

Flexible Workforce Development Fund



College Case Studies

Introduction

The college sector in Scotland has welcomed the opportunity to administer and deliver the Scottish Government's £10 million Flexible Workforce Development Fund (FWDF). The fund has allowed colleges to build on existing partnerships with employers and form new links with eligible businesses.

Launched in autumn 2017 as part of the Apprenticeship Levy, the FWDF in Scotland supports levy-paying employers to undertake training and development which will increase productivity, fill identified skills gaps, upskill and retrain the existing workforce.

The work colleges have undertaken with levy-paying organisations has positively contributed towards the achievement of significant economic impact and increased productivity as a result of training to support public, private and third sector organisations, supported through the FWDF.

The establishment and continuation of the FWDF has stimulated college engagement with a broader range of levy-paying companies. This has led to creating sustainable future relationships with these employers where they did not previously exist.

The fund has enabled levy-paying customers to flex their training budgets to support a broader range of staff. In many cases, staff supported through this fund would otherwise not have had any other opportunities for Continuous Professional Development or workforce development support.

The college sector is pleased to continue to exclusively deliver and administer the FWDF for year two of the programme. The additional benefits for employers in year two include an increase in the cap for levy-payers and the option for businesses to utilise some of the funding in their supply chain.

Ayrshire College

Spirit Aerospace Ltd is one of the world's largest Tier 1 aerostructures suppliers. Their plant based at Glasgow Prestwick Airport manufactures leading and trailing edges for Airbus and Boeing aircraft.



Unprecedented growth in the global aerospace market has created new opportunities for this Ayrshire business and the FWDF is assisting the company to develop the agility and technical skills to respond to these opportunities.

The Spirit team utilised the FWDF to part-fund a vocational trainer based on-site at Prestwick. The Ayrshire College trainer delivered a range of technical programmes designed to strengthen the current staff skill levels and refresh existing manufacturing skills.

Approximately 300 staff members have been trained since January 2018 on a wide range of courses including sheet metal work, handling composite materials, assembly techniques, understanding blueprints, general maths and measuring. The content of each course was aligned with the training delivered in other Spirit plants in the USA to ensure consistent approaches and techniques were being used across the globe.

The FWDF facilitated the delivery of an employer focused training solution. Relationships between Ayrshire College and Spirit have grown into a true training partnership, delivering inclusive growth. Both organisations continue to collaborate on future skills requirements and are currently working together on a gender action plan.

Borders College

Staff at the Scottish Public Pensions Agency (SPPA) in Tweedbank recently completed WorldHost (the principles of customer service) training delivered by Borders College through the FWDF.

This has given their staff the skills and knowledge necessary to deliver excellent customer service at the agency.



Penelope Cooper, Chief Executive of SPPA, said:

“Investing in our people is a key priority for our organisation, ensuring staff have the right skills to deliver pension services to our 500,000 pension scheme members.”

“I am delighted that we have been able to work with Borders College to deliver this qualification which forms part of our continual staff development ensuring we provide focused learning and development opportunities to benefit our customer service. Staff who completed this qualification should be extremely proud of their achievements.”

Susan Rennie, Business Skills Manager at Borders College, said:

“SPPA are a very forward-thinking organisation with a real commitment in the development of their staff. Delivering these courses is invaluable to strengthening working relationships in the development of their workforce.”

City of Glasgow College

G1 Group, Scotland's largest hospitality group, identified a need for training including butchery, fishmongery, patisserie, cultural food and gluten free food preparation. This would assist G1 with addressing the skills gaps in their existing workforce and assist with succession planning for chefs.



The company works across a wide range of activities from fine dining restaurants and boutique hotels to state-of-the-art nightclubs, cinemas and casinos. City of Glasgow College, with its extensive catering training facilities and experienced body of staff, was well placed to help meet this need.

With G1 Group having identified the training needs, City of Glasgow College worked with them to put together a training plan and schedule. Training was then delivered at the college's new City Campus, which has purpose-built catering training facilities. G1 staff were able to attend training, supervised by staff with many years of catering experience, and certificated by the college through the Faculty of Lifestyle and Leisure. For G1 Group, it has filled its identified skills gap, helped with succession planning, boosted staff motivation, and provided access to state-of-the-art kitchen training facilities and experienced staff.

This programme has improved college links with industry, enhanced staff awareness of current industry best practice and formed a new partnership opportunity with G1 for future projects.

Fiona Armour, G1 Group's Head of HR and Reward, said that the pilot programme *"...was a great success and the feedback from candidates on the training courses was positive throughout."*

Dumfries and Galloway College

Brown Brothers Ltd is one of the UK's largest cooked and sliced meat producers. One of the company's key production sites is in Kelloholm, in Upper Nithsdale of Dumfries & Galloway, employing some 600 people.

Following some major investment in the production facilities in 2017, new staff were taken on. The FWDF could not have come at a better time.

Dumfries & Galloway College worked with Brown Brothers Ltd and People1st to put together the right training to give the new team leaders the correct skills to give all new employees the best support in their new roles from day one. Some 20 mentors and team leaders went through either the People1st Introduction to Effective Training or the Group Training Certificate course.

Samantha Rae said:

"I found this programme very useful as I am a new team leader. I learned how to train others and gained a lot more confidence."

This was echoed by Sara Britton, Training Co-ordinator for Brown Brothers Ltd:

"The feedback from staff has been really positive and the training has been really beneficial and informative. Key learning outcomes for all of them have been increased confidence, becoming a better listener, an increased ability to explain things more clearly and to pay more attention to the trainees' needs."



Edinburgh College

Edinburgh College has teamed up with leading children's charity Barnardo's Scotland to deliver professional training to enhance the skills of its leadership across central Scotland.



Barnardo's Scotland has tapped into the FWDF and enlisted the help of Edinburgh College to create a new leadership and management training programme.

The college spent time with the Barnardo's Scotland team to assess which areas of its operations in central Scotland would benefit the most from the college's wide range of professional training options.

Thirty members of Barnardo's Scotland staff have since undertaken two training modules – Leading and Motivating a Team and Understanding Performance Management. The programme is aimed at employees in supervisory and line management roles.

Each member of staff who completed the programme received an Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) Level 3 Award certifying they had undergone CPD and have been trained to manage effectively and aid the workplace development of others.

Lucy Finn, Assistant Director of People at Barnardo's Scotland, said:

"Barnardo's Scotland was one of the first organisations to apply for and access the FWDF and the charity has definitely benefitted from the training delivered by Edinburgh College.

"The members of staff who achieved their ILM Level 3 Award have praised the training and have found it very useful in their line of work. Without the FWDF we would not have been able to provide the additional professional training to our staff. We would definitely encourage other organisations to think about accessing the fund."

Fife College

Fife College's Business Development team has engaged with local levy-paying companies to assess their training needs and put together tailored packages of funded training to meet their specific staff development needs.



The FWDF has provided an excellent opportunity for the college to reinforce existing employer relationships while identifying and developing new ones. The fund has directly contributed to training that would not have taken place in the absence of funded support and, in some cases, it has allowed employers to access training more quickly than was originally budgeted, helping them to fast-track the achievement of their business objectives.

One company that has benefitted from the fund is James Donaldson & Sons Ltd, a local family timber engineering business established in Fife over 150 years ago which now has close to 800 employees and operates in over 30 facilities throughout the UK. The company has used the funding to invest in a six-day ILM qualification in Leadership and Management through Fife College's Andrew Carnegie Business School.

Neil Donaldson, Non-Executive Chairman of James Donaldson & Sons Ltd, said:

"Our company has been around for over 150 years, and we plan to be here for the long term. Our staff are the next generation of leaders of our company and we are delighted to be able to offer them our full support for the training that they are undertaking."

Forth Valley College

The FWDF will allow Tillicoultry Quarries to train more than 100 of their staff.

The family owned firm which has 11 sites across Central Scotland specialising in hard rock and sand quarries, recycling and asphalt and concrete plants, is building a strong relationship with Forth Valley College, who will be delivering training at their sites in IOSH – Managing Safely and Manual Handling.

The firm which employs 155 staff, first heard about the FWDF when Human Resource Manager, Sophia Marshall, and Health, Safety and Environmental Manager, Stuart Caine, attended a Jobs Fair at Alloa Town Hall.



Sophia Marshall said:

“As we pay the Apprenticeship Levy, we were very interested to find out how we could work together to access the fund and help enhance our staff training levels. It will allow us to offer more training on-site to our staff and we are really excited about giving our staff a great opportunity to develop and also for us to strengthen our relationship with Forth Valley College.”

Stuart Caine added:

“We have a great workforce, but our average age is just under 50 years of age, so we need to look at ‘growing our own’ and developing younger Modern Apprentices for the future. We hope we can link up with Forth Valley College to plug the gaps across our entire workforce that exist in our training and the FWDF has started us on the road to doing this.”

Glasgow Clyde College is working in partnership with Specsavers on the development and delivery of workforce development programmes for staff employed in their retail outlets across Scotland.



Through the FWDF, Glasgow Clyde College is currently delivering six bespoke courses in Customer Excellence in locations such as Glasgow, Aberdeen and Edinburgh.

The courses have been designed specifically to match the development needs of around 60 members of staff providing frontline services to Specsavers customers. Customer Service is one of Specsavers' three core principles. Their store-based teams interact with customers every day; it is their awareness of and ability to provide great Customer Service that underpins customer loyalty and advocacy for the Specsavers brand.

In addition, Specsavers identified a need to develop skills in British Sign Language (BSL) amongst their customer service teams which will contribute to their efforts to improve the level of customer care for people with hearing difficulties. Workers from 10 branches are in the process of completing the SQA certified British Sign Language (BSL): An Introduction (SCQF Level 3). This unit is designed to enable candidates to develop basic proficiency in BSL and will enable them to use BSL in simple situations to produce, respond to and receive communication about everyday personal matters.

The FWDF has also played a significant role in enabling Glasgow Clyde College to engage with and develop a positive relationship with the company. The college and Specsavers are now exploring the possibility of working in partnership to contribute to the development of a Modern Apprenticeship framework that is suited to the job role of Optical Technician within this sector.

Moray College UHI

Discussions on the FWDF with Moray employers established that there was a demand for bespoke, added value employee development – training which would support an increase in employee motivation and confidence, and therefore productivity.



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In consultation with the organisations and academic teams, Moray College UHI developed a suite of leadership and management courses designed to be delivered as stand-alone or as a wider programme.

The first organisation who undertook this programme was Walkers of Aberlour who identified a group of 12 employees from various departments in the organisation to undertake the programme. The courses were delivered so that the learning could be applied across the programme and included:

- Management and Leadership
- Teamwork
- Assertiveness Techniques
- Stress Management and Time Management
- Influencing Techniques
- Negotiating Techniques
- Conflict and Mediation
- Internal Communications.

Walkers of Aberlour said:

“This was the first time we have carried out leadership development with a mixed group from across the business and the results are hugely positive with each delegate clearly demonstrating their personal benefit from the course. I very much look forward to developing this partnership with UHI, it is a great example of higher education and employers working in collaboration.”



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Contact Us

01786 892100 | policy@collegesscotland.ac.uk | @CollegesScot | www.collegesscotland.ac.uk

Colleges Scotland, Argyll Court, Castle Business Park, Stirling, FK9 4TY



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