

PRESS RELEASE

PARTNERSHIP TACKLES UNEMPLOYMENT IN HIGHLANDS

13 August 2009

A fresh commitment has been made by key public agencies and businesses in the Highlands to work together to support people who are being worst affected by rising unemployment.

Economic and health consequences of joblessness were discussed at a Scottish Council for Development and Industry (SCDI) and NHS Highland event in Inverness for business and civic leaders. Preventing a 'lost generation' of young people missing out on job opportunities and supporting people with disabilities and health problems into work are high priorities.

Principal speaker Alastair Macdonald of Jobcentre Plus Scotland highlighted that the UK Government has created a £1 billion Future Jobs Fund to which local authorities and other organisations can bid to create around 150,000 new jobs for young people and jobseekers. The Highlands were encouraged to bring forward proposals for the next round of funding.

Alastair Macdonald, Customer Service Director of Jobcentre Plus Scotland, said:

"I am delighted to have been given the opportunity to speak to SCDI members in Inverness about the additional support Jobcentre Plus has to offer employers and jobseekers in the current economic climate.

"I am particularly encouraged by the commitment from key agencies including NHS Highland, Highland Council and other key employers to work with us building on the success of Local Employment Partnerships and in particular tackling the rising numbers of young unemployed people.

"One of a series of measures Jobcentre is introducing is a Future Jobs Fund which will involve working with partners to create new jobs for young people from October 2009.

"Nearly 3000 new jobs have already been identified in Scotland and we will build on the excellent existing partnerships to ensure that we have opportunities for young people across the Highlands."

Following the event, three new businesses signed up for NHS Highland's Healthy Working Lives Awards which promote health and well being in the workplace, and thinking about how more work opportunities can be made available to people with disabilities or health problems.

Dr Roger Gibbons, Chief Executive, NHS Highland, said:

"We know that generally work is good for health and that being out of work has a negative effect on health and wellbeing. Being unemployed is a major cause of poverty and inequality which brings with it greater risk of ill health. NHS Highland is committed to working with Jobcentre Plus, our other partners and businesses to support people to get back to work and to ensure that work is a healthy place to be."

Gareth Williams, SCDI Highlands and Islands Manager, added:



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“UK unemployment is predicted to go on rising and the Highlands cannot be immune. It was encouraging that public sector and business leaders agreed to work closely together to explore opportunities to support people who are being especially badly affected and ensure that the Highlands have a high-skilled, healthy workforce for future economic opportunities.”

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