

*Notes from Aberdeen Prospers Meeting 08 June 2020*

1. **Welcome, Introductions and Apologies** (A Carrington, 5 min)  
Apologies from Angela Taylor, Liz Rattray, Susan Morrison (Maggie Hepburn attended), Lavina Massey, Jonathan Smith
2. **Minutes of previous meeting, actions and matters arising** (A Carrington, 5 min)  
Jamie Coventry to be invited to present on Aberdeen City Data Hub at some stage in the future.

3.

|                      |               |
|----------------------|---------------|
| Update from Partners | (All, 45 min) |
|----------------------|---------------|

- a. Each to provide a short update on work their organisation is doing /situation re Covid / progress on improvement projects (if any).

**Allison - SDS update:**

Skills Development Scotland's Career Information Advice and Guidance services are evolving to continue meeting the changing needs of our customers using the channels available to us.

Partners continue to be central to the success of our service delivery, ensuring that individuals can get the right support, at the right time and from the right person or organisation to allow them to progress and succeed.

We recently launched a campaign to make customers aware of our enhanced online content at My World of Work and helpline services on **0800 917 8000**. These enhanced services are complemented by a [fun new career education programme](#) that young people can undertake at home.

**Key CIAG service offers and methods of delivery**

**Our School service offer:**

Our continued collaboration with school and Local Authority partners will ensure support for these individuals is coordinated to achieve the best outcome for each pupil.

- Continued delivery of entitlements for senior phase targeted pupils, identified through validation of service offers, to receive ongoing 121 support.
- Engagement with Foundation Apprenticeship learners to support their transition to second year or, for those who have completed this year, to explore their options and next steps.
- Engagement with any other pupil with an expected leave date for this year, identified through the Data Hub, to provide transition support and planning for their next steps.

**Our Post School service offer:**

- Continued delivery of entitlements for Next Steps targeted customers, identified through the Data Hub, to receive ongoing 121 support.
- Engagement with individuals identified as Employability Fund leavers as a result of provision not continuing, to provide transition support and planning for their next steps.

#### **PACE (Partnership for Continuing Employment):**

- Continued delivery of support for employers and employees in redundancy situations through the enhanced online PACE service offer delivered through the PACE Partnership.
- For individuals at risk of, or who have been made redundant, the PACE Helpline provides universal access to support during this time.

#### **Individual Helpline:**

- Universal support through enhanced digital content and resources on My World of Work as well as access to one-to-one support with SDS advisers through our helpline on 0800 917 8000. This includes information and advice on support with:
  - Finances and employment rights
  - Wellbeing
  - Immediate employability and employment opportunities
  - Longer term employability, learning and skills provision, employment opportunities and career development.
- Local authority partnerships are enabling the coordination of support to those accessing national or local helplines and services. This includes local authority support signposted on My World of Work and inter-partnership referral approaches to reduce multiple access points for individuals.
- All age support for individuals whose employment, learning, or career development has been impacted as a result of the pandemic. This includes those who are unemployed, furloughed or in work, as well as pupils and their parents/carers looking for information and advice.

#### **Career Education curriculum programme:**

- Development and delivery of offline and online resources, content and workshops to support pupils, their parents and teachers in accessing career education and career management skills learning activity. This is being undertaken with the awareness of Education Scotland and DYW to ensure alignment with their workstreams and activity. [The programme is now available on My World of Work.](#)

#### **My World of Work Job Hub:**

In partnership with industry, we've developed My World of Work Job Hub for employers to advertise immediate vacancies through Scotland's dedicated online careers resource. In line with Scottish Government advice, vacancies can be uploaded

through our employer site, OurSkillsforce. Find out more and upload jobs. [More about the Job Hub](#)

### **Apprenticeships:**

We are also continuing to consider and agree measures to reduce disruption to contract holders, employers and apprentices in the delivery of Foundation, Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships, and the Employability and National Third Sector Funds.

### **Labour Market Insight:**

The evidence based, **SDS Labour Market Insight** report has been developed by SDS's Skills Alignment Team with support from the Skills Planning and Sector Development Team who are offering insight from a regional and sectoral perspective.

This data and evidence is being updated on a monthly basis to reflect the latest changes and the insight is being used to help formulate the ongoing response to the pandemic not only within SDS but in Scottish Government and partner agencies.

### **Bob Farthing, Community Council:**

Community Council meetings being held online which may herald

### **Duncan Abernethy, NESCol:**

All delivery of courses has continued online where possible. Have completely amended assessment strategy in conjunction with SQA. Qualifications with large practical element cannot continue/be completed but are being prioritised for August return in order that students can complete. Full time programmes are getting priority re timetabling in September. Now looking at arrangements for continuing to offer teaching on College premises in light of rules relating to social distancing. Anticipate approx 1/3 of people in campus at any one time. Support staff will work from home if possible to reduce numbers. Unusual requests (such as fishing exams) have had to be cancelled but we are working to develop ways to accommodate these. Many employers are not ready for commercial delivery of exams at moment but we continue to engage with them to ensure delivery when possible. Communicating with students to ensure they are still engaged. Things would be naturally winding down at this time anyway as it is coming to the end of term. Still a lot of work to do to prepare for the new academic year and support delivery of all courses.

### **Ishbel Greig, ACC:**

Aberdeen City Council is continuing to provide Food Parcel support. A Covid Respond Hub has been created to support businesses. Council is administering various grants for businesses on behalf of Scottish Government - phase three of non-domestic rates goes live today (08 June). Newly self-employed hardship fund is also being administered. Aberdeen City Council has set up dedicated helplines to support these grants.

**Martin Barry, SE:**

SE response has been to work with other agencies to support their business resilience work. Also looking to determine whether there are viable business opportunities (e.g. in public health etc.) into which they could redirect their work to maintain a workload. Support given to businesses to do this if a possibility. Support funds have been massively oversubscribed although approx. 7,000 businesses benefited to date ([is this across the NE?](#)).

Now moving into reset and recovery phase, determining how we deal with huge challenges around getting businesses back up and running (social distancing, lack of funding etc.) going forward. Lots of support online re business growth, workplace innovation, access to funding etc. All info on SE website is being updated on a regular basis. Scottish Government also has a wealth of info on their website (<https://www.gov.scot/>).

**Paul Tytler** - Aberdeen City Council has been operating a crisis line for anyone in the city requiring advice or support. Lots of people looking for additional food bank support and financial support/guidance. Housing team making welfare calls to tenants, offering support and advice re rent, claims for UC, furlough scheme etc. At community and locality level - support has moved online. 3 Hubs across the city for vulnerable primary age children. This is on verge of extending to secondary pupils and likely to continue to end of summer. Working well. Mental health and wellbeing support also being delivered. Looking to stand up a broader range of housing support measures and undertaking a review of locality planning arrangements with the aim to streamline these where possible. Lots of volunteers have come forward and people from the community are getting involved in initiatives without the need to sign up to a board or attend meetings. Locality level structure is being reviewed to see how it fits into Outcome Improvement Groups and Local Outcome Investment Plan. Support services working are from home. The Council is aiming to 'Build Back Better' so not going back to how we offered support before - rather, learn from good practice during emergency.

**Roz** - Elevator - Very busy over past 12 weeks. From time we moved to home working we (with support from contract managers) we have changed the services we offer from start-up and growth to offer support to businesses in the region who are impacted by Covid. Phones are still very busy with many callers contacting us for the first time still (although now 12 weeks into Covid lockdown). Pointing clients to appropriate funding, assisting with applications, one-to-one support for HR and finance and now also strategy and digital marketing to help with launch of new products and services etc. (pubs doing takeaways etc). Team has never dealt with so many emotional and distressed people before and counselling is a new role. Many harrowing stories. No barriers to businesses getting in touch. General start-up and growth services are still available but are not being taken up.

Working with Alley Allen, SDS, and about to launch 4 workshops around redundancy - discover (ideas generation), define (elements of business model), develop (start-up awareness), deliver (finances etc). Clients given a redundancy pack of info and be given an advisor to work with after the workshops. Expecting many people who have

been in similar situation 5 years ago as return customers. Covid and O&G are offering a double challenge. About to launch a series of 6 recovery workshops (Health and Safety and Risk Assessment, HR recovery, Business Continuity, Sales Recovery, Leading in a Crisis, digital Recovery) - one hour webinars delivered by growth team. First is 18th June. Aimed at reopening businesses. Continuing to support businesses in other areas also. One advisor continues to be the point of contact for each business.

**Maggie Hepburn**, ACVO - ACVO team has been flat out. Many concerns people have are about what will happen post emergency stage - what will they do / how will they cope when emergency funds are no longer available. Staff have been supporting those who are unsuccessful in applications - providing advice on other routes of help. It's been very useful to contact Third Sector Interfaces in other areas as this is giving a clearer national picture of employability and issues around this. Trying to start discussions with Scottish Government as we do not want organisations who have not managed to maintain an initial response to covid to be unable to continue post covid due to lack of cashflow / understanding of the new landscape. Most third sector organisations have minimal resources and there are concerns that we will not be able to continue after lockdown is eased if it continues much longer. Third Sector Interface has carried out a national survey - will share results with Aberdeen Prospers when available.

Short discussion and agreement within the group that we will need to revisit / reassess the improvement projects agreed by Aberdeen Prospers as we emerge from lockdown. Ishbel stated there was an understanding in the council that some of the projects will need to be reviewed going forward and that we can do so at group level.

#### 4. Planning for Recovery Phase:

What do we, as a group, need to do to best support the economic recovery of Aberdeen City? (All, 20 min)

Digital skills for some companies are an issue. Business Gateway have been encouraging people to look at their digital offering via the business gateway website. One of the more important things we need to do is ramp up marketing to ensure people are fully aware of what skills needs they may have, what is available to them and how to access it.

There are a number of SMEs within the City who have not yet engaged with support offerings (grants, training etc). Need to work to ensure that as many companies as possible are aware of the support they can access. Issues arise as not everyone has social media / reads newspapers and thus advertising may not reach all. Each partner has a responsibility to ensure they are aware of what is out there and share on a local basis.

Local organisations can share what they do with local businesses.

There is a real challenge in city at moment - normally Elevator would see approx. 50/50 split for support requests between the City and Shire. Now the split is approx.

20/80 (city/shire). There seem to be problems in getting businesses to engage with any form of support. There have been very few applications for self-employment hardship fund. High proportion of grants still to be claimed by those in businesses premises.

Ideally - we should ensure that anyone who has businesses in their portfolios can direct them to Elevator for advice. Note that businesses need to furlough staff by 10th June!

Martin - SE has a new marketing campaign launched last week. Still struggling to get to those without social media etc.

Bob Farthing - Jonathan submitted a number of questions ahead of today's meeting. **Circulated to group - all to note answers to them which will be collated and returned to JS.**

Next meeting (July) - we will look at projects currently sitting under Aberdeen Prospers remit to determine whether they need to continue/delay/stop/reassess etc.

To invite Alison Swanson (improvement planner - to support discussion)

**5. AOCB (5 min)**

**Martin** - RES - working with partners ahead of Covid to refocus and reprioritise to take account of energy transition, net zero etc. Looking to refocus and see this as a key tool going into recovery. Focus very much on Energy Transition.

**Roz** - role has changed from Ops Manager to Ops Director at Elevator. Kirsty MacLauchlan will be taking over Ops Manager and will be lead on Aberdeen Prospers although Roz will still be involved.

**6. Date of next meeting – 20<sup>th</sup> July 10am to 12 noon (Skype)**