a particular focus on NEET and pre-NEET activity)
- developing the supply side; and
- developing the employability service sector;

More detail is provided on the attached Action Plan overleaf.

Developing the Strategic Direction and Coordination of Partnership Activity

(Partnership Governance and Management)

Objectives	Actions	Resources	Timescales	Partners
Ensure the Employability Strategy is implemented through robust joint planning and management arrangements in Perth and Kinross	Develop effective arrangements for implementing the strategy and ensuring that key partners are involved	Limited resource requirement	Immediate	All partners
	Identify lead agency for co-ordinating the work of the partnership and single point of contact for partnership members and representatives from linked policy structures	Resource requirement for employability co-ordinator	immediate	All partners
	Ensure that important links are maintained with other planning structures and programmes– particularly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Health and Care; • Community Planning; • Economic Development; • Area based Initiatives; • Rural Development; • Financial Inclusion; and • Childcare Strategy 	Resources for provision of information	ongoing	All partners
To encourage joint working between service providers	Promote the strategy aims and objectives among service providers	Limited resource requirement	ongoing	All partners
To establish a robust monitoring framework	Develop client tracking system that allows service providers to report on performance against strategic objectives	Resource required for gathering information and establishing recording system	Year one	All Partners

Supporting Adult Training and Employability

(Developing the Supply side through working with adult clients)

Objectives	Actions	Resources	Timescales	Partners
To provide up to date supply side information	Ongoing research and provision of information on target client groups and service provision demands and subsequent demands on related services e.g. Childcare services, debt and money advice.	Effective use of available research resources within partner organisations	ongoing	Lead Partner Drawing on information from other partners and service providers
To provide information on service provision and employment opportunities	Marketing activities and service provision through the delivery of employability events e.g. marketing strategy including job fairs in targeted communities.	Build on current activities carried out by individual partners and adopt a joint approach Some resource implications	ongoing	Co-ordinated by lead partner/ or individual partner leading on specific campaigns
To provide and manage a client facing referral pathway	Developing referral protocols that clients understand and one that avoids duplication of information gathering – based on joint database between service providers	Resource implications in establishing appropriate database	Year one	All partners

Supporting Youth Training and Employability for Younger People (14-19) and Supporting and Developing local School/College Programmes

(Developing the Supply side (with a focus on NEET and pre-NEET activity))

Objectives	Actions	Resources	Timescales	Partners
To provide up to date supply side information	Ongoing research and provision of information on target client groups and service provision demands and subsequent demands on related services e.g. Childcare services, debt and money advice.	Effective use of available research resources within partner organisations	ongoing	Lead Partner Drawing on information from other partners and service providers
To provide information on service provision and employment opportunities	Marketing activities and service provision through the delivery of employability events e.g. marketing strategy including job fairs in targeted communities.	Build on current activities carried out by individual partners and adopt a joint approach Some resource implications	ongoing	Co-ordinated by lead partner/ or individual partner leading on specific campaigns
To provide and manage a client facing referral pathway	Developing referral protocols that clients understand and one that avoids duplication of information gathering – based on joint database between service providers	Resource implications in establishing appropriate database	Year one	All partners
To develop specific NEET and pre-NEET activity for young people	To be developed from existing More Choices More Chances (NEET and pre- NEET activity)			
To develop school/college initiatives designed to improve employability skills within young people.	To be developed.			

Developing Employer Engagement and Improvements in Employability Service Provision

(Developing the Demand side through working with employers and developing an improved quality and range of local service provision)

Objectives	Actions	Resources	Timescales	Partners
EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT				
To provide up to date demand side information	Ongoing research and provision of information on developments in key sectors to inform planning on training and employability interventions	Effective use of available research resources within partner organisations	ongoing	Lead Partner
To Market and Promote employability partnership activities	Provision of information on available services and examples of joint working to encourage employer engagement	Develop employability partnership brand – some resource implications	ongoing	All Partners
To Engage with employers in the private sector	Reinforcing activity around engagement related to national Employment Partnership Programme and employer engagement carried out by Scottish Enterprise to increase awareness of developments with services providers (delivering employer –led training) and clients.	Ensuring effective communications between partnership members Limited resource implications	ongoing	All Partners
To engage with public/voluntary sector employers	Developing appropriate ways for public /voluntary sector employers to employ clients from the target group.	Joint working to develop protocols and within public sector employers Some resource implications	ongoing	All Partners
To ensure aftercare support is an integral part of service delivery	Ensuring that future interventions (contracts and grant funded programmes) are developed with clear indicators for positive outcomes and expectations on levels of sustainability.	Ensuring future employability resource allocations have clear targets – limited resource implications	ongoing	All Partners

DEVELOPING THE EMPLOYABILITY SERVICE SECTOR				
Take measures to ensure access to employability services are provided to all residents in Perth and Kinross currently in receipt of benefits	Provide ongoing up to date labour market information to service providers	Effective use of available research resources within partner organisations	On going	Lead Partner
To develop 'second tier' support for service providers	Develop methods to ensure clear communications for information e.g. Branded web-site; Electronic bulletin; Information and factsheets; Single point of contact ; Employability Training and networking events	Some resource implications for development and management of approach	Year 1 –establish Ongoing communications	All partners
To provide information on the availability of resources for employability service provision	Collating information on contracts and grant availability and ensuring all providers are aware of opportunities		ongoing	All partners – though requirement for co-ordinating role
To develop the capacity of service providers to compete for contracts and grant funding	Support for business development activities Support for social enterprise organisations to compete for 'employability' contracts	Drawing on resources provided by business and social economy support development programmes	ongoing	All partners