

Falkirk's Third Sector Employability Forum
Wednesday 5 November 2025 2025
2pm – 4pm
Arnotdale House, Dollar Park, Falkirk

Present:

Lynsey Hansford (Chairperson)	CVS Falkirk & District
Laura Jamieson (Minute Taker)	CVS Falkirk & District
Angela Moohan	The Larder
Beverley Isdale	First 4 Kids
Cheryll Bremner	Go! Youth Trust
Declan Kidd	Falkirk Foundation
Grant Ferguson	Falkirk Foundation
Hazel Taylor	Cyrenians
Jacinta Jaylo Barker	RISE Forth Valley
Jacob Brown	Falkirk Citizens Advice Bureau
Jenifer Keenan	Enable Works
Jonathan Aitken	Scottish Union of Supported Employment (SUSE)
Linda Pople	One Parent Families Scotland (OPFS) Falkirk
Lynda McLeod	Into Work
Myra Binnie	Link Living
Stuart Matson	Routes to Work

Guest Speakers:

Stewart Ritchie	Forth Valley College
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Apologies:

Dave Alcorn	The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) Scotland
Maria Throp	1 st Step Development Ventures
Sandra Lyon	The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) Scotland

1. Welcome and Introductions

Lynsey introduced herself, and welcomed forum members present to Arnotdale House. Members then introduced themselves to each other, with a brief descriptor of their roles.

2. Review of Previous Minutes and Action Tracker

The minutes of the previous meeting in June were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. Hosting Forth Valley College Students for Third Sector Placements

Lynsey welcomed Stewart from Forth Valley College to speak about the courses he leads and the opportunities available for the third sector to host these students on placements.

Stewart gave some background and context on both his own history and expertise, and the courses, which he described as being studied by “people who are passionate about working with people and making a difference”:



- Newstart – Care & Communities
 - beginning in January; while there is no placement required, students should be involved in volunteering
- NC Working with Communities
- HNC Working with Communities

Both the NC and HNC courses run August – June, and require students to secure a placement. Students are required to find their own placement and connect with the group or organisation (though Stewart can offer suggestions), and Stewart will meet with the organisation to discuss the potential placement.

Placement providers should be able to provide a mentor or supervisor for the student, and the opportunity to work with at least one group of people (which will help develop their group work skills). They should also be committed to following the CLD values and principles (Stewart can do a session with their team if they are unfamiliar), though they do not need to be CLD practitioners at this stage of the students' studies.

As part of the preparations, Stewart, the student, and the placement provider will agree duties and responsibilities, and identify policies and procedures the student may be working with during their placement.

Placements for both courses should be at least 3 – 6 hours each week (although it can be more); the NC students must do 90 hours of placement during their course, while the HNC students must do 180 hours. Students on both placements commit to a task or project which benefits their placement provider, which could include working on funding applications. (Stewart also noted that funding applications is a mandatory unit within these courses.)

While there is unfortunately no funding available to support these placements, Stewart's role involves offering support to the placement supervisor, as he is keen to ensure the group or organisation has a positive experience, as well as the student. He will also aim to do placement visits, and will pass on job opportunities within the organisation to students and alumni. Students will also be put through their PVG checks for adults and children, regardless of the role they are going into.

Questions from members included:

- Would the student have to live in Falkirk District or Forth Valley?
 - No, there is precedent with other areas doing remote, including in rural and northern areas.
- Are travel expenses provided?
 - This will depend on the student's circumstances, Stewart would direct them to the student support team at the college.
- Is it possible to do a condensed placement over 3 weeks (for example)?
 - The difficulty with a condensed placement is that the placements are designed to run alongside the course and the training within, but it can be done. Ideally,



placements work best beginning in October or November and running until May (5 months), but there is some flexibility.

- Will the placement have to work around the course time commitment?
 - Technically yes, as it is a full time course. However, this is only 14 hours per week, and students can get away for one-off occasions if needed at their placement, but this cannot be a regular occurrence.

Members also discussed their experiences of placements hosted, including those who moved into employment. Those interested in learning more about hosting a student placement can contact Stewart by email: stewart.ritchie@forthvalley.ac.uk

4. Third Sector Voice: Local Employability

4.1 Update on the Development of Falkirk's Local Employability Plan

Lynsey informed members that the new plan is due to be published in March 2026; there are some opportunities for the third sector to get involved, including a consultation later in the process.

While Lynsey will continue to ensure the voice of the sector is heard during these planning meetings (especially around gaps and priorities), it is unlikely that the employability commissioning framework will change. However, she encouraged members to register with the framework, as this is the way into employability commissioning in Falkirk District. While it is not always open for registrations, Lynsey will ensure the forum, and the wider third sector, is informed when this happens.

She also noted that, while the analysis is very much driven by quantitative data, the sector is full of qualitative data and evidence which can support and complement this.

4.2 Facilitated Discussion on Third Sector Priorities & Contributions to Local Mapping Activity

Pro formas were passed out to members, which asked a number of questions relating to the above. These will be collated and used to contribute to the new plan.

5. Scottish Union of Supported Employment (SUSE)

Jonathan from Scottish Union of Supported Employment (SUSE) provided a brief overview of their current offer of support for the third sector: until the end of March 2026 they have capacity to support organisations to undertake an accessibility audit exercise, resulting in an action plan noting some areas for improvement and development, and getting access to specialist consultancy support to implement improvements.

6. Member Updates

Members shared more detailed information on their organisations and their roles, along with their current focuses and activities.

**Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 18 February 2026,
10am – 11am via Microsoft Teams**

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