

Back on Track: Retraining in the Covid-19 Era

FAST FACTS

- Scotland is facing an unemployment crisis “on a scale not seen since the 1980s”.
- 736,500 people in Scotland have been furloughed.
- Vacancies are falling and CV-Library has suggested there had been an 80% drop on this time last year in Aberdeen and a 67% drop in Glasgow.
- Prior to the pandemic Scotland’s business density level was behind only the North East within the UK.
- While the full impact of Covid-19 and lockdown on the labour market remains unclear, government should act now to prepare for the worst.
- The Scottish Government cannot work in isolation and must embrace new partnership with industry, councils, the third sector and the unions.
- Retraining and upskilling programmes should be developed in conjunction with industry and there is an opportunity to use the Scottish National Investment Bank to help identify such possibilities.
- Government retraining programmes must adapt for the lockdown generation. While there are huge opportunities from embracing technology, there will be data, device and space barriers to some who need that help most.
- The Scottish Government should hugely expand its programme of Individual Training Accounts. The current offering covers less than 1% of the number of people furloughed.

CONTEXT

While the full extent of future job losses is unknown, it is clear that the pandemic has had, and will continue to have, a huge impact on the labour market in Scotland. Economy Secretary Fiona Hyslop has warned that Scotland is “facing unemployment on a scale not seen the 1980s”.¹

As the furlough scheme begins to wind down, each new day brings additional news of job losses. The following are only a few examples, but highlight the breadth of sectors affected:

- Up to 5,000 staff from Upper Crust owner SSP Group²
- More than 300 Menzies Aviation workers at Glasgow and Edinburgh airports³
- Centrica to cut 5,000 jobs⁴
- Macdonald Hotels to cut 1,800 jobs⁵
- Daily Record owner Reach to cut 550 jobs.⁶
- Apex Hotels expects job losses⁷
- Crieff Hydro to cut 241 jobs⁸
- Rolls Royce’s Renfrewshire plant to cut 700 jobs⁹
- Pitlochry Festival Theatre to cut 42 jobs¹⁰
- Breast Cancer Now cutting 60 jobs, including in Edinburgh and Glasgow.¹¹
- 4,500 North Sea jobs have been lost, with more expected.¹²
- Barrhead Travel to cut jobs.¹³
- Boots to cut 4,000 jobs across the UK.¹⁴
- Bus builder Alexander Dennis to cut 650 jobs.¹⁵

While the job losses increase, there continues to be a decline in vacancies and opportunities. All of which point to a looming unemployment crisis.

¹ <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/coronavirus-in-scotland-unemployment-crisis-will-be-worst-since-eighties-says-fiona-hyslop-gs2zn36b9>

² <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-53230682>

³ <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/318-glasgow-edinburgh-airport-workers-22203848>

⁴ <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/scottish-gas-owner-slash-5000-22173900>

⁵ <https://www.insider.co.uk/news/macdonald-hotels-talks-staff-over-22173667>

⁶ <https://news.stv.tv/scotland/daily-record-owner-reach-to-cut-550-jobs-as-advertising-falls-top>

⁷ https://www.heraldscotland.com/business_hq/18508075.scots-hotel-group-apex-cut-jobs-amid-devastating-impact-covid-19/

⁸ <https://scottishfinancialnews.com/article/crieff-hydro-announces-241-job-cuts>

⁹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-52909550>

¹⁰ <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/local/perth-kinross/1355945/pitlochry-festival-theatre-forced-to-make-half-its-staff-redundant-due-to-furlough-changes/>

¹¹ <https://thirdforcenews.org.uk/tfn-news/scots-jobs-losses-expected-at-leading-charity>

¹² <https://www.energyvoice.com/oilandgas/north-sea/246053/heartbreak-as-new-figures-suggest-north-sea-job-losses-surpass-4500/>

¹³ <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/business-consumer/barrhead-travel-announces-job-cuts-22312703>

¹⁴ <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/lifestyle/money/boots-cut-more-4000-jobs-22328359>

¹⁵ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-business-53558309>

At the start of the year the Scottish Government acted fast; implemented change; and thought the unthinkable to ensure our health system could cope with the potential threat of Covid-19. As we move out of lock-down and restore freedoms, that same focus must now turn to unemployment.

BACKGROUND

Prior to the current Covid-19 crisis the Scottish economy was already facing strains. As the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery¹⁶ notes:

“the Scottish economy grew 0.7% in 2019, significantly below trend, while business investment had fallen 13%.”

However, despite this unemployment remained low:

“Scotland’s labour market continued to perform strongly over 2019 with unemployment remaining around 4% and close to record low levels and high employment.”

The coronavirus and subsequent lockdown blew the positive story about employment levels out the water. The Scottish Government’s Economic Brief for July¹⁷ noted:

“The unemployment rate in the 3 months to April was 4.6%, however the claimant count almost doubled between March and May to a rate of 7.8%, signalling that unemployment has risen and incomes have fallen.

“Alongside this, survey data signal that labour demand has continued to fall sharply in June, albeit to a lesser extent than in April and May, while a sharp rise in staff availability signals that redundancies have increased.”

According to HMRC, at 15 July the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme had furloughed 736,500 Scottish workers. 155,000 self-employed people in Scotland were also supported through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.¹⁸

Although the furlough scheme kept some people in work during lockdown, as the July report noted, Scotland’s claimant count has increased sharply since March. In May the claimant count was 217,600 (up 20,000 over the month and over 100,000 since March.)¹⁹

Fraser of Allander has highlighted²⁰ that it will take less than 20% of those furloughed to lose their jobs for the unemployment rate to more than double.

The Fraser of Allander Addleshaw Goddard Scottish Business Monitor for July 2020²¹ also indicated that 12% of businesses that had furloughed staff expected to have a large decrease in the number they employed over the next 6 months with an additional 43% of businesses reporting a small expected decrease.

As different sectors have experienced different impacts from the pandemic, the fallout varies across the country.

The Scottish Government’s economic briefing for June looked at regional exposure and resilience in the labour market across Scotland.²²

It highlighted that local authorities that are rural or mainly rural have slightly higher shares of jobs in the most-exposed sectors. However, the number of jobs in the most exposed sectors is highest in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Fife. The following two

¹⁶ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/towards-robust-resilient-wellbeing-economy-scotland-report-advisory-group-economic-recovery/>

¹⁷ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/monthly-economic-brief-july-2020/>

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-government-supports-nearly-900000-jobs-across-scotland>

¹⁹ <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/research-and-analysis/2020/07/monthly-economic-brief-july-2020/documents/monthly-economic-brief/monthly-economic->

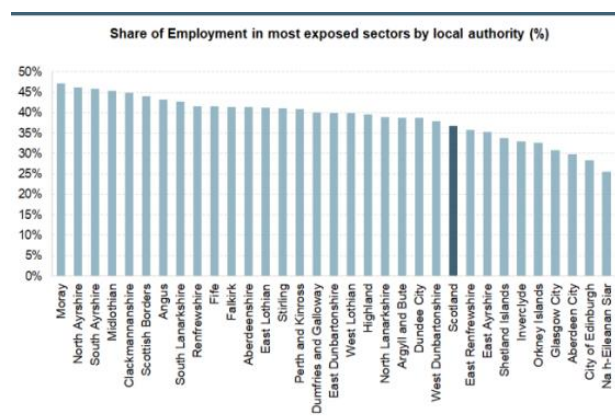
<brief/govscot%3Adocument/monthly-economic-brief.pdf>

²⁰ <https://fraserofallander.org/scottish-economy/overview-of-todays-labour-market-statistics/>

²¹ <https://www.addleshawgoddard.com/globalassets/insights/general/scottish-business-monitor-summer-2020/scottish-business-monitor-q2-2020.pdf>

²² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/monthly-economic-brief-2/pages/5/>

charts from the briefing illustrate the different risks to employment across council areas:



Area	Number of jobs in sectors most exposed to COVID-19 risks
Scotland	958,000
Glasgow City	128,000
City of Edinburgh	100,000
Fife	57,500
North Lanarkshire	53,500
Aberdeen City	52,500
South Lanarkshire	51,000
Highland	50,000
Aberdeenshire	47,500
Renfrewshire	36,500
West Lothian	30,750
Dundee City	29,250
Perth and Kinross	28,000
Dumfries and Galloway	27,500
Falkirk	27,500
South Ayrshire	22,000
Scottish Borders	21,250
Stirling	20,500
North Ayrshire	20,000
Moray	18,500
Angus	17,000
Argyll and Bute	15,250
East Ayrshire	15,250
Midlothian	14,400
East Lothian	13,500
West Dunbartonshire	12,250
East Dunbartonshire	10,900
Inverclyde	9,350
East Renfrewshire	8,050
Clackmannanshire	6,850
Shetland Islands	5,350
Orkney Islands	4,250
Na h-Eileanan Siar	3,950

As the mounting evidence indicates, while there remain many unanswered questions about the exact level of unemployment that will eventually impact Scotland, the outlook is far from optimistic.

Where are the jobs?

While the scale of job losses to come is unknown, there are already signs of reductions in vacancies. Royal Bank of Scotland's monthly jobs reports have shown falling availability. The July report²³ noted a continued five-month decline in permanent placements; a fall in starting salaries; a reduction in average hourly pay for short-term staff. The falls in both permanent and temporary vacancies have surpassed their respective pre-coronavirus records.

Research from jobs website CV-Library suggested that there had been a 62% fall in job vacancies across the UK in the three months to June compared to the same period last year. Two of the worst affected cities were Aberdeen (down 80%) and Glasgow (down 67%).²⁴

The outlook of job losses and falling opportunities has the potential to create a huge unemployment problem across Scotland.

With vacancies declining, the Scottish Government should work with the business community at identifying where there may be availability and what skills shortages need to be addressed to meet those opportunities.

Scotland is potentially starting from a disadvantaged position due to our lower level of companies. Prior to Covid-19, Scotland was only behind the North East of England when it came to business density in the UK.

Data from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy's business population

²³ <https://www.rbs.com/rbs/news/2020/07/royal-bank-of-scotland-report-on-jobs.html>

²⁴ <https://uk.finance.yahoo.com/news/coronavirus-uk-sees-widespread-fall-in-job-vacancies-050011604.html>

estimates for 2019²⁵ highlighted that while Scotland had 739 businesses per 10,000 adults, the UK average was 1,090, as the table below illustrates.

	Businesses per 10,000 adults				
	Size (number of employees)				
	None *	1-49	50-249	250+	All sizes
United Kingdom	828	254	7	1	1,090
North East	507	181	5	1	694
North West	740	233	6	1	981
Yorkshire and the Humber	734	225	6	1	967
East Midlands	666	237	7	1	912
West Midlands	764	241	6	1	1,012
East of England	911	278	7	1	1,198
London	1,199	333	9	2	1,544
South East	989	277	7	2	1,274
South West	948	262	6	1	1,218
England	877	262	7	2	1,147
Wales	642	214	5	1	862
Scotland	525	208	6	1	739
Northern Ireland	597	229	7	1	834

*Includes sole proprietorships and partnerships with only the self-employed owner-manager(s), and companies with 0 or 1 employees, who are assumed to be employee directors.

GOVERNMENT ACTION

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme/Retention bonus

Data from 15 July²⁶ showed that 736,500 Scots had been furloughed under the job retention scheme. These individuals are still employed, with the UK Government paying 80% of the wage costs, up to a maximum of £2,500 per month.

From 1 July employers were allowed to bring furloughed employees back to work for any

amount of time while still being able to claim the government grant for the hours not worked.

From 1 August the level of the grant will be reduced each month before finally closing on 31st October.²⁷

The UK Government has announced a job retention bonus, whereby it will make a one-off payment of £1,000 to employers for every furloughed employee who remains continuously employed through to the end of January 2021.²⁸

UK Government Plan for Jobs

The UK Government announced a Plan for Jobs in July.²⁹ Some elements are devolved, so cover only England, though the following policies are UK-wide:

- Kickstart Scheme – the policy aims to create hundreds of thousands of high-quality six-month work placements targeted at those aged 16-24 who are on Universal Credit and are deemed to be at risk of long-term unemployment. Funding available for each job will cover 100% of the relevant National Minimum Wage for 25 hours a week, plus the associated employer National Insurance contributions and employer minimum automatic enrolment contributions.
- Expanded Youth Offer – expand and increase the intensive support offered by DWP to young jobseekers, to include all those aged 18-24 in the Intensive Work Search group in Universal Credit.
- Enhanced work search support – doubling the number of work coaches in Jobcentre Plus.
- Job-finding support service – fund private sector capacity to introduce an online, one-to-one job-finding support service for those who

²⁵ Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, "Business Population Estimates For The UK And Regions 2019", October 2019 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/business-population-estimates-2019>

²⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-government-supports-nearly-900000-jobs-across-scotland>

²⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme/changes-to-the->

[coronavirus-job-retention-scheme](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-plan-for-jobs-documents/a-plan-for-jobs-2020)

²⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-plan-for-jobs-documents/a-plan-for-jobs-2020>

²⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-plan-for-jobs-documents/a-plan-for-jobs-2020>

have been unemployed for less than three months.

Scottish Government plans

On 16 July the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture, Fiona Hyslop, gave a statement to the Scottish Parliament outlining the Scottish Government's proposals to address unemployment.³⁰ The statement announced the following policies:

- **Job guarantee scheme for young people**

The Scottish Government has asked Sandy Begbie to develop an implementation plan for a job guarantee scheme, which was one of the key recommendations of the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery (AGER). The AGER report called for a scheme to offer employment, for at least two years, to 16-25 year olds, paid at the Living Wage, with access to training, apprenticeships and the possibility of progression. AGER called for this to be delivered locally but set within a coherent national framework.³¹

- **Retraining scheme**

Fiona Hyslop gave a commitment to *"bring forward proposals for a new retraining offer focused on helping those in sectors where there is the greatest risk of job losses. That new offer will help people to gain the skills that they need to move into new jobs in key growth sectors."* It is expected that the programme will build on the AGER recommendation, as well as the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board report. The latter called for the following training initiatives in its report published on 3 July:³²

- Introduce Apprenticeship Pathway Programmes. Student bursary or industry-aligned training allowance to

attract apprenticeship candidates until industry place becomes available;

- Maximise the flexibility of college and university provision to meet the critical skills needs of employers;
- Scaling up of online learning from universities of high-level skills for those in employment or those seeking employment, targeted towards areas of critical skills demand from employers;
- Re-introduce Transition Training Fund to support training as pathway to a job;
- Support expanded use of virtual learning environment for off-the-job training.

- **Extension of Fair Start Scotland**

Fair Start Scotland is to be extended for a further two years, to March 2023. The service currently provides flexible employment support for unemployed people who have disabilities or health conditions or who face other barriers to moving into work.

Rebuilding Better

On 5 August the Scottish Government unveiled its economic recovery plan, Rebuilding Better. This comprised of its response to the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery (AGER) as well as its response to the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board report.³³ The Scottish Government accepted the recommendations of the AGER and "broadly endorses" the Strategic Board's report. The government's response publications summarize action being taken by the Scottish Government, including the Jobs Guarantee Fund.

Job Start Payment

The Scottish Government's Job Start Payment is also open for applications from 17 August 2020.³⁴ This is a one off £250 payment to help with the costs of starting a new job for people aged 16-24.

³⁰ <http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=12729>

³² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/report-enterprise-skills-strategic-board-sub-group-measures-mitigate-labour->

<market-impacts-covid-19/pages/2/>

³³ <https://www.gov.scot/news/rebuilding-better/>

³⁴ <https://www.gov.scot/news/new-benefit-for-young-people-starting-work>

The upper age limit rises to 25 for care leavers and the payment rises to £400 if the person has a child. The Scottish Government has estimated that the payment will help around 5,000 young people.

Individual Training Accounts³⁵

The Scottish Government has announced Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) designed to help individuals get training they require for a job. People who are unemployed or earn £22,000 or under can apply and receive up to £200 towards the cost of a training course. Up to 14,000 ITA applications will be accepted and the scheme will be placed on hold when this target is met or by 31 October, whichever comes first.

ITAs are part of Skills Development Scotland's Myworldofwork.co.uk, which is the online home for career information and advice.

Retraining is undoubtedly crucial as we move out of lockdown and more people find themselves looking for work. It is, therefore, unfortunate that the scope of the programme is limited. While furloughed individuals can apply, they are only eligible if they meet the earnings ceiling, meaning that many people who find themselves unemployed when the job retention scheme ends will be unable to access this help.

While 14,000 ITA applications are allowed for, that figure is dwarfed by the 736,500 Scots who have been furloughed.

It is regrettable that the availability of the ITAs was not decided in partnership with the business community, which will ultimately provide the jobs; or with local authorities, who will be aware

of the different circumstances affecting different areas of Scotland.³⁶

Tourism funding

On 29 July the Scottish Government announced a £14 million Hotel Recovery Programme, whereby eligible businesses can apply for individual grants of up to £250,000.³⁷

VisitScotland will also deliver £1 million in grants to self-catering businesses that have not received any other Scottish Government COVID-19 support. Eligible businesses can apply for a one-off £10,000 grant.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

We don't yet know the full impact of the coronavirus and lockdown on the labour market in Scotland. Only time will tell which industries and organisations can survive, which can adapt, which can come back to strength as relaxation progresses and which, unfortunately, are lost permanently.

There are different short and long-term implications for the labour market, behavioural unknowns, and the risks a second wave may bring.

However, we cannot wait until we have answers to these questions to start addressing the problem. As with the health crisis at the start of lockdown, we need to prepare now.

Partnership working

There are no easy answers, but it is clear the Scottish Government cannot work in isolation. The Advisory Group on Economic Recovery called for "*urgent action to develop a stronger*

³⁵ <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/news-events/2020/june/individual-training-accounts-to-reopen-in-july/>

³⁶ The following statement on Skills Development Scotland's website explains that the Scottish Government chose the courses: "In light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, this phase of ITAs will be focused on sectors likely to have skills gaps and/or job openings. These sectors have

been identified by Scottish Government based on current economic data and labour market information and will be subject to ongoing review."

<https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/news-events/2020/june/individual-training-accounts-to-reopen-in-july/>

³⁷ <https://www.gov.scot/news/further-funding-for-tourism/>

relationship between business and government on the strategy for Scotland's economic recovery"³⁸ and this has to be a priority.

The business community needs to be involved at the heart of decision making – they are where new jobs are to be found, economic recovery will take place, and tax revenues increase to fund public services.

Local authorities also have to be involved - as the Scottish Government's own economic briefings highlight, the risk to employment varies across the country and councils are better placed to know their area's individual priorities and circumstances. It is worth highlighting that the AGER noted that local authorities should be central to the development of any job-guarantee scheme in partnership with businesses. The Scottish Government should support it, but not lead it.

The third sector needs to be involved – it is already engaged in providing support and advice to those facing unemployment.

Unions need to be utilised for their experience and expertise.

The higher and further education sectors have a role to play in filling the skills gaps but also in developing new partnerships which could support local businesses and jobs.

Karen Betts, CEO of the Scotch Whisky Association, wrote in a blog for Reform Scotland of the need for greater collaboration across sectors in the hope that we might "build back better":

"It will require government to reach into the business community and encourage those who do not normally engage with government to do so. It will require business people to come forward and

offer their skills and experience, even when they are flat out keeping their heads above water and protecting employment. It will require the not-for-profit sector to reach out to new contacts in different ways, rethinking what they can do and inculcating a better, broader understanding of the critical role that they play. There will be different ways of cutting it, but government should act first and fast to create the space for this new kind of interaction; which could be sector by sector and/or issue by issue (and, on issues, skills tops the list)."

Reform Scotland agrees with this sentiment and welcome the commitment in the Scottish Government's economic recovery plan for:

*"A partnership approach with business, trade unions, the third and voluntary sectors, local authorities and our enterprise and skills agencies, that is based on shared ambitions".*³⁹

This partnership working is the essential starting point. Central government does not have a monopoly on all the answers. More voices need to be round the table.

But that partnership working is crucial not just within Scotland, but between the UK and Scottish Governments.

Unemployment is an issue where both governments have a degree of responsibility and are currently engaged in developing policy programmes. For these proposals to be as effective as they can, the UK and Scottish Governments must work in tandem, not against each other. Individuals desperately searching for work have little concern for constitutional politics.

Where are the jobs?

Retraining is crucial, but it is vital to first consider where the job opportunities are, which sectors

³⁸ <https://www.gov.scot/news/working-towards-economic-recovery/>

³⁹ [https://www.gov.scot/publications/economic-recovery-implementation-plan-scottish-government-response-to-the-](https://www.gov.scot/publications/economic-recovery-implementation-plan-scottish-government-response-to-the-advisory-group-on-economic-recovery/)

[advisory-group-on-economic-recovery/](https://www.gov.scot/publications/economic-recovery-implementation-plan-scottish-government-response-to-the-advisory-group-on-economic-recovery/)

have the potential for growth, and therefore what skills and training are required to help people meet those needs. This requires intense and on-going partnership with the business community to identify those needs and opportunities.

In an article for [Reform Scotland's Melting Pot](#), Angrynomics authors Mark Blyth and Eric Lonergan highlighted the potential of the new Scottish National Investment Bank in helping identify such “survivors”.

“Such a Bank, by definition, will have two roles. First, to pick, if not winners, then survivors. What are the key sectors of the Scottish economy that Scotland needs to succeed post-Covid? How can a public Bank take equity stakes in such ventures to ensure that temporary (albeit long-term by recent standards) liquidity problems do not become long-term solvency problems? To gain from the upside of such liquidity provision, the “price” for assistance should come in the form of five-year warrants that grant the government the right to buy equity in the supported businesses, up to an additional 10 per cent, at the same price at which it has injected the equity, at any point in the next five years.”

Using the Scottish National Investment Bank in this way will help those industries capable of weathering the storm, so helping prevent job losses, as well as looking for growth potential.

Data, devices and space – retraining for the lockdown generation

The consequences of the pandemic and lockdown have seen many aspects of work shifting online. Not simply working from home, for those who can, but embracing technology such as Zoom for meetings and connecting with people digitally rather than directly.

Technology brings with it many advantages, and as the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board report suggests, online learning and virtual technology offer new opportunities. It is likely that many interviews will now be conducted online. Support and advice can also be delivered this way.

While relaxation may mean that things gradually shift to “in-person” again, this will take time and due to shielding, some people may be more reluctant to venture out of home into busier public spaces. Embracing technology allows skills to be developed and support provided despite the restrictions of Covid-19.

However, with these opportunities there needs to be a recognition that the shift online requires greater use not just of devices, but access to data and private space which will place many at a disadvantage. The Scottish Government should consider data, devices and access to private space as part of its wider jobs scheme. If people can’t access an interview, they can’t get the job.

Schemes should be developed which look to embrace innovative ideas that help meet those needs and working in partnership with organisations that can help.

For example telecoms company ee currently provides unlimited data to NHS staff.⁴⁰ One of a number of examples of companies supporting NHS staff during the lockdown. Can that same spirit be utilised to help those out of work? The Scottish Government should explore partnerships to ensure those who need to access online support and interviews have the ability to do so.

Private space also needs to be considered. Not everyone has a space where they can work and concentrate at home without interruption. Such space is needed for online training and essential to

⁴⁰ <https://ee.co.uk/nhs-unlimited-data-allowance>

take part in a digital interview. Programmes should be developed at a local level which look to utilise available rooms in public buildings that can be booked out free of charge to individuals with data and a device to enable them to access online interviews. Just as training and support are innovating to shift more online, public policy needs to innovate to ensure those who need that help have the means to access it.

Individual Training Accounts

The Scottish Government has rightly focused its attention on retraining and we look forward to the proposals that the Cabinet Secretary indicated would be published soon.

The AGER and the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board made a number of important recommendations about training. In its response to the Strategic Board's report, the Scottish Government repeated its commitment to "bring forward proposals for a COVID-19 Transition Training Fund".⁴¹ In addition, we would like the Scottish Government to open up Individual Training Accounts well beyond the 14,000 currently allowed for. This limit equates to less than 1% of those currently furloughed. The ITAs allow those who are currently classed as in-work, but furloughed, to access training and start planning ahead in the event they are unable to return to their current work. Such opportunities should be encouraged, not limited.

In addition to vastly extending the numbers, the much needed new partnership-working between businesses and the Scottish Government can help ensure that training programmes covered by the ITAs link up to skills gaps.

Signposting

The UK and Scottish Governments should be commended on the policies they have outlined to date on mitigating the looming jobs crisis. There is also a great deal of on-going good work being done which can be built upon, such as myworldofwork.com, which can help support people entering the labour market, looking to upskill, or those facing redundancy. However, having good resources that are not well signposted or publicised helps no-one. The jobs crisis is likely to impact on people who have not been unemployed before, as well as younger workers who have not yet navigated support paths. It is important that the wide range of support available is well signposted and we would recommend that the Scottish Government has a publicity campaign aimed at ensuring that as many people as possible know what help is available and how to access it. The same spirit that animated its response to the health crisis should now be applied to the economic one.

⁴¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/addressing-labour-market-emergency-scottish-governments-response-report-enterprise-skills-strategic-board-sub-group-measures-mitigate-labour-market-impacts-covid-19/>