

Cross-Party Group on Skills

Friday 1 November 2024 (1000-1100)

Minute

Present

MSPs

Pam Gosal MSP
Stephen Kerr MSP
Miles Brigg MSP
Alexander Stewart MSP
Paul Sweeney MSP

Invited guests

Stuart McKenna, Chief Executive, Scottish Training Federation
Caroline McFarlane, Director, Limelight Careers
Anneliese Archibald, Managing Director, XTRA-MILE.com

Non-MSP Group Members

Anastasia Kourtis, Scottish Parliament
Isabella Williams, Scottish Parliament
Stuart Stevenson, Scottish Parliament
Lynne Currie, Scottish Parliament
Jonas Laurson, Scottish Parliament
Joanne Buchan, Colleges Scotland
Claire Vekic, Colleges Scotland
Aimee Logan, Universities Scotland
Claire Bannister, Universities Scotland
Kirsty Summers, Scotch Whisky Association
Lauren Pennycook, CITB
Dr Sanjana Mehta, ISC2
Dr Liz Barron Majerik MBE, Lantra Scotland
Sinead Griffin, Scottish Funding Council
Sharon Drysdale, Scottish Funding Council
Calum McNairney, Scottish Funding Council
Shelia Dunn, SCQF Partnership
Graeme Hendry, Skills Development Scotland
Helen Allison, Skills Development Scotland
Ashley McLean, Nesta
Dr Alix McDonald, University of Strathclyde
Frankie Walker, Jisc
Robert Bruce, Enginuity

Keith Robson, The Open University
Dale Thomson, Snipef
George Brown, SQA
William Hardie, Robert Gordon University
Donella Beaton, Robert Gordon University
Georgia Marks, UCAS
Tommy Breslin, STUC
Sheila Dunn, SCQF Partnership
Kevin Kelman, NHS Education for Scotland
Steven McLennan, CLD Standards Council
Geoff Campbell, Nithcree Training
Kenneth Flemming, Engineering Construction Industry Training Board

Apologies

Michael Marra MSP
Pam Duncan-Glancy MSP
Jim Metcalfe, Fife College
Kellie Zdanowicz, JBM
Pauline Radcliffe, SCQF Partnership
Marie Hendry, CDN
Gordon Nelson, Federation of Master Builders
Fiona Harper, Sectt
Pauline Radcliffe, SCQF Partnership
Fiona Stewart, Skills Development Scotland
Wendy Burton, STUC
Yemi Omeihe, University of the West of Scotland

Welcome

The group's Convener, Pam Gosal MSP, opened the meeting and noted apologies before handing over to Aimee Logan, Universities Scotland, to conduct the election part of the meeting.

Annual General Meeting

Pam Gosal MSP was re-elected as Convener and Stephen Kerr MSP was re-elected as the Deputy Convener. Colleges Scotland was re-elected as the Secretariat.

The Annual Return Form was approved by the group.

The Convener, Pam Gosal MSP, then conducted the remainder of the meeting.

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 April 2024 were approved.

Presentations

The topic for this meeting was the innovative delivery of Apprenticeships from independent training providers. Presentations were heard from:

1. Stuart McKenna, Chief Executive, Scottish Training Federation
2. Caroline McFarlane, Director, Limelight Careers
3. Anneliese Archibald, Managing Director, XTRA-MILE.com.

Discussion

Stuart McKenna provided the context to Modern Apprenticeships, saying that they are a success story; they have a good reach across society and are value for money for the economy – every £1 invested at SCQF Levels 4-5, provides a return of £4-5.

He said that there is a mixed delivery model for apprenticeships with independent training providers accounting for around 70%, and that they have a good record of delivering high quality and achievement. He noted that achievement rates are back to pre-pandemic levels.

Stuart said that funding is a problem, noting that contribution rates have not changed for over 10 years and there needs to be a review of rates, and that only colleges receive funding from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) to deliver apprenticeships. It was also questioned whether there should be more spent on apprenticeships from the Apprenticeship Levy.

Caroline McFarlane introduced Limelight Careers, which focuses on vocational skills, supporting the delivery of Foundation and Modern Apprenticeships in the business and financial sectors. She said they create a meaningful and supporting journey, with learners at the heart of what they do.

She noted that their staff are multiskilled and have an industry background, providing a one-to-one service for learners and employers and evaluating throughout.

Caroline highlighted the challenges of introducing new frameworks for private training providers including the need to upskill staff to deliver them and the associated time and cost implications. She also noted the changing learner demographics with now more apprenticeships being delivered to those over the age of 25 and that there should be a review of the contribution rates for this age group.

Anneliese Archibald gave a presentation on XTRA-MILE.com who specialise in hospitality and training and upskilling staff for the tourism industry. They managed the St Andrews Skills Academy and developed the St Andrews Charter.

She highlighted their Junior Hotelier Programme and their work with the Fairmont Hotel in St Andrews to create a talent pipeline for school leavers, with a mapped-out career path which allows them to develop as future leaders. Since its launch in 2018, 25 people have been inducted into the programme with 15 remaining at the hotel in promoted posts, with some going on to undertake Graduate Apprenticeships.

Anneliese said that the programme has resulted in higher staff retention, better working across departments, improved guest experience and motivated employees.

A Q&A followed. Geoff Campbell highlighted that the price reduction is having an impact on LGV training, despite there being a demand from employers to fill jobs.

Sharon Drysdale picked up on Stuart McKenna's point about colleges receiving funding from SFC, stating that the funding colleges receive is not solely for apprenticeships as colleges are expected to deliver Scottish Government priorities.

Pam Gosal MSP ask how engaged private training providers are and whether they have seats at the appropriate tables for discussion. Stuart McKenna confirmed that they are well engaged but add that there is always room for more.

Close

With no other business to conduct, the meeting was brought to a close.