Third Sector Employability Forum

**Thursday May 29th 10am**

Present: Alan McCloskey and Victoria Isbister (VSGWL), Ann Taylor (CAB WL), Gareth McKenna (Broxburn Utd), Hayley Gillies (The Larder and Partnership for Parents programme coordinator), Scot Smith (Routes to work)

Apologies: Adam Brown (Street league), Angela Moohan (The Larder), Kathleen McLoughlin (Routes to work), George Scott (WLC), Fin Russell (Impact Arts), Helen Davis (WLYAP)

1. **Welcome, Apologies and Introductions (Interim-Chair)**

Alan opened the meeting and was delighted to advise that colleague Liyan Hmidan will chair this forum going forward. Liyan starts her post as Employability Development officer at the Gateway on June 10th working 4 days a week, Monday to Thursday. Liyan will meet with all employability partners to identify the needs of the third sector to better support LEP.

1. **Previous minutes (03.04) and matters arising (Interim-Chair)**
* Alan to pass Angela’s details onto Pegs as The Larder happy to have ministerial visit (completed)
* Gateway happy to publicise any of your events: Victoria / David (ongoing)
* Showcase DYW event at The Larder: Gareth, Beverley and Alan met a couple of weeks ago. Looking to involve LEP partners and local schools. Still confirming date and venue then will issue save the date.
* Please contact Angela if you wish to be involved in event – All members
* Apologies given from Angela and Fin for May 29th (noted)
1. **Council update (George Scott):** **George.Scott@westlothian.gov.uk**
* The positive destination work led by education services is currently exploring all provision possible for YP who are due to leave school. They have been linking in with the LEP on this. Sectoral training is currently in the commissioning process and there may be further procurement of services in the future. This has traditionally been 3rd sector based.
* Access2 Employment supported over 1000 people on their employability journey in 2024-2025 with > 50% entering a positive destination. Our work with parents continues at very good levels compared to the Scottish level overall under the NOLB programme.
* Our Access2 Employment team have successfully completed Trauma Informed Practice Level 1 training supporting our ongoing commitment to person centred care. Good training if folks/ teams were interested.
* We have began engaging with local employers on our Employer Recruitment Incentives. These have been highly successful in the past supporting individuals into paid work.
* Internally we have completed our migration from one CRM system to another. We have included partners where this has been necessary to support our joint working on programmes.
* Alan and I attended an interesting day/ few days at the SLAED conference in Stirling. Always good to meet others doing similar work and or trying to achieve the same goals.

Alan added that he attended on day one and there was a lot of learning. It was well attended, fascinating to see how the different LEPS involved function. Many have a strong approach to co production such as West Dumbartonshire who held a 3-day event with all partners to look at No One Left Behind approach. This was a joined-up approach to support the people furthest away from employability. Examples continued throughout the day in workshops showing the agility and efficiency of the third sector. Pegs Bailey and others updated those present on the national approach to Commissioning. Alan also sits on this group. The Government is tentatively considering a national employability model 26/27 to maximise the effectiveness of all programmes.

 There was also an announcement on Shared prosperity fund (SPF). Funding looking to be continued for employability programmes throughout UK. There will be further discussions next month and a decision regarding the route funding would take. It would be a bold move but a smoother process if third sector got funding directly.

1. **LEP**

Alan asked members if there was anything to be taken forward? No comments.

1. **Service Delivery (All)**

CAB: Continuing to support Partnership for Parents (PfP). Pause on volunteer recruitment, met target of 7 for this period so currently future planning. WL College good partner, especially for Saturday volunteers.

Routes to Work: Provision secured till next March. May take someone else on to support. Open to referrals. Attended council job fair yesterday which was good. Still building connections locally. Also been exploring definition of lone parents which has been positive (e.g. parents who are in recovery phase not currently living with their children).

PfP: Hayley advised target met for this contract. Will continue to roll out until next starts in July now provision extended until March. Good footfall yesterday at council job fair although perhaps people were more looking to speak to employers rather than engage with support. Few positive stories of participants inc paid placements and employment. Approaching quiet time over school holidays so will link in with Scot to see what can be run over the summer.

The Larder: Next Power to Grow cohort will start in August for young people with support needs. The academies which are currently running are due to come to an end this month and we are currently bidding for the new contracts that have been released so we are not running these or taking any referrals.

These are a 12-week training prog followed by 6-week placement. Mostly referred through SDS (Skills Development Scotland), good success. Completed 4 in this contract. Exploring with partners (WL college, Volunteer Matters and WLYAP) what phase 7 Cashback for Communities will look like.

Broxburn Utd: 13-week Apprenticeship scheme completed through enhanced recruitment centre. Now on 26 weeks half paid. Potential partnership with the Larder and positive meeting with Scot re parental employment following award from SFA to look at upskilling parents. In general, good meetings across the region to continue to explore what Broxburn Utd can offer. Over 1000 young people access Broxburn Utd facilities weekly giving great opportunities to engage and develop range of activities.

Alan said it was great to see members sharing best practice and knowledge to best support Employability in West Lothian.

1. **AOCB** – nothing raised

**Standing actions**

* Gateway happy to publicise any of your events: Victoria / David

**Actions:** None

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Forum Meeting** | **LEP Meeting** |
| **29/05/2025 10am** | 05/06/2025 |
| 24/07/2025 1.30pm | 31/07/2025 |
| 18/09/2025 1.30pm | 25/09/2025 |
| 13/11/2025 1.30pm | 20/11/2025 |
| 08/01/2026 1.30pm | 15/01/2026 |
| 05/03/2026 1.30pm | 12/03/2026 |