

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure

DATE 6<sup>th</sup> November 2012

DIRECTOR Gordon McIntosh

TITLE OF REPORT Support for local employability training providers

REPORT NUMBER: EPI/12/239

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report aims to highlight the needs and the potential benefits of supporting local employability training providers.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. Officers within Employability, Skills and Community Enterprise further investigate and consult on the optimum means of supporting local employability training providers.

2. Officers submit a further report to committee once further investigation and consultation has been completed.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Further investigation and consultation into the development of a support mechanism for local employability training providers will have no additional financial resource implications on the service

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

If officers participate in this piece of work, it will mean that there is adequate and appropriate training provision available on a local level which may have a positive impact on the ability of local businesses to attract appropriate skills to support their needs, and a potential decrease in numbers of long term dis-engaged people within our communities.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

With employability high on both the political and economic development agendas it is imperative that Aberdeen City Council ensures that we have robust employability support provision within the city that links

with local employer and client needs and can address all aspects of disengagement.

### **Current Situation**

Currently there are a number of local specialist employability service providers that work in isolation across the city. Initial feedback from meetings with companies has identified that there are no clear communication channels between these companies, linkages or communication channels into and from the community planning framework are poor, which often excludes the evaluation of information obtained from working with local clients and businesses when strategic decisions are made. Initial discussions with local employability training providers also highlighted a willingness to work closer together, to address the ever changing local employability and engagement landscape and strengthen their position when competing against national providers. The need to strengthen local provision is further enforced with the introduction of Welfare reform. What they sought was an appropriate platform to bring their organisations together to aid meaningful exchange and development.

Increasingly, employability contracts are awarded on a national basis, which requires high level financial robustness and a track record of large scale delivery, which eliminates many local providers from the tendering process and also eliminates appropriate provision based on local needs and knowledge.

This system also encourages competition amongst local providers and this produces a barrier to partnership working and co-operative engagement within the employability providers community. This can lead to duplication of and gaps in service provision, and a general lack of awareness of the service provision landscape.

It must also be noted that more and more contracts are awarded on an outcome related basis, with payment not being made till many months after outcomes are achieved, which puts severe financial strain on the organisations.

These administrative issues all have an impact on the breadth, depth and sustainability of services and this has an ultimate negative impact on the number of disengaged individuals within the city. This is a particularly significant issue, since the current economic recession means that the level of disengagement within the youth population is already rising on both a local and national level.

Furthermore, local businesses across all sectors are having increasing difficulties in recruiting appropriate staff, which will negatively impact on service delivery, growth, sustainability and ultimately business location in Aberdeen.

## **Going Forward**

Officers within the ESCE service will further consult with other external agencies, local employability training providers and members of Aberdeen Works to highlight the concerns raised by local businesses and training providers to identify potential solutions that could create a platform for local employability training providers to work closer together.

The formation of an appropriate platform should also ensure that a clear pipeline of employability support services is developed, which will engage with all sections of the population from schoolchildren through to those approaching retirement. This will ensure that local needs on an individual and business level are met, and that a diverse range of employability options are promoted.

The formation of any support platform should not duplicate the work of any existing forums or partnerships.

## **Potential Benefits**

The potential benefits of establishing an appropriate platform for local employability training providers include:

- Sharing of information
- Gaps in provision can be identified and addressed
- Access to wider funding streams – explore funding opportunities and scope for collaborative bids
- Shared knowledge of local provision
- Improved pipeline progression
- Wider skills and knowledge base
- Facilitate increased partnership working
- Central communication point
- Development of cradle to grave provision
- Coordination of relationships
- Improved alignment to business needs
- Improved relationships with business community

Initial discussions have already taken place with a number of employability training providers to identify if there was a willingness to participate if an appropriate platform were to be established. (Aberdeen Foyer, Pathways, SHMU, Enterprise North East, Opito, Cornerstone, GREC) and positive responses were received from all the above organisations. If approval to initiate further investigation and consultation is given then other local employability training providers will also be consulted. Officers from Education Culture and Sport will also be included in this consultation.

## **Reporting process**

All information gained during the consultation process will be shared with our external partners and Aberdeen Works, prior to appropriate proposals being submitted and a future report being submitted to Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure committee.

6. IMPACT

The project contributes significantly and directly to the achievement of

**Single Outcome agreement (SOA) National Outcomes:**

1. We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people
2. We are better educated, more skilled and more successful

**Aberdeen the smarter City**

1. We will enhance the physical and emotional wellbeing of all our citizens by offering support and activities which promote independence, resilience, confidence and self-esteem
2. Working with our third, public and private sector partners, we will provide opportunities for lifelong learning which will develop knowledge, skills and attributes of our citizens to enable them to meet the changing demands of the 21st century.
3. Again, working with partners, we will create a City of Learning which will empower individuals to fulfill their potential and contribute to the economic, social and cultural wellbeing of our communities.
4. We will aim to have a workforce across the city which has the skills and knowledge to sustain, grow and diversify the city economy.

**Equality and Human Rights implications**

A full equality and human rights impact assessment was not required, as this paper only seeks approval to investigate and further consult. A full EHRI will be undertaken once potential solutions are in place..

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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