

Adequate Incomes – Joining The Dots

By Kate Kelman, Deputy Chief Executive of Capital City Partnership

The rise of in-work poverty poses a stark challenge. Disrupting the narrative that people can escape poverty simply with a bit of effort, stagnant rates of pay combined with the soaring cost of living only add to the barriers people already face to finding and maintaining employment that is good for them, their family, and their finances. At Capital City Partnership, we believe in the importance of good jobs - not only empower people to move out of poverty but also to build confidence and a sense of purpose, to feel part of a team and make connections with others, and to enrich and enable a work-life balance that is positive for individuals and their families.

Capital City Partnership works in the realm of employment and employability from several angles. We are involved in the commissioning and contract management of employability services – supporting people to move into work, or into better work. Alongside this, we work with employers, to identify their needs and requirements, in terms of vacancies and skills gaps, and to support and promote the principles of good work. Our ability to work with both employers and employability services allows us to join the dots on the opportunities and challenges. One particularly clear example of how this works in practice is the Vocational Training Framework programme that we run.

The Vocational Training Framework programme (VTF) creates courses that give people the knowledge and skills they need for specific roles that are required by employers. Our staff identify opportunities and linkages with employers with a specific focus across priority sectors including hospitality, retail and construction. People seeking employment, facing insecure work or in-work poverty can apply to participate in the VTF courses. Participants have the opportunity to upskill and gain SQA-accredited qualifications or certificates and are also offered a job interview at the end of the course. A key part of the VTF approach is ensuring inclusion and supporting clients with removing their barriers to work, which may include covering transport costs, assisting with right-to-work documents, provision of interview and work clothing, or support to gain membership of a professional body.

VTF has seen a 92% pre-employment course completion rate and moved 148 people into secure work since the model launched in July 2022. One of those individuals was Shalina, originally from Bangladesh. Shalina moved to Edinburgh six years ago and struggled to find a job due to several challenges. Firstly, she lacked IT skills, making online job searches and applications difficult. Secondly, English being her second language posed communication challenges, both in written and verbal contexts, affecting the application and interview processes. Lastly, the absence of industry-recognized qualifications hindered her job prospects.

Recognising these barriers, Shalina sought help from VTF. After a consultation with an approved VTF Trainer, Shalina joined a 2-week Introduction to Childcare course. Here she gained SQA NQ Process of Play and SQA Personal Development qualifications. She also improved her IT skills and completed online courses in Child Protection, Food Hygiene, and Infection Control. VTF supported her in preparing for an employer interview, and she passed with flying colours. Following this, Shalina underwent a successful short work experience in an after-school club, demonstrating her strong interaction with children. She continued to receive support through a WhatsApp group and one-on-one welfare catch-ups. After the course, Shalina took on a 'bank staff' role with Spring Oscars, gradually transitioning into a permanent position within six weeks due to her excellent performance.

Shalina's journey from unemployment to secure employment marked a significant personal achievement.

VTF is just one example of the fantastic work going on across the city to support and enable individuals not only to access work but also to explore their personal potential. Alongside our employability work, we also oversee some of the welfare advice services in the city – they provide a crucially important resource for people to ensure they are receiving the financial support they are entitled to. We are currently recruiting for an officer to support the strategic direction of welfare advice services in Edinburgh, and you can find out more [here](#).

This Challenge Poverty week we welcome today's focus on adequate incomes. We support the work that Poverty Alliance, the Living Wage Foundation and others are doing to ensure that going to work means moving out of poverty. Focussing on a sample of our projects that report the wage level of those moving into work, we found that 82% have moved into jobs that pay the Real Living Wage. Given the financial pressures on individuals and families at this time, this is particularly important and encouraging to see so many employers commit to this. As ever there is more to do, and you can read the Poverty Alliance calls to action about adequate income [here](#).

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