

**ROCKET  
SCIENCE**

**Edinburgh Local  
Employability  
Strategy: 2024-  
2026**

February 2024

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# Executive Summary

Rocket Science was commissioned by Capital City Partnership, who chair the Edinburgh Local Employability Partnership, to work with the LEP partners to articulate their strategy for 2024 – 26. The work included a review of the current and emerging context for the LEP's work, a range of detailed interviews with partners and stakeholders, and workshops with the LEP. The strategy will inform the LEP's activity and structure for 2024-2026 and provide the basis for focusing funding to maximise impact.

The landscape of the employability and the employment sector in Edinburgh is complex. There have been several challenges in recent years, including the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, Brexit, and the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. This has changed the landscape of need and provision, and there have been crises that have required a focus on the 'here and now'.

There are skills gaps in Edinburgh, and employers are facing recruitment challenges in the city. There are important gaps in hospitality and retail, social care, and green infrastructure. Young people who are transitioning from schools and colleges into employment or further education require more support than ever before, as many have missed out on important aspects of their personal and technical skill development during the Covid-19 lockdowns of 2019 and 2020. This has required ever stronger collaboration across sectors and between organisations to ensure that both the needs of employees and the requirements of employers are met, and barriers to maintaining employment are reduced.

Poverty in Edinburgh is a significant and growing issue, and, linked to this, there has been a steady increase in the number of people experiencing poor health, and requiring flexible working and appropriate support to access employment. The LEP has a key role to play in helping employers, potential employees, the third sector and local authority services to work together in an integrated, future focused way to respond to this context.

With a background of constrained funding and a recognition of the significant resources that are deployed across a range of relevant services and providers, the main theme of the strategy is 'joining up for high performance'.



This means:

- **Joining up at the strategic level**, ensuring that the LEP strategy aligns with, and is integrated with, the wider city approach to tackling poverty.
- **Joining up around key sectors and developments** to maximise the impact of LEP activity on skills, employment and pay.
- **Joining up around the needs of individual clients** to ensure that those with a range of support needs are supported effectively to reduce barriers to accessing and maintaining good employment.

The LEP partners recognise the importance of ensuring that the LEP remains a space where strategic partners can come together to explore the actions that may be required to address long-term and emerging labour market and economy issues to identify and put in place **long term, multi-agency, co-ordinated responses**. To ensure high performance, there is a need for a clear articulation of the role of each of the partnerships that operates across the city, the relationships between them, and how they integrate and connect with the LEP.

In 2024 – 2026 the LEP will strengthen its influencing role and will use data to monitor and evaluate the reach of services, identifying the extent to which priority groups are being engaged and supported. This data-focused, and data-led approach will ensure more effective co-ordination, better and more timely responses to both high and weak performance among support services, and will help to identify preventative action to address gaps in provision.

There is a need for the LEP to operate at different time scales. These are:

- The **'here and now'** – tackling urgent and priority issues.
- The **long-term** opportunities around major developments across Edinburgh – how will the economy work for those most in need (in terms of jobs, skills, income)?
- **Preventative** action to reduce enhanced longer terms issues and demand.

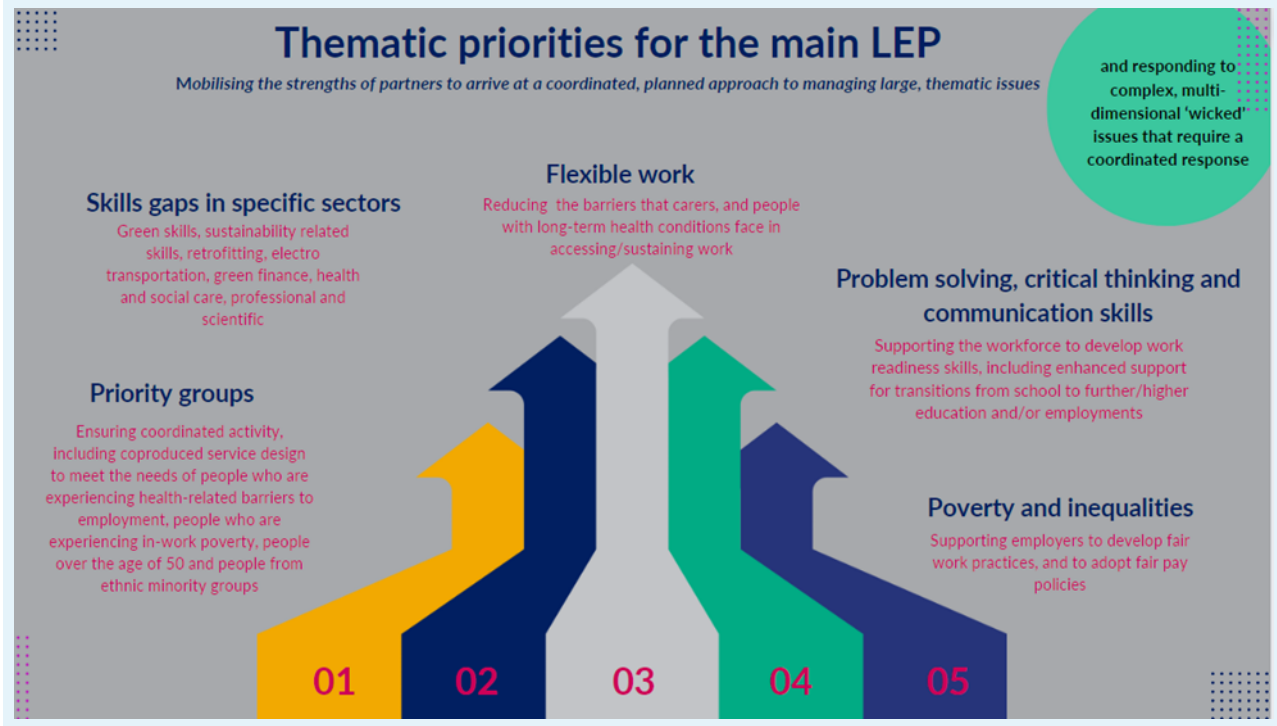
To increase its efficiency and effectiveness, the LEP will be restructured, through the creation of an operational subgroup. This subgroup will be responsible for developing and implementing a commissioning plan to ensure that funded services meet the overarching priorities for LEP. This group will also analyse the performance of funded services, assess the reach and performance of existing services, and use data to identify gaps in provision.



The group will also engage local people in consultation about the effectiveness of current services to better understand the barriers they may face in accessing employment and employment support. The subgroup will ensure that the design of future services embeds [the principles of the Scottish Approach to Service Design](#) by ensuring that people are given a say in the design of services to meet local needs.

Once the operational duties related to funding, commissioning and managing the performance of services is moved into the operational subgroup, the LEP will have more space for members to engage in horizon scanning and future-focused strategic planning.

A summary of the recommended actions, and areas of focus for each of the groups, the LEP and the subgroup is provided below.





A detailed delivery plan will be developed following the launch of this strategy. Undertaking the actions outlined above will ensure that the LEP is able to achieve its vision of ensuring that Edinburgh is a city without barriers to achievement and where a good quality of life is a basic requirement enjoyed by all.

## Foreword

This document sets out the Local Employability Partnership’s strategic plan for 2024 – 2026. The plan sets out who the Local Employability Partnership (LEP) are and outlines the steps that will be required to ensure equitable access to fair, sustainable, high-quality jobs for the people of Edinburgh.

The development of this strategic plan reflects the LEP’s commitment to continuous improvement. LEP members have reflected on what they do well, and what can be done to improve their approach. They have considered ways to build on achievements and continue to add value by creating a structured approach to performance monitoring to draw on the expertise and networks of those involved.

In developing this strategic plan, the Edinburgh LEP have carefully considered their vision and values, and have identified strategic objectives as well as underpinning actions which will guide their work over the coming two years.



Strategic planning such as this is a useful exercise for all organisations and partnerships, but particularly one which exists at a time when the employability sector is responding to the lasting impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, and a continually evolving employment patterns. The strategy has taken into account the challenges and opportunities that exist in Edinburgh as a result of recent societal and economic changes. The LEP remains focused on its commitment to deliver high quality, relevant and targeted support to both employers and employees (current and future) in Edinburgh. What this means in practice is that:

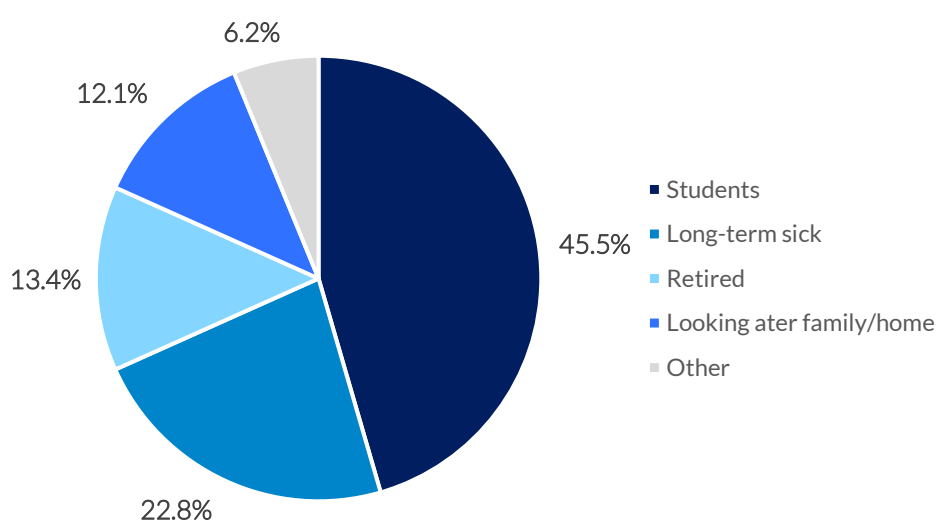
- The LEP has a focus on **improving support for individuals seeking work** and **understanding the needs of employers** who are seeking recruits.
- The LEP seek to **align and join up the different support services across Edinburgh** to create a **coherent 'employability service' for the city**.
- The LEP will strengthen their focus on **actively managing the performance of this service as a whole**, through the effective use of performance data, using this to understand and respond to performance issues.

This strategy outlines the strategic objectives for the LEP in the next two years. This includes a focus on the here and now, and the steps required to tackle urgent and priority issues. This also includes an outline of the LEP's objectives in relation to responding to longer term opportunities to ensure that the economy works well for those most in need, in terms of jobs, skills and income. Finally, the strategy outlines the preventative action that the LEP will take to plan for enhanced responses to longer term issues and demand.

# 1: Background and context to the strategy

## Employment rates and economic inactivity

The employment market in Edinburgh is relatively buoyant. There are high employment rates, where 80.2% of the working age population are known to be economically active. There are low unemployment rates, which were only 2.6% in 2022-2023<sup>1</sup>. However, a further 17.3% were classed as being economically inactive in the same period. These are people who either face barriers to employment that prevent them seeking work, or those that are not currently seeking work for a range of reasons. Figure 2 (below) shows some of the known reasons for economic inactivity in the area<sup>2</sup>



**Figure 1. Reasons for Economic Inactivity** [ Source: Nomis data]

Despite the relatively positive picture in relation to employment rates, there are some inequalities which are acutely affecting those who live and work in Edinburgh, including issues related to underemployment, insecure work, and low paid roles. Therefore, a buoyant employment market tells only part of the story.

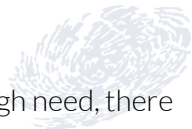
## Poverty and socio-economic deprivation

Levels of poverty and socio-economic deprivation are rising in Edinburgh, as they are across the UK. Rates of claims for Universal Credit are now widely recognised as being good indicators of income and poverty rates. Universal Credit data indicates that the experience of poverty and deprivation in

<sup>1</sup> Nomis Official Census and Labour Market Statistics: *Labour Market Profile – City of Edinburgh*. [Link](#)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

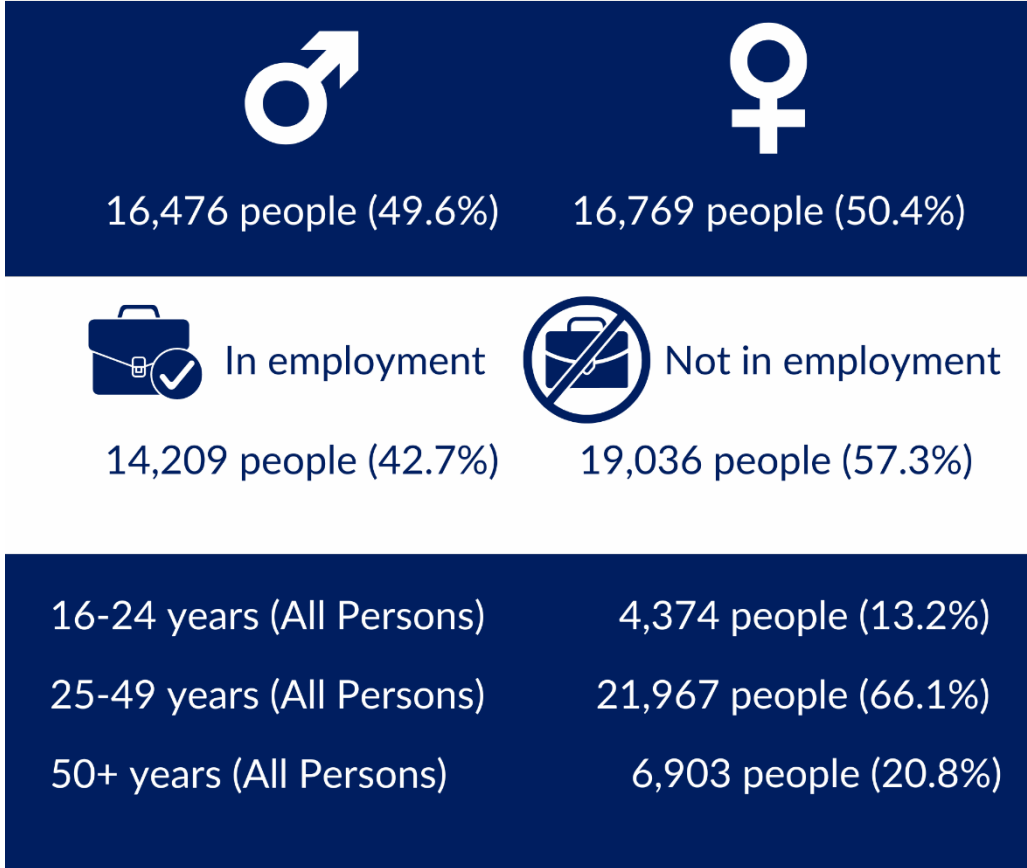




Edinburgh is not equally spread geographically, and although there are known areas of high need, there are intersecting needs spread across the city.

Just under half of universal credit claimants (42%) are experiencing in-work poverty and are reliant on this benefit to top up low wages as Figure 3 (below) indicates.

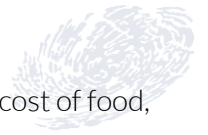
## Universal Credit Claimants



**Figure 2. Demographics of Universal Credit Claimants in Edinburgh [source: City of Edinburgh Council]**

Poverty can act as a barrier to accessing employment as it is often related to complex needs, as well as presenting practical barriers to attending interviews and work preparation. Poverty is also known to present barriers to sustaining employment and can, over time, lead to health complications including having an impact on mental health and wellbeing.

Some residents in Edinburgh are likely to be facing deeper levels of poverty than others. While Universal Credit claims give a picture of the prevalence of low incomes, and the requirement for income top-up, it is also likely that those who feature in Universal Credit statistics are struggling to meet the cost of household bills.



Nomis data (2023) suggests that those on Universal Credit are often unable to meet the cost of food, housing, heat and electricity<sup>3</sup>. It is now widely understood that experiencing poverty and socio-economic inequality can create, and exacerbate health conditions, including stress, anxiety and physical health issues. Often, people who experience poverty also experience health inequalities and have unmet health, social care and welfare support needs<sup>4,5</sup>. In Edinburgh, as with other parts of the UK, there is a need to consider how such support integrates with the offer of employability support.

There is also a further need for qualitative research to be conducted locally to understand the barriers that people face when seeking to navigate multiple services, while also engaging with employability-oriented support. It is likely that those who are unable to meet basic costs of living will need considerable support to access employment. It is important that employability support takes into account the support that may be required to travel to interviews and to travel to work prior to wages being paid. Those dealing with such complex life situations are likely to also require support to manage mental health and wellbeing during the early months of employment, particularly prior to the payment of the first employed wage.

Poverty and barriers to employment relate to broader structural issues that are being experienced across the UK. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) notes that the UK currently has one of the lowest rates of income replacement benefit among their 38 member countries<sup>6</sup>. Inadequate levels of income support can create considerable barriers to people accessing employment, moving them further from the labour market due to the lived experience of social exclusion, stigma, deprivation and homelessness<sup>7</sup>. The LEP has a key role to play in ensuring that all employability services make adequate provision for support during the early stages of employment for those who are transitioning into job roles, including for those who are claiming Universal Credit.

**The strategy needs to address retention and progression in work as well as gaining a job, and specifically about the ability to make progress into better paid, more secure and more fulfilling work.**

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Bannister, L., Matejic, P., Porter, I., Sands, D., Schmuecker, K., Wenham, A., ... & Hughes, A., (2023) An Essentials Guarantee: Reforming Universal Credit to ensure we can all afford the essentials in hard times.

<sup>5</sup> Earwaker, R., & Johnson-Hunter, M. (2023). Unable to escape persistent hardship: JRF's Cost of Living Tracker, summer 2023. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

<sup>6</sup> A full list of OECD member countries can be found at: [Our global reach - OECD](#)

<sup>7</sup> Mcknight, A., and Vaganay, A., (2016) *The strength of the link between income support and activation*. Location: European commission;

Oxford City Council (2015) *Welfare reform team evaluation of the European Social Fund Pilot Project 2014-2015*. Oxford: City council;

Reader, M., Anderson, K., Patrick, R., Reeves, A., and Stewart, K., (2023) *Making work pay? The labour market effects of capping child benefits in larger families*. Location: Centre for analysis of Social Exclusion.



These findings align with the work of the Edinburgh Poverty Commission. The Edinburgh Poverty Commission is an independent group who have been working in partnership since 2018 to identify the actions required to address poverty in Edinburgh. Their work has been supported by The Edinburgh Partnership, and the City of Edinburgh Council. Their final report, published in 2020<sup>8</sup> included the perspectives of over 70 organisations and 1000 people across Edinburgh. The 2020 report outlines that poverty in Edinburgh is widespread, and is being experienced across the city. It notes that almost two thirds of people who are on very low incomes live in areas that are not commonly described as ‘deprived or disadvantaged’. In Edinburgh, inequalities are considered to be entrenched, and increasing, with poverty having risen more than 25% in the last five years. Levels of in-work poverty are similarly rising, and 65% of all children who live in poverty live in households where adults are in paid employment.

When it comes to the current LEP strategy and review, the Edinburgh Poverty Commission’s 2020 report outlines a highly relevant call to action, where it recommends that all public services and affiliated organisations should work in partnership to ensure that all frontline workers are focused, and recognise poverty to be a key issue, placing prevention at the core of all they do. The 2020 report notes that achieving the aim of reducing poverty and ensuring that all people have access to fair work that provides dignity, security and enough money to meet basic needs will require all organisations to work together across the city to develop person-centred approaches. This, they note, is likely to require enough freedom and courage for people to cross professional boundaries where required, to support people to access the right services, at the right time.

Within this, they outline a call to action to ensure that opportunities drive justice, and boost prospects, recognising that in-work poverty is now a widespread issue that requires focused intervention to ensure that employers are providing what workers need to receive fair wages, and promotion prospects. While some of the above is possible to achieve at a city level, the report also notes that issues around low rates of income replacement benefits and low wage rates are structural issues that the city’s partnerships cannot address in isolation, and that require action on the parts of the UK and Scottish Governments.

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<sup>8</sup> Edinburgh Poverty Commission (2020) *Edinburgh Poverty Commission Report October 2020*. Edinburgh: Policy and Sustainability Committee.



These findings, and the proposed direction for the LEP, also aligns with the [City of Edinburgh Council's 2023 'End Poverty in Edinburgh' Annual Progress report](#) which indicates that an estimated 17% of people in Edinburgh were living in poverty in the period up to 2022, which includes 20% of all children. The Edinburgh Poverty Commission has set a target for the city to ensure that all-age poverty falls by 7 percentage points by 2030, and that child poverty requires to fall by 10 percentage points by 2030. Edinburgh's Poverty Strategy 2023 recognises that these are challenging targets that will require well executed policy interventions from the UK Government, Scottish Government, and local partnerships.

At a local level, actions and priorities have been integrated into the work of the Edinburgh Partnership, which feeds into the work of the LEP. The priorities relevant to the LEP's work are that there should be focused activity to ensure that income from work increases, and that people are offered the opportunity to progress into higher paid roles. This includes plans to develop a new Edinburgh Fair Work Charter, and partners involved in the LEP have agreed to work towards the aim of supporting a further 4,150 people into work and learning via employability programmes. The Edinburgh Poverty Strategy 2023 outlines that there are particular groups in Edinburgh who are known to be at particularly high risks of poverty. These include women, people who are in minority ethnic groups and households where someone is disabled. The strategy recommends targeted action on behalf of all providers to ensure that the needs of these groups are met. These priority areas align with the findings of the desk review carried out to inform the LEP's 2024 – 2026 strategy.

### Skills gaps

One of the challenges Edinburgh faces in connecting unemployed people to the labour market is a mismatch between the number of skilled job roles available and the number of people who hold the necessary skills, training and experience. In 2021, 11.9% of the working age population in Edinburgh had low or no qualifications.<sup>9</sup> This was above the Scottish average of 9.7%. At the same time, a high number of job roles in Edinburgh require medium high or high skills levels. There has been a recent reduction in jobs that require low or medium qualification levels in Edinburgh which has increased the barriers that people face to accessing employment when they have no formal qualifications.<sup>10</sup>

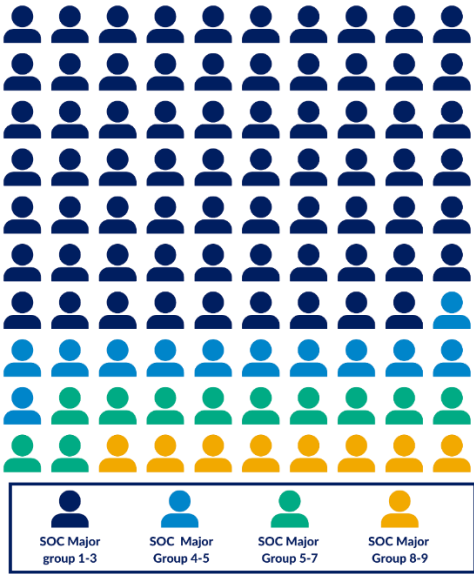
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<sup>9</sup> Scottish Hub For Regional Economic Development (2022). Wellbeing Economy Monitor. <https://regionaleconomicdevelopment.scot/wellbeing-economy-toolkit-2/>

<sup>10</sup> The Scottish Government. (2021). Scotland's Labour Market: People, Places and Regions - Statistics from the Annual Population Survey 2020/21. The Scottish Government. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-labour-market-people-places-regions-statistics-annual-population-survey-2020-21/pages/1/>



It is forecast that in the mid and long term, there will be a growing requirement for skilled workers in Edinburgh who are educated to SCQF level 7 and above.<sup>11</sup> This suggests that there is a requirement for a co-ordinated response involving the further and higher education sector to reduce the barriers that people may face to entering formal education, and to increase access to college and university places for Edinburgh residents. The growth areas are considered to be within managerial, professional and associate occupations<sup>12, 13</sup>. The reduction in lower skilled job roles in Edinburgh is visually represented in Figure 3 below.



**KEY:**

- Socmajor group 1: managers, directors and senior officials
- Socmajor group 2: professional occupations
- Socmajor group 3: associate professional and technical occupations
- Socmajor group 4: administrative and secretarial occupations
- Socmajor group 5: skilled trades occupations
- Socmajor group 6: caring, leisure and other service occupations
- Socmajor group 7: sales and customer service occupations
- Socmajor group 8: process, plant and machine operatives
- Socmajor group 9: elementary occupations

**Figure 3. Occupations by SOC Major Group in Edinburgh per 100 people [source: Nomis data]**

<sup>11</sup> Edinburgh City Chamber of Commerce, (2021). Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce: Inspiring Connections. Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce. <https://www.edinburghchamber.co.uk/policy/policy-publications/>

<sup>12</sup> Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics. (n.d.). <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157416/printable.aspx>

<sup>13</sup> *Classified via the Standard Occupation Classification*



## Impact of Brexit

Edinburgh has a strong hospitality sector, which has been significantly impacted by Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic. Since Brexit, many EU citizens have left Edinburgh, leading to recruitment challenges within the hospitality and retail sector<sup>14</sup>. Skills Development Scotland's (2022) Regional Skills Assessment suggests that a decline in the working age population, and the labour shortages created by Brexit, are likely to create increased competition for skilled labour, as well as ongoing labour shortages in key sectors.<sup>15</sup> Sectors that are likely to be most affected by skills and labour shortages are hospitality, health and social care, as well as scientific and technical sectors.

The skills likely to be in highest demand across Scotland in 2024 - 2026 are green skills, digital skills, and self-management skills. The latter term relates to a combination of emotional intelligence, work readiness, negotiation, creativity and teamwork skills, a suite of skills that were once referred to as 'soft skills'. These skills are needed across different sectors. Through the changing and increasing use of technology, jobs are likely to change and digital literacy and skills will be integral for accessing employment and progressing within roles.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Skills Development Scotland (2022). Regional Skills Assessment - Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal November 2022. <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/49092/rsa-edinburgh-and-south-east-scotland-city-region-deal.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Skills Development Scotland (2022). Regional Skills Assessment - Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal November 2022. <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/49092/rsa-edinburgh-and-south-east-scotland-city-region-deal.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Skills Development Scotland (2022). Regional Skills Assessment - Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal November 2022. <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/49092/rsa-edinburgh-and-south-east-scotland-city-region-deal.pdf>



Figure 4. Skills for current and emerging opportunities [source: SDS skills review]

Within construction, sustainability skills, retrofitting, electro transportation, solar PV panels, skills around alternative heating sources are key skills and areas of opportunity and growth for the coming two years.<sup>17</sup> It is expected that enhanced knowledge and green skills will be required for at least 25.7% of all jobs in Edinburgh.<sup>18</sup>

**The strategy needs to address a range of skills issues, in particular about ensuring that those entering the labour market and seeking work are able to gain skills related to the current and emerging needs of employers.**

<sup>17</sup> Edinburgh City Chamber of Commerce (2022). Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce: Inspiring Connections. Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce. <https://www.edinburghchamber.co.uk/policy/policy-publications/>

<sup>18</sup> Skills Development Scotland (2022). Regional Skills Assessment - Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal November 2022. <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/49092/rsa-edinburgh-and-south-east-scotland-city-region-deal.pdf>



## Partnerships and developments

Through the City Region Deal a number of priorities and pathways were identified which aim to support the development of required skills for Edinburgh in the coming years and decades. This includes two specialised centres: the Data-driven Innovation Skills Gateway and the Housing, Construction and Infrastructure (HCI) Skills Gateway. The Housing, Construction and Infrastructure (HCI) Skills Gateway has programmes supporting inclusive progression pathways which help people develop the skills to move into higher skilled roles.

Additionally, some partnerships between employers and training have been established to provide training and support to help Edinburgh residents to take up roles within growth industries. One example of this is the Green Home Systems Green Skills Academy in partnership with Edinburgh College which offers apprenticeship programmes for the construction industry. The programme is aimed at all age groups and skills levels and includes first qualifications, upskilling, and retraining.<sup>19</sup> Further co-ordinated efforts such as this are likely to be required in the coming two years and beyond to ensure that those who live and/or work in Edinburgh are in a strong position to take advantage of forthcoming opportunities.

Due to a range of factors, including demographic change, it is likely that there will be an increased requirement for workers within health and social care roles. These roles, however, appear to be less appealing, leading to recruitment challenges in this sector that are predicted to worsen through time. Strategic action will be required to support recruitment and the appeal of training and education to increase the health and social care workforce in Edinburgh<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Easton, S. (2022). Green Jobs Partnership. Green Home Systems. <https://www.greenhomesystems.co.uk/green-jobs-partnership/>

<sup>20</sup> Skills Development Scotland (2022). Regional Skills Assessment - Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal November 2022. <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/49092/rsa-edinburgh-and-south-east-scotland-city-region-deal.pdf>





**Figure 5. Jobs and skills forecast [source: Skills Development Scotland & Edinburgh City Chamber of Commerce]**

Without the co-ordination of training and education to support preparedness, these skill gaps will grow in coming years. This signals a need for a data-led approach to identifying patterns and trends in relation to skills and knowledge gaps and suggests that employers would benefit from support to consider ways to train and upskill existing staff, thereby addressing recruitment challenges, while also tackling the growing issue of in-work poverty.

Addressing these challenges, and identifying a co-ordinated response, will require the LEP to ensure high levels of integration with multiple sectors. This will include the private sector, third sector providers, and public bodies. The LEP’s membership already includes strategic partners from a range of organisations across the city, many of whom are integrated within partnerships and working groups that seek to address poverty. As such, the LEP is well placed to co-ordinate and oversee activity to support employers to invest in their workforce, to ensure that more people have access to sustainable, high-quality jobs with good prospects, and progression pathways.



## In-work poverty

More than 37,000 people in Edinburgh earn less than the Real Living Wage, and 27% are in jobs that do not provide 'satisfactory' pay, hours or contracts<sup>21</sup>. Low paid, insecure work is recognised as being a key driver of poverty in Edinburgh.

Between April 2019 and May 2020, 5.7% of all employees in Scotland were in insecure working arrangements, with young people the least likely to be in secure employment.<sup>22</sup> Edinburgh had an underemployment rate of 12.4%. The Covid-19 pandemic has had an impact on job retention and loss in Edinburgh. With a high proportion of jobs being in the food, accommodation and retail sector and the tourism sector, the availability of jobs and redundancies were heavily impacted by Covid-19 restrictions.<sup>23</sup> Between April 2019 and May 2020, 5.7% of all employees in Scotland were in insecure working arrangements, with young people the least likely to be in secure employment.<sup>24</sup>

Edinburgh has an underemployment rate of 12.4% (the proportion of those who are employed but would prefer to work more hours, have a second job or change jobs to one offering more hours of work). Edinburgh's rate is the highest in Scotland and increased by 6.2 percentage points from April 2020 to March 2021.<sup>25</sup> Many businesses in Edinburgh report having been badly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, and many remain concerned about how they will repay debts incurred during Covid lockdowns. The economy appears to show some signs of improving but is still in an uncertain stage. These challenges mean that transitioning toward increasing wages and working conditions for Edinburgh workers is not likely to be easy, particularly for small businesses, who may need support to appreciate the importance of becoming Living Wage employers.

The LEP is well placed to promote the Edinburgh Poverty Commission's Living Wage City Action Plan, which calls upon employers across the city to become Real Living Wage Accredited. Many members of the LEP are part of the Edinburgh Living Wage Action Group, which is a collaboration of organisations and institutions who are dedicated to reducing the number of people in the city who are earning below

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<sup>21</sup> The Edinburgh Living Wage City Action Group (2021) *Edinburgh Living Wage Action Plan October 2021*. Edinburgh: Living Wage City Action Group.

<sup>22</sup> The Scottish Government. (2021). Scotland's Labour Market: People, Places and Regions - Statistics from the Annual Population Survey 2020/21. The Scottish Government. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-labour-market-people-places-regions-statistics-annual-population-survey-2020-21/pages/1/>

<sup>23</sup> Edinburgh City Chamber of Commerce, (2021). Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce: Inspiring Connections. Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce. <https://www.edinburghchamber.co.uk/policy/policy-publications/>

<sup>24</sup> The Scottish Government. (2021). Scotland's Labour Market: People, Places and Regions - Statistics from the Annual Population Survey 2020/21. The Scottish Government. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-labour-market-people-places-regions-statistics-annual-population-survey-2020-21/pages/1/>

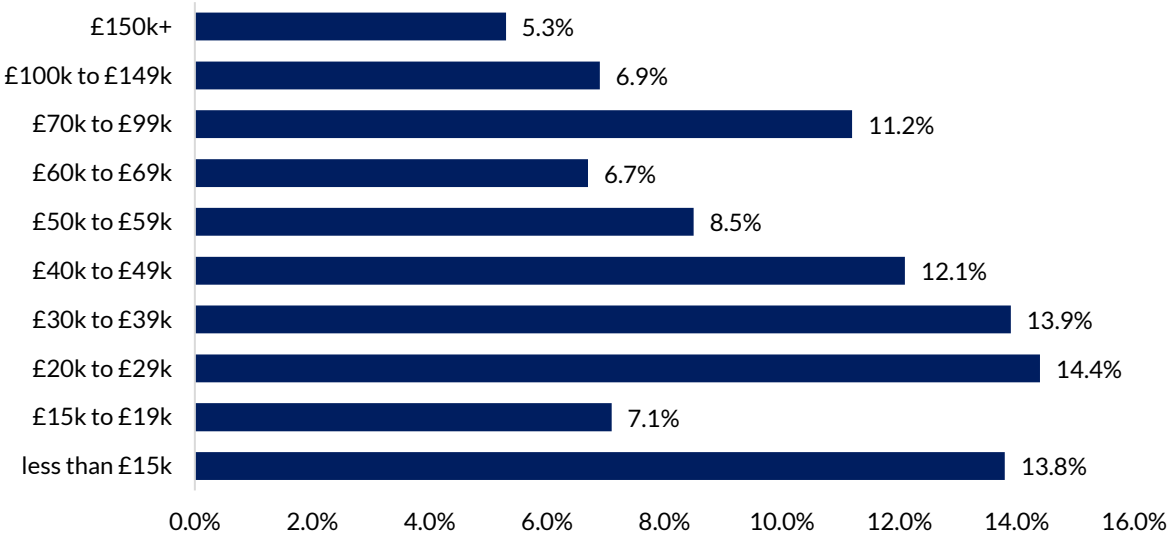
<sup>25</sup> The Scottish Government. (2021). Scotland's Labour Market: People, Places and Regions - Statistics from the Annual Population Survey 2020/21. The Scottish Government. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-labour-market-people-places-regions-statistics-annual-population-survey-2020-21/pages/1/>



living wage and increase the number experiencing fair work. This forms part of the goal to end poverty in the city by 2030. While the Edinburgh Living Wage City Action Group is already working to promote and encourage the adoption of 'Fair Work' business practices, there are likely to be key supports that the LEP could put in place, using its influence, network and expertise to support employers and promote fairer work.

**Inequalities**

The experience of in-work poverty is not evenly spread across the city, which suggests a need for a data-led approach to ensuring that services are provided in the areas of highest need. The average annual household income in Edinburgh in November 2021 was £52,835. There is significant variation across wards in Edinburgh with the highest ward average being £76,810 and the lowest being £34,344<sup>26</sup>. To earn an Edinburgh living wage the annual gross income needs to be approximately £19,000.<sup>27</sup> Looking at Figure 17, almost 21% of the population in Edinburgh were earning the living wage or below the living wage in 2021, indicating likely levels of in-work poverty.<sup>28</sup>



**Figure 6. Average Household Income [source: Edinburgh City Council Data]**

Data also indicates that 14.2% of households in Edinburgh find it difficult to cope on their household income and 6.6% find it very difficult (Figure 7).

<sup>26</sup> City of Edinburgh Council. (n.d.). Edinburgh statistics and data. The City of Edinburgh Council. <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/strategy-performance-research/edinburgh-statistics-data>  
<sup>27</sup> Breese, E. (2023, July 6). The national living wage, real living wage and minimum wage explained. The Big Issue. <https://www.bigissue.com/news/employment/the-national-living-wage-real-living-wage-and-minimum-wage-explained/>  
<sup>28</sup> City of Edinburgh Council (n.d.). Edinburgh statistics and data. <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/strategy-performance-research/edinburgh-statistics-data>

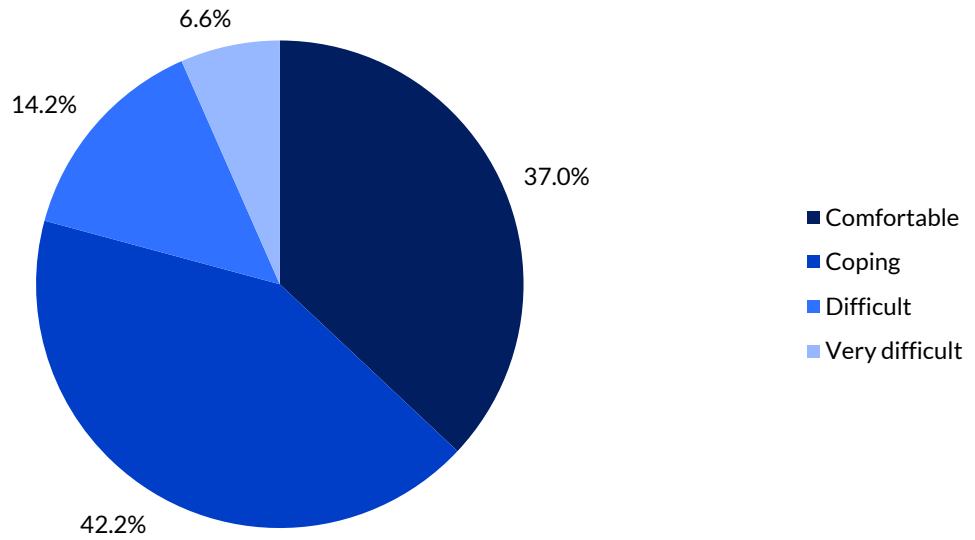


Figure 7. Experience of households living on their household income [source: Edinburgh City Council Data]

Household incomes also impact the number of children growing up in low-income households. As seen in Figure 8, the number of children in both absolute and relative low income has increased since 2017/2018 and is likely to increase further with the current cost of living crisis.

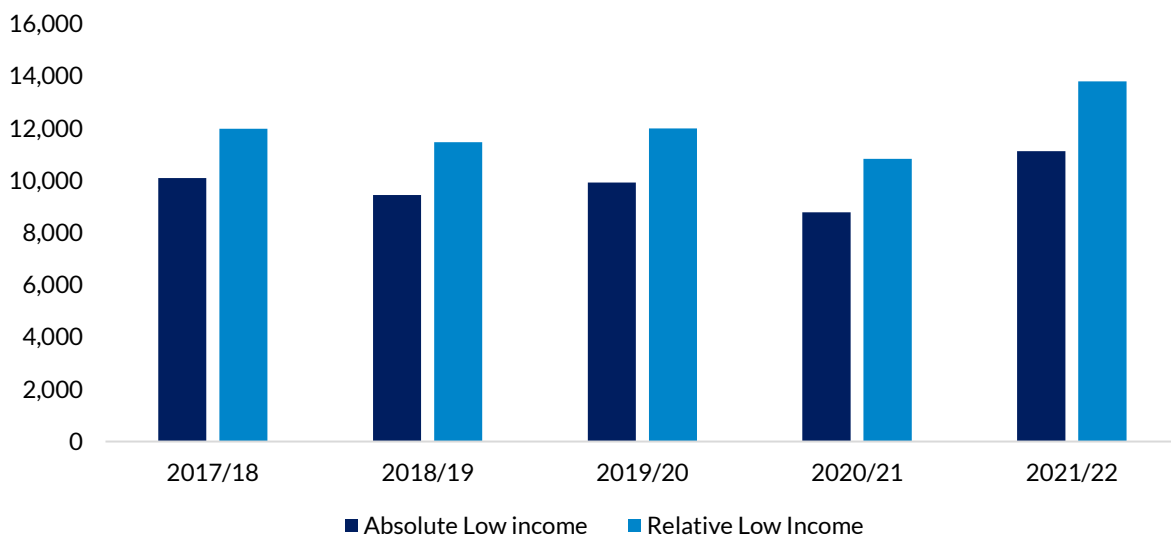
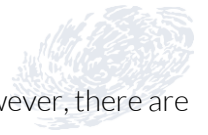


Figure 8. Number of children in low-income households [source: DWP stat-Xplore]



Across Edinburgh, there are people that need access to support throughout the city. However, there are significant differences in levels of deprivation across areas of Edinburgh, with pockets of high socio-economic deprivation. For instance, areas of Muirhouse have a rank of 1 in the domains of income, employment and education and skills, making them in the most deprived 5%. Similarly, other areas in the most deprived 5% include Parkhead and Sighthill, Niddrie and Granton South.<sup>29</sup>

Having services in only one area or centrally can contribute to inequality, as services and support may be inaccessible to people. Inaccessibility could relate to the time it takes to get to the service and back or the cost related to using transportation to get to the service.<sup>30</sup> This could be mitigated by using existing infrastructure such as GP surgeries, schools, libraries or other community centres to deliver services to enable accessibility across neighbourhoods.<sup>31</sup> This would align with the 20 minute neighbourhood strategy which aims to ensure that all residents are able to live locally and access all the essential amenities within a 20 minute radius of their home<sup>32</sup>. Using existing infrastructure to deliver employability services also aligns well with the principles of the No One Left Behind (NOLB) strategy. Thus, using existing infrastructure such as schools and libraries which should be easily accessible for all, compliments this strategy to ensure that everyone can easily access the services required, wherever they live.<sup>33</sup>

**The strategy needs to ensure that services are accessible to those with the greatest need for support. While the most accessible place for early support and confidence building is likely to be in those areas where unemployment is concentrated, it needs to be complemented by support where the jobs are to help clients with the issues involved in travelling to and from work.**

<sup>29</sup> Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (2020). Available at: [https://simd.scot/#/simd2020\\_5pc/BTTTTTT/12.5/-3.2181/55.9632/](https://simd.scot/#/simd2020_5pc/BTTTTTT/12.5/-3.2181/55.9632/)

<sup>30</sup> Poverty Commission Edinburgh. (2021). A Just Capital - Actions to End Poverty in Edinburgh. <https://edinburghpovertycommission.org.uk/timeline/>

<sup>31</sup> Poverty Commission Edinburgh. (2021). A Just Capital - Actions to End Poverty in Edinburgh. <https://edinburghpovertycommission.org.uk/timeline/>

<sup>32</sup> Edinburgh City Council (2023). 20 Minute Neighbourhood: Living well locally. Available at: <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/file/33790/20-minute-neighbourhoods-strategy-august-2023>

<sup>33</sup> Employability in Scotland (no date). *No One Left Behind*. <https://www.employabilityinscotland.com/policy/no-one-left-behind/#:~:text=No%20One%20Left%20Behind%20is%20our%20strategy%20for%20placing%20people.and%20delivery%20of%20employability%20services.>



## Long-term unemployment

Current data sources indicate that long-term unemployment is not equal across social groups in Edinburgh, and there is a need for further research to understand the specific barriers experienced by different social groups. Researching the perspectives of those accessing/requiring services will help to identify solutions and approaches that could be used to address need, thereby reducing inequalities when it comes to accessing employment.

There is data to suggest that long-term unemployment increases with age. Economically inactive people aged over 50 years of age are understood to be facing significant barriers when it comes to getting a job following a period of unemployment.<sup>34</sup> Within Scotland at a national level there are known areas of inequality when it comes to employment and gender, ethnicity and disability status. The ethnicity employment gap in Scotland is 11.7%. Although there is growing concern among stakeholders in Edinburgh about employment gaps related to ethnicity, it was not possible to identify any data to verify the extent of this gap in Edinburgh, suggesting a need for further primary data collection and analysis of current trends. Data for Edinburgh indicates that there was a 13.6% gender pay gap in 2021.<sup>35</sup> There is existing data in relation to employment and disability status for Edinburgh, and statistics indicate that people with a disability are 31.2% less likely to be in employment than those who are not disabled. The disability employment gap in Edinburgh has reduced by 1.4% in Edinburgh since 2019, but still remains a statistically significant gap, and a source for concern.<sup>36</sup>

At a national, Scotland-wide level, there are intersectional differences and current data indicates that there is a higher ethnic employment gap for women from ethnic minority backgrounds compared to men. This was at 23.1 percentage points for women in 2021 compared to -1.5 percentage points for men with this negative statistic demonstrated that the minority ethnic groups have a higher employment rate than white ethnic groups.<sup>37</sup>

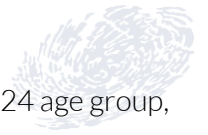
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<sup>34</sup> The Scottish Government. (2021). Scotland's Labour Market: People, Places and Regions - Statistics from the Annual Population Survey 2020/21. The Scottish Government. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-labour-market-people-places-regions-statistics-annual-population-survey-2020-21/pages/1/>

<sup>35</sup> Statistics Scotland (2023). City of Edinburgh. Available at: <https://statistics.gov.scot/atlas/resource?uri=http%3A%2F%2Fstatistics.gov.scot%2Fid%2Fstatistical-geography%2FS12000036>.

<sup>36</sup> The Scottish Government. (2022). Scotland's Labour Market: People, Places and Regions – Protected Characteristics. Statistics from the Annual Population Survey 2021. The Scottish Government. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-labour-market-people-places-regions-protected-characteristics-statistics-annual-population-survey-2021/#:~:text=In%202021%2C,rate%20of%2074.7%20per%20cent>.

<sup>37</sup> The Scottish Government. (2022). Scotland's Labour Market: People, Places and Regions – Protected Characteristics. Statistics from the Annual Population Survey 2021. The Scottish Government. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-labour-market-people-places-regions-protected-characteristics-statistics-annual-population-survey-2021/#:~:text=In%202021%2C,rate%20of%2074.7%20per%20cent>.



The largest employment gap across age groups was 19.6 percentage points for the 16 to 24 age group,<sup>38</sup> and the smallest was for those aged 50 to 64 at -8.4 percentage points. A targeted, data-driven approach is likely to be required to support those who face the greatest barriers into employment. It is likely that this will require a combination of different types of data, including detailed qualitative insights to understand the picture that the statistics tell us, and to understand the key steps required to reduce the barriers that people are facing to accessing and sustaining employment across social groups.

There are several areas where it is evident that there is an increased requirement for support and service provision. There is, for example, an evident link between health and employment. In Edinburgh, Scotland and across the UK, ill-health is one of the most common reasons for economic inactivity. These trends are currently rising. Across the UK in January 2023 long-term sickness accounted for 28% of total economic inactivity.<sup>39</sup> Current data shows that Scottish residents experience disproportionately high levels of health-related economic inactivity when compared to the rest of the UK.<sup>40</sup>

This is also the most common reason for people to seek employability support. Existing data from Edinburgh’s Capital City Partnership demonstrates that over 4260 participants were accessing employability support for this reason in 2022 - 2023. Supporting those who experience health-related barriers to accessing or sustaining employment will remain a key priority area for service provision in 2024 – 2026. It is likely that the LEP may also have a role in advocating with employers to ensure that adequate provisions are made for flexible working policies, which are known to reduce barriers to sustaining good employment for those who have long-term health conditions and/or disabilities.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> **Note:** Small samples sizes were used for 16 to 24 years estimates.

<sup>39</sup> Kirk-Wade, E. & Harker, R. (2023) How is health affecting economic inactivity?. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/how-is-health-affecting-economic-inactivity/#:~:text=Economic%20inactivity%20E2%80%93%20the%20proportion%20of,after%20lockdown%20Restrictions%20were%20introduced.>

<sup>40</sup> Fraser of Allander Institute, University of Strathclyde. (March 2023). *Economic inactivity and ill-health in Scotland*. Available at: <https://fraserofallander.org/economic-inactivity-and-ill-health-in-scotland/>

<sup>41</sup> The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. (July 2023). *Flexible working practices*



## Disability Living Allowance Claimants

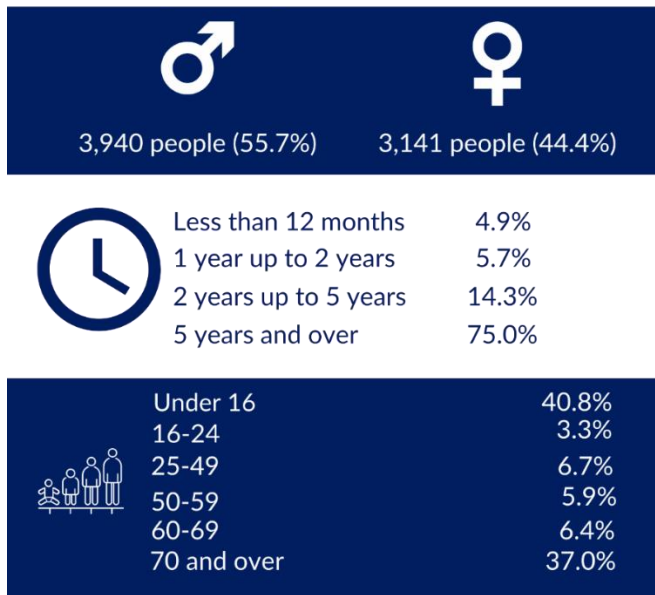


Figure 9. Demographics of Disability Living Allowance claimants [source: City of Edinburgh Council]

Employability support for those with long-term health conditions and/or disabilities is likely to remain a priority area, particularly given that employers are reporting the impact of long Covid on their staff. Long waiting lists for NHS treatments are also known to be a current and growing reason for people to delay returning to work, presenting issues in terms of access to adequate income issues for some, and issues in relation to sustaining employment for others.<sup>42</sup>

**The strategy needs to address the growing issue of health conditions and unemployment, and specifically in building on extensive experience of integrating health and work support, including parallel support once in work.**

<sup>42</sup> Kirk-Wade, E. & Harker, R. (2023) How is health affecting economic inactivity?. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/how-is-health-affecting-economic-inactivity/#:~:text=Economic%20inactivity%20E2%80%93%20the%20proportion%20of,after%20lockdown%20Restrictions%20were%20introduced.>





## Service priorities for the LEP to take forward as part of the 2024 – 2026 strategy

To address the issues outlined in this chapter, the areas identified as service priorities for the LEP in 2024 – 2026 are:

- **Multiple complex needs:** there is a need for employability partners to respond to the complex needs of those who require employability support, whether the person presents at services at a point of readiness, or pre-readiness for employment. This will require enhanced integration between the LEP and the local health and social care partnership. It is recommended that housing and homelessness be considered a key part of the employability response. Many people will also require signposting and referrals to mental health support, as well as to specialist providers who can help with issues related to substance use or other complex needs. Responding to these emerging challenges may require the LEP to become integrated with more employers, and wider third sector partners, as well as with the Edinburgh Health and Social Care partnership. This will require enhanced partnership working and the strengthening of referral pathways to and from employability support.
- **Data mapping:** there is a need for an intensive data mapping exercise to be undertaken to identify where the priority groups are located in Edinburgh to support a more targeted approach to commissioning.
- **Skills gaps:** there is a requirement for enhanced coordination between the LEP, and further and higher education bodies to ensure clear education pathways to increase the skills of the local workforce in relation to growth industries and those where there are known skills gaps. This will include health and social care, green industry skills, sustainability, electro transportation and other scientific and technical skills.
- **Transitions:** there is a further requirement for coordinated activity to identify interventions to support transitions from school to college, university and employment. There is a growing awareness among LEP members that in the post-pandemic context, there is now a need for enhanced transition support as young people emerge from schools or college and present looking for work. In some cases, this is now understood to relate to delayed adulthood, which can require enhanced support related to life skills, self-management and 'soft skills' including the ability to be responsible and understand the requirements of employers. This is likely to include training in 'soft skills' such as problem solving, critical thinking, communication, creativity and self-management. The coordinated activity required to support transitions is also likely to involve developing further links with employers.



- **Addressing in-work poverty:** there is a need to work with employers to ensure that people are given support to progress into better paid/more secure roles.
- **Data-driven commissioning:** there is a need to closely examine the location of services to ensure that these are well placed to meet the needs of those in most acute need, including those who belong to priority groups due to their high-risk of experiencing poverty.

## 2: The LEP's integration with city-wide partnerships

This chapter outlines the role, function and structure of the LEP.

### The role, function and structure of the LEP

The Edinburgh Local Employability Partnership (LEP) is a forum comprising members from key organisations and sectors, who come together to manage the employability landscape in the sector. The LEP links directly to the Edinburgh Partnership and the *Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) Priority 2: Access to work, learning and training opportunities by* providing a forum where strategic partners come together to identify opportunities and the actions that may be required to improve the performance of the City's 'employability service' for both individuals and employers. This includes identifying the actions required to facilitate the integration of services to ensure that local authority and Scottish Government priorities are aligned.

Through working together, LEP members aim to identify areas for added value that can be mobilised to reduce the barriers that people face in relation to accessing and sustaining high quality employment in the city. The LEP therefore has a role to play in ensuring a co-ordinated response to key strategy areas, including the Edinburgh Poverty Commission. Their work also includes identifying actions required to respond to external factors such as the Covid-19 recovery, Brexit and the cost-of-living crisis. Although the LEP contributes to multiple regional, local and national strategy areas, one of their main foci is to discuss and provide updates in relation to the [Scottish Government's No One Left Behind delivery plan](#).



No One Left Behind (NOLB) is the Scottish Government Framework for addressing employment challenges. NOLB is supported through a Partnership Working Agreement which outlines shared ambitions and principles for improving outcomes for people. The working agreement is between the Scottish Government and [COSLA](#), with oversight through the Improvement Service, [Scottish Local Authorities Economic Development \(SLAED\) group](#) and [SOLACE 2](#), the framework for public funding of advice services in Scotland. The principles of NOLB inform the LEP's work – these are:

- People should be treated with dignity and respect, fairness and equality, and there should be a commitment to continuous improvement.
- Support should be flexible, needs based and person-centred.
- Support should be straightforward for people to navigate, and there should be no wrong door.
- Support should be integrated and aligned with other services. This should build upon the Scottish Approach to service design, which places the user at the centre.
- There should be pathways into sustainable and fair work.
- Interventions and support should be driven by evidence, including data and the experience of people who use services.
- More people should be supported to move into the right job, at the right time.

The LEP links into a range of other partnerships, strategies and groups. The LEP follows No One Left Behind (NOLB) principles, which use a 'no wrong door' approach to work collectively to ensure that every person gets the service they require quickly regardless of their entry point to services. The LEP in Edinburgh is deeply embedded within national and local frameworks. The work, and structure of the LEP has been continuously reviewed and developed since 2008. The Edinburgh LEP is heavily supported by the third sector who receive more than 80% of NOLB funding. This is provided via the third sector infrastructure and community organisations within the city.

Members of the LEP come from a range of organisations across the employability sector. The LEP provides a platform for members to share their collective strengths to respond to major strategic interventions, such as the example [The Edinburgh Poverty Commission](#), and discuss and consider external factors such as Covid and Brexit impacts. The LEP's mission statement is provided below.



**The skills of our people and our global industries have been the driver of our success over the past thirty years. In 2050, Edinburgh will be a place of opportunity and ambition, where innovators and entrepreneurs can achieve prosperity and success. A great city commits to sharing success and improving the wellbeing and life experience of all its citizens. In 2050, Edinburgh will be a city without barriers to achievement and where a good quality of life is a basic requirement enjoyed by all.**

**Edinburgh 2050 vision statement**

## Structure of the LEP

The LEP has a Core Chair, who is the Chief Executive of the [Capital City Partnership](#), who chairs the quarterly meetings. The Chair also facilitates meetings on a more regular basis when external factors are identified that require a rapid, or co-ordinated collective response. All meetings have an agenda, and minutes are taken, with a focus on identifying actions and reporting resolutions. Members include partners from key roles within the local authority, business, skills, health, the third sector, regional and national bodies, and further and higher education. All LEP activity is reported back to the board of Capital City Partnership which is an ALEO of the City of Edinburgh Council. This means that actions, resolutions and identified issues are presented to elected members, who also sit on the committee that approves recommendations made under the No One Left Behind activity, under [the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee](#). The LEP is also part of [The Edinburgh Guarantee](#), representing employability alongside their focus on employers and education.

The LEP's recommendations are presented to the City of Edinburgh Council by the [SLAED](#) employability lead for approval. The LEP also forms part of the [Edinburgh Partnership](#), which is the name given to the city's community planning partnership. The community planning partnership brings together public agencies, private sector, the third sector and local communities, to join together in an aim to improve services, and the lives of people who live and work in Edinburgh. The Edinburgh Partnership provides a governance and support infrastructure which links to other strategic areas. This enables larger issues to be presented and discussed, and all actions, opportunities and challenges are then reflected and further discussed within the LEP forum as a regular standing agenda item. Similarly, items emerging from the LEP forum are discussed via the Local Outcome Improvement Plan within Edinburgh Partnership meetings. The LEP is also represented within [The Edinburgh Children's Partnership](#) which informs the [Child Poverty Action Plan](#) and which links to End Poverty Networks. The LEP is also linked to the [Edinburgh Guarantee](#), which represents employability alongside a focus on employers and education.



The branding **Joined up for...** is used to create an infrastructure that feeds into priority areas, enabling the LEP to bring stakeholders together for focused work. This includes:

- **Joined up for Jobs**
- **Joined up for Business**
- **Joined up for Young People**
- **Joined up for Families**

The **Joined up for jobs strategy** mentioned above is the forum that the LEP use to manage the Edinburgh employability landscape. The forum provides a space to bring partners together to identify shared opportunities, and to facilitate the integration of services and align priorities. Through their work, the Joined Up for Jobs strategy group seek to make a positive contribution to addressing exclusion and disadvantage across the city. The strategy itself is based upon the three pillars outlined in the list below.

- Services should be demand led
- Services should be client centred
- Services should be joined up.

To achieve the aims outlined above, the strategy is supported by a formal partnership, whose members include a range of organisations who have agreed to work together to harness the cooperation of employers across the city. Members include:

- The City of Edinburgh Council,
- Scottish Enterprise
- Job Centre Plus
- Skills Development Scotland
- Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce.

The Joined up for Jobs strategy is overseen by the LEP's core group, the Jobs Strategy Group.



The work of the core group is also supported and complemented by the **Joined up for Business strategy group**. This group are responsible for the co-ordination of services and employers. Capital City Partnership lead this strategy group. The group brings together public sector organisations to provide a single point of contact for employer services. This work has been undertaken to make it easier for organisations to access the support that they require. Key partners within this strategy include:

- The Edinburgh Guarantee
- The City of Edinburgh Council
- Developing the Young Workforce Edinburgh, Midlothian and East Lothian
- Skills Development Scotland
- Business Gateway
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Edinburgh Universities
- NHS Midlothian.

The partnership offers a free service that can be tailored to meet the needs of employers. This aims to make it easier for employers to do business in Edinburgh. Support offered can include:

- Recruitment support
- Training and development
- Vacancy posting through varied channels and networks
- Identifying funding incentives
- Business advice (e.g. redundancy, retention and more)
- SME and micro-business support
- Support work placement or work experience opportunities
- Community Benefits advice and support
- Provide a single point of access to Edinburgh's employability providers and organisations - Joined Up for Jobs (JUfJ).



As part of Joined Up for Business, Capital City Partnership offer free sector-specific certified training courses with guaranteed interviews for participants in multiple sectors, including:

- Hospitality
- Health and Social Care
- Retail
- Early Learning and Childcare
- Business and Finance
- IT and Creative
- Construction
- Warehouse and Logistics

Those who take part in the courses also receive employment and career advice, interview preparation and in-work support. Joined up for Business also manages recruitment and skills centres across the city to support employers and candidates. This includes skill centres within Fort Kinnaird, FUSE, and Edinburgh Airport. The work of the group is divided into the skills centre group and a further project delivery group.

**Joined Up for Young People** is a strategy which launched in 2021 and was similarly led by Capital City Partnership. It aimed to develop collaboration across youth provision as part of the Scottish Government's Young Person's Guarantee Activity Plan. The strategy was originally delivered via three strands, as outlined below.

- Strategic leadership and commissioning of new services. This involves monitoring and coordinating activity across the Youth Employability Partnership and the Joined Up for Young People Network.
- Stakeholder partnerships. This involves working with partner organisations to develop, support and coordinate opportunities for employment, training, volunteering and higher/further education.
- Mapping and monitoring existing and newly commissioned youth provision across the city. This involves tracking the opportunities available and increasing coordination to make it easier for referrers to find the most suitable destination for the young people that they support.



The Joined Up for Young People Strategy has now been replaced by the Youth Employment Partnership, and the DYW regional group, as part of the Edinburgh Guarantee. Together, these two groups coordinate and implement services for the young people of Edinburgh. This is delivered via:

- The Edinburgh Partnership
- Capital City Partnership Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) groups
- Localities models and neighbourhood networks
- Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region
- Regional School Networks
- Scottish Government
- The LEP National Delivery Group.

## LEP Meetings

The Jobs Strategy Group is the name given to the core meeting of the LEP. During LEP meetings, partners come together to discuss and align activity and provision of services to ensure that the right support is put in place for people who rely upon, and who require employability support. Consideration is also given to the actions required to support employers to meet the needs of employees and reduce the barriers that people may face when it comes to both accessing and sustaining employment. Many of the partners who attend the LEP forum come with their own organisational strategies, objectives and priorities, but each does so with a shared commitment to working collectively and collaboratively to ensure a cohesive, collective response to emerging challenges and opportunities. LEP members are embedded within local partnership actions to ensure synergy, and alignment of strategic priorities at local, regional and national levels.

The core Chair of the LEP is also the Chair of the *Local Outcome Improvement Plan Priority 2: Access to Work, Learning and Training Opportunities*. This ensures that duplication of time and resources is avoided, and also ensures that the LEP is integrated within multiple groups to ensure wider influence, including recognising the links between in-work poverty, sustainable employment and access to income maximisation support for those in work, as well as those seeking employment.





## 3: The strategic vision, themes, and priorities for 2024 - 2026

Drawing on the extensive interviews with the LEP partners (Appendix), the main theme of the strategy is '*joining up for high performance*'. This requires some restructuring to ensure that there is a joining up and alignment of activity at the strategic level, to ensure that the work of the LEP dovetails with the wider city approach to tackling poverty. It will also require a joining up around key sectors and development, to maximise the benefits for those who live and work in Edinburgh in relation to skills, good quality employment and pay rates. Further, there is a requirement for joining up activity to ensure that the needs of individual clients are met, ensuring that those who have a range of support needs are helped effectively.

The Edinburgh LEP is already a mature, and well connected, integrated forum. There is clear evidence of a shared commitment to achieving positive outcomes for those seeking work, and those in work in Edinburgh. There have been some great examples of combined efforts to address emerging challenges that have required a co-ordinated rapid response, such as the arrival of skilled Ukrainian refugees who required access to both accommodation and jobs. Such examples highlight the potential that the forum has. There have been opportunities in recent years to use intelligence, data and insights to identify current and emerging market trends, as well as employment practices that could be improved to reduce barriers to accessing sustainable fair work.

It is important that the LEP continues to be a safe space for strategic partners to engage in open and transparent dialogue to think throughout long-term labour market and economy issues, such as the Green Free Port, and related green economy impacts, and other forthcoming impacts to ensure that there is a co-ordinated and well-planned long-term response to future issues. To achieve this, there is a need for a clear articulation of the role of each partnership across Edinburgh and the relationships between them. The background to this report highlighted the complex landscape, and the strong position of the LEP, created in part by LEP members being well connected to broader forums, ensuring a collegiate exchange of knowledge and planning. It is important that these connections continue to be used to strengthen the influencing role of the LEP.

This can best be achieved by drawing upon a range of data sources, including LEP partner's knowledge, as well as quantitative trend-based data, and qualitative insights gained from consultation with those facing unemployment or labour market challenges. The triangulation of multiple sources of data will



ensure a deeper, and continually updated understanding of the barriers people are facing to accessing high quality work, and the steps that can be taken to address barriers and reduce inequalities. This will require a stronger focus on coordination, as well as a stronger focus on the use of data to ‘join the dots’ and identify preventative action.

To achieve the aims of the LEP, it is necessary to create a new structure that allows the LEP activity to operate at different timescales. These will include:

- The ‘**here and now**’ – tackling urgent and priority issues.
- The **long-term opportunities** around major developments across Edinburgh – how will the economy work for those most in need (in terms of jobs, skills, income)
- **Preventative action** to reduce enhanced longer terms issues and demand.

The strategic objectives for 2024 – 2026 are outlined below. A rolling action plan will be developed around these three objectives.



**Figure 10. Strategic objectives for 2024 – 2026**

The Edinburgh LEP strategy begins with outlining a vision of where we want to get to.



**The vision for 2024 – 2026 is that the Edinburgh Local Employability Partnership will become a joined up, high performing partnership that operates on a shared commitment to increasing access to fair work for all.**

The vision is underpinned by the values that need to be at the heart of an employability strategy, and that are core to those who will be responsible for implementing it. There are also factors that need to be in place to ensure that the aims outlined can be implemented, such as partnership working and considered funding structures. The strategy document also outlines recommendations that have already been consulted on which set out the long-term direction. Some can be achieved in a shorter term, and others will take longer to achieve. These are broken down in Chapter four and set out as ‘the here and now’, the medium term, and long term. The recommendations set out in the strategy are encompassing, and involve a joining up around the individual, sectors and developments, and strategically. These overarching aims are further distilled into key recommendations that form the beginnings of an action plan to be carried forward and implemented by LEP members.

**The vision that underpins the strategy is that those who are furthest from the labour market will receive targeted support to address complex needs that can act as barriers to accessing fair work. The strategy is also underpinned by an aim to ensure that those who are in work are supported to progress to higher paid roles, develop further skills and sustain employment.**

The data review and consultation undertaken as part of this strategy’s development has identified several groups who are experiencing significant challenges to accessing work, and to maintaining employment. These groups are also recognised as being particularly at risk of experiencing poverty and other inequalities within Edinburgh. They are thereby identified as priority groups for LEP to consider as part of their work in 2024 – 2026. These are outlined below.

### **Priority Groups for employability and employment support**

- **People who are experiencing health issues, and/or disabilities**
- **People who are experiencing in-work poverty**
- **Ethnic minority groups**
- **Those who are aged over 50 who are classed as being economically inactive**

A rolling action plan will be developed for the LEP to ensure that the needs of the above priority groups are examined, and met via a range of targeted and universal services. The action plan will identify and outline in detail the steps required to ensure that all activity is joined up at the strategic level, around



key sectors and developments, and that it takes into account the needs of individual clients. This work will be undertaken as part of the LEP's commitment to addressing poverty and tackling inequalities.

## 4: Actions required

### Restructuring and streamlining LEP Activity

Achieving this strategy's vision will require that the LEP is restructured, to enable streamlining. The main LEP group will function as a space for partners to engage in strategic horizon scanning to identify forthcoming challenges, opportunities and priorities for collaborative, coordinated activities. This group will set the strategic direction, and members will continue to ensure that the work is well integrated and aligned with national and local priorities.

A new subgroup will be created, which will deal with operational issues. This group will be taken forward and formalised as LOIP 2. The LOIP 2 group will henceforth deal with funding and commissioning, and will be tied to making decisions about service delivery, operationalising the decisions made at the wider LEP group.

The two groups will have similarities, as they will be dealing with the same/similar overarching themes and priorities, but the LEP will have more flex to look upwards into higher skills areas and also prevention, where as the operational subgroup of the LEP, the LOIP 2 will have links to funds, and a closer relationship to Edinburgh's LOIPS 1 and 3, which seek to tackle inequality. Thus, the LOIP 2 (as a new, and operational subgroup of the LEP) will have addressing poverty, and reducing barriers to fair work as it's core objective. The structure and positioning of the new operational subgroup (LOIP 2) is outlined in the figure below.

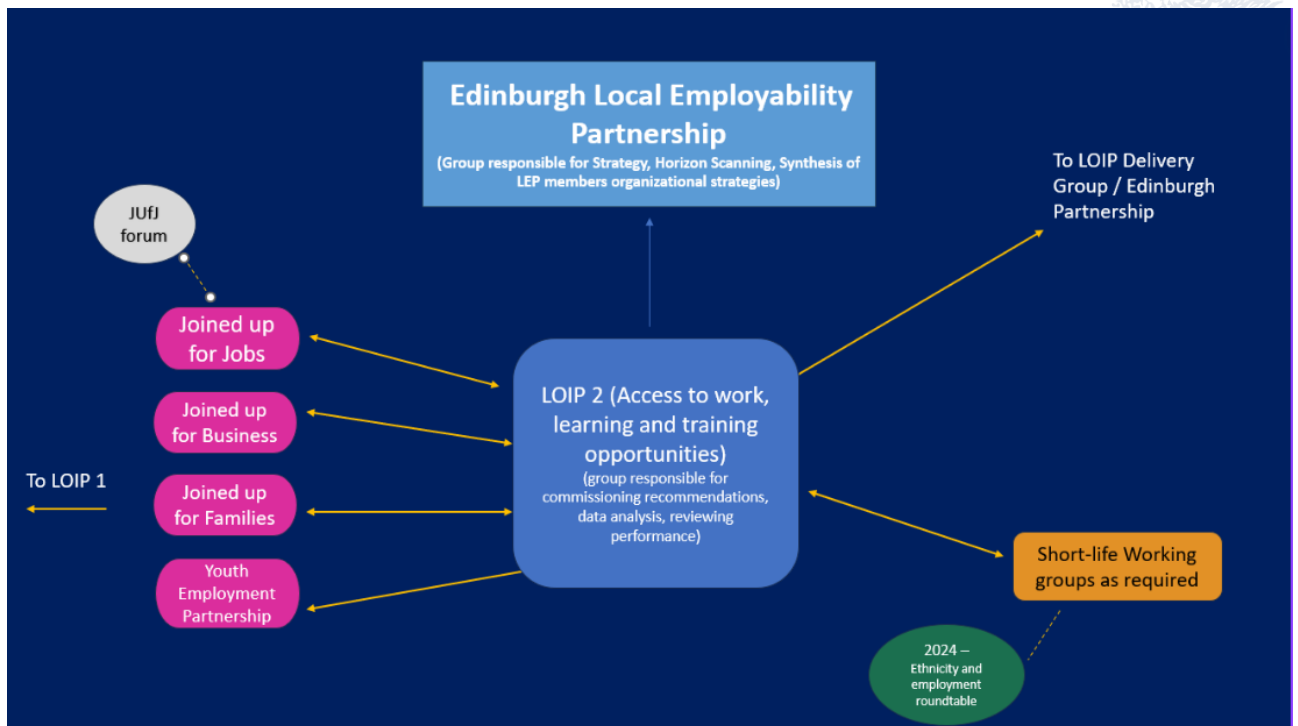



Figure 11. The new operational subgroup

## The core LEP group: activities and focus

The thematic work, horizon scanning and strategic action of the main LEP group will focus on the areas outlined below.

- **Higher and Further education**, and training as part of a co-ordinated approach to ensure that the people of Edinburgh have access to opportunities so that they are ready to capitalise on forthcoming opportunities. This will help to address skills gaps, and the recruitment challenges being experienced in key sectors. The training and education theme will include strategic planning in relation to green skills, digital skills, health and social care and self-management skills.
- **Poverty, deprivation and reducing barriers** to accessing and sustaining high quality employment.
- **Flexible working** and supporting employers to understand requirements to reduce the health-related barriers people may face to accessing/sustaining employment.
- Ways to use a more regional approach to addressing **recruitment and skills gaps** by co-ordinating efforts with other LEPs to ensure that people who live elsewhere can access work in Edinburgh.

- 
- **Transitions planning and support**, including co-ordinated actions to support young people transitioning from college to work, and from school to education or employment. This theme will include a focus on identifying ways to support vulnerable young people who are leaving school early without a future plan, many of whom are now known to be too young to access traditional supports via job centres.

The preventative, strategic and future focused scope of the main LEP's work will mean, however, that the above thematic areas are likely to evolve and change as new crises or situations are identified. A fundamental aim of the overarching LEP will be to close the gap between supply and demand by working together to plan for ways to address some of the larger issues listed above, as well as responding to change. As such, the LEP's priorities and strategic direction will feed down into the work of the operational subgroup (LOIP 2). Moving operational issues, such as performance management, funding decisions and service commissioning out of the main LEP group will mean that there is more scope for the main LEP to move beyond a focus on the 'here and now', so that they may explore long-term and preventative actions to address forthcoming challenges and opportunities. This will also mean that LEP members who do not have a direct involvement in funding and commissioning will not need to attend LOIP 2 meetings, reducing some of the time input required of them. The subgroup will ensure that the work of both groups is more streamlined.

The appointment of an independent chair for the LEP will be required as part of this change, and will ensure that the LEP is well positioned to mobilise the collective influence of members from multiple sectors. The new chair, once appointed, will be supported by the existing chair during the transition period, to ensure that they are integrated and connected to a range of forums, thereby supporting the ongoing influencing role of the LEP. This will also ensure that the LEP's work remains closely aligned to community planning as part of The Edinburgh Partnership.

## **LOIP 2 as an operational subgroup of LEP**

The work of the operational subgroup (LOIP 2) will also require the development of a commissioning plan, and a rolling action plan. A chair for LOIP 2 will have to be appointed to oversee the development of these plans. It is expected that the appointed chair will be an existing LEP member who is already involved in making funding and commissioning decisions to ensure a smooth transition to the new structure and the rapid development of a commissioning plan that is tied to meeting the needs of the priorities outlined within this strategy.



[The Scottish Approach to Service Design \(SAtSD\) principles](#) should be embedded within the commissioning plan. These are set out below.

- We explore and define the problem before we design the solution.
- We design service journeys around people and not around how the public sector is organised.
- We seek citizen participation in our projects from day one.
- We use inclusive and accessible research and design methods so citizens can participate fully and meaningfully.
- We use the core set of tools and methods of the Scottish Approach to Service Design.
- We share and reuse user research insights, service patterns, and components wherever possible.
- We contribute to continually building the Scottish Approach to Service Design methods, tools, and community.

To ensure that the commissioned services are effective and achieving the desired impact will require enhanced use of data. A data driven, and data informed approach to performance management will be required across the sector to ensure that priority groups are being reached effectively. It is anticipated that achieving the aims of this strategy will require there to be enhanced use of key performance indicators to ensure that all organisations take responsibility for the part they play in reducing the inequalities experienced by priority groups, as part of increasing access to fair employment for all. Ensuring that the needs of priority groups are understood and met will require the collaborative and participatory approach of the Scottish Approach to Service Design, which embeds ‘user voice’ and coproduction in all aspects of service design and evaluation.

Enhanced consultation and qualitative research will require to be accompanied by enhanced use of statistical data, which will include ongoing mapping of need, demand and service availability to ensure that support is provided in the geographical areas, and thematic areas where people need it most. This will include mapping to identify where the priority groups are located within the city to ensure that services are provided in the areas where they are needed most. The LOIP 2 will feed back information on the alignment of service to need to the main LEP, who will think strategically about the collective actions that could be undertaken to address emerging areas of unmet needs that fall beyond the scope of current funding possibilities.



The LOIP 2's main activity will thereby centre around assessing the effectiveness of current provision, identifying areas of new and emerging need, and developing commissioning plans in accordance with this. They will provide data to the main LEP group for consideration, particularly where there are areas of unmet need that require innovation or enhanced partnership work between sectors, such as health and social care, education or welfare as part of contributing to reducing poverty, and inequalities within the city.

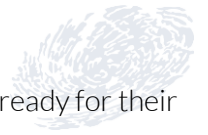
## **Intersectionality, complex needs and the skills pipeline**

The skills pipeline has been updated and is available here: [strategic-skills-pipeline-2022-to-25 \(edinburgh.gov.uk\)](https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/strategic-skills-pipeline-2022-to-25). This should be considered to be a working document that is continually updated as part of the core LEP group's work. It is recommended that a new website for all LEP activity is created to ensure transparency. The new LEP website should also provide a link to the skills pipeline, alongside a directory of services and information on how to make funding applications. It is expected that the creation of a new website and directory will require the establishment of a new subgroup, which will shoot off from the LOIP 2 operational group.

Ensuring a joined-up approach to employment support is likely to require some acknowledgement that the employability pipeline is not linear. While the skills pipeline has been updated, it is now increasingly clear that there is a need for long term support for those who have complex health needs or who face barriers to sustaining employment. This is likely to require long-term support and touchpoints throughout a person's career, where they can check in with those who they have established relationships with to obtain support to sustain employment, or to move quickly back into new roles following job loss. Ensuring that services are well equipped to deal with this will be a focus of LOIP 2's ongoing analysis and will feed into decisions about funding and the commissioning of services.

As the background to this strategy has indicated, the needs of people who are experiencing long-term unemployment in Edinburgh are increasingly complex. Those furthest from the labour market are facing challenges related to a range of life domains, and many have acute health and social care needs. Often, unmet health and social care needs are accompanied by challenges related to housing, which is made more acute by Edinburgh's housing crisis. There is a growing recognition of a need for better integration of health, social care and welfare services and employability support. It is recognised that while many people who are experiencing poverty and deprivation would benefit from being able to access employment, many are not in a position to do so until support to meet underlying needs is achieved.





Consideration will be given to those at the start of the skills pipeline, who may not yet be ready for their journey toward education or employment as a result of unmet health and social care needs. The LEP will consider the effectiveness of referral pathways for this group as part of their integration with other community services, and will continue to share insights with The Edinburgh Partnership in relation to enhancing partnership work to meet needs in a holistic and coordinated way.

Supporting people into work, however, will present only one part of the LEP's focus for 2024-2026, as there are now considerable issues related to under-employment that require to be addressed. A mixed methods approach to data collection and analysis is further recommended to inform next actions for the LEP to joining up efforts to ensure that income is maximised by reducing barriers people may face to receiving enough hours within work. It is likely that this work will also align with efforts to support employers to consider the flexible working arrangements that may be required for those who experience ill-health and those who have caring responsibilities. It is now widely recognised that people with disabilities, lone parents, mothers under the age of 25 with children under 2, and some racial and ethnic groups are facing disproportionately high incidences of poverty and deprivation, as well as barriers to accessing employment. This again will be a focus for the main LEP group to consider as part of their thematic work.

## **Collaboration and feedback loops between LEP and LOIP 2**

Ensuring that the strategic vision outlined in this plan is achieved will require the development of a rolling delivery plan for both the LEP and the LOIP 2. Sustainable relationships with service providers also embody the principles of NOLB and of a trauma-informed approach by reducing the need for re-telling stories due to an awareness of tried and tested ways to support each individual. Such sustainability of relationships and longer-term support, however, may require some consideration to be made in relation to the current funding structures for employability services, which tend to be short term. Short term funding within the sector contributes to a complex, and ever-changing landscape which is likely to continue to be challenging for end users to navigate. This also contributes to recruitment and retention challenges within employability support services themselves due to the uncertainty of job roles. While this is a structural issue that is likely to be beyond the current scope of the LEP's scope, it would be advantageous for the LEP to use its influence to highlight issues related to funding as part of performance management and data reviews. The core group of the LEP will be used to explore this, whilst the LOIP 2's evidence on impact will provide evidence of the requirement for altered funding structures. Achieving the aim of creating a high performing, sustainable employability sector will require a two way feedback loop between the strategic (LEP) and operational (LOIP 2) groups.



## Summary of lines of responsibility for LEP and the operational subgroup (LOIP 2)

The table below provides some insight into the roles and responsibilities of the main LEP group, and the operational subgroup (LOIP 2).

Activity or area of focus	Group Responsible	Detail
Horizon scanning to identify forthcoming challenges and opportunities	Main LEP group	Engaging in longer-term planning and developing preventative strategies/coordinated action
Coordinating activity to ensure that the gaps between the types of jobs available, including forthcoming growth areas, and the skills of local people are matched	Main LEP group	Strategic planning to ensure coordination of activity between skills providers, training centres, schools, colleges and universities, and the creation of an up to date directory of available access routes.
Ensuring enhanced uptake of fair work practices and policies, including the more widespread adoption of the Living Wage Pledge among the city's employers	Main LEP group	Supporting employers and providers
Communicating with, and engaging employers, third sector organisations and local authorities to ensure that the barriers to fully implementing national strategies related to employability are recognised and overcome. Ensuring that	Main LEP group	Drawing upon the LEP's collective knowledge, creating space for reflection to think through complex challenges and arrive at innovative, partnership based solutions



<p>the struggles faced by specific industries are understood by those working at local, regional and national levels.</p>		
<p>Strategic action to support employers to think long term about their recruitment needs. Encouragement to think beyond immediate needs, and to plan for the future by upskilling existing staff to reduce the likelihood of skills gaps and recruitment issues later on. Further action to support more widespread adoption of flexible working practices and policies to reduce the barriers that people with long term health issues or caring responsibilities face in relation to accessing and sustaining employment, and thereby reducing poverty.</p>	<p>Main LEP group</p>	<p>Collectivising knowledge and resources to strengthen the influencing role of the LEP and develop stronger partnerships with local employers</p>
<p>Remaining nimble and responsive to emerging developments within the employment sector, including giving consideration to how new developments relate to structural issues.</p>	<p>Main LEP group</p>	<p>Horizon scanning, long-term planning and preventative actions</p>
<p>Integrating with LEPS in other regions to ensure alignment with national strategies, and identifying opportunities to</p>	<p>Main LEP group</p>	<p>Capitalising on opportunities and developing networks across multiple geographies to</p>



learn from best practices and innovative approaches being used elsewhere. Creating opportunities for sharing resources between regions to better support those who live elsewhere, but who travel to Edinburgh for work.		strengthen the work and influencing role of the LEP
Appointing a new independent chair to oversee the new structure and the implementation of the strategy	Main LEP group	
Creating a directory of services, to be made available on a newly created LEP website, that will also include detail of how to make funding applications	The operational subgroup (LOIP 2)	The activity involved in creating the new website will be an operational task, which will be overseen by LOIP 2, but will be dealt with by a new subgroup of LOIP 2.
Data analysis to examine the reach of current funded services, to ensure that priority groups are being reached effectively.	The operational subgroup (LOIP 2)	Statistical analysis to examine reach, including data mapping
Ensuring increased data to monitor the impact of services funded and commissioned via LEP and NOLB.	The operational subgroup (LOIP 2)	Developing effective and standardised monitoring frameworks with key performance indicators that align with the priorities set out within the LEP strategy, and further developed as part of the rolling action plan
Consultation, and coproduction, involving local	The operational subgroup (LOIP 2)	Ensuring that services are well equipped to support people to overcome the barriers they



people in the design and commissioning of services		may face when seeking employability support, and in maintaining employment within good/high quality jobs.
Developing a commissioning framework that aligns with the LEP's aim of reducing poverty and inequality, and increasing access to fair work for all.	The operational subgroup (LOIP 2)	Ensuring alignment of community need to strategic priorities, and service provision. Operationalising the strategy.
Feeding back data on the impact of current services, the reach of services, gaps, duplication and the effectiveness of the sector as a whole to the LEP	The operational subgroup (LOIP 2)	Enabling prevention, and long-term planning, as well as contributing insights to inform further strategic actions

# Appendix: Feedback from LEP partners



## Summary

In this appendix, we draw on our wide range of interviews with LEP partners to draw out the key issues for the LEP strategy.

### Where we are now

**Strategic position:** the Edinburgh LEP is a well established partnership with committed members who are driven to share resources across organisations, using networks and connections to create innovative responses to emerging challenges. There are examples of excellent practice that can be built upon to achieve the aims of the 2024 – 2026 strategy.

**Responding to the needs of individual clients:** there is a need to think strategically about how employability services integrate with, and provide routes to, health and social work services for those who are experiencing multiple complex needs and challenging life circumstances.

**Key sectors and developments:** there is a need for a joined up approach to ensure that those who live and work in Edinburgh are able to capitalise on forthcoming opportunities in green infrastructure, technical and scientific roles, and to address gaps in the health and social care sector.

- The Macmillan Skills Hub, which has made best use of regeneration opportunities at Leith Waterfront, creating skills pathways and jobs.
- The response to a sudden influx of Ukrainian refugees who required jobs and housing, which included a focused effort by a few key partners who shared a clear objective of increasing access to good quality, well matched jobs and housing.
- The Standard Life Employability Course, which provided 44 people aged over 50 with employability skills training, many of whom accessed work with the organisation at the close of the course.
- A disability employment focus at Edinburgh Airport, which has led to an increase in employment for people with disabilities within various roles at the airport.



Many LEP members felt that the work of the LEP could be strengthened with a clear articulation and guidance in relation to the role of each of the partnerships working across Edinburgh relevant to employment, skills, and the response to poverty. They expressed that a clear articulation of roles and forums would help develop a shared understanding of the relationship between groups, and the LEP’s activity, thereby ensuring a co-ordinated and integrated approach to addressing some of the city’s challenges. We note that some LEP members were able to articulate these links, roles and relationships well, where others felt they needed more guidance, and a clearer picture. This perhaps indicates the different roles of LEP members themselves, and their relationships to their own organisations. Some organisations are likely to be more connected to wider Edinburgh partnerships and initiatives than others. Clear information flow and communication on what is going on where is likely to be of benefit to LEP members whose organisations are less well integrated into the wider strategic picture in Edinburgh.

**Commitment, connections and shared aims**


Some LEP members expressed that one of the strengths of the LEP was that its membership was well established, as many members remained involved, even when they changed role and took on new positions within the sector, as the quote below outlines.

*“There is an interesting thing that happens in the City of Edinburgh around our agencies where there’s a lot of cross pollination. Staff tend to move around within the network, which actually works very advantageously for the LEP in terms of the knowledge staying in the system. A real strength of the city is how the local employability services connect together in that way, because people bring that knowledge with them to their new role and they’re able to then kind of connect back.” LEP Member*

Most members who took part in the consultation described the LEP as being well established, and felt that fellow members were open to ideas, and responsive.

*“We’ve been very lucky, as the individuals involved are all and very open and professional and responsive.”  
LEP Member*

Some felt that the strength of the relationships within the LEP, and a shared commitment to improving the working lives of Edinburgh’s citizens is what motivated them to remain involved in the partnership over a long period of time.



*"I think that's where we do well, keeping going, a kind of continuation of those connections [...] I think you know, that's one of the reasons why I'm still involved." LEP Member*

Many commented on the importance of maintaining connections, which had benefited their knowledge of the sector, as well as their ongoing commitment to improvement. Most noted that although they were committed, and keen to share resources across organisations to maximise the impact of the LEP, many members' work with the LEP was not part of their core role, but rather, something that they engaged with because of a shared commitment to improving the lives of those who live and work in Edinburgh.

Many LEP members felt that the LEP was an important space where partners could engage in open and transparent dialogue due to the long-standing and honest nature of the relationships that exist within the partnership.

## **The need for a data-driven approach to commissioning and funding**

LEP members shared that although there was currently a good level of funding available within the employability sector as a whole, a lot of the funding was reactive and in response to emerging crises.

Some noted that the LEP was sometimes alerted to new funding sources at short notice, and noted that often, decisions around commissioning would have to be made quickly. Some noted that there was a focus on the 'here and now' within allocated funding, which often came with short funding cycles.

Several members shared the view that the complexities of commissioning and managing operational issues, such as making decisions on funding, and commissioning could at times, get in the way of the LEP's ability to forward plan and think strategically about the actions that may be required in the future, as part of a more prevention-oriented approach. Much of the success of the LEP was considered to be based upon those relationships, and member's commitment to working together.

Many felt that there was a good level of funding available, but that the funding was sometimes reactive, and required rapid commissioning decisions, which meant that a lot of LEP meeting time was dedicated to these pressing operational matters. This appeared to be leaving less time for future planning around prevention and longer-term work.





*“[A key issues is] being reactive to money ... the funding cycles are so short and it's generating quite a lot of work. So, with the time taken for LEP members doing that, it can take away from the time from horizon scanning or thinking right.” LEP member*

Some felt that the speed at which decisions had to be made meant that there was not always time to carry out data analysis, to understand whether priority or target groups were being reached effectively by existing services. This meant that it was challenging for LEP members to feel certain about whether there were gaps in provision, or potentially duplication of services. Most felt that there was a need for a more data-driven, and data informed approach to commissioning. Most felt that a more data-driven approach was also required in relation to monitoring impact, and the performance of funded services. Many felt that enhanced use of data would also allow the LEP to forward plan to identify preventative strategies or interventions that could be of value to respond to forthcoming, future challenges within the sector. Those who felt this way also suggested that a greater focus on the use of data could strengthen the influencing role of the LEP, offering opportunities to feed back to statutory bodies, and the Scottish Government about future funding priorities, and the effectiveness of current strategies. The need for enhanced data use came through strongly in the interviews.

Some LEP members expressed that currently, much of the emphasis was on funding that aligned with national priorities, rather than local priorities, which meant that strategic planning to meet local and hyperlocal needs was sometimes challenging. A few felt that current structures meant that local employability providers, and local employers were less trusting of the LEP because the LEP's priorities were too heavily focused on alignment with national strategies rather being tailored to local need. The majority of LEP members, however, felt that local needs were most often in alignment with national priorities due to the current focus on reducing poverty, which most felt was a need across all local areas. Again, however, many asserted the need for a data mapping exercise to be conducted to identify areas within Edinburgh where local needs were misaligned by national priorities and where there may be a need for a more localised, tailored approach or focused work to target very specific groups.

## **The influence of the LEP**

LEP members shared that there are many partnerships across the city who are working together to address poverty and improve service provision (further information on this is provided in chapter 1). Although all interviewees felt that LEP members were well connected strategically and represented at many of the associated partnership meetings and forums, some felt that there was a need for greater articulation of the role and function of each partnership and how it connected with the LEP's work.



Some members were well aware of this, and well informed, and others felt that they required further information, as the LEP member below discusses.

*"I'm not as involved in the Edinburgh Guarantee, or Young Person's Guarantee. That's something that's consciously discussed at a different level. It would be of benefit to filter down to more operational staff or encourage an awareness of what these offers are to people where it's not the part of their day job. That feels like something that we could definitely do more on." LEP member*

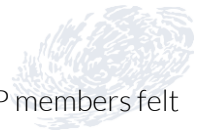
This participant felt that it would be beneficial to each of the partners involved in the LEP if each of the partnerships were discussed in detail, which would then allow LEP members to take insights back to their own organisations to share awareness.

Although many described the successes of the LEP to date, some discussed the constraints and challenges of achieving the LEP's aims of increasing access to fair work for all. Some expressed that achieving this aim would require that all employers embrace strategies such as the Scottish Government's Fair Work strategy, and so most members felt that there was a need for the LEP to provide guidance to employers, to advocate for further uptake.

*"...this is a really important question in terms of actually looking at the labour market, but unless we have things like Fair Work implemented really fully by the Scottish Government, the third sector is an example of a set of employers that are really going to struggle." LEP Member*

Many felt that there was a need for the LEP to create more space to collaborate, reflect and share ideas as part of strategic planning, to ensure that the LEP adopted an advocacy role within the employability sector as well as the employment sector as a whole. Some felt that this would contribute to their ability to promote strategies like Fair Work further.

Many LEP members discussed the challenges facing providers within the employability sector itself. For example, some members expressed the challenges involved in short-term project funding, which did not allow for overhead or core costs. They shared that this meant that employees within the sector, including those who provide employability support, were being given short-term contracts, which reduced the organisation's abilities to fully embrace Fair Work schemes.



Given that many employability service providers are third sector organisations, some LEP members felt that there were some contradictions and areas of strain within the sector itself. They noted that often, the people providing employability support would be in short-term, low paid or insecure work themselves due to the complexities of funding structures.

*“A lot of the providers are third sector and charities, and the workers are not in in good positions in terms of the salaries that they are receiving themselves. They are staffed by folk on short term contracts with no inflationary uplift unless it comes out of reserves or hours get cut.” LEP Member*

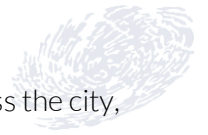
Some felt that those from statutory bodies such as the NHS, council, or those from Skills Development Scotland would find it difficult to comprehend the challenges faced by those in the third sector. They expressed that this was a key challenge within employability support as well as in relation to funding and commissioning and was an issue that required the LEP to adopt an advocacy role to make these challenges, and the impact they have upon the sector clear.

*“The priority is also the resilience of the organisations that do the work, making sure we invest in our communities and Edinburgh postcodes where organizations are working together. Those structural things are super important because otherwise we just we have a set of services that are going to be overwhelmed with cost and closure, when actually it's the thing that's been most agile. To me they're really pulling the heart of that out by undermining our ability to recruit people and our resources.” LEP member*

Another LEP member noted that there had been a reduction in Scottish Government grants for some third sector providers, which had led to strained relationships and a lack of trust within some areas of the sector. Some described this as a disconnect between the strategic vision at a governmental level and what that translates to on the ground at a local level.

*“I suppose there's always a disconnect between that kind of strategic vision and what that means on the ground. And you know, [the Government and the council] are key players in what the future of this looks like, but I'm not sure that the vision is always communicated well to all of the stakeholders.” LEP Member*

This was described by one LEP member as being a very challenging operating environment where often, the challenges facing third sector employability service providers were not widely understood. Several LEP members expressed that there was a need to clearly articulate the LEP's role in advocating for the



needs of third sector providers when attending meetings within other partnerships across the city, thereby joining up the partnerships strategically and creating a more coherent, complete understanding of the sector, and how it relates to wider aims of reducing poverty and strengthening organisation's abilities to work together to ensure a 'no one left behind' approach. Sustained relationships, and sustainable services were considered important to the success of such initiatives. The findings suggest that the LEP has an important role in articulating the impact that funding arrangements can have upon the operating environment and the constraints facing employability service providers.

Many felt that due to the strategic connections of LEP members, the LEP could play a key influencing role, and could make systemic and structural issues and their impact on practice more visible to policy makers. They expressed that this could support policymakers to be able to understand areas where policy, strategy, funding, and commissioning arrangements could constrain, or negatively impact upon service providers, and the stability or effectiveness of services.

The findings suggest that there is considerable collective knowledge within the Edinburgh LEP. For example, many members shared that they had been a part of the partnership for many years, and stated that this meant that they were able to identify patterns, trends and initiatives that had occurred before in previous years. There appeared to be considerable knowledge related to what had worked well and less well in the past, as well as knowledge of 'tried and tested' solutions to contemporary challenges. There were several examples of this. For example, some LEP members discussed guaranteed interview schemes for those who took part in vocational training. Others discussed previous branding for skills academies and other sector-specific training programmes, many of which, they felt could be beneficial to meet current market needs. During these conversations, the collective knowledge of LEP members was evident, and it was clear that those involved had a shared commitment to learning from experience, which could be used to identify innovations that had worked previously, and those that had failed for context-specific or operational reasons.

Many LEP members felt that they should use their collective influence to engage more fully with local employers, both small and large, to promote flexible working practices, and other work-based policies/practices that could reduce the barriers that those furthest from the labour market may face.



Many felt that they could play a stronger role in raising employer's awareness of initiatives such as the Edinburgh Guarantee to increase understanding of the need to embrace flexible work.

*"There are a lot of existing relationships that really understand what we're trying to do and we also get employers that are new to the city coming to us through the Edinburgh guarantee where employers can contact us directly to hear about how they can get involved, how they can advertise job. Everyone is pushing the Fair Work message which has those underpinning principles and saying, if you want to be an employer in the city and you want to get staff, you're going to have to be flexible because there's a lot of choice out there for people." LEP Member*

Many LEP members described the current moment as being one of both change and opportunity, where employers were starting to be more accepting of, and willing to give back to local communities.

Several noted that this was more evident within larger employers, who were responding to the challenges of the current context by demonstrating a 'corporate social responsibility' in a meaningful way by creating initiatives to support people who require reasonable adjustments to be made as part of reducing barriers to accessing fair work.

Many LEP members felt that Edinburgh was in a fortunate position because there are a large number of global businesses in the city, who have embraced their social responsibility, and who see their engagement with the local community as being key to their success.

Many LEP members felt that the LEP activity would be enhanced with a higher level of collaboration and a more joined up approach to integrating with other LEPs regionally. They felt that at a city level, Edinburgh had a relatively coordinated structure, where people were working across many partnerships and able to bring knowledge to the LEP, as well as communicating LEP activities and priorities with other groups. All felt that there could be more structured activity to ensure that this integrated approach continued. Many felt that there was a requirement to join up regionally with other LEPs, particularly because those who live in other areas could travel to Edinburgh for work. This meant that there were potential missed opportunities for cross-LEP initiatives. They described the potential benefits of creating a coherent regional vision going forward, to ensure that the activity of local LEPs is aligned.



## Responding to the current context

During the consultation and review, many LEP members expressed that in recent years, the scale and impact of poverty across the city had become more evident. Many felt that priority groups for LEP interventions should be those that are experiencing the highest levels of poverty, but found it difficult to prioritise which groups. Some felt that there was a need to create more opportunities for the LEP to take a step back from pressing, and operational issues to consider how they could plan ahead, and advocate for the steps that may be required to address poverty by taking an intersectional approach to reducing the barriers that people may face to accessing employment, and good quality jobs, as the LEP member below describes.

*"...it is about really stepping back and planning ahead for 10 to 20 years because it's going to take that amount of time, maybe for advocacy work with the government. But how we can all individually in the LEP partnership influence the direction? I'm not convinced we know how we influence Government and funders to influence long term change." LEP member*

Some felt that there was a need to spend more time as a collective partnership exploring what could be done to create more place-based approaches to meet the needs of those who were experiencing the highest levels of poverty, and thereby the biggest barriers to entering the job market.

*"I think we could do more around and place-based work and that could actually most reach those in poverty." LEP member*

This participant went on to state that there was a need to think carefully and plan around where events, such as recruitment fairs were held, to ensure that instead of offering city centre events, there were community-based events, that made the most of infrastructure within micro-local areas.

*"Rather than having one recruitment fair in the middle, you have to have recruitment fairs in different places. There's some bits of the city which have quite low infrastructure in terms of our sector. We need to explore the real connectedness of a few years ago, where, for example, the GPs were paid staff at the table and part of finding out what was going on in communities. But the organisations locally are sometimes supporting those networks themselves out of their own resources. A bit of a boost to that could help." LEP member*



The above LEP member went on to suggest that in some areas, there are hyperlocal networks emerging that are sometimes more effective than centralised services, and proposed that the LEP may have a key role to play in identifying where these exist and seeking to link effective networks to funding provision to ensure longevity and sustainability. Another LEP member discussed hyperlocal collaboratives and praised these as being an innovative way to address local issues, and to link people into services that could help them to overcome barriers to accessing employability support. Helping to connect hyperlocal community networks with funding streams was considered to be a powerful way to strengthen local connections and to engage with more people. While many felt that the 20-minute neighbourhood approach was helpful to ensuring that people didn't have to travel too far to access services, some felt that it could have negative consequences for those who lived close to neighbourhood boundary lines, who required services on the other side of the boundary.

Those who discussed hyperlocal community support networks felt that the LEP could explore such innovative models further, using a range of approaches, including public consultation and qualitative research to understand their impact, and any requirement that there could be for funding to enhance routes to employment and/or education.

*“There is a potential for some of these [local collaborations] to be really powerful and but I notice at LEP when we bring these ideas, we're listened to, but I think that keeping the pace up of rolling out some of these innovations and targeting in this way, we're not going to try and roll that direct the whole city, but let's target the top 20 minute neighbourhoods that have got at significant poverty challenges and we can get moving with it.” LEP member*

## **Responding to complex needs**

Many stressed that although the LEP contribute to the Poverty Commission Report for Edinburgh, the reactive nature of their current work means that it is difficult to contribute to longer-term strategic planning, and to consider the above innovative approaches to supporting creative local approaches. Some noted though that although there was a widespread recognition that earning above a certain threshold could lift someone out of poverty, there were data sharing and data connectivity issues that prevented there being documented evidence of the impact in this regard. Several LEP members felt that there needed to be a more well-developed understanding of what works to address poverty and complex needs, to understand the best ways for the LEP to support people into fair work. This is discussed in detail in the quote below.





*“So you need the bigger picture and not just the number of those attending [employability support services]. We sometimes do case studies that give you a little snapshot, a little peak, but they don't speak for the volume sometimes, especially when you're spending so much money [commissioning services]. It's frustrating, and for me, it's not all about the job, but it's very hard to quantify when somebody has a job, what have you've done with that person. You need to know somebody is earning an amount that lifts them out of poverty, that lifts them off benefits. But you don't see that because you you're not the DWP, and there's never been that kind of communication between employability projects and DWP in terms of somebody's now come off benefits. So it's really hard for the LEP to invest in the in work support and for any provider to show how their service has lifted that person out poverty.” LEP member.*

This LEP member, and several others, described the complexity of monitoring the performance and impact of employability services to demonstrate impact. Many shared that this made commissioning the right services challenging. They shared that when it comes to contributing to reducing poverty, there is not currently enough known to understand and evidence the impact that employability services are having.

Some felt that having a good relationship between the LEP as commissioners, and contract managers within funded organisations, helped with this, because it was possible to discuss impact in more detail and understand the aims of the service. Several noted that measuring impact was not always about assessing the reach of services, or their success in getting people into work. Several noted that it was about understanding the person's journey, and the impact that services had had upon the person's confidence, ability to manage their health, their medication and their approach to life. Some noted that often, when people were experiencing multiple complex needs, incremental changes such as these were a fundamental part of the journey towards eventual employment.

Some felt that there was now a very strong link between health and social care issues and employability and reflected that this was not always well understood within contractual arrangements. Most expressed that the unknowns related to a requirement for a more data driven approach, that took into account people's journeys via qualitative research, while also examining the data on the reach of current programmes in relation to known priority groups.

*“So there's maybe something around data collection and mapping that to the 6 priorities in terms of poverty and seeing what data we don't have so we can see who we can target a little bit better. It's sitting in pockets and there's lots of good work happening, but that feels like an opportunity that's building on the money that's come into the city and the expertise that's already here that we can*





*improve., There's an ambition there around being the data capital of Europe too. And for some reason, strategically, we've had some blockers in policy terms to that in Edinburgh, but I think that's starting to change." LEP member*

The need for a data driven and data informed approach was the golden thread that wove through many of the points raised by LEP members. Some felt that this was more required now than ever before due to the highly complex needs of those seeking work, and the complex needs of those furthest from the labour market. For example, several LEP members noted that there were a lot of citizens who had experienced trauma during the pandemic, who now had multiple complex needs that required a range of health and social care services before employment or training could be considered.

*"So I would imagine the kind of resource it needs has to be a little bit more intensive and a little bit more flexible to the people's needs. There's a lot of people facing a lot of trauma just now because of what they've experienced the last couple of years and we are reaching the really-hard-to-reach people as well. The people that we now support have quite complex needs, and tend to have a little bit of trauma in their background. So we maybe just need to think about how supportive services are and maybe a bit better versed in the wider issues rather than just focusing on employability and to support these people." LEP member*

Many LEP members felt that there was a need to think strategically about how supportive services are, and the extent to which they are able to identify and triage wider issues rather than simply focusing on employability. Some felt that there was a need to acknowledge that when people were referred to, or entered employability support, they were now often in a state of pre-readiness for employment-oriented intervention. Several LEP members described a need for enhanced support for young people who were transitioning from schools to colleges, universities and the workplace. This is explored in the quote below.

*"I suppose one of the things that we grapple with, which I'm sure will probably be relevant for other elements of the LEP is the kind of delayed adulthood. It isn't specifically related to mental health or anxiety or health and employment, but I think there are facets of that. Delayed adulthood requires a greater level of support to transition into the labour market, and support to upskill in terms of the softer skills and resilience, confidence and living independently." LEP member*




Several LEP members felt that there was a need for the LEP to think strategically and to share knowledge collectively to explore the complexity of need that was emerging within society, and which had appeared to have increased since the Covid-19 pandemic. They expressed that this would require some reflective space to consider innovative solutions and strategies that could be used to respond meaningfully to the changing needs of the young workforce.

Some felt that there was now a growing need for upstream early interventions to be considered before people came into the employment sector, as part of pre-readiness for employability style support. Some examples of this related to there being a need for an all-systems, multi-professional, cross-sector response that included intensive, holistic family support and ongoing engagement with early years establishments, to support life and employment skills development.

Some described this as being a holistic, wrap around provision of skills training that could be aligned to developmental stages, to ensure that people were able to self-manage and achieve independence by the time they were ready to start engaging with employment, or further education. They described this as being part of a shift toward focus on prevention.

*“The holistic approach would then mean prevention, more prevention [...] So where we don't have good early intervention, which is what they have in the health and social care partnership and are working on a strategic plan around early intervention that includes things like personal assistants being employed through self directed support. Where people get good self directed support, they're able to live fuller lives and they're less likely to have mental health or physical health problems because they're actually engaged in volunteering and opportunities. They are able to have somebody alongside them on that journey, especially if you start early. If you always start with the young people.” LEP Member*

The above LEP member went on to explain that people with complex health conditions and people with learning needs, or those who are neurodiverse, often require tailored additional support to access education and employment. They expressed that often, the person presents for employability support, but often have health and social care needs that ideally should have been addressed earlier in their lives. The member felt that if these needs had been addressed earlier, such as during their school age years, then they would have missed out on fewer opportunities and would not have such intensive needs at the point where they are referred into employability services. This LEP member felt that there was now a growing need for the LEP to engage with the local health and social care partnership.



*"I think of us [the employability sector] as being the Canary in the coal mine. We need to prioritise some of the things that we're able to identify because we're more likely to be trusted by some. Sadly, for some of our bigger statutory partners there just isn't the same trust. People worry 'that's the social workers going to take my children away'...And when I lose my house...'. We have, the highest number of families in long-term temporary accommodation and that's going to be a job challenge as well. So, I think really proactive work with our children and families colleagues, particularly in the Council and our sector, is a big thing for the LEP." LEP member*

Many LEP members described situations where a close working relationship between the LEP and the local health and social care partnership would be advantageous, particularly in relation to meeting the complex needs of those who present looking for employability support.

*"One of the biggest opportunities is making sure that there's a very solid pipeline that can meet the needs of everybody and provide those opportunities for those in school right up until those that are 50 and over. And I think that's something that maybe doesn't happen smoothly." LEP member*

Some LEP members felt that the relationships between the LEP and the health and social care partnership needed to be further developed, to ensure that there were clear ways into services for those who were seeking employment but were unable to engage in employment until their complex needs were met. Some pointed out that this was sometimes about those with caring responsibilities who required support with child and adult care to enable them to enter the workplace. A LEP member explored the complexity of this.

*"This isn't about helping people, a few weeks apart, to do a CV and then there's a job interview and good luck. This is about breaking down a lot of barriers. And there's some people out there who unfortunately are still in a position where when they are looking at entry level work and financially they are not much better off, or in some cases they are not better off at all by making the move into employment. So it goes back to that multiple barrier... the hardest to reach people with multiple barriers [to employment]. It's having that holistic support available for these people so it's not just about having an employability worker. It's much more than that. And, it could be that you're moving into territory that some might think is not employability but actually is completely connected." LEP member*



The focus on prevention and multi-modal interventions described above aligns with the concept of a public health approach, which prioritises upstream prevention and holistic solutions to complex issues. Several LEP members expressed that adopting a holistic, and integrated approach was now necessary due to the complex life experiences of those who are currently in need of employability support. They noted that adopting this type of integrated, holistic approach to meeting people’s needs would require a clear articulation of the role of the LEP, its members and the services that it commissions. They also stated that ensuring a solid employability pipeline that meets the needs of all citizens would require interventions throughout a person’s life journey, beginning at school and within the sphere of family support, requiring closer relationships between the LEP and the health and social care partnership. Many felt that achieving a joined up, public health informed system that prioritised prevention and early intervention would require strategic planning, innovation, and creative thinking.

Many felt that the LEP was in a unique position to undertake such work, but noted that there would need to be more space within the LEP to think about some of these structural issues, and create future-focused strategies for addressing them.

## Key sectors and developments

In this section, we provide LEP member’s perspectives and insights in relation to key sectors, and developments within Edinburgh’s employment market. Many LEP members expressed that the city was still recovering from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and Brexit, which had both impacted negatively upon the availability of staff within certain sectors, as the quote below outlines.

*“Coming out of COVID in Edinburgh, the LEP used to have really good relationships with some of our entry level positions in certain sectors. In terms of hospitality and tourism there was such a turnover of staff, we had a lot of people from Europe working in these industries. And because there’s been struggle to recruit senior level management posts in those industries, then the appetite to come in at an entry level is lessened.” LEP Member*

LEP members shared that there had been recruitment challenges in hospitality and retail across all job levels, but particularly at senior management levels. This had led to some employers within the retail and hospitality sector working with employability providers to increase access to staff and to fill vacant job roles. Some felt that the recruitment challenges that employers were facing were leading to an increased willingness to consider trying different working patterns, and offering additional support or flexibility to employees.



LEP members reflected that there were also recruitment challenges within health and social care, and the creative industries. Some noted that these sectors, together with the hospitality sector, were those where there were still zero hour contracts, which meant a lack of job security.

*“Health and social care, hospitality, there are real challenges, and the creative industries as well, because of a lot of poor conditions or zero hour contracts and a lack of security and employment now. More people have portfolio careers of doing different things and being self employed and you've got to be able and resilient to manage that. The days of turning up and doing a nine to five are gone [...] and a lot of relatively straightforward jobs have been automated and so there's a real mismatch in supply and demand in the workforce.” LEP member*

In the context of recruitment challenges, and high numbers of vacancies, one LEP member expressed.

*“In theory, there is a job for every person who is out of work, in a city which pre-pandemic had high employment. It meant that if you were unemployed in Edinburgh, it was for a very significant reason.”  
LEP member*

Some discussed the staffing shortages within the health and social care sector, as being part of this issue, as the quote below indicates.

*“I would say that in terms of the referrals we get now from the job centres, the people are not employment ready and in many cases they aren't even volunteer ready, in terms of being able to undertake something for three or four hours a week because their health and well being is so poor. We have got massive recruitment challenges, particularly in health and social care.” LEP member*

Several LEP members felt that there were also skills gaps related to green skills, and expressed a need for coordinated effort across the city to upskill, educate and train citizens so that they would be in a position to take advantage of this growth area.

*“I think this is right across the pipeline and making sure that people have these clear opportunities that are easy to access but also meet our needs as an area and as a city.” LEP member*



*“If we are looking at sectors, there's a big opportunity there for the likes of health and social care, you know, green skills and things like that, and we don't have enough people with the right skill set for a lot of these roles.” LEP member*

LEP members also affirmed that there were shortages of trained staff in Edinburgh able to take up scientific and technical roles, and expressed a need for planning and enhanced coordination of activity to increase both the offer of, and the uptake of training and education within these growth areas. LEP members also expressed that, across all industries and sectors, there was a recognised need for improved ‘soft skills’ within the workforce, and expressed that increasingly this was something that employers were looking for, particularly when struggling to recruit people with the right technical skills. Some felt that in some cases, employers were now more willing to train people in technical skills, provided that they came equipped with the right work ethic and interpersonal skills.

*“We are starting to see a shift in employers asking for more soft skills rather than technical skills, or realising that they perhaps need to take on a bit more of that training themselves.” LEP member*

Several LEP members expressed that many employers required further support to see the value of training their current staff, and help them promote from within rather than going straight to recruitment. Some felt that there was still a long way to go on this, but that the labour shortage had led to more employers starting to think about providing training to existing staff, which had the potential to address issues around low pay and in-work poverty. Most LEP members felt that strengthening this shift via advocacy and support for employers should be a key focus area for the LEP.

The below quote illustrates the complexity of addressing the issues that we have described so far within this section, and shows the intersectional nature of addressing in-work poverty and encouraging those in employment to upskill via education and/or training.

*“I suppose we've always struggled with in work poverty and how to help support those people. Because they're busy working, so how do you help them to get qualifications? And many need childcare. It must be hard for somebody looking at the statistics of employment in Edinburgh, and looking at unemployed people, to understand that it's not just a case of, 'There's lots of jobs out there, people can move into those jobs'. There is a lot more to it than that.” LEP member*

Most LEP members reflected that there was so much poverty in Edinburgh that it made it difficult to identify specific priority groups, although all responses aligned with the six groups identified as being at



highest risk of poverty within Scottish Government strategies, so there was an alignment with national policy. All LEP members agreed that the LEP needed to maintain a dual focus on supporting those furthest from the labour market, alongside supporting those who were experiencing in-work poverty. Taken together, the perspectives shared during the consultation aligned with the concept of supporting people into high quality, sustainable, fair work.

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