



# Annual Review 2021/22

If you require this report in alternative  
formats please contact [equality@sds.co.uk](mailto:equality@sds.co.uk)



# Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Goal 1: Enabling Scotland's people</b>	<b>6</b>
- <b>Informed career and learning choices</b>	<b>6</b>
- <b>Effective learning pathways into productive employment</b>	<b>8</b>
- <b>Productive and resilient workforce</b>	<b>11</b>
- <b>Equitable learning and employment outcomes</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Goal 2: Mobilising Scotland's businesses</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Goal 3: Influencing the learning and skills system</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Goal 4: SDS as an organisation</b>	<b>20</b>

Front cover: **Top row (l to r)** - Skills for Growth at Raasay Distillery, MyWoW Live at Uddingston Grammar  
**Second row (l to r)** - Apprentice of the Year, Jennifer Kolonko, and careers advice at Bishopbriggs Academy

# Foreword

The past year has continued to be a period of challenge and change for Scotland's people and businesses.

While we continue working at pace to react to the ever-changing environment, I am incredibly proud of our response to the unprecedented challenges that have impacted us all and Scotland's economy.

Central to SDS's focus has been our contribution to the economic and social recovery, and the creation of a more prosperous, greener and fairer economy aligned with Scottish Government ambitions as detailed in the National Strategy for Economic Transformation.

Work over the last year has included enhanced offers such as additional support for the Young Person's Guarantee, new offers for Scottish Apprenticeships and innovative ways to deliver careers information, advice, and guidance.

## **Innovation in Scotland's career service**

This year, we worked with around 15 organisations, who are involved in providing careers advice to 16-24-year-olds, on the most comprehensive review of Scotland's career services in a generation. A key part of the Young Person's Guarantee, the Career Review, and its 10 recommendations, aims to ensure that career services are fit for purpose and future proofed to meet the demands of a changing world of work. We believe that adopted, properly resourced, and implemented as a whole, the Review will deliver a fundamental transformation of our career services.

Throughout this year SDS colleagues have continued to offer high-quality Careers Information, Advice and Guidance to service users in a range of settings despite the challenging restrictions posed by the pandemic.

## **Green Jobs Workforce Academy**

We launched the Green Jobs Workforce Academy, helping people to take a greener approach to their careers, and develop new skills which will allow them to access the job opportunities offered by Scotland's growing green economy. This initial service is being expanded, in line with the Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan, to help ensure Scotland's workforce has the skills needed to meet our net zero ambitions.

## **Work-based learning**

Another key element of the Young Person's Guarantee, Scottish Apprenticeships have a key role to play in our economic recovery. The statistics show the extent to which employers value Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships as part of their workforce development plans, and the importance of Foundation Apprenticeships in preparing our young people for the workplace. There is great focus on youth unemployment, harder to reach individuals and people from marginalised communities and work-based learning is opening up opportunities for those individuals to gain the skills they need for life and work.

## **Evidence, impact, and strong governance**

Monthly COVID-19 Labour Market Insights continued to provide the latest evidence on Scotland's economy, businesses, and people. This intelligence informs developments within SDS, but also proves valuable with national and local partners, supporting their own interventions and the effective stewardship of public funding.

## **Service delivery**

As Scotland's economy recovers from the pandemic, SDS has remained committed to excellent service delivery and an agile and responsive approach to customer need, as demonstrated by the achievement of a British Quality Foundation headline award, which recognises and celebrates SDS's 'organisation-wide dedication to excellence'.

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. Also, to all our SDS colleagues for their commitment and hard work, which continues to deliver exceptional results under challenging conditions.

## **Frank Mitchell**

Chair, Skills Development Scotland

# 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 levels, 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 2021/22 was the third and final in our three-year strategic planning period. Our 2019-22 Strategic Plan is summarised in a Strategy Map (see next page) which outlines the corporate goals we are seeking to achieve. Our Corporate Performance Framework identifies the measures through which we monitor success and progress against our Strategic Plan and provides the basis for this Annual Review.

Our activity and performance in the 2021/22 operating year continued to be affected by the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which changed our operating context markedly.

This Review outlines our ongoing response to these incredibly challenging circumstances and highlights our ability to maintain delivery of core services to Scotland's people and businesses throughout unprecedented and rapidly changing circumstances.

# A Human Future – Scotland in 2035

Driving productivity and inclusive growth through skills

2019–2022



Strategic Plan

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

- To achieve this goal SDS will:
- Enable learners and workers to make informed learning and career choices
  - Empower people to achieve equitable learning and employment outcomes
  - Provide effective learning pathways into productive employment
  - Help create an increasingly productive and resilient workforce for Scotland

 **Scotland’s businesses**  
drive productivity and inclusive growth

- To achieve this goal SDS will:
- Deliver an aligned and integrated service offer for employers
  - Inspire and enable employers to take a strategic approach to workforce planning
  - Promote the development of productive and innovative workplace practices
  - Drive understanding and adoption of fair work practices

## Scotland has a dynamic and responsive skills system

- To achieve this goal SDS will:
- Strengthen industry ownership of the skills system
  - Build a high-quality evidence base using robust and comprehensive data
  - Influence the prioritisation of resources in line with the evidence base
  - Ensure work-based learning is efficient, responsive and future-focused

## SDS leads by example and continuously improves to achieve excellence

- To achieve this goal SDS will:
- Adopt high-performing workplace practices, leading change in others
  - Improve customer experience and customer service through enhanced use of data and technology
  - Make efficient, effective and sustainable use of our resources
  - Drive better outcomes through deeper collaboration and partnership working

 Customers at the Heart       Strengths and Expertise       Motivation, Responsibility and Respect       Achieve Excellence

# Goal 1: Enabling Scotland's people

## Informed career and learning choices

We are proud to deliver Scotland's national careers service. During 2021/22 our Career Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) services continued to deliver excellent customer service to people across Scotland through schools, our network of Public Access Centres (PACs) and partner premises.

SDS-delivered CIAG services are available in all 357 publicly-funded secondary schools in Scotland. We provide universal face-to-face and digital services, including My World of Work, with more intensive support available to those who need it most. In-person services continued to be impacted by public health restrictions during the 2020/21 academic year and again during the winter of 2021. Colleagues utilised remote delivery when necessary to maintain service delivery to our customers and returned to in-person delivery when it was safe and appropriate to do so.

## Career Management Skills

Our all-age CIAG services enable Scotland's current and future workforce to develop the Career Management Skills (CMS) they require to achieve their potential. The labour market

is rapidly changing. To be able to navigate this dynamic landscape, it is essential that the people of Scotland are both adaptive and resilient. Our career professionals combine CMS development strategies with their knowledge of local labour market information to support individuals to make the right learning and career choices for them.

## Next steps

Through our PACs and partner sites, our Next Steps programme provides continued post-school support to young people who have not yet transitioned into a positive destination. In addition to this, our dedicated career professionals provide universal CIAG services to adults looking to think about their career options, tailored to individual need.

## In 2021/22:



The Career Review was published with **10** recommendations, based on strong evidence and co-designed with over **80** young people in Scotland, to build on the success of existing services, presenting an ambitious redesign of the career system



**237,698** CIAG engagements were delivered to secondary school pupils across Scotland by SDS Career Advisers



Over **13,500** young people engaged with MyWoW Live across Scotland, using experiential technology to offer work-related experiences through hybrid sessions



We launched **Classroom Clash**, innovative and interactive games to develop CMS in primary schools



**8,136** individuals engaging with our Next Steps programme: **74.5%** of Next Steps customers progressed to learning, training or work and of those, **63.1%** sustained the destination for six months or more



**32,811** people accessed our universal CIAG service, receiving support through over **70,104** engagements, an increase in both reach and activity from last year.

## Case study: **Classroom clash**

Designed and delivered by experts, Classroom Clash aims to inspire young people and help them understand future careers and opportunities.

In this new activity, which is an addition to SDS's My World of Work Live programme, pupils learn about Scotland's key sectors – working in teams to compete in a quiz and sector-focused mini games.

The free experience is now available for schools across Scotland to book through My World of Work.

Classroom Clash is for pupils in P7-S3 and aims to introduce them to the sectors that will be critical for future economic growth in Scotland. The focus is on computing and ICT, construction and building, engineering, healthcare, social work and caring services.

Primary school teacher Gillian Clark said: “It was very exciting for our pupils to be among the first in the country to try the new activities. The Classroom Clash is all about them learning and discovering information – they did that and enjoyed every minute of it.”



Classroom Clash

# Goal 1: Enabling Scotland's people

## Effective learning pathways into productive employment

Work-based learning, including the Scottish Apprenticeship family, offers accessible and effective opportunities for individuals to build the skills employers need, while gaining relevant work experience.

### High quality apprenticeships

Ensuring a supply of high quality apprenticeship opportunities is crucial to delivering the Scottish Government's Young Person's Guarantee, and contributing to Scotland's economic recovery. Over the past year, we continued to rebuild Modern Apprenticeship delivery towards pre-pandemic levels, with a significant uptake of opportunities compared to the previous year.

We continued to actively promote the benefits of apprenticeship opportunities to employers, individuals, teachers, parents, and carers. This included the continued development of apprenticeships.scot as a platform for sharing information and opportunities. This was supported by the successful delivery of established campaigns such as Scottish

Apprenticeship Week and the Scottish Apprenticeship Awards, which celebrate the benefits of apprenticeships.

### Collaborative approach

As funding and delivery arrangements for Graduate and Foundation Apprenticeships evolve, we continued to work with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) to contribute to the delivery and embedding of high quality work-integrated learning experiences in mainstream education.

### In 2021/22:

 **25,401** new Modern Apprenticeship (MA) starts exceeded expectations - **36% higher** than last year (+6,746)

 **79.3%** of MA starts were at SCQF level 6 or above, this is up **4.4%** relative to 2019/20

 **71.8%** of MA leavers successfully achieved their apprenticeship

 **4,199** school pupils started Foundation Apprenticeships (FA), available at SCQF levels 4, 5 and 6

 **1,147** Graduate Apprenticeship (GA) new starts

We delivered a record-breaking Scottish Apprenticeship Week and second virtual Scottish Apprenticeship Awards, resulting in:

- ▶ **310** new apprenticeship postings over the week
- ▶ **933.4%** increase in apprenticeships.scot web traffic compared to the previous month
- ▶ **92%** rise in social media engagement compared to the previous year



We launched our Foundation Apprenticeship 'Big Future' campaign to promote FAs as a subject choice to young people and their parents, carers and teachers



Over **9,000** apprenticeship opportunities were posted on apprenticeships.scot, significantly exceeding the annual target of **5,250**. This resulted in more than **32,000** applications through the site, an increase of **13%** throughout the year.

## Case study: **ES Catering find the perfect recipe for apprenticeship success**

Investing in a diverse range of people and skills are the main ingredients for success for a Fife catering firm set up by a former apprentice.

Leven-based ES Catering, which runs successful restaurant Base alongside new venture TRUTH, currently employs six Modern Apprentices. The Fife business has a workforce of 26, 15 of whom have completed a Modern Apprenticeship.

Such commitment to the pathway will be no surprise to those who know founder Ewan Brown. Learning provider MGT Training supported Ewan through his own apprenticeship more than a decade ago prior to him co-founding ES Catering.

MGT Training Director Michelle Batt said: “I can’t think of many other employers who embrace the apprenticeships as much as ES Catering do.

“Ewan and his team take everyone at face value and support everyone to where they want to be in their lives. Yes, it benefits the business but there is no doubt Ewan and Steven are more interested in the people as individuals.

“Once people join ES Catering they don’t leave – some even go onto university and come back. That’s purely down to the hard work of staff who buy in to the whole process.”

ES Catering Ltd Co-Founder Ewan said: “Providing apprenticeships is important for me because when I left school I did so without any qualifications.

“It was an apprenticeship that got me to where I am today, that’s what makes me want to give people the same opportunity.”



**Ewan Brown, ES Catering**

## Case study: **Anna champions apprenticeships**

Six years ago, Anna McCormick almost cancelled her interview for a Modern Apprenticeship.

She has now long since moved on, completing a Modern Apprenticeship and progressing onto a Graduate Apprenticeship, and is determined to share the benefits of work-based learning as far and wide as she can.

Anna is in the final year of her Graduate Apprenticeship (GA) in Business Management with Microsoft, where she was able to transition straight from a Modern Apprenticeship in Digital Marketing with the company.

“I’ve had the best start to my career and I get to have so many different experiences that other people my age don’t even have access to at university or college.”

Anna’s Modern Apprenticeship has given her a passion to continue her learning and the confidence to ask for more opportunities from her employer. She worked with Microsoft to become their first Graduate Apprentice in Scotland – opening up opportunities for others to follow in her footsteps. Microsoft have since employed two more GAs in Scotland.

Anna said: “When I first heard about Graduate Apprenticeships, I immediately knew they were the ideal next step for me. I researched the frameworks available and contacted universities myself to get more information. I then pitched the idea of me progressing onto a GA to my manager, who helped me secure the opportunity.”



**Anna McCormick**, Microsoft

# Goal 1: Enabling Scotland's people

## Productive and resilient workforce

Skills are essential to helping Scotland's employers and workforce embrace opportunities as they occur and remain productive and resilient in the face of a changing economy.

### Support through redundancy

On behalf of Scottish Government, we continued to deliver Partnership Action for Continuous Employment (PACE) services to provide vital and timely information and advice for people and businesses facing redundancy situations. We further enhanced our PACE offer this year, rolling-out a new webinar series improving the reach and accessibility of this service. We continued to provide bespoke support to apprentices who were made redundant, helping to ensure they were able to complete their apprenticeship or take up alternative employment or training.

### Upskilling and reskilling

As the skills needs of Scotland's economy and employers change, individuals must reskill or upskill in order to remain competitive in the labour market. In 2021/22, we continued to deliver programmes such as Individual Training

Accounts (ITAs) and the National Transition Training Fund (NTTF), which allowed people to develop new and existing skills, to prepare them to take up emerging or high demand jobs within the labour market.

We also continued to develop the employability and work-related skills of those furthest from the labour market throughout the final year, including through the final year of delivery of the Employability Fund as provision transitions to No-one Left Behind.

### Our 2021-22 delivery included:

Reduced redundancy rates resulted in decreased demand-led PACE activity in 2021/22 relative to last year. 67% fewer employers and 71% fewer individuals formally accessed PACE support. Despite this:

- ▶ **1,321** customers received individual or group CIAG support largely through our Helpline
- ▶ **9,902** individuals from **173** companies were provided with PACE information
- ▶ **350** individuals attended PACE webinars and were provided with PACE information



**294** redundant GAs and MAs were offered SDS support to access alternative learning and/or employment, with **155** continuing their apprenticeship with a different employer



**15,643** individuals were approved to achieve work-related qualifications through ITAs (this is a huge increase from **7,936** last year)



More than **5,000** individuals were supported through the National Transition Training Fund, which has provided focused training interventions for sectors including Tourism, Creative Industries, Digital and Childcare



**137** STEM bursaries were awarded to support career changers to teach secondary school STEM subjects such as Mathematics, Biology, and Home Economics



We supported **7,754** young people towards employment in local training programmes



**501** people newly accessed help to return to the workforce after a career break of at least six months through the Women Returners Programme.

## Case study: **Tanya's career goal stems from bursary support**

A computer science graduate has explained how a STEM Bursary aimed at career changers has helped her to pursue her career goal of becoming a teacher.

Tanya Howden was managing a digital programme for Heart of Midlothian Football Club when she realised she wanted to become a teacher and now she's on course to reach that goal, thanks to the bursary.

The STEM bursary scheme encourages people to train as secondary school teachers in Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, Computing Science, Technological Education and Home Economics.

After enjoying a successful period as Digital Education Programme Manager for the Innovation Centre at Hearts FC, Tanya, who lives in Edinburgh, realised that she wanted to become a full-time Computer Science teacher at high school level.

Tanya said: "Through working with schools and seeing the impact we were having at the Innovation Centre made me realise that now was the right time to take a step into teaching.

"But without the bursary it would've been a much different story. It's much harder to imagine."



**Tanya Howden**, Heart of Midlothian Football Club

## Case study: **PACE support helps Bruce waste no time in securing new job**

When Bruce McAllister was made redundant during the COVID-19 pandemic, he feared the worst in terms of securing new employment.

The 49-year-old from Hamilton had worked at Quadscot Precision Engineers in Blantyre for 13 years.

“It came as a bit of a shock to lose my job”, Bruce said. “I felt quite angry and disappointed, as I thought I’d have been with the company until retirement, I was quite happy to stay there. It was a bit of a bombshell to be honest.”

The father-of-three had heard from a friend that there was redundancy support available to people who had lost their jobs.

Bruce and his colleagues were then told about Partnership Action for Continuing Employment (PACE), which is the Scottish Government’s initiative for responding to redundancy situations.

Bruce said: “We had a video meeting with Gillian, who told us what PACE did, and she answered any questions that we had. We were then offered a 1-2-1 phone call. I thought ‘I’ve nothing to lose here’ so I requested a call.”

He then had a telephone consultation with PACE Adviser Gillian Steven. He says: “Gillian was brand new. She went through everything with me, what my skills were, what I wanted to do, and asked how I was feeling.

“Gillian took my email address and sent me lots of information, including a phone number for Routes to Work South. So I phoned them and sent them my CV, which they helped me tidy up. The next thing I know they told me that a company was looking for staff and asked if I was interested, and I said yes. My CV was sent to them, and I was offered an interview.”

Bruce got the job and is now working as a general operative at Tradebe in Bellshill, who deal with clinical waste from the NHS.



**Bruce McAllister,**  
Quadscot Precision Engineers

# Goal 1: Enabling Scotland's People

## Equitable learning and employment outcomes

At SDS we are committed to embedding equality, diversity, and inclusion throughout all we do. Our 2021-25 Equality and Diversity Mainstreaming Report was published in April 2021, and introduced new equality outcomes which will drive all our equality activity moving forward.

### Maintained focus on equality and inclusion

This year we continued to deliver and enhance our services in ways which reflect our ambitions for equality of access and inclusion. For example, our webinars were captioned, and both Easy Read and British Sign Language (BSL) guidance was made available for customers accessing online appointments. We also returned to face-to-face appointments as soon as it was safe to accommodate customers who could not easily engage online, for example due to digital poverty.

We also continued to work with partners to address barriers to participation in learning and work. For example, we partnered with Data Education in Schools, the DDI Skills Gateway and the Scottish Sensory Centre to create more than 500 new words and terms in BSL. This will help to help the deaf community access opportunities in computer science, cyber security, data science and software development.

Our third Corporate Parenting Plan was published in December 2021 which highlighted five new commitments that SDS will focus on between now and 2024.

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	29.2%	67.9%	13.3%	66.9%
Those who self-identified as Mixed or Multiple; Asian; African; Caribbean or Black; and Other ethnic group	4.7%	62.3%	3.1%	71.6%
Those who self-identified as care experienced	7.0%	60.7%	2.0%	58.6%

Overall Participation Measure rate 2021 (proportion of 16 to 19-year-olds participating in education, training or employment):

	Overall Participation Measure rate
All 16 to 19-year-olds	92.2%
Disabled	88.3%
Ethnic minority	95.4%
Female	93.2%
Male	91.2%
Most deprived SIMD quintile	87.1%

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

	% progressing	% progressing and sustaining for 6 months
All customers	74%	63%
Disabled	75%	57%
Ethnic minority	76%	66%
Care experienced	67%	48%
Female	76%	64%
Male	74%	62%
Most deprived SIMD quintile	72%	59%

## Case study: **Apprenticeship paved the way for Peyvand's new life and career**

A mum-of-two who came to Glasgow from Iran as a refugee has realised her dream of working with children through an apprenticeship.

Peyvand Alipoor, 26, completed her Modern Apprenticeship Level 7 in Social Services (Children and Young People) in October 2021.

To do her apprenticeship Peyvand had to overcome a number of challenges, such as English not being her first language, cultural factors and having two young children to care for. Her hard work and determination paid off and she was a finalist in the Scottish Apprenticeship Awards.

Peyvand, who settled in Glasgow in 2015, said: "I found out about Modern Apprenticeships while studying a course for non-English speakers at college.

"My apprenticeship has been a game-changer for me. I had a family at a young age and never had the opportunity before to do something else besides being a wife and mum. I wanted to do the apprenticeship.

"I love kids, had volunteered in a nursery and was determined to get a career working with children. But it was hard in my situation as my husband was not sure about me working."

Peyvand added: "When I compare myself now to before I did my Modern Apprenticeship, there's a really a big difference. I saw myself as just a mum, but now I'm a professional.

"The apprenticeship changed everything for me - the way I live, how I interact with my kids, my personal life and confidence levels. It all came together through the apprenticeship."



**Peyvand Alipoor**, Modern Apprentice

# Goal 2: Mobilising Scotland's businesses

Businesses need to be able to attract, develop and retain a diverse pool of talent to meet their current and future skills needs. Working closely with the enterprise agencies, our role is to support and encourage Scotland's businesses to grow and prosper through investment in skills.

## Team Scotland approach

As recovering from COVID continued to be a priority for Scotland's employers, we continued to work closely with employers to understand how the pandemic was impacting their skills and training needs. With other agency colleagues, particularly through the Business Support Partnership, we contributed to delivering a 'Team Scotland' approach to business support, particularly leading on skills aspects. This included supporting inward investors to develop and implement bespoke skills training through the Digital Catalyst Fund.

## Targeted support

Across Scotland we provided targeted support to employers, helping them to take a strategic approach to workforce planning, build resilience to disruption, and create the conditions for long-term sustainability. This included the continued promotion of, and

support to uptake apprenticeships as a means of attracting and developing talent. In 2021/22, this work included the launch of the Rural Employers' Toolkit, which offers guidance on training, apprenticeships and placement support for rural businesses.

## In 2021/22:



We approved **83** applications from employers to the Flexible Workforce Development Fund, which offers levy-paying businesses up to **£15k** for staff training, resulting in the provision of training to **1,800** individuals



**436** businesses were relationship managed by SDS employer-facing colleagues, helping them to realise the benefits of increased work-based learning within their organisations



**157** SMEs were supported to undertake skills reviews through Skills for Growth, exceeding the targets for the year

Through **'Team Scotland'** cross agency working with employers:

- ▶ **121** accounts for inward investment businesses were supported
- ▶ **1,570** jobs were created and a further
- ▶ **1,113** jobs were safeguarded as a direct result



Over **400** employers were engaged in events held by SDS during Scottish Apprenticeship Week



Over **50,980** users accessed the Our Skillsforce employer support website



The **'Attract, Train, Motivate, Retain'** campaign was launched to encourage employers to take on apprentices, or upskill a member of staff through an apprenticeship.

## Case study: **New guide highlights skills support for rural businesses**

Help for Scotland's rural businesses to recruit and grow the skills they need is in the spotlight thanks to a new guide.

The Rural Employers' Toolkit offers practical guidance on training, apprenticeships and placement support for rural businesses across all sectors of the economy.

The toolkit was launched by Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands, Mairi Gougeon on a visit to The WeeCOOK Kitchen in Angus – a business that invested in apprenticeships as part of its growth strategy.

Ms Gougeon said: "Rural businesses across Scotland have shown great resilience in recent times and they will play a central role in driving economic recovery.

"Adapting skills to deal with emerging challenges and grasping new opportunities is a fundamental part of that, this guide will help businesses of all sizes identify the steps they can take to grow and thrive.

"It spotlights the options available for employers and the steps they can take to ensure their business and people are well-equipped for the future."

The toolkit was developed by Lantra Scotland which offers training, qualifications and skills in the land-based, aquaculture and environmental sector.



**WeeCOOK Kitchen, Angus**

# Goal 3: Influencing the learning and skills system

Through extensive collaboration at national, regional, local and sectoral levels, and the provision of evidence and intelligence, we work to create a dynamic and responsive skills system for Scotland.

Recognising the importance of ensuring the skills system is fit-for-purpose, this year we continued our vital work to further develop the standards and frameworks that underpin apprenticeships in line with the realities of employer and workplace needs.

## Dynamic evidence base

Providing shared access to up-to-date information on the impacts of the pandemic and the UK's departure from the EU, on Scotland's economy, labour market and industries, continued to be essential. We worked to further enhance the depth and quality of the evidence base on skills supply and demand through the collation, analysis, and publication of labour market information. We also continued our partnerships with industry, helping to identify and articulate current and future skills needs in Scotland and how these vary by geography, industry and occupation.

## Focus on recovery and beyond

SDS proactively engaged with partners and stakeholders on a regional and sectoral basis, sharing our expertise and knowledge of the evidence base to help develop their approach to recovery and renewal. Additional resource was directed at sectors that were most affected by the pandemic.

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.

## In 2021/22:



We worked with the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB), to undertake employer-led redevelopment of apprenticeships, with an emphasis on the integration of meta-skills needs in the workplace



**137** evidence base products were delivered, including:

- ▶ **46** National and Regional Skills Assessments (RSA) summary reports and infographics published to inform future investment in skills, built up from existing datasets and forecasts
- ▶ **32** Sectoral Skills Assessments built from existing datasets and forecasts, presented in the style of the RSAs
- ▶ **18** unemployment reports
- ▶ The online, interactive Data Matrix also underwent **12** refreshes during the year



The Green Jobs Workforce Academy was launched on My World of Work, as part of the early implementation of the Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan



We provided leadership across the skills workstreams of Scotland's Regional Economic Partnerships and City and Regional Growth Deals, to encourage a dynamic skills response to the identified opportunities in the regions, supporting economic recovery and sustainable economic development.

## Case study: **The Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB) recommendations on how Scottish Apprenticeships can support environmental sustainability**

The Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB) has made recommendations on how Scottish Apprenticeships can support environmental sustainability.

Proposals include developing climate change skills for every Scottish apprentice in training across the country – currently around 47,000 people.

The employers have also called for a national programme to mobilise apprentices to think about sustainability and act as a catalyst for change in their organisations, local areas and beyond.

The recommendations also call for a whole-system approach across the economy – not just focused on carbon reduction sectors, with stakeholder engagement and support at its core.

**“At a critical time for the actions we take to avert the climate emergency, it is imperative right now that we make changes in the apprenticeship system that not only make a difference for the next five or ten years, but for generations.”**

In line with current approaches, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board continue to work with employers and stakeholders on the recommendations as part of the wider future development of apprenticeships.



Skills Development Scotland, who administer and contribute towards funding on behalf of the Scottish Government, developed the Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan to support ambitions to tackle climate change.

A key strand of the plan is to align work-based learning opportunities to support the transition to net zero.

# Goal 4: SDS as an organisation

Working through the pandemic demonstrated the resilience, adaptability, and flexibility of both our organisation and our people. Over the last year, we have considered how we can best consolidate the learning and innovation generated in successive lockdowns to drive service and organisational improvements in support of being a high-performing and sustainable workplace.

Like most organisations, our digital capability was fundamental to new ways of working, and we have continued to develop the technology available to our people, and their capacity to utilise it well, over the past year. We recognise our data is one of our greatest assets, and over the past year we have also continued to grow our capacity to store, share, understand and analyse the information we have.

## Maintaining employee engagement and wellbeing

The health, safety and wellbeing of our people remains paramount. We worked closely with our trade union partners to ensure colleague experiences of the pandemic were understood and accommodated. As in previous years, we maintained a focus on the continuous development of all our colleagues, and on providing opportunities through our Young Talent programme.

## Sustaining an efficient workplace

Financial stewardship, organisational resilience, including cyber security, continuous improvement and quality assurance remain key priorities. By driving our own innovation, efficiency, and productivity as an organisation, we seek to inspire other organisations to follow our example.

### In 2021/22:



We were proud to be announced as the winner of the UK EFQM Excellence Award at the annual British Quality Foundation (BQF) Awards in recognition of our 'organisation-wide dedication to excellence'



Additional Office 365 functionality was rolled out to all colleagues, supporting improved online collaboration



As part of our 'Your Views' all-staff survey, colleagues gave an average score of **8.6/10** in agreement with the statement 'I would recommend SDS as a place to work'



The SDS Young Talent programme offered **37** new work-based learning opportunities in 2021/22, including Foundation Apprenticeships, Modern Apprenticeships, Graduate Apprenticeships, Interns, and Trainee Careers Adviser roles. **96%** of Young Talent went on to positive destinations



A **46%** reduction in our carbon footprint (tCO2e) was achieved in 2021/22 compared to the 2019/20 baseline. We achieved an **82%** reduction in business travel miles and an **8%** reduction in energy consumption (kWh). This is largely due to increased remote working as a result of the pandemic



Over **£0.5** million of value for money savings were realised through streamlining SDS procurement, making more efficient use of public finances.



Enterprise IS (EIS) generated savings of **£3.5m** on Microsoft Licensing Renewal over a four year period on behalf of SDS, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and South of Scotland Enterprise.



The EIS Service Desk maintained its achievement of a two star 'proactive' rating in its Service Desk Institute Audit.

## Case study: **SDS scoops prestigious UK award**

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) was announced as the winner of the UK EFQM Excellence Award at the annual British Quality Foundation (BQF) Awards 2021.

This headline award recognises and celebrates SDS's 'organisation-wide dedication to excellence' and follows on from SDS being awarded a 7-star recognition by European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) in spring 2021.

BQF Excellence Award judges emphasised that SDS "demonstrated a people-focused culture with high levels of investment in their staff", adding that the organisation "had a very clear strategic direction but were still able to pivot to respond to government calls to 'respond, reset, restart and recover' the economy."

The EFQM model is used by the best organisations in more than 40 countries, from Colombia to New Zealand, from BMW to Bosch and the UN to Huawei.

Allowing organisations to achieve success by measuring where they are on the path towards excellence, the model helps them understand the gaps and viable solutions available, empowering them to progress and significantly improve performance.

Karen Leftley, President of BQF said;

"The focus of SDS on direction, execution and results, as fostered by their understanding and implementation of the EFQM model is exceptional.

"Congratulations to the whole team at SDS. We are excited to continue to work with SDS to promote excellence throughout our other member companies."



**Callum Rae and Julie Riley from SDS with HRH Princess Royal**

**Skills Development Scotland**

1st Floor, Monteith House  
11 George Square  
Glasgow G2 1DY

[www.sds.co.uk](http://www.sds.co.uk)

