Annual Review
2020/21

If you require this report in alternative formats please contact equality@sds.co.uk
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeline</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal 1: Enabling Scotland’s people</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Informed career and learning choices</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Effective learning pathways into productive employment</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Productive and resilient workforce</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Equitable learning and employment outcomes</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal 2: Mobilising Scotland’s businesses</strong></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal 3: Influencing the learning and skills system</strong></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal 4: SDS as an organisation</strong></td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The last year was one of rapid and dynamic change for the businesses and people of Scotland.

The COVID-19 pandemic challenged every aspect of Skills Development Scotland’s delivery.

While we continue working at pace to react to the changing environment, I am incredibly proud of our response to the unprecedented challenges of the last year.

**Rapid and responsive systems**

Whilst few would have predicted the dramatic shift in work practices, our business continuity systems and IT infrastructure supported a smooth transition from office to online working.

This planning and technical capability ensured our back-office systems were fully accessible to staff across the country, helping us maintain productivity whilst protecting colleagues and supporting their wellbeing.

**Services supporting those needing it most**

The nature of our delivery has also changed substantially over the year.

Proven and established services, including our vital careers services and PACE redundancy support, have been adapted and enhanced to support virtual delivery to those most at risk.

We’ve also introduced new services to offset the acute impacts of the pandemic, including the My World of Work (MyWoW) Job Hub, Online Learning Portal and a strand of the National Transition Training Fund.

**Investing in and protecting work-based learning**

Safeguarding work-based learning has been a key priority, providing additional resources to protect apprentices and the learning provider network.

For those whose employment has been impacted by COVID-19, we provided enhanced support including through Adopt an Apprentice.

We also worked with industry to continue offering new start apprenticeships, including the rapid provision of the Apprenticeship Employer Grant, creating thousands of opportunities for Scotland’s young people.

**Evidence, impact and strong governance**

Monthly COVID-19 Labour Market Insights have provided the latest evidence on Scotland’s economy, businesses and people, directly informing developments within SDS, but also shared widely with national and local partners, supporting their own interventions.

This evidence-led approach has further ensured the highest levels of vigilance and stewardship of public funding. Through active management of budgets and alignment of resources around immediate need and impact, SDS has maintained the highest standards of governance through the most challenging of years.

My sincere thanks go to the rest of the Board for their extensive engagement and agility in leading and supporting SDS’s work over the last year.

**Frank Mitchell**

Chair, Skills Development Scotland
## Timeline

### Announcements & Developments

- **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme** launched by the UK Government (UKG)
- Full lockdowns imposed and schools closed by UKG and Scottish Government (SG)
- Advisory Group on Economic Recovery, led by Benny Higgins and supported by SDS, has published its report on the reconstruction of the Scottish economy
- UK GDP contracts by 19.8% in Q2 – the largest quarterly contraction since records began in 1955
- Kickstart announced by the UKG
- Sandy Begbie appointed by ministers to develop an implementation plan for a Young Person’s Guarantee (YPG)
- SG response to ESSB commits to investing £50m in youth employment, embedding FA and GA, introduction of the National Transition Training Fund (NTTF) and extra investment in PACE
- £10m announced for Adopt an Apprentice
- Fiona Hyslop confirms £60m will be invested in a YPG to give young people access to work, training or education

### SDS Activity

- SDS moves quickly to provide full telephone and online CIAG support for individuals
- Full telephone and online PACE support available to individuals affected by redundancy
- MyWoW Job Hub launched to match individuals to jobs
- Online learning portal expanded to connect people with thousands of free online learning resources
- Monthly Labour Market Intelligence launched to inform local and national partner delivery
- Guidance issued to Foundation Apprenticeship (FA) learning providers on virtual and online delivery
- National TV and radio campaign to publicise support available for individuals through the SDS Helpline
- COVID-19 relief grant introduced for learning providers
- Letters of Recognition – accepted by all colleges and universities - are provided to Foundation Apprentices to recognise their achievements
- Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB) input to Enterprise & Skills Strategic Board (ESSB) sub-group via letter issued on behalf of SAAB Group Board Chairs
- SDS Chair, Frank Mitchell, co-authors ESSB sub-group report on Measures to Mitigate the Labour Market Impacts from COVID-19
- SDS delivers the Results Helpline to support pupils and school leavers with their next moves after they receive their results

### March

- **MyWoW Job Hub** launched to match individuals to jobs
- Online learning portal expanded to connect people with thousands of free online learning resources
- Monthly Labour Market Intelligence launched to inform local and national partner delivery
- Guidance issued to Foundation Apprenticeship (FA) learning providers on virtual and online delivery

### April

- National TV and radio campaign to publicise support available for individuals through the SDS Helpline
- COVID-19 relief grant introduced for learning providers

### May

- Letters of Recognition – accepted by all colleges and universities - are provided to Foundation Apprentices to recognise their achievements
- Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB) input to Enterprise & Skills Strategic Board (ESSB) sub-group via letter issued on behalf of SAAB Group Board Chairs

### June

- SDS Chair, Frank Mitchell, co-authors ESSB sub-group report on Measures to Mitigate the Labour Market Impacts from COVID-19

### July

- SDS delivers the Results Helpline to support pupils and school leavers with their next moves after they receive their results

### August

- SG response to ESSB commits to investing £50m in youth employment, embedding FA and GA, introduction of the National Transition Training Fund (NTTF) and extra investment in PACE
- £10m announced for Adopt an Apprentice
- Fiona Hyslop confirms £60m will be invested in a YPG to give young people access to work, training or education
## Announcements & Developments

- Programme for Government commits to the YPG and the NTTF
- UKG announces Job Support Scheme to replace Job Retention Scheme
- UK GDP increases by 16% in Q3 – but this is 8.6% below its Q3 2019 level
- UKG launches Kickstart

## SDS Activity

- National Transition Training Fund launched, supported by specific sectoral activity
- Enhanced Adopt an Apprentice payments launched

## September/October

- SDS begins delivery of component of the Flexible Workplace Development Fund
- Launch of first phase of Young Person’s Guarantee website, hosted within My World of Work

## November

- Apprentice Transition Plan launched, supporting redundant apprentices
- Launch of new web service supporting adults in work, at risk or on furlough with careers information and advice
- Pathway Apprenticeships launched to help young people gain an industry-recognised qualification
- First Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan published

## December

- Apprentice Employer Grant launched, supported by a national advertising campaign

## January

- Launch of SDS-led Career Review, part of Young Person’s Guarantee implementation plan
- FA recruitment campaign across TV, radio and digital

## February

- Scottish Apprenticeship Week 2021 and the Scottish Apprenticeship Awards.
- National TV and radio PACE campaign to publicise redundancy support for individuals

## March

- UK GDP decreases by 1.5% in Q1
Introduction

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is Scotland’s national skills agency. Our purpose is to drive productivity and inclusive growth through investment in skills, enabling businesses and people to achieve their full potential. Our services are designed to reflect best practice nationally and internationally and, through extensive engagement with partners at national, regional and local level, we flex and shape our delivery to meet local needs and priorities.

We value innovation and continuous improvement, using both to drive the quality and efficiency of our work.

The operating year 2020/21 is the second in the three-year strategic planning period, 2019–2022, adopted across the skills and enterprise agencies in response to the Strategic Board’s Strategic Plan. This sets out our collective commitment to raise Scotland’s productivity, equality, sustainability and wellbeing to OECD top quartile levels.

Our Strategic Plan is supported by a Strategy Map (see next page) which defines the performance outcomes we are seeking to achieve. These outcomes form the basis for monitoring success and progress against our Strategic Plan and provide the framework for this Annual Review.

The 2020/21 operating year was dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic, changing our operating context markedly. This Review outlines our response to these incredibly challenging circumstances, and highlights our ability to continue delivering core services to Scotland’s people and businesses throughout the year.
2019–2022 Strategic Plan

All people in Scotland have the skills, information and opportunities to succeed in the labour market

Scotland’s businesses drive productivity and inclusive growth

- Informed choices
- Equitable outcomes
- Effective pathways
- Resilient workforce

- Integrated services
- Workforce planning
- Workplace practices
- Fair work

Scotland has a dynamic and responsive skills system

- Industry ownership
- Evidence base
- Prioritised resources
- Future of WBL

SDS leads by example and continuously improves to achieve excellence

- High-performing workplace
- Customer experience
- Use of resources
- Deeper collaboration
Goal 1: Enabling Scotland’s people

Informed career and learning choices

The initial lockdown saw the immediate closure of Scotland’s schools, and the network of public access centres and partner premises through which our Career Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) services were delivered.

Adaptive services

Through use of technology and innovation, we not only maintained but enhanced delivery of our core services, while also rapidly designing and deploying new offers to people at risk.

A national campaign, launched in May 2020, ensured that furloughed and out-of-work individuals were aware of the telephone and online CIAG support available to them through SDS to gain skills and remain in, or return to, work.

Throughout the year, and successive changes in restrictions, we continued to innovate, adapt our delivery, learn from our experiences, and enhance our offer to Scotland’s people.

Targeted support

We proactively reached out to school leavers, Foundation Apprentices, and our existing Next Steps customers, to ensure they continued to receive the one-to-one personalised support they needed.

Our 2020-21 delivery included:

For schools:

- An eight-week Career Education Programme for teachers to use with students was launched on My World of Work, with significant visits and downloads
- **Over 11,750 pupils** engaged in My World of Work Live! using *experiential technology* to increase access to work-related experiences
- **Over 2,500 parents and carers** attended webinars on supporting key transitions for their child
- **37,140 of the 42,849 expected school leavers** in Summer 2020, were contacted and offered ongoing support

Our SQA results helpline was extended throughout August in response to the disruption in the exam diet in 2020.

- **Over 1,200** calls from young people and their parents and carers were received.
- **98%** of surveyed callers would recommend the Helpline to a friend

The new SDS Helpline received over **4,300 calls, 93%** of them related to employment

- **8,643** individuals were supported by our targeted Next Steps service for young unemployed people. Over this period:
  - **68%** of customers improved their career management skills
  - **64%** progressed to learning, training or work and, of those, **64%** sustained that outcome for 6 months
- **Over 31,000** people accessed our universal CIAG service and received support through over **69,000 engagements**

Our CIAG web service *My World of Work* recorded over **1.9m users**
Case study: Supporting students through a new kind of ‘results day’

In a year like no other, our Results Helpline provided invaluable, extended support to students feeling anxious during an already challenging time.

Stirling teenager, Conner Balfour, is one young student who sought support from the helpline after a misprint on his test certificate meant his Modern Studies grade wasn’t shown.

With a keen ambition to join the police or become a paramedic, results day was hugely important to Conner. After seeing the error, stress soon set in.

The 16-year-old said: “I was nervous, anxious and had a lot of worry over my results. The circumstances around this year’s results made me feel different towards them.”

Conner quickly phoned the helpline, who assisted in calling his school to notify them, who then arranged with the SQA for a new certificate to be sent out.

SDS Careers Advisers answered over 1,200 calls from young people, like Conner, and their carers, with over 98% of those surveyed saying they’d recommend the Results Helpline to a friend.

SDS Results Helpline Leader, Pauline Graham, said: “I’m delighted that Conner got the help he needed and that it made a difference to his day. Our experienced advisers are here all year to support everyone’s career and learning journey.”
Case study: **Expanding skills and access to opportunities through new digital services**

Through partnering with a number of learning providers, including Open University, we were able to enhance the My World of Work course search, providing thousands of free-to-access online learning materials to complement the vast range of courses already available.

The expanded learning portal was developed as a direct response to help those who were furloughed, made redundant or looking to learn new or develop existing skills. In the first 11 months the learning portal had over 245,000 views. With flexible and convenient online learning from 12 different providers, the courses cover a range of subject areas such as digital, languages, business and technology.

Following the launch of the online portal, Susan Stewart, Director of the Open University in Scotland, said: “Furloughed workers and people facing job uncertainties can undertake a range of courses that will be useful for anyone thinking of a change of career on the other side of lockdown or those looking to use their time to upskill themselves.”

The online portal continues to provide access to thousands of free online learning resources.

We also launched the ‘My World of Work Job Hub’ in March 2020, to connect employers with people seeking work, which gained 106,000 views from March to November 2020.

Having been developed in partnership with a range of industry bodies, employers were able to use the web service to advertise vacancies free of charge. Hundreds of job opportunities were posted across sectors including healthcare, food and grocery retail, social care, childcare, delivery and distribution, food manufacturing and production.

Users of the Job Hub were also able to access additional support including CV tools, skills builders and other career information and advice.

Derek Hawthorne, SDS Digital Development Manager, praised the hard work of colleagues who, “delivered these first rate digital products under tight timescales, providing support at a challenging time for many across the country”. He added: “Whether furloughed, unemployed or looking to develop their career opportunities, the online learning portal and Job Hub have given thousands of individuals across Scotland access to tools and opportunities to consider their career prospects.”
Effective learning pathways into productive employment

The disruption to the labour market and Scottish Apprenticeships, through successive lockdowns and changing restrictions, had the potential to dramatically impact youth employment, with future implications for the skills needs of industry and the economy.

Protecting apprentices

Our first priority was to protect those apprentices already in work. Enhanced support was made available to employers and learning providers to ensure existing apprentices were retained and new opportunities continued to be made available.

We were proactive in ensuring co-ordinated action to protect work-based learning pathways and to sustain investment in young people. We worked with SQA, sector skills councils and learning providers to ensure that those due to complete their Foundation Apprenticeship (FA) in summer 2020 were offered a Letter of Recognition from SQA, enabling individual transitions to further or higher education.

Agile and responsive delivery

Partnership work also enabled us to develop and implement innovative adaptations to the FA delivery model, and to each FA framework, including options to complete the qualification through virtual work placements.

We reprioritised resources in response to need, developing and launching new initiatives to support the continuation and uptake of apprenticeships. All of these were live by early 2021, maximising opportunities in the face of exceptional circumstances.

Our 2020-21 delivery included:

18,655 people started a Modern Apprenticeship in 2020-21 – an exceptional outturn in an extraordinarily challenging year

81.4% of Modern Apprenticeship starts were at or above SCQF Level 6/ VQ Level 3

1,150 people started a Graduate Apprenticeships in our fourth cohort (2020) combining paid employment with learning at SCQF Levels 8-11

4,240 pupils started Foundation Apprenticeships in schools across Scotland at SCQF Levels 4-6

76.4% of leavers in 2020-21 achieved their Modern Apprenticeship

3,544 job opportunities were advertised on apprenticeships.scot in 2020-21

Scottish Apprenticeship Week was delivered virtually in March 2021 resulting in over 73,000 visits to the Apprenticeships.scot website in one week

The Scottish Apprenticeship Awards received a record number of nominations, and over 2,600 views online

1This figure is correct at publication date but is subject to change due to delay in data received from Learning Providers; any revision will be included in our forthcoming GA Annual Report.
Case study: From Modern Apprentice, to Graduate Apprentice, to Apprentice of the Year

Our 2020 Apprenticeships Equality Action Plan highlighted how apprenticeships and apprentices will play a key role in our economic recovery from COVID-19.

One apprentice who has himself been aiding in the frontline COVID-19 response is Graduate Apprentice, Samir Khan-Young.

Having previously completed a Modern Apprenticeship at Govan-based Thales, he became aware of Graduate Apprenticeships and felt it was the natural progression.

Samir said: “I didn’t feel that I was ready to go to university when I left school, so a Modern Apprenticeship was the best option then. Now that I’m older, I’m glad the Graduate Apprenticeship has enabled me to gain a degree and further my career.”

Samir has been putting the skills learnt through his apprenticeships to great use, working as part of the nightshift team at Thales during lockdown to make PPE for NHS staff. Not only is he considered a role model for apprentices in his organisation, Samir’s dedication and commitment during the pandemic led to him winning the title of ‘Graduate Apprentice of the Year’ and the overall ‘Apprentice of the Year’ at the 2020 Scottish Apprenticeship Awards.

Then-Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair work and Culture, Fiona Hyslop, congratulated Samir’s success, saying: “Samir’s confidence and capability has grown throughout his Modern and Graduate Apprenticeship, putting the skills and knowledge gained to good use by helping others succeed. I’d also like to personally commend Samir for his critical role in our COVID-19 response. He took significant responsibility to produce PPE to protect our frontline NHS workers.”
Goal 1: Enabling Scotland’s people

Productive and resilient workforce

The pandemic demonstrated the ways in which the labour market can be dramatically disrupted without warning. We help Scotland’s employers and workforce to develop the resilience to respond to such change and to embrace opportunities amidst the uncertainty.

Support through redundancy

While furlough offered a lifeline to some workers, others found their previously secure jobs suddenly under threat. Our redundancy support, part of the Scottish Government’s Partnership Action for Continuous Employment (PACE), was in place to respond rapidly. We worked quickly to enhance this offer, increasing our dedicated resource in each local authority area.

A new PACE webinar service and helpline were developed and launched which allowed those at risk to access the information and advice they needed – regardless of their location or employer. Our targeted offer to apprentices facing redundancy was also enhanced, with Adopt an Apprentice funding increased for some sectors, and eligibility extended to Graduate Apprentices.

Upskilling and reskilling

With some businesses and sectors irreversibly affected by the pandemic, programmes were created, including the National Transition Training Fund, allowing people to develop new and existing skills so that they are well placed to take up emerging or high demand jobs within the labour market.

Despite the challenges to delivery, we continued to provide services for those already furthest from the labour market, developing their employability and work-related skills through our national programmes.

Our 2020-21 delivery included:

- **34,222** individuals and **523** companies provided with PACE support
- **3,396** of those went on to receive one-to-one or group CIAG
- **936** redundant Modern Apprentices were offered SDS support to access alternative learning and/or employment destinations
- **350** of those secured the chance to continue their MA with a different employer
- **137** redundant apprentices were supported to continue their apprenticeship through enhanced Adopt an Apprentice funding
- **150** career changers received support from the STEM Bursary to train to become teachers in STEM subjects

Individuals were enabled to study and achieve work-related qualifications through:

- **7,936** approved applications for Individual Training Accounts
- **2,933** National Transition Training Fund starts
- **7,955** people took up support from the Employability Fund (EF)
- **69.5%** of EF leavers had achieved a positive output or outcome
- **2,234** individuals with additional barriers to work received specialist support through the National Third Sector Fund

1 NTTF was introduced in October 2020 and delivered over three strands – 1) Individual; 2) Sectoral and 3) Further and Higher education provision. Stats here only include NTTF delivery where SDS has had direct involvement, covering a small proportion of overall NTTF funding. There is additional NTTF delivery through Scottish Enterprise, other sector bodies, colleges, and universities.
Case study: **National Transition Training Fund provides new career opportunities**

Launched as one of our new initiatives in October 2020 to tackle the rise in unemployment caused by COVID-19, the National Transition Training Fund helps people prepare for a new career by offering short, sharp training opportunities for in-demand skills.

Former branch manager, Zake Muluzi, is one of the 844 people across Scotland who benefited from this retraining support in 2020-21.

Having spent six years working for a vehicle rental firm, Zake found out last summer that he was going to be made redundant from his role.

Zake, who lives with his wife and young son in Nairn, said: “When I found out about the redundancy, I really wasn’t sure where to turn next. It was an anxious time, especially having to think how I was going to support my family.”

He had an interest in retraining for a new career in the offshore industry and after attending an event organised as part of the PACE redundancy support, Zake was enrolled in a three-day training course with Survivex, based in Aberdeen.

Zake praised the ‘seamless’ process and was keen to take advantage of the training opportunity right away. He said: “I launched into applying to several companies and then quickly got the news I had secured an offshore rigger role starting in May.

“After a difficult time for my family and me, it’s a huge relief to start a new career in a sector with good prospects.”

---

**Zake, Survivex Trainee**
Case study: **Initiatives and employers helping support apprentices through the pandemic**

Joinery and building servicing specialists, JB Contracts, is one of the many employers who supported 137 redundant apprentices through the Adopt an Apprentice scheme in 2020/21.

They have recruited six new apprentices since the beginning of the pandemic who were all either unemployed or facing redundancy from another employer. Jim Brydon, Director of JB Contracts, said of their decision to recruit: “We made it clear that we could support people who have been made redundant elsewhere – and in turn help enhance the level of workforce that’s starting in the industry.”

And by utilising the Adopt an Apprentice scheme, JB Contracts benefited from the £5000 incentive which helps employers recruit Modern or Graduate Apprentices who have lost their job to continue their training and complete their apprenticeships in the same framework.

One young apprentice who was supported by JB Contracts is third-year apprentice Lewis Stewart. The 20-year-old started with JB Contracts in September 2020 and said: “I got made redundant with my most recent employer, but thanks to help from CITB, I was put in touch with JB Contracts who offered me a job.

“With JB Contracts I feel valued and informed – and there’s a great variety to the work. I get to work alongside joiners who are helping me learn more about the trade.”

Michael McGuigan, Apprenticeship Officer at CITB Scotland, acknowledged the impact of JB Contracts taking on the new apprentices: “The company’s willingness to give a chance to apprentices who unfortunately found themselves redundant due to the pandemic has been of enormous benefit to the individuals and everyone who shares the goal of training apprentices to be skilled tradespeople for the future of the construction industry.”
Equitable learning and employment outcomes

Before the pandemic hit, inequality in relation to both access and outcomes existed across education and employment in Scotland. Emerging evidence shows that the crisis has exacerbated many pre-existing inequalities and drawn out more harshly the effect of deprivation on labour market participation, education and life chances.

Maintained focus on equality and inclusion

During the pandemic, additional action was taken to help ensure customers with protected characteristics could continue to engage with our services remotely. For example, our webinar series contained equality related information, and was made available with subtitles. In addition, guidance for accessing online appointments was made available in BSL and easy read versions. Enhancements to pandemic-related apprenticeship support were also put in place for apprentices with protected characteristics.

However, we were acutely aware that some of our customers did not have digital means to access alternative provision, and these customers were prioritised for appointments in the time when face-to-face services were able to resume.

New approaches

Over the past year, we have also made time to consult with equality specialist colleagues, partners and stakeholders in the development of our new equality outcomes for 2021-25. Published in April 2021, these will provide a more challenging, intersectional and holistic focus for our equality work over the coming years, ensuring those facing disadvantage in learning and employment remain at the heart of all we do.

Goal 1: Enabling Scotland’s People

| Starts (ST) and Achievement Rates (AR) for National Training Programmes: |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
|                | EF ST | EF AR | MA ST | MA AR |
| Those who self-identified as having an impairment / health condition or learning difficulty | 26%   | 68%   | 14.4% | 70%           |
| Those who self-identified as Mixed or Multiple; Asian; African; Caribbean or Black; and Other ethnic group | 4%    | 74%   | 2.7%  | 75%           |
| Those who self-identified as care experienced | 6%    | 63%   | 17%*  | 64%           |

Overall Participation Measure rate 2020 (proportion of 16 to 19 year olds participating in education, training or employment):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Participation Measure rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All 16 to 19 year olds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic minority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most deprived SIMD quintile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of Next Steps customers progressing to and sustaining learning, training or work:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% progressing</th>
<th>% progressing &amp; sustaining for 6 months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All customers</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic minority</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care experience</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most deprived SIMD quintile</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure updated - August 2021
Case study: **SDS support led to career success for Sammie**

Our products and services are all designed to ensure individuals, particularly those most likely to achieve poor learning and employment outcomes, have access to a range of options and pathways which allow them to effectively prepare for, enter and progress in the world of work.

Edinburgh-based careers adviser Joanne Holmes knows the challenges care experienced young people face and works at well-attended drop-in and job club sessions. These sessions, delivered virtually in the past year, are held in partnership with Edinburgh Council’s Throughcare and Aftercare Services at their Hub.

One young person who has benefitted from these sessions, is 24-year-old Sammie Armitage who had been in care from the age of 13.

Sammie was referred to SDS career services by her through care worker. That’s when she met careers adviser Joanne Holmes in SDS’s Shandwick Place centre. She felt able to access the SDS services in a way that suited her, be that drop-in to use the centre resources, appointments arranged by her support worker to have some in-depth discussions with Joanne, or through the targeted care-leaver sessions.

Thanks to her personal determination and ambition, with solid support from Joanne and her colleague Louise Winser, SDS and partner organisations, Sammie is now working for a global financial services company.

Sammie said of her experience working with Joanne: “I knew when I met Joanne that I could trust her. When you’ve been in care, you get good at that kind of thing. I could see she was so genuine, she wanted to help, that she really cared and that really helped me”.

Sammie, global financial services
Goal 2: Mobilising Scotland’s businesses

At the start of this financial year the economy was in full lockdown. The initial shock meant that many businesses ceased operating, on a temporary or permanent basis.

Team Scotland approach

Colleagues mobilised early as part of the COVID response. Working closely with colleagues across the enterprise agencies, we ensured our contribution was made to deliver Scottish Government business support to employers in distress. Our employer-facing teams refocussed their activity to prioritise critical engagement work, including promotion of the range of offers and services available to help businesses.

Cross-agency surveys were carried out during the year, providing focused insight about the people and skills impact of COVID-19 on our account managed companies.

Repurposed resources

Our employer service offer was adapted to provide guidance and contingency support to mitigate impact on work-based learning participants and workforce sustainability.

Utilising our existing infrastructure and extensive experience of procurement, contract management and programme delivery, SDS was responsible for the rapid roll-out of additional products and services introduced to incentivise in-work skills development during the year. This included non-college provision of the Flexible Workforce Development Fund, and the new Scottish Apprenticeship Employer Grants.

Our 2020-21 delivery included:

- **392** large companies were relationship managed, helping them realise the benefits of increased work-based learning within their organisations.
- **135** small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) were supported through Skills for Growth
- Over **58,887** users on our employer support site, ‘Our Skillsforce’
- In collaboration with SE, SDI and HIE, SDS has managed **195** accounts for businesses either looking to locate or expand operations in Scotland
- Through Team Scotland activities, **2,253** jobs were created, and an additional **452** jobs safeguarded during 2020/21
- **245** businesses responded to cross-agency surveys carried out during 2020/21, providing valuable insight about the impact of COVID-19 on their operations and people
- **£79,423** distributed to employers through non-college provision of the Flexible Workforce Development Fund
- Over **£19 million** of Scottish Apprenticeship Employer Grants were paid out to support more than **3,500** new MA and GA starts
Case study: **Skills for Growth helps businesses adapt to a new economic environment**

In the past year, we’ve continued to support small and medium-sized employers through various initiatives, including Skills for Growth. Much of this support has focused on helping the SMEs adapt and innovate in their response to this new economic environment.

Pitman Training, who deliver specialist professional development training in Scotland, is one of the small businesses which has benefitted from this support.

The team at Pitman were among the many businesses last year who had to transform the way they work – moving from face-to-face delivery of their training to virtual delivery overnight.

Caroline Meikle, Pitman Training’s Business Development Manager, turned to Skills for Growth for a fresh perspective into the skills the business requires to meet the current challenge and needs for the future.

“We had to change how we were going about about our business. I needed help to reorganise and reprioritise the team and, without this support, it would have been much more difficult.”

SDS Employer Engagement Adviser, Pam Ralston, was able to work with specialists from Skills for Growth partner Remarkable, to meet Pitman Training’s needs and help the team adapt to a changing market.

They assisted Pitman Training to develop a detailed people plan, assess the skillsets of the team, and introduce a new vision and set of values.

Pam said of the support offered: “Skills for Growth provided a detailed roadmap which highlighted the support available to Pitman from the public and private sector. Managing change in any business can be challenging, but with an engaged team on board, all moving in the new direction, it’s a much easier journey.”

And Pitman Training’s Business Development Manager, Caroline Meikle, praised the support they received saying it ‘revolutionised’ her thinking about their team and their capabilities.
Case study: **Financial support provides new apprenticeship opportunities and business growth**

Food production firm, The Scottish Bee Company, was able to provide new work-based learning opportunities and grow their business thanks to the Apprenticeship Employer Grant.

Launched by the Scottish Government in response to the COVID-19, the Apprenticeship Employer Grant provided up to £5000 to eligible employers taking on an apprentice or upskilling an existing staff member through an apprenticeship.

With this financial support, The Scottish Bee Company have recruited 24-year-old Supply Chain Modern Apprentice Heather Goater, and 23-year-old Digital Marketing Modern Apprentice Rachel Henderson. The apprentices have been able to help the honey producer launch a new product range and support the firm’s ambitious growth strategy.

Rachel previously worked in The Scottish Bee Company’s warehouse on a part-time basis, but now manages its social media channels as part of her Digital Marketing Modern Apprenticeship. She said: “I didn’t know much about Modern Apprenticeships before but I’m really enjoying it. It’s great being able to work and study at the same time. My capabilities have grown massively since I started, so it has been really beneficial.”

The Scottish Bee Company Director, Iain Millar, is delighted to have the new apprentices on board during an exciting period of growth for the business. He said: “Heather and Rachel have been a tremendous addition to The Scottish Bee Company. The skills they are acquiring are particularly beneficial at a time when we are bringing our premium honey products to new international markets.”

Heather, The Scottish Bee Company
Goal 3: Influencing the learning and skills system

The change created by the pandemic was vast, but fell disproportionately on different sectors, regions and demographics within Scotland.

Dynamic evidence base

The need for up-to-the-moment information on how the pandemic was impacting the economy was more important than ever. Building on our existing high-quality evidence base, and drawing on new and emerging research from others, we worked quickly to establish our own understanding, and to make that available to partners in an accessible format. Work completed prior to the pandemic to improve our use of technology meant we were well-placed to respond to this need, with Regional Skills Assessments, for example, moving from an annual to a monthly publication.

Focus on recovery and beyond

Our colleagues were proactive in engaging with partners and stakeholders on a regional and sectoral basis, sharing our expertise and knowledge of the evidence base to help develop their approaches to recovery and renewal. Additional resource was directed at sectors that were most affected by the pandemic, including Tourism, Food and Drink, Construction and Rural.

While the pandemic posed an immediate threat, we did not lose sight of Scotland’s other key priorities, progressing work throughout the year in response to the Climate Emergency, Brexit, and Fair Work.

We also retained a focus on the ongoing development and governance of our own work-based learning products, ensuring they will deliver the future skills Scotland will need.

Our 2020-21 delivery included:

- 255 evidence base products were delivered, a dramatic increase on the previous year. These included:
  - A new monthly Labour Market Insights publication, developed in response to the pandemic, from June 2020
  - 173 National and Regional Skills Assessments published to inform future investment in skills
  - 16 Sectoral Skills Assessments delivered and published

Continued promotion of the evidence base to inform future skills provision, aligned to sector and economic need.

In response to demand, and in partnership with employers, industry, and the devolved administrations of Wales and Northern Ireland, we newly developed or reviewed the content of:

- 57 suites of NOS National Occupational Standards (NOS)
- 17 suites of NOS translated into the Welsh language
- 39 Scottish Qualification products (SVQs/CBQs), and
- 37 Apprenticeship Frameworks, including 9 Scottish Modern Apprenticeships

Ongoing work with City and Regional Growth Deals to support recovery and longer term sustainable economic development

Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan developed, published and implemented with partners

Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB) continued its work remotely, including helping to shape new and enhanced employer offers in response to the pandemic

Extensive work to understand the economic returns and social impacts of Modern Apprenticeships.
Case study: **Net-zero skills are at the centre of economic recovery**

Our Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan, published December 2020, identified priority areas focused on employers, education and individuals that will help Scotland capitalise on job opportunities emerging from the net-zero transition.

One of the measures highlighted in the plan includes launching a Green Jobs Workforce Academy to support existing employees and those who are facing redundancy. This will help individuals assess their existing skills and undertake the upskilling and reskilling required to secure green job opportunities as they emerge.

Skills Minister Jamie Hepburn said “Our first Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan will, crucially, help us ensure people have the right skills to support a just transition to a net-zero economy.

“The Green Jobs Workforce Academy will play a key role in this, supporting those who are facing redundancy to upskill and reskill so they can capitalise on green job opportunities as they emerge.”

Other measures identified to support a green recovery from COVID-19 include providing support to those facing redundancy in sectors facing job losses and ensuring collective regional responses to labour market challenges and opportunities resulting from COVID-19. People will also be supported to upskill and reskill into emerging green jobs through measures such as the Flexible Workforce Development Fund and the National Transition Training Fund.

Alongside the action plan, we also launched our 10-year Climate Strategy. This set out how we as an organisation will contribute to Scotland’s net-zero target. We’re aiming to be a lead contributor to a low carbon, inclusive and sustainable economy in Scotland by 2030.
Case study: **Understanding the impact of the pandemic through labour market intelligence**

Between December 2020 and February 2021, we delivered four regional webinars in partnership with the Scottish Chambers of Commerce to over 140 businesses and organisations across Scotland to help them understand and respond to the impacts of the pandemic.

Liz Byrne, SDS National Skills Planning Lead said of the sessions: “Using our extensive evidence base, we were able to share detailed labour market information with spotlights on specific sectors, regions, and the key challenges. This evidence base has been strengthened during the pandemic through the inclusion of new monthly COVID-19 insight reports along with our Regional and Sectoral Skills Assessments that are now updated quarterly (rather than annually).”

The webinars also included an overview of available COVID-19 business support, with details on initiatives from the UK Government, Scottish Government and other local support.

Liz Cameron, CEO of the Scottish Chambers, said: “It has never been more important for businesses to know what support is available to them. The insights these sessions provided, accompanied by a clear briefing of support available at a time of many support announcements, was well received by attendees and brought about further product specific meetings with members. We look forward to delivering more of these webinars in 2021-22 in partnership with SDS and facilitating more businesses to access the support available to them.”

Positive feedback was received from attendees and further webinars focusing on specific sectors are planned for 2021-22.


Goal 4: SDS as an organisation

Like all employers, the pandemic dramatically altered our operating landscape and challenged us to adapt our services and working culture rapidly. Our premises were vacated by the third week of March 2020 and many remained unoccupied for the whole year.

Maintaining employee engagement and wellbeing

Throughout the year, the health, safety and wellbeing of our people was paramount. We worked closely with our trade union partners to ensure colleague experiences of lockdown were understood and accommodated, including increased flexibility for colleagues with caring responsibilities, and a maintained focus on providing opportunities for our young talent.

A comprehensive range of campaigns, initiatives and pulse surveys were used across the year to maintain colleague engagement and promote employee wellbeing.

Digital capability

Our digital capability, IT infrastructure and workplace culture were tested wholesale as we made a move to home-working in a matter of days. We rose to the challenge effectively, ensuring continuity of service to Scotland’s people and businesses at this critical time. We continued to develop our digital and data capability throughout the year, to the benefit of our colleagues, customers and stakeholders.

Efficient, effective and sustainable

In early 2021 we were delighted to receive seven star recognition from the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) – reaching the highest possible standards against that internationally recognised framework. We also published our first Climate Change Strategy, demonstrating our organisational commitment and approach to becoming net-zero.

Our 2020-21 delivery included:

- 91% of colleagues in our October 2020 pulse survey agreed with the statement “I would recommend SDS as a place to work”
- Over 800 comments were provided by colleagues on what SDS has done well to support them during the pandemic

EFQM Recognised for Excellence Award assessment undertaken remotely, resulting in seven star recognition

Carbon reduction – compared to 2019/20 we recorded a 60% reduction in total carbon footprint (tCO2e) (1,049 to 418)

Total value for money savings realised on central contracts placed by SDS of £316,586 up to Q3

Significantly increased security controls across EIS Shared Services reducing vulnerabilities across desktop, mobile and server estate for all partner agencies

44 new work-based learning opportunities in 2020-21 were offered (FA, MA, GA, Intern, Trainee Careers Advisers) through our Young Talent programme

97% of Young Talent leavers went on to a positive destination (94% in 2019-20)

Expanded our range of statistical reporting, by introducing monthly snapshot reporting of the Participation Measure

Expanding our range of statistical reporting, by introducing monthly snapshot reporting of the Participation Measure

Expanded our range of statistical reporting, by introducing monthly snapshot reporting of the Participation Measure
Case study: **Seven stars on our path to excellence**

This year we were delighted to demonstrate our progress towards our goal ‘SDS leads by example and continuously improves to achieve excellence’ by becoming the first public sector organisation in Scotland to be awarded seven stars against the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM): Recognised for Business Excellence framework.

EFQM is a globally recognised management framework which allows organisations to achieve success by measuring where they are on the path towards excellence, helping them understand the gaps and possible solutions available, and empowering them to progress and significantly improve their organisation’s performance.

In 2021, six European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) assessors attended virtual site visits to gather evidence to validate our submission to be Recognised for Excellence. Across these visits, 240 colleagues from a range of roles, grades and geographies met with the assessors to provide feedback on working for SDS.

We applied for this external assessment to bring robust, external scrutiny to our approach to continuous improvement, quality management and performance. For our first submission, we were proud to achieve seven star recognition and are in good company with BMW and Bosch also being awarded seven stars.

Our accreditation is valid for three years and along with the recognition, EFQM also shared their detailed findings and further areas for improvement, which we will act upon in line with our vision for continuous improvement.
Case study: **BAME Allies Network creates safe platform for colleagues**

In the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement, colleagues from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds created the SDS BAME Allies Network with the aim of supporting BAME people to be treated fairly in both work and society.

Using Yammer, our internal social networking platform, colleagues from all communities can share news, knowledge, and advice about BAME issues.

The network’s vision is to showcase SDS as a workplace that proactively promotes, embraces, and welcomes BAME diversity, dignity, inclusion, and talents. The group also works to support SDS’s various customers to ensure we are achieving our corporate goals of excellence and fair work practices.

In 2020, the BAME Network informed the development of our Race Equality Strategy and the establishment of our Race Equality Steering Group. The group includes a diverse range of colleagues to ensure our approach to equality and diversity in all areas of our work is informed by lived experience.

On the creation of the group, Shukriya Addow, NTP Equality Executive, said:

“I hope this network will bring together all SDS staff members to discuss issues affecting BAME groups and keep the conversation going on how we can tackle racism and discrimination at work and in our wider communities.”

Thanks to the excellent work of the colleagues responsible for the creation of the BAME network, they were awarded the Service Development and Delivery Combining Strengths Award 2020 at our first annual Everyday Leadership Awards.

**Members of the SDS BAME Network:**
Annah Masahi, Beckie Obro, Sade Bankole, Sam Soyombo, Shukriya Addow