

Written submission from Skills Development Scotland to the Public Audit Committee, dated 18 June 2014

Thank you for writing to Andrew Livingstone, Director of Finance & Audit at Skills Development Scotland (SDS), to request supplementary evidence following our appearance before the Public Audit Committee on 28 May. Mr Livingstone has asked me to respond on his behalf.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and the Members of the Committee for inviting SDS to provide evidence on Audit Scotland's Section 23 Report on Modern Apprenticeships. We very much welcomed the contributions and positive comments made by Members of the Committee. We will take their comments on board in our programme of continuous improvement for the delivery of Modern Apprenticeships (MAs).

The Committee requested the following supplementary information:

Age profile for Modern Apprenticeships for individuals aged over 25 years

Please refer to the table below which provides the number of MA starts in 2013-14 who were 25 years and over when they commenced their training.

	Age at start (years)				Grand Total
MA starts	25-35	36-45	46-55	56+	
Total	2467	1533	1097	314	5411

Objectives of the Modern Apprenticeship programme and the relative priority of each objective

SDS's role in Modern Apprenticeships is primarily to administer the funding for training on behalf of the Scottish Government and ensure Scottish Government programme priorities are met. The Scottish Government's annual Letter of Guidance to SDS sets out the priorities for MAs in the coming year. The 2013-14 letter¹ states the following:

"7.5. SDS should provide 25,000 new starts in 2013-14. Within the programme, the majority of places should be allocated to young people aged 16-24 across all sectors with a particular focus on 16-19 year olds. For those 25+, SDS should continue to offer MA opportunities in key and supporting sectors."

16-19 year olds have been prioritised in terms of start allocations within these objectives.

What work, if any, SDS is undertaking with the Scottish Government to develop outcome measures to assess the long-term benefits of Modern

¹ http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/641795/sds_letter_of_guidance_2013-14.pdf

Apprenticeships

SDS has been working with the Scottish Government through a *Joint Programme Board* to develop long-term outcome based measures and approaches to assess the long term benefits of MAs. The primary purpose of the Board is to oversee a programme of work relating to the support we provide employability services in Scotland. As a result of this joint approach, the Scottish Government is now working to seek appropriate UK legislation to allow greater data sharing between SDS and HMRC and DWP, which could then allow long term MA outcomes to be tracked going forward.

SDS has already undertaken work to consider the benefits of participation with both employers and individuals. The employer survey included questions on impact on the business (including productivity, improved product/service quality) and the individual survey sought responses on post-6 months completion in terms of employment and other benefits such as career progression and impacts on skills and abilities. The survey responses can be found on our corporate website at:

<http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/resources/research-and-evaluation/>

The employer survey was supplemented by a bespoke analysis of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) 2012 Employer Perspectives Survey. The UKCES survey was designed to provide a UK-wide picture of employer perspectives of, and experiences in, the recruitment and skills landscape. Plans to update the surveys are included in our Evaluation & Customer Research Plan 2013-16². As members will be aware, surveys of this nature are expensive and thus the work outlined above with the Scottish Government is intended to provide a comprehensive and cost-effective means of monitoring and measuring long term impact.

Work SDS is undertaking with awarding bodies and QA accreditation to improve quality assurance arrangements including good practice, and agreeing who is responsible for acting on and reporting concerns about training provider performance

SDS is responsible for monitoring training provider service levels and taking action to address any concerns. In particular SDS assesses providers against SDS Provider Service Quality Standards which are focussed on the needs of apprentices and their employers. The Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) – not SDS - is responsible for accrediting vocational qualifications offered across Scotland, including Scottish Vocational Qualifications undertaken as part of MA training, and approving awarding bodies who wish to award industry specific qualifications. SDS and SQA have a data sharing agreement in place which enables both organisations to share information they hold on apprentices which aids in tracking training provider performance.

We have plans in place to work with all awarding bodies relevant to MAs to share data and consider roles and responsibilities and good practice. The approach

² http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/824363/evaluation_and_customer_research_plan_2013-16.pdf

requires careful consideration given the legal issues inherent in data sharing arrangements.

I hope the information provided is useful for the Committee Members. Should you require further information please do not hesitate to email me at corporate.affairs@sds.co.uk.

Yours sincerely

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