

The Partnership

Glasgow Works (GW) was established in late 2006 succeeding the existing 'Welfare to Work' (WtW) forum. This forum existed to integrate public sector agencies with each other and with the private sector in order to provide an improved, joined up service creating a continuum of service for people. It was recognised that no single organisation could resolve Glasgow's long-term, health-related unemployment; co-operation was needed between social workers, health professionals, employment advisers, training organisations, etc, to create the necessary range of support for individuals with complex needs.

In 2006 Glasgow was successful in its bid to become a 'City Strategy Pathfinder'. The present GW board includes the original WtW organisational members, an independent chair and an independent academic expert. The membership has progressed in order to include the employer coalition representing the business community as well as the public sector. The partnership's aims are:

1. To streamline the decision making processes in relation to employability in Glasgow.
2. To change the way in which employment services are delivered in the city - fewer individual contracts/grant-funding relationships, fewer organisations who deliver support, and, a full range of customer support from 'job-ready' to the very beginnings stages.
3. To create better, more attractive offers to employers - helping to supply people for vacancies and helping to resource specific training that matches the requirements of vacancies.



The Challenges

Strategy

The strategy challenges that GW has faced involve streamlining decision making, changing delivery infrastructure and dealing with specific employability issues.

The economic downturn has also created challenges for GW who is observing a change in the labour market. There are increasing numbers of people currently seeking work who have a solid work history, experience, qualifications etc. This is potentially a concern for those less skilled job-seekers.

Partners

David Coyne, Executive Director of Glasgow Works, reports his most challenging moment to be when the procurement process began. David and his team communicated to all the relevant organisations in the city, including many small voluntary organisations, that the grant programmes they were used to accessing no longer existed. These organisations were told that large contracts would be replacing this system, and that they may or may not become a subcontractor for these contracts. This was particularly challenging because lobbying took place by organisations who believed themselves to be a special case warranting different treatment. This was compounded by adverse press coverage reporting homeless projects shutting down and other similar situations.

Membership

GW's membership represents a large section of the employability community. On occasion a dialogue takes place to determine the appropriateness of inviting further organisations to become members. The most recent organisation under consideration was the Glasgow Housing Association (GHA).

The Solutions

Strategy

GW's strategy has remained constant since their conception. The partnership is attempting to streamline decision-making by facilitating existing policy groups to communicate with each other, and work together, more effectively.

Endeavouring to change the delivery infrastructure in Glasgow, GW has assembled an investment fund incorporating money from the DWP, Fairer Scotland Fund, NHS, City Council and Europe. With this fund they went out to tender with a public procurement exercise to appoint 5 contractors. These contracts are now live and will be until 2010.

Sub groups have been set up to deal with specific employability issues: employer engagement, More Choices More Chances, Black & Minority Ethnic policy, child poverty and mental health.

GW have chosen to maintain their strategy in the face of the current economic downturn. Their hope is that the labour market will begin to improve by the end of 2009 by which time a person who is currently unfit for work may be job-ready with experience, and so be attractive to employers.

Partners

David Coyne and his team dealt with the challenges of the procurement process by “(working) hard to keep the line on what we thought was the right way to do it – it was difficult.”



Membership

GHA are a large public sector entity who have an interest in employability as the majority of their tenants are unemployed. There is a correlation between social rented housing, worklessness and the benefits trap. No formal approach has been made from GW to the GHA and there is currently no intention to review the formal membership. However work is occasionally carried out by GW in conjunction with the GHA and other organisations.

The Impact

Customers

GW reports many and varied benefits to customers as a result of the partnership as follows:

- The services contracted allow more people who have considerable barriers to work to enter the pathway towards work.
- As many resources are focussed towards early engagement outreach to particularly disadvantaged groups, GW are beginning to see an increased number of BME customers, incapacity benefit claimants, lone parents and the long-term unemployed.

GW assumes that one in five people who engage in the early stages of the programme will progress to employment. To benefit the other four people GW designs an early-stage intervention process including incentivising organisations to work with them. This ensures the person gains with something concrete (e.g. referral to counselling, debt advice, etc) even if it is not progression towards work. Prior to the creation of GW much of the funding available was based on job outcomes therefore these four in five people have received little or no support.

Employers

GW's aim to create better, more attractive offers to employers is appreciated by many. In Glasgow, even with many recent redundancies, employers often find it difficult to recruit people to fit their posts. GW provides awareness raising, short training courses and other approaches to assist with local recruitment needs.

Support Required

David Coyne reports that “since we got on the Pathfinder programme I think there's been less direct relationship between our partnership and the Scottish Government ... the Scottish Government are there in the background; they are very supportive when we ask for help and it's really useful to have a kind of local team, our local civil servants there to help us.”

David also reports to have found the links with the Workforce Plus team, the National Delivery Group (NDG) and various NDG working groups “enormously beneficial”. It is David's view that “out of a learning network environment you can form these kind of bilateral relationships where you go and directly try and learn specific things”.

Next Steps

The next steps of the Glasgow Works partnership are:

- To continue to radically change the way employment services are delivered in Glasgow.
- To recognise the effect of the economic downturn on employability and establish additional measures to assist the shorter term unemployed.
- To develop an improved rapid response to redundancy situations.
To develop the process of re-employment to become more sophisticated.