

PE1828/A

Scottish Government submission of 4 November 2020

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is the national skills body supporting the people and businesses of Scotland to develop and apply their skills. As a national organisation with a firm presence in communities across Scotland, SDS works with the Scottish government and other public bodies to shape and implement strategies that drive Scotland's economic growth and social inclusion.

SDS works with a wide range of national and local partners to improve, align and integrate services for customers. Strategic engagement at both a national and local level allows SDS to shape delivery to meet *local* needs, informed by knowledge of best practice from across the country.

SDS' relationships with local authorities and Community Planning Partnerships allow them to participate in developing Local Outcome Improvement Plans, and to ensure that services and investments are joined up, contributing to the skills agenda locally.

Many providers, including local authorities, offering employment related support to unemployed participants are restricted by the terms of a grant or contract for their services. These restrictions can be related to factors such as age (e.g. to tackle youth unemployment), geography (e.g. to address poverty as measured by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation), or impairment (e.g. to address the employment gap experienced by disabled people).

In the case of the employability services delivered by local authorities, the geographic restriction exists because local authorities fund the services and have no obligation to widen provision beyond the residents in their area. The Scottish Government has no jurisdiction in this matter and therefore cannot intervene.

Scotland's first fully devolved employment support service, Fair Start Scotland, provides tailored, flexible and person-centred support to people who want help to find work, and stay in work. It is a voluntary service with respect and fairness at its core, supporting people to achieve their full potential. Those looking for work can call the Fair Start Scotland Information Line on 0800 804 8108. The line is open 10am to 4pm Monday to Friday.

Scotland's National Skills agency - SDS offer a range of support services, both online through their website or through My World of Work, SDS's online support service. At present, some SDS careers centres are closed, however they continue to operate their dedicated helpline (0800 917 8000) where professionally qualified careers advisors can offer support from CV writing to interview skills and searching for a job.