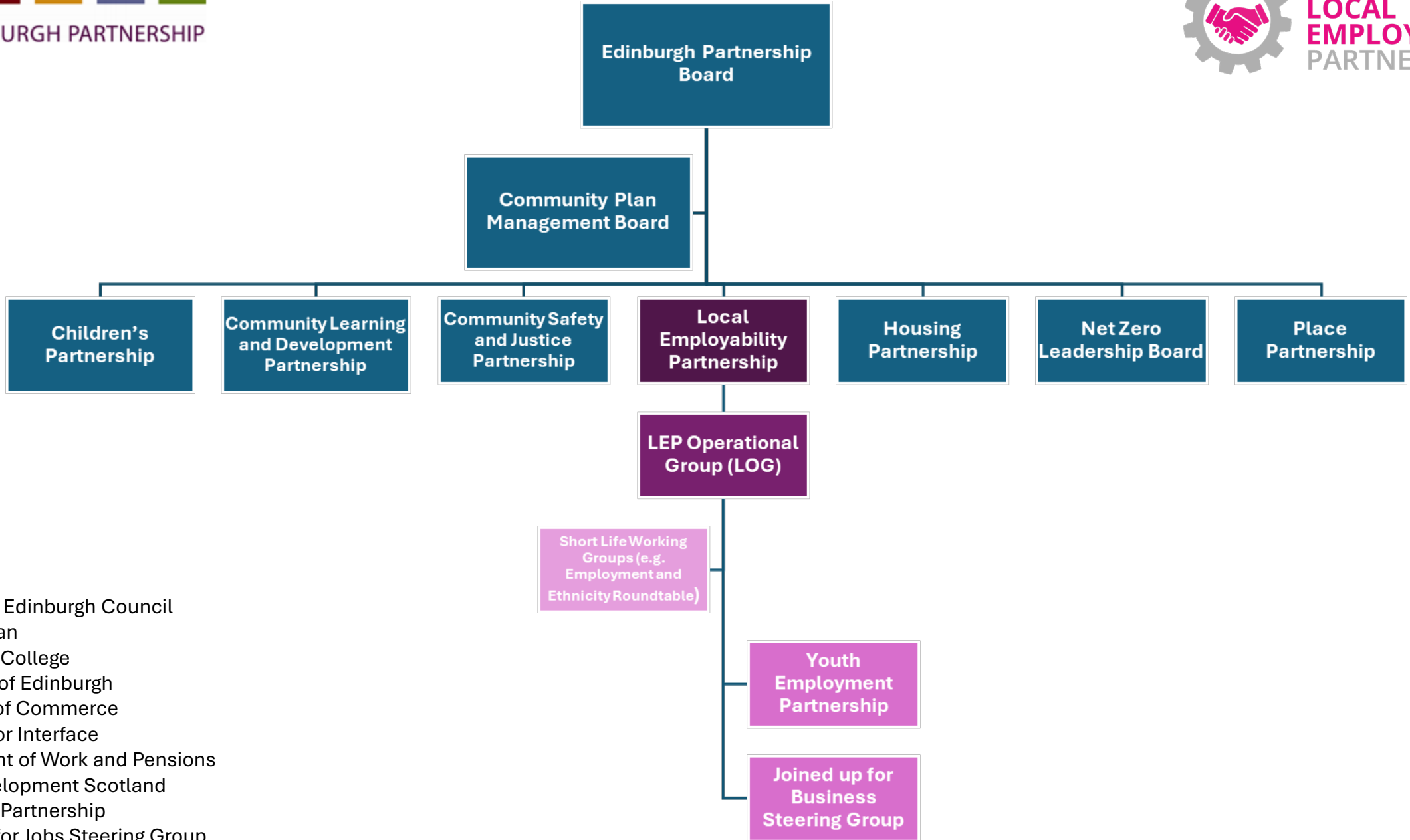




EDINBURGH
LOCAL
EMPLOYABILITY
PARTNERSHIP

Summit focus on in-work progressions



The City of Edinburgh Council
 NHS Lothian
 Edinburgh College
 University of Edinburgh
 Chamber of Commerce
 Third Sector Interface
 Department of Work and Pensions
 Skills Development Scotland
 Edinburgh Partnership
 Joined up for Jobs Steering Group

CONTEXT - THE CHALLENGE

- Edinburgh has an employment rate of **82-83%**
- We are one of the best performing areas in the UK
- October 2025 the universal working claimant count was **15,127**
- Universal Credit claimants in work in the City Region **47,347**
- Living Wage annual full-time salary is **£26,200**
- There is still a reliance on benefits
- Under-employment is still a challenge for many
- Employers struggle to recruit staff and offer progressions

AGENDA

9.30 INTRODUCTION AND SCENE SETTING

Economic picture

DWP Insights

Voices of citizens and employers

Chamber of Commerce viewpoint

Minority Ethnic Employer Panel

11.00 BREAK 30 MINS

11.30 WHAT ARE WE OFFERING

Advance

DWP

JobFit training

IRES regional programme

Edinburgh College

12. 50 WHAT NEXT

Survey Monkey

Panel Q&A

Reflections of the day

13.35 SESSION ENDS AND LUNCH PROVIDED

The state of the Scottish and Edinburgh economies

David Waite and Graeme Roy (University of Glasgow)

Capital City Partnership, January 22 2026

david.waite@glasgow.ac.uk

Overview

- The Scottish economy now
- Challenges for Edinburgh
- Next steps for city-region policy

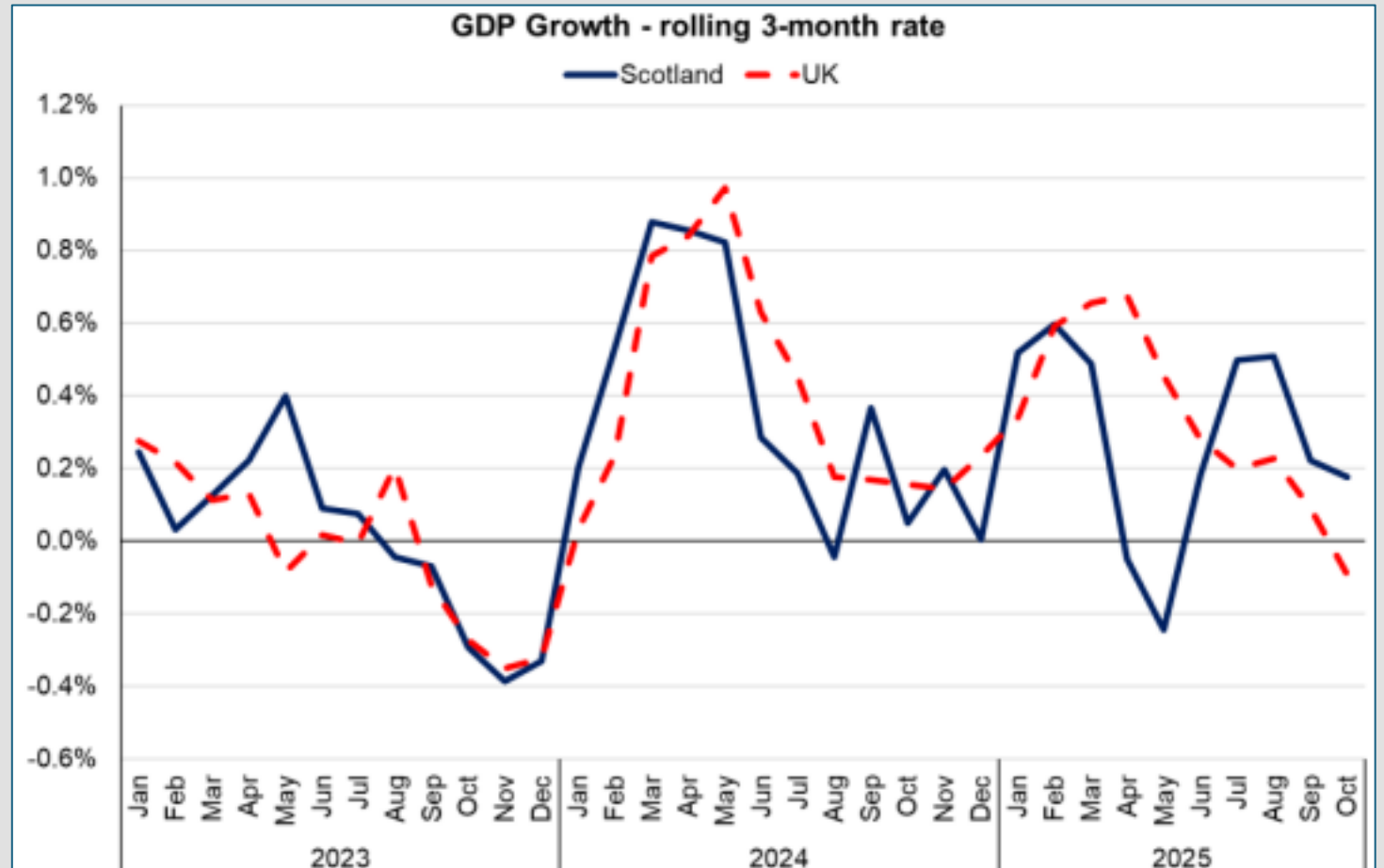
Scottish economy

Blank	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Economy, per cent growth						
Real GDP	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.5
Consumer Price Index	3.5	2.2	2.0	2.1	2.0	2.0
Average real earnings	1.9	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.8
Employment	-0.3	0.1	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5

Source: Scottish Fiscal Commission (2026)

Scottish economy

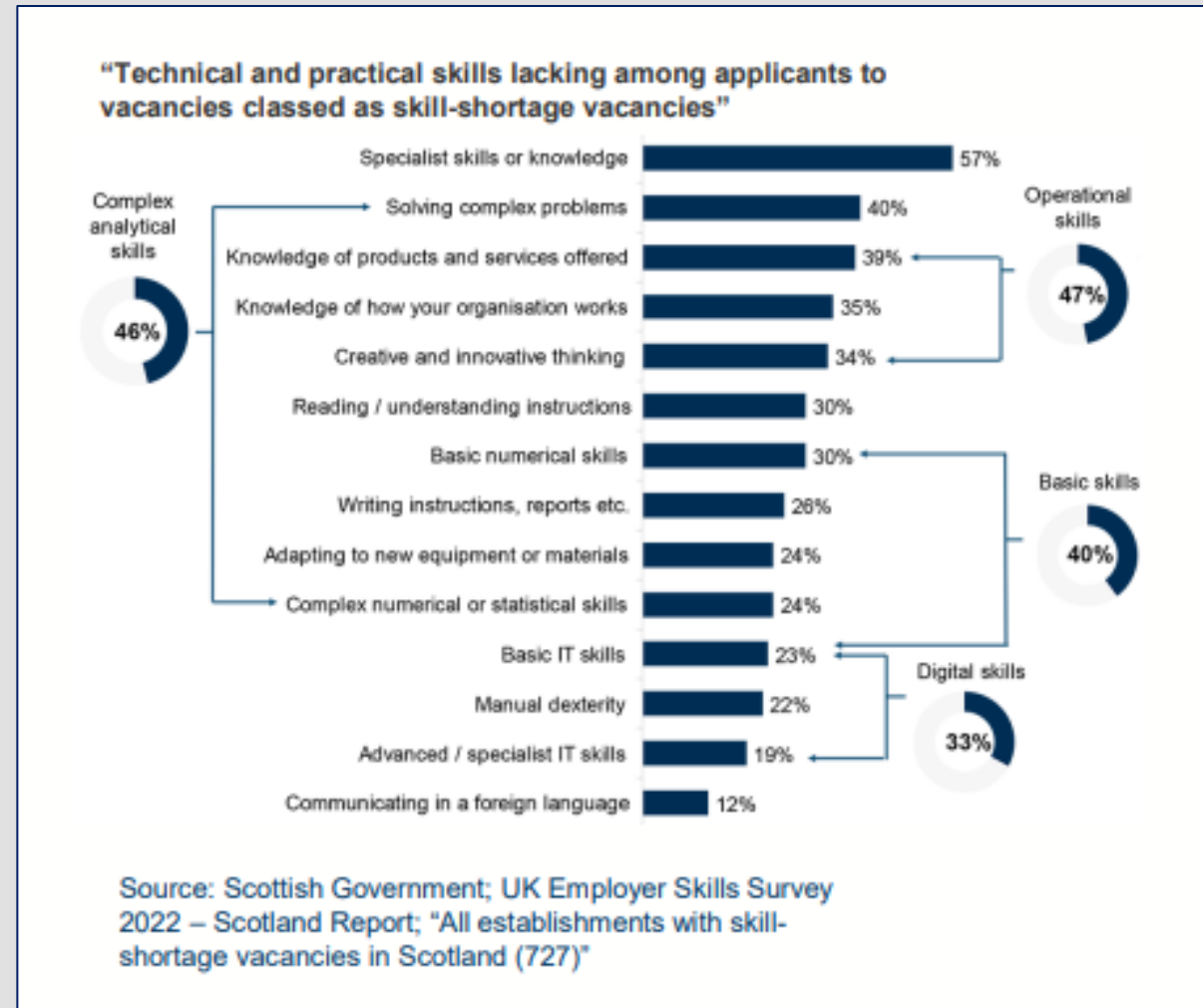
- Broadly tracking the UK economy more broadly
- Need to carefully track as the global economy is reconfigured through shifting geopolitics



Source: Scottish Government (2026)

What can and can't Scottish workers do?

- A mixed picture
- Highly qualified
- Yet, matching with employer needs an ongoing issue



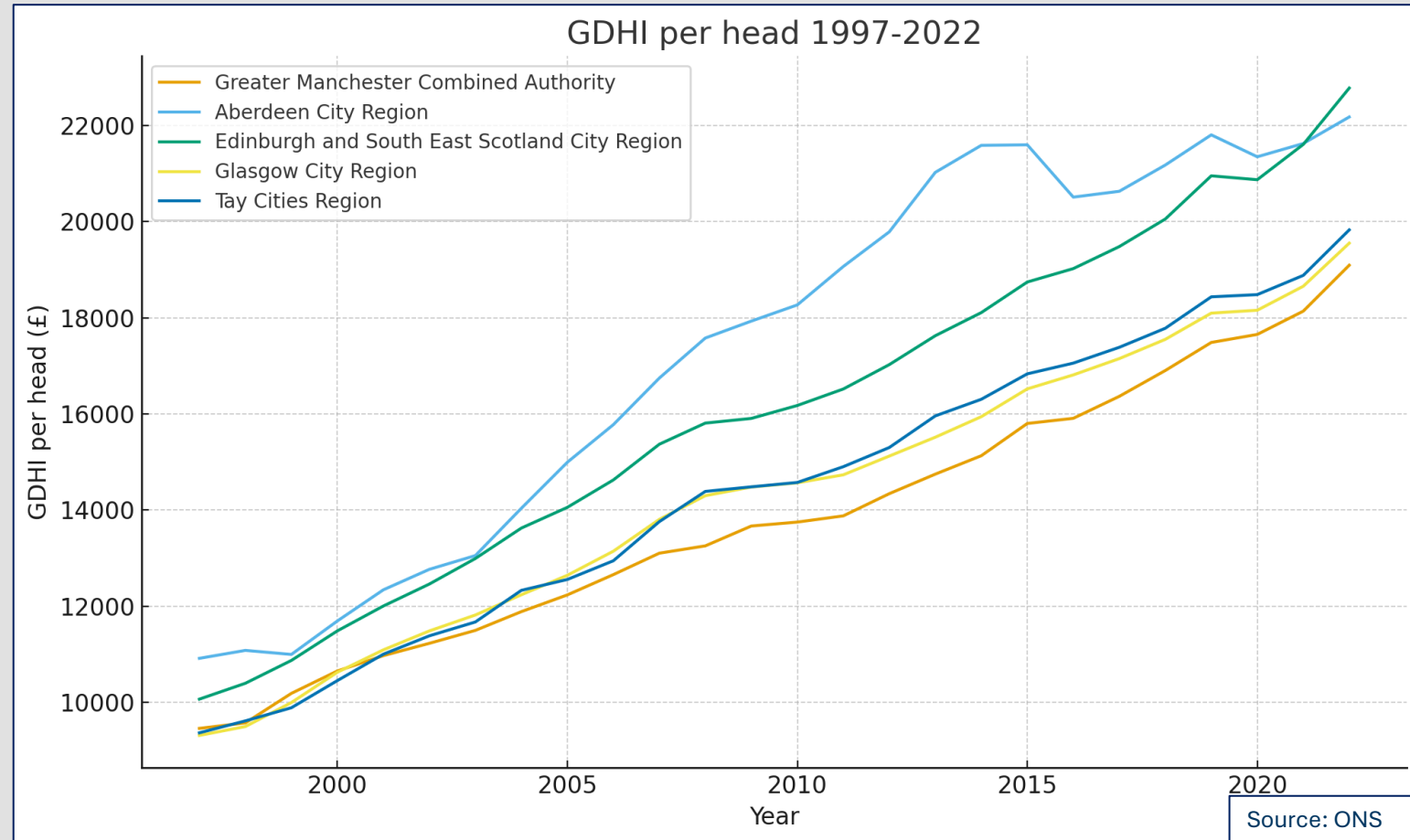
A differentiated Scottish economy

- Edinburgh pulling away
- Need to understand the shift to the east in the Scottish economy



Measuring success

“[GDHI reflects] ... the amount of money that individuals in the household sector can spend or save after income distribution measures” (ONS)



Success under threat?

- Headline indicators for Edinburgh are “relatively” rosy, in the main
- Yet, ongoing challenges around housing and transport clearly threaten growth
- Also, a city-region of stark inequalities
- ... new cranes in the sky do not equate to a gain for all



Source: Edinburgh Poverty Commission (2025)

Regions back in focus

Sources: <https://scottishlabour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Independent-Report-on-Regional-Economic-Development-in-Scotland.pdf> and <https://prosper.scot/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Prosper-Blueprint-2025.pdf>



A new era for regionalism?

New report sets out options for city-region policy in Scotland

Published: 1 December 2025

1 December 2025: Read a new report, written by the University of Glasgow's David Waite and Graeme Roy, and University of Strathclyde's Stuart McIntyre and Niall G MacKenzie, that sets out a framework for regional and city-region policy to become a central focus of policymaking in Scotland.

- Work with colleagues at Strathclyde
- Argues for a new approach to city-regions in Scotland, through greater deconcentration and/or devolution
- Seeks to build on progress through initial city-region deals and recognise bespoke dynamics of our four city-regions
- If the Scottish economy is to succeed, we need effective city-regions underpinning it

Future steps for Edinburgh (1)

- Initial city-region deal provides a governance platform to build on; regional development history is littered with initiatives (and thus knowledge) coming and going
- There is a narrative to tell about the Edinburgh economy which, we think, is somewhat under discussed in a wider Scottish context:
 - Its role in the Scottish economy
 - Its internal divides
 - Its less than certain future



Source: author

Future steps for Edinburgh (2)

- **Key questions to ask:**
 - **If Edinburgh is a growth star, how can it be sustained and what are the risks?**
 - **For a strong services economy, what will AI mean and who will gain and who will lose?**
 - **How can growth be shaped that flattens rather than steepens social divides within the city-region? How is the inclusive growth push in the city-region deal progressing?**

Chopsy McBurnie

Senior Customer Service Leader



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Universal Credit supports people in work when earnings are low, irregular, or constrained by personal circumstances. It ensures basic living and housing costs can be met while people work and progress in work.

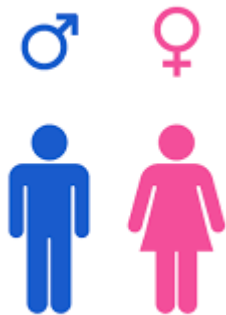


Department
for Work &
Pensions

UC *Universal
Credit*

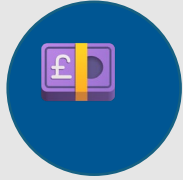
LA AREA	OCTOBER 2025	OCTOBER 2024	IN YEAR CHANGE
East Lothian	3774	3808	-34
Midlothian	3655	3654	1
Scottish Borders	3909	4049	-140
City of Edinburgh	15127	15156	-29
Fife	14086	14443	-357
West Lothian	6808	7124	-316
Total	47347	48225	-878

Universal Credit Customers who are In Work



	October 2024		October 2025	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
East Lothian	1257	2553	1244	2530
Midlothian	1186	2469	1153	2501
Scottish Borders	1440	2605	1355	2557
City of Edinburgh	5674	9484	5725	9395
West Lothian	2336	4784	2228	4578
Fife	4944	9495	4921	9164
Total	16839	31385	16627	30719

Key Factors



Lower wages

Earnings may not cover essential living costs.



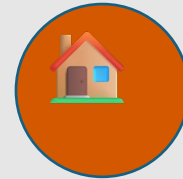
Limited hours

Caring responsibilities or health constraints reduce workable hours.



Variable pay

Zero-hour or fluctuating shifts cause unstable income.



Housing costs

UC supports rent when wages don't cover it.



Skills

Limited skills or progression restrict earning potential.

Earnings and Work Coach Engagement

Administrative Earnings Threshold – Income level that determines what you are asked to agree to in turn for receiving benefits.

Individuals - £952

Couples - £1534

If you earn below AET – you will be asked to engage with a work coach to increase your hours or find better paid work.

If you earn above AET – you won't have regular meetings with work coaches but should try to increase your income.

How much do you need to earn to lift a customer out of Universal Credit?

Universal Credit is a means tested benefit so is based on the unique circumstances of a claimant.

Variable Factor

- Earnings
- Single/Couple
- Health
- Housing Costs
- Children
- Transitional Protection

Earnings Taper

Work Allowance

Case Study Examples



Couple claim (over 25), 2 children, one working 18 hours per week with £1200 per month housing costs

COMPONENT	AMOUNT (£)
Standard Allowance (Couple)	628.10
Child Element (First Child)	339.00
Child Element (Second Child)	292.81
Housing Costs	1,200.00
Total UC Before Taper	2,459.91
Earnings	951.38
Work Allowance	411.00
Earnings Above Allowance	540.38
Taper Deduction (55%)	297.21
Final UC Entitlement	2,162.70
Total Income (UC + Earnings)	3,114.08

Single claimant (25+), awarded LCWRA. Housing costs of £750 and working 15hrs per week

COMPONENT	AMOUNT (£)
Standard Allowance	400.14
Housing Costs	750.00
LCWRA Element	423.27
Total UC Before Taper	1573.41
Earnings	793.65
Work Allowance	411.00
Earnings Above Allowance	382.65
Taper Deduction (55%)	210.46
Final UC Entitlement	1362.95
Total Income (UC + Earnings)	2156.60

Couple with Two Disabled Children, LCWRA and Carer's Element, One Member working
35 hours per week

COMPONENT	AMOUNT (£)
Standard Allowance (Couple)	628.10
LCWRA Element	423.27
Carer Element	201.68
Child Elements (2 × £292.81)	585.62
Disabled Child Additions (2 × £158.76)	317.52
Housing Costs	1,200.00
Total Before Earnings	3,356.19
Earnings	1,851.85
Work Allowance	411.00
Earnings Above Allowance	1,440.85
Taper Deduction (55%)	792.47
Final UC Award	2,563.72
Total Income (UC + Earnings)	4,415.57

Single claimant, 2 children, no housing costs, comparison of working 12 hours per week and 25 hours per week

12 hours per week		25 hours per week	
COMPONENT	AMOUNT (£)	COMPONENT	AMOUNT (£)
Standard Allowance	400.14	Standard Allowance	400.14
Child Element (First Child)	292.81	Child Element (First Child)	292.81
Child Element (Second Child)	292.81	Child Element (Second Child)	292.81
Total UC Before Taper	985.76	Total UC Before Taper	985.76
Earnings	634.92	Earnings (after tax/NI)	1248.08
Work Allowance	684.00	Work Allowance	684.00
Earnings Above Allowance	0.00	Earnings Above Allowance	564.08
Taper Deduction (55%)	0.00	Taper Deduction (55%)	310.24
Final UC Entitlement	985.76	Final UC Entitlement	675.52
Total Income (UC + Earnings)	1620.68	Total Income (UC + Earnings)	1923.59



AVA BRADLEY

SENIOR EMPLOYABILITY OFFICER
CAPITAL CITY PARTNERSHIP



Recruiting & Developing Talent: Employer Perspectives in Edinburgh

Presentation to the Edinburgh Local Employability Partnership Summit
22nd January 2026

Jo Davidson, Director of Policy & Insights



WHAT EMPLOYERS TELL US



- Access to talent is the number one systemic challenge facing businesses across all sectors
- Latest British Chambers of Commerce recruitment survey published Jan 12th suggests only 23% of firms intend to increase workforce size – 14% will decrease. 22% have cut staff training due to cost pressures
- Despite rhetoric from Governments at all levels about the importance of economic growth, employers feel actions don't support this in practise

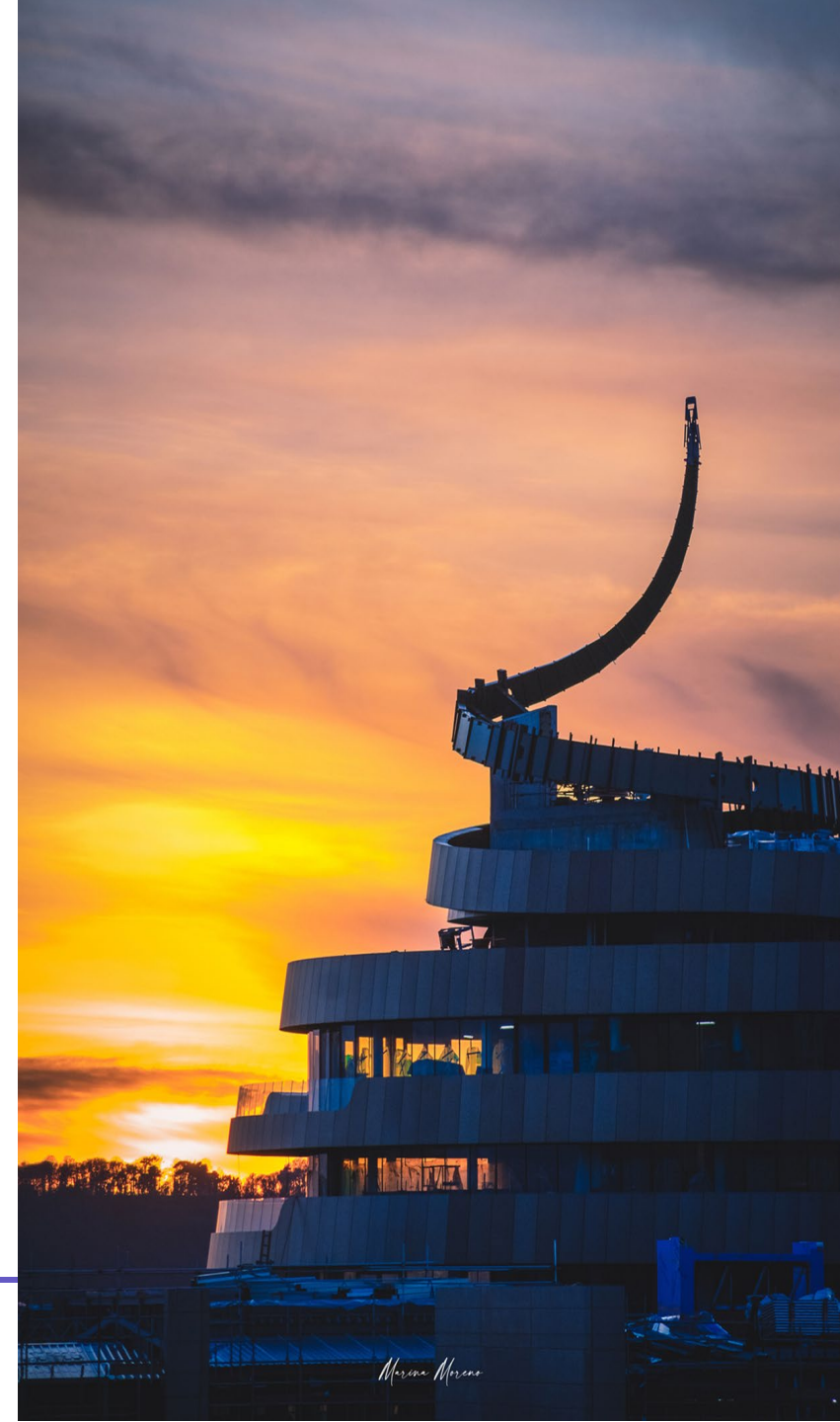
CURRENT CHALLENGES

- Increasing business costs
- Skills mismatch
- Intense competition for talent
- Regulatory changes
- Adoption of AI & pace of change



WHAT EMPLOYERS NEED

- Better, more targeted support
- Flexible, modular training which supports lifelong learning
- A more supportive regulatory landscape
- Incentives to invest in training and development





THANK YOU



EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT PROJECT FOR ETHNIC MINORITIES (EEPEM)

Ethnic Diversity in Employment: Barriers and Recommendations

Nadia Aslam

Strategy and Development Manager



WHOLE FAMILY
EQUALITY PROJECT

Research Project

Employer Engagement Project for Ethnic Minorities (EPEM)

1

Employment Disparities

In 2024, the estimated gap between the employment rate for white groups compared with minority ethnic groups was 10.2 percentage points (pp). (Scotland's Labour Market Insights: April 2025)

2

Poverty Rates

Poverty rate: 50–51% in some ethnic groups (*Scottish Government, 2025*)

3

Change in Demographics

Employability services are attracting more people from ethnic minority backgrounds: Year #1 of the Vocational Training Framework saw 32% of clients from ethnic minority backgrounds; in Year #2 it is 48%.

"It is estimated that in the UK, the economy would stand to gain an additional £24 billion if there were full representation and progression across ethnicities in the workplace" (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, n.d.) (Race inclusion in the workplace, CIPD 2023).

Research Objectives

- **Understand lived experiences of ethnically diverse individuals**
- **Identify pre-employment and workplace barriers**
- **Engage employers and support services**
- **Develop actionable recommendations**



Research Approach

Two-Strand Model

Strand 1:

Barriers to Employment for Ethnic Minority Individuals - Report & Employer support Toolkit

- Based on research with:
 - Lived-experience individuals
 - Employers across sectors
- Focus on systemic and practical barriers

Strand 2:

Skilled Voices Panel (SVP)

- Individuals with:
 - Overseas qualifications
 - Good English language skills
 - Right to work in the UK
- Currently working in entry-level roles below their skill level

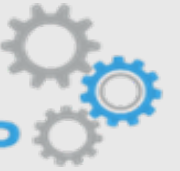
Methodology

Research Framework

- **Timeframe:**
 - Strand 1 Aug – Nov 2024**
 - Strand 2 Sept – March 25/26**
- **Location: Edinburgh**
- **Participants: Employers, Jobseekers, employees, Employability support services (public, private & public Voluntary)**

Research tools

- **Employer Surveys**
- **Focus Groups**
- **1-2-1 Interviews**
- **Case studies**
- **Skilled Voices Panel**



Key Barriers

Individual-Level

Lack of UK work experience in relevant field

English level proficiency and lack of ESOL provision

Limited professional networks in Scotland

Confidence erosion from repeated rejections

UK Visa Sponsorship requirement

Key Barriers

Systemic Barriers

Recruitment practices that unintentionally exclude migrants

Risk-averse hiring, especially in regulated sectors

Limited employer understanding of international qualifications

Few supported routes into skilled roles for migrants

1. Barriers Identified – Access to Employment

Unrecognised overseas qualifications

Inflexible job opportunities/ (Work placements, Internships, apprenticeships)

Complex application processes

Lack of constructive feedback

Interviews & cultural competence

Limited professional networks



2. Barriers Identified – Retaining Employment

Discrimination and micromanagement

Cultural misalignment

Unconscious bias and inequitable workloads

Lack of inclusive, culturally relevant platforms

Lack of inclusive support systems

3. Barriers Identified – Career Progression

Lack of access to training or mentorship

Underemployment and retraining burdens

Underrepresentation in leadership roles

Glass ceiling and exclusion from informal networks

Skilled Voices Panel (SVP) – Lived Reality

Highly skilled professionals stuck in entry-level jobs

Examples:

- **Engineers/Medics working in care or retail**
- **Graduates driving taxis or working in hospitality**

Key message:

Skills are present – opportunity is missing

Impact:

- **Economic loss**
- **Talent waste**
- **Reduced wellbeing**



SVP Report to be launched in March 2026

Barriers - Wider ethnically diverse Communities

ESOL Provision

- **Insufficient volume and flexibility**
- **Long waiting lists**
- **Limited vocational and sector-specific ESOL**

Visa Sponsorship

- **Low uptake by Edinburgh employers**
- **Complexity and cost barriers**
- **Smaller and third-sector employers excluded**

Barriers – Ethically diverse skilled workers

Qualification Recognition

- **Overseas qualifications are not understood or recognised**
- **No central information platform to understand the recognition process**
- **Qualification recognition certification can be expensive**

Lack of UK Work Experience

- **Lack of work placements, apprenticeships and internships for mid career**
- **Lack of cultural awareness & workplace practices**
- **Jobs only available in certain sectors (care, hospitality, retail) - not relevant to qualifications and experience**

Recommendations – Inclusive Recruitment

Name-blind recruitment

Remove potential bias by eliminating names from initial application review

Clear job descriptions & expectations

Ensure transparency and accessibility in all job postings

Structured application/interview feedback

Provide constructive feedback to candidates

Cultural competence training

Train hiring managers and teams to recognise and value diverse perspectives

Work Experience - opportunities

Based on success of Graduate schemes – design similar opportunities for mid-level career professionals

Recommendations – Support and Retention

Workplace Support

- **Structured onboarding and language support**
- **Anti-discrimination policies**
- **Inclusive leadership training**
- **Safe, accessible feedback channels**

Retention requires more than hiring. It means building systems that support employee wellbeing and voice in the workplace.

Career Development

- **Recognise overseas qualifications**
- **Offer mentoring & sponsorship programs**
- **Track pay gaps and promotions**
- **Transparent career pathways**

Progression is essential. Equity in access to training, mentorship and advancement builds motivation, loyalty, and innovation.

Call to Action

Strategic: recognise underemployment as a skills and growth issue

Operational: pilot toolkit-led employer engagement in priority sectors

Partnership: co-design solutions with ethnic minority communities & employers

Outcome: a fairer, more productive Edinburgh labour market




EEPEM Toolkit



Thanks for listening.



A high-angle photograph of a narrow, cobblestone street in Edinburgh, Scotland. The street is lined with multi-story stone buildings. On the left, a row of dark stone buildings with many windows. On the right, a row of lighter stone buildings, some with colorful facades (red, blue, and green). A blue car is parked on the right side of the street. In the background, more buildings and a cloudy sky are visible. The lighting suggests late afternoon or early morning.

Edinburgh Local Employability Partnership

Our approach to in work support

Edinburgh context

While headline unemployment is low, the city's strong focus on high-skilled jobs and the relatively high cost of living (particularly housing costs) is likely to hide underemployment - where people are employed but in roles not fully utilising their skills or offering sufficient hours/pay.

In 23/24 70% of children living in relative poverty were in a household where at least one person worked (8,110) The average Scottish proportion is 66%.

Our LEP response



In work support spread throughout our provision. Today we'll hear about specific advice, support and upskilling.



8-10 % of our clients on Helix are employed on engagement, representing c.400 people in any year. This has remained relatively steady over the past few years.



In work outcomes are usually job retention (support for employer and/or client) or job progression (moving to a higher paid, better hours) we have around 300-350 of these per year.



In Work Employment Support Service (Advance)

Aidan Fyffe
Operations Manager

Enable Works

We believe that every person in Scotland has the **right** to work in a job that is high **quality** and well **paid**.

Enable Works supports over 7000 people every year across 30 Scottish Local Authorities to learn **skills** for work and more than **1000** people **into work**.

We **partner** with thousands of employers to create **inclusive** cultures and improve the **diversity** of Scotland's workforce.

Together we will **challenge perceptions** of disability and **unleash the potential** in Scotland's future workforce.



◆ EDINBURGH ◆
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL



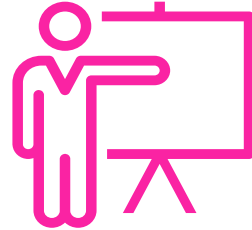
CAPITAL CITY
PARTNERSHIP 





In-Work Retention & Progression Support

3 specialist organisations delivering personalised in-work support focused on job retention, progression, and sustainable employment



Welfare Support

Access to income maximisation support, including Better Off In Work calculations, benefits advice, and support to improve financial security alongside employment



Skills Development

Targeted training including resilience, leadership, customer service, and LinkedIn to strengthen confidence and workplace skills

Impact of **Advance**



People Supported

April 2022 - Dec 2025

834 customers supported.

Many reported conditions including **Mental Health** and Neurodiversity



Focus Areas

Retention of employment, improve job quality, and build pathways for future progression



Welfare Rights Gains

April 2022 - Dec 2025

£164,317.27 in Income

Maximisation

Benefits, Grants and Trusts

Challenges of **Advance**



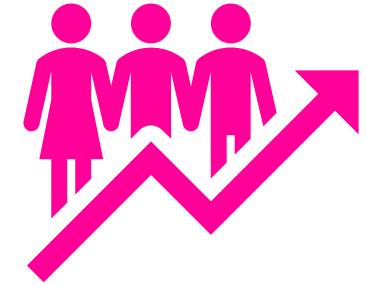
Flexible Working

A lack of flexible working opportunities can be a barrier for people balancing health needs, childcare and caring responsibilities



Employment Landscape

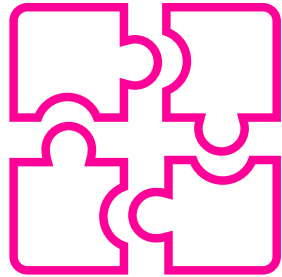
Limited availability of progression pathways and secure roles across sectors



Job Quality

Widespread low-paid and insecure employment undermines financial security and long-term sustainability

Successes of **Advance**



Partnership

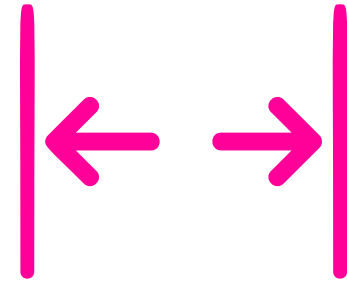
Simplified access,
removed competition

Effective partnership
working



Community Engagement

Well established presence,
deep community
engagement, **recognised**
brand



Strong Foundation

Early delivery has focused on
embedding a clear offer,
consistent practice, and
high-quality support



Q&A



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David Roy – Work Coach Team leader



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Case Study 1

Julie had been volunteering at a Primary School in East Lothian. Julie grew in confidence, and when the opportunity arose for paid classroom assistants, she received support from her Work Coach to work on her CV, and prepare her for interview.

Julie was successful in being given one of the roles, which was for three days per week. The three days per week, was a combination of the hours possible through the employer, and the confidence of Julie herself.

Julie earned below the AET, and so still received support from her work coach who was passionate about trying to help her secure more hours.

Through dialogue with the school, and Julie, after some time, her hours were increased to 4 days.

Julie now earns above the AET so no longer engages with her work coach, but her confidence is high, and her quality of life improved. She hopes to be able to progress within her chosen field.

Case Study 2

Emma is a customer in Edinburgh who had no experience in Hospitality – a sector that she expressed a strong interest to work in.

Her work coach referred her to Direct Partners – to attend a two week Hospitality course.....and placement with a well known Hospitality venue in Edinburgh.

Post her placement, Emma was thrilled to be given some shifts over the festive period – but had a set back in January when she was advised her shifts would come to an end.

She continued support with her work coach to look for alternative hospitality employment – but has since received the news that she is being offered a full time contract for an initial 3 month period.

While the path is still not certain – she is feeling more confident, she has gained new skills and is building her experience in a sector that she hopes to now build her career in – with sustained full time employment.

Case Study 3

Ruth is a customer in Edinburgh, who worked as a part-time self-employed translator. Her part time hours were related to an ongoing health condition.

After several months support from her work coach and Disability Employer Adviser, felt confident enough to begin looking for ways to increase her earnings.

Ruth attended an NHS Information Session in Leith Jobcentre, and was able to make connections that has resulted in her getting a contract with NHS to increase the clients she works for.

Ruth is now out of the AET and hoping that through time, she will build enough clients to lift her completely out of Universal Credit.

Case Study 4

Martin was earning above the AET threshold, but wanted to increase his hours, and so reached into the Jobcentre for work coach support.

Martin met with the work coach to review his skills and discuss the types of jobs that interested him. They worked through his transferable skills and practiced interview techniques.

Martin also was referred to partners for further employability support including Christians Against Poverty, and Jobcentre Employer Advisers who helped target employers to those who matched his skills and were recruiting.

His work coach referred him to a large well known retail employer in Edinburgh which has lifted Martin out of Universal Credit.

Case Study 5

Sarah, worked in hospitality and had her first child in 2024.

Sarah began working again in hospitality when her child was 1 year old, however had to restrict her hours to balance her new life as a working mum.

She raised the question of self employment with her work coach who referred her to the self-employed team. She received support from a SE Work coach , and Business Gateway, who guided her through the process of setting herself up with a new company – doing something she loved – designing and selling fabric.

She has been able to build her work around her new schedule as a Mum, at a pace that suited her – while steadily increasing her earnings.



Gosia Lysakowska – Training Manager, Capital City Partnership

Background context

- No One Left Behind funding created the Vocational Training Framework
- Focus on entry level jobs across entry level sectors
- 2–4-week courses designed with the employer
- Built confidence and delivered qualifications
- Guaranteed job interview
- 921 completed training (90% completion rate)
- 50% people moved into jobs
- 75% overall progression rate (jobs, further education or volunteering)

VOCATIONAL
TRAINING
FRAMEWORK
Delivered by Capital City Partnership



Need for Change

- Demand for higher skills from employers
- More sectors needing new higher qualifications
- Job changers and upskilling current staff was growing
- Need to explore other models and expand service offer
- Skills Bootcamps in England successful for 30-35k jobs
 - 16-week course
 - Higher level qualifications
 - More aimed at people working so flexible delivery
- Created a new Framework on Public Contracts Scotland



New JobFit Framework

Entry Level

1. Hospitality
2. Health and Social Care
3. Early Learning and Childcare
4. Manufacturing
5. Construction
6. Creative Industries
7. Finance
8. Retail
9. Miscellaneous

Higher Level

1. Construction/NetZero/Retrofit
2. AI and Data Skills
3. Advanced Manufacturing, Engineering and Robotics
4. Tourism, Hospitality, Culture
5. Advanced Health and Social Care
6. Creative Industries
7. Land and Rural Skills
8. Miscellaneous

Pilot Projects

Project One: Debugging Technician Programme

- Designed to address a **skills shortage** identified by **CTDI and Raytheon**
- Focus on **advanced fault diagnosis and repair of electronic systems**
- **12 employees** enrolled
- Role enhancement for participants
- **Salary increases** on successful completion

Project Two: Retrofit Sector Upskilling

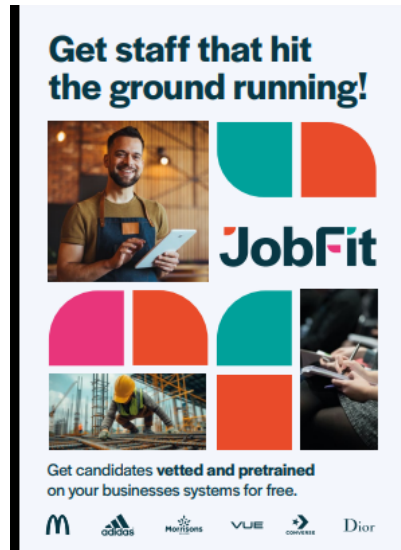
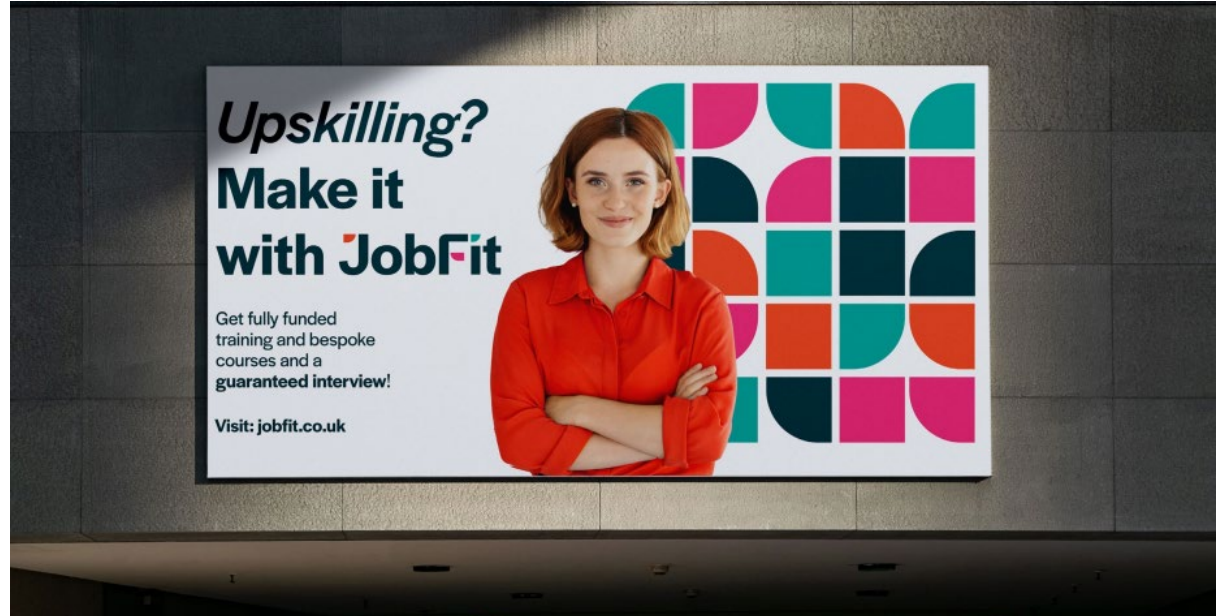
- Leadership & Management (Levels **3–6**)
- IOSH Managing Safely
- NEBOSH Certificate
- Promotion into higher paid roles
- Ability to take on **additional responsibilities**

Launch Project April 2026

- New framework and website
- Any LEP stakeholders can use JobFit and City Region Deal IRES partners

The image displays three vertical panels, each representing a different service offered by JobFit. Each panel features a central photograph of a smiling individual and a list of partner logos at the bottom.

- Job hunting? Make it with JobFit**
Get fully funded training and a **guaranteed interview!**
Visit: jobfit.co.uk
Trusted by: McDonald's, adidas, Morrisons, VUE, Converse, Dior. (Accompanied by a woman in a black apron)
- Upskilling? Make it with JobFit**
Get fully funded training, bespoke courses and a **guaranteed interview!**
Visit: jobfit.co.uk
Trusted by: McDonald's, adidas, Morrisons, VUE, Converse, Dior. (Accompanied by a man with glasses in a maroon sweater)
- Hiring? Get staff that hit the ground running!**
Get candidates **vettted and pretrained** on your businesses systems for free.
Visit: jobfit.co.uk
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Make it with **JobFit**

E: trainingacademy@capitalcitypartnership

T: 07703005656



CITY REGION DEAL
Edinburgh & South East Scotland
Integrated Regional Employability and Skills



Adam Dunkerley
IRES Programme Lead
adam.dunkerley@fife.gov.uk

Integrated Regional Employability & Skills (IRES) Programme

CCP Employability Summit
January 2026





131,580
skills improvements



11,392
Job outcomes achieved



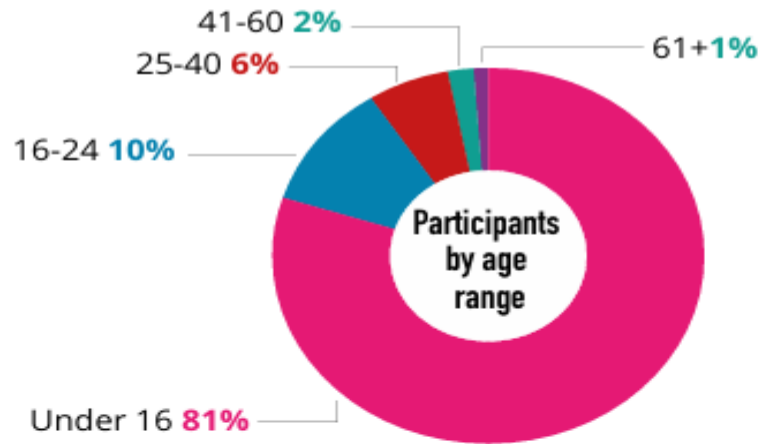
622
People progressed
in their career

£11.8m
leverage
secured

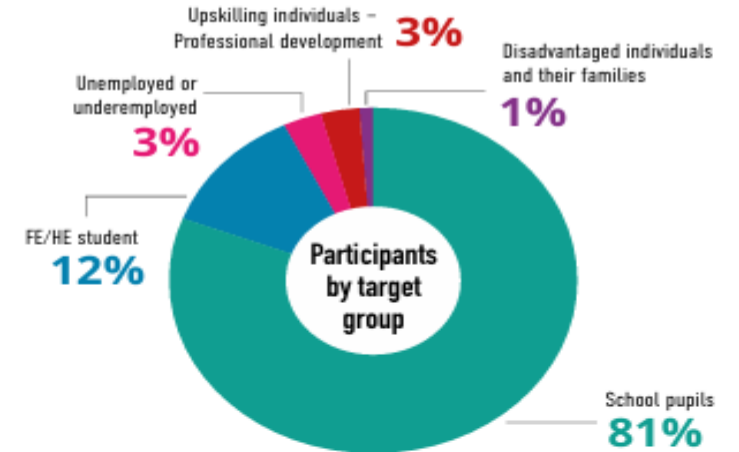


Over **3.7k** professional development courses accessed & over **19.9k** resources downloaded by teachers and educators equipping them to deliver new data and construction skills to over **709,000** learners

* actual impact expected to be higher



Community Wealth Building (CWB)



Helix

Over 91k
clients recorded
on Helix
(expected to be over
120k by year end)

Over 820
users across 95
organisations
(expected to be over
1.1k users by year end)




**Over
3,724**

learners (teachers) have accessed
professional development
courses in Data Skills



4,172
employer engagements
have been made



£268k
awarded to employers
through the IEE employer fund

Over **3.7k** professional development courses accessed & over **19.9k** resources downloaded by teachers and educators equipping them to deliver new data and construction skills to over **709,000** learners

* actual impact expected to be higher

Over 31k school children have attended a Face-to-face Data Skills lesson



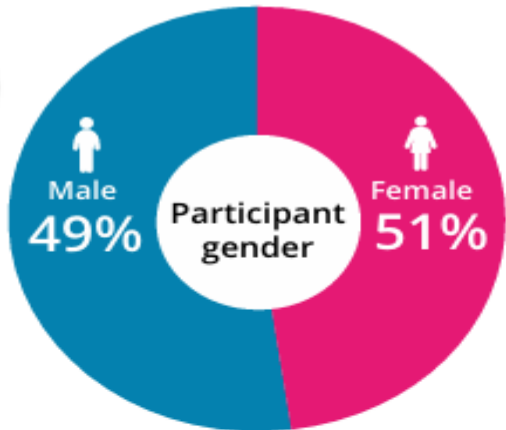
Over 62k school children have attended an online Data Skills lesson



Over 2,300 school children attended hybrid data skills lessons



175 schools across the region are part of the Internet of Things (IoT) Project



Community Benefits and Community Wealth Building

- 193** apprentices & trainees employed on site
- Over £66k** of financial contributions have been made to regional good causes
- 77%** spent locally within a 40-mile radius of CRD sites
- 79%** of labour from within 40-mile radius of CRD sites



Over 18k resources have been downloaded to teach data skills in the classroom

6,539 HE/FE progressions

73 Scholarships/ studentships funded



110 Internships funded



Over 15,000 learners have accessed Data Skills Training across SCQF Levels 3 to 10



Over 2,200 learners have accessed HCI related training across SCQF Levels 3-12

Economic Case – The Challenge



Projected additional workforce demand of 116,969 jobs by 2034

Strategic sectors:
Digital Tech, Fintech, Advanced Manufacturing, Engineering/Robotics, Construction /Net Zero require thousands of additional skilled workers to sustain growth and remain competitive

The Challenge

Many people are in work, but not earning adequately, struggling with progression and working below their skill level

Labour Market pressures:
Rising levels of In-work Universal Credit claims, youth unemployment and health related economic inactivity

Analysis by GC Insights indicate key challenges that underscore the need to invest in a coordinated regional response to support progression into better-paid, future-facing roles.

Economic Case – The Solution



The findings from the economic analysis are clear, the region cannot:

- meet its future workforce demands
 - fulfil its strategic sector ambitions, or
 - tackle rising in-work poverty
- without a coordinated and scalable skills system.

“This volume of skills demand is an important economic opportunity for the population of ESESCR and will generate significant income in the region”.

Source: GC Insights 2025

IRES has demonstrated its value as the regional framework that links employers, providers and communities, and ensures training aligns with real economic opportunity.

Continuing and enhancing IRES will unlock productivity gains, support high-value sector growth, and ensure residents can access the jobs that will drive the ESES region’s future prosperity.

The Solution

The scale of demand, the strategic importance of priority sectors, and the rising challenges in the labour market make continued investment in IRES not just beneficial, but essential for the region’s economic future

The next stage of IRES is a strategic investment, building on established success providing clear, measurable returns that enhance productivity and combat poverty

Evaluation Findings



What Stakeholders Say Has Worked Well

A Regional Skills Ecosystem Has Emerged

- IRES has aligned schools, colleges, universities, employers and third-sector partners
- Stronger collaboration and shared direction across the region

“Through IRES, a strong regional partnership has been built — one that simply did not exist before”

“The programme has delivered significant positive outcomes—this momentum must not be lost”

Agility Is A Major Strength

- Ability to reallocate resources quickly
- Responding to employer changes and emerging economic needs
- Hybrid and online delivery expanding reach

“The programme’s agility has allowed us to respond quickly as conditions changed”

Communities & Learners Benefit Directly

- More people accessing training who previously did not engage
- Improved school reach and digital capability
- Third-sector partners reporting stronger pathways into work

“IRES is levelling the playing field — enabling those furthest from opportunity to access high-quality training and pathways”

Partnership Has Strengthened Delivery Quality

- Shared intelligence on skills gaps
- Joint problem-solving
- Common reporting and data standards
- Better employer engagement through unified regional messaging

“It has undeniably promoted a culture of collaboration across the region”

Evaluation Findings

Where Stakeholders feel we can strengthen:

Strengthening Local Employability Partnership (LEP) Pathways

- Variation in delivery models across local areas
- Need for clearer, more consistent progression routes out of poverty into sustainable and better employment
- Need to link employability pathways more tightly to sector workstreams

Stakeholders emphasised the need to further develop LEP pathways, ensuring consistent progression routes across the region to tackle poverty and better alignment with sector pathways and employer demand.

Improving Communications and Campaign Visibility

- Communication not always reaching audiences
- Need for improved visibility of IRES activities and successes
- Requests for stronger promotional campaigns

Respondents identified communications as a critical area for improvement, ensuring all stakeholders have consistent, timely information and a clearer narrative about IRES opportunities and impact.

Data Sharing, Reporting & System Alignment

- Helix is seen as a flexible and capable system
- Data transfer and reporting consistency are recurring challenges
- Stakeholders want clearer, more standardised reporting

Stakeholders highlighted the need to streamline data sharing, reporting and system alignment, ensuring all workstreams and partners operate from consistent, real-time information.

Employer Engagement Consistency

- Some sectors have strong employer ties; others are emerging
- Need for systematic employer engagement models

A more consistent employer engagement approach across sectors and localities will strengthen the link between training and skills supply and workforce demand.

Adding value not duplication



ALIGNMENT OF EFFORT CRITICAL

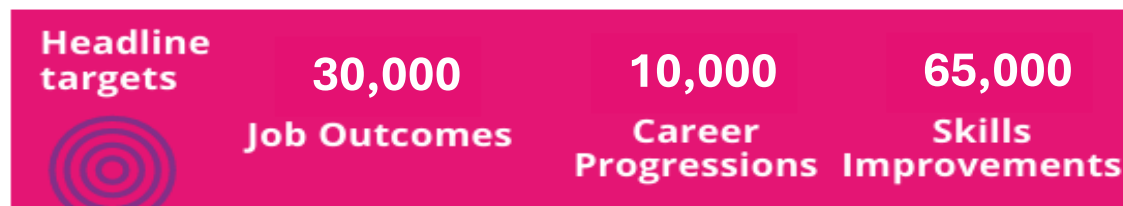
Benefits Realisation

The IRES 2027+ Programme will be underpinned by a robust Benefits Realisation Framework, setting out clear programme-wide headline targets and individual project KPIs. Each Skills Gateway and Enabler project will contribute to these shared outcomes, ensuring collective impact across the region. The Helix system will be adopted as the central management and intelligence platform for IRES, enabling real-time tracking and delivering unique insights into performance, participation, and progression, providing a level of understanding not previously possible.

Inclusive growth will remain at the heart of IRES 2027+, with clear targets and expectations embedded across every aspect of delivery. This section offers a snapshot of the impact that can be expected, underpinned by a comprehensive Benefits Realisation Framework that will capture programme-wide priorities such as engaging underrepresented groups, strengthening community impact, and supporting people to move out of poverty and into sustainable, higher-value employment.

The benefits realisation process will be embedded from the outset of delivery, with dedicated resource across the programme to ensure that consistent, accurate, and meaningful data is captured and used to drive decision-making. This approach builds on the success of the first phase of IRES, where we developed a process described as sector-leading and later adopted across the wider Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal and other UK Deals — a legacy we are proud of.

With IRES 2027+, we will go one step further. We will create a truly integrated benefits framework that connects data across funded employability and skills activity and beyond, providing for the first time a complete view of career mobility, progression, and impact across the region. This marks an exciting step forward in revolutionising how we track, measure, and realise impact at a regional level, positioning IRES at the forefront of data innovation and setting a new standard for regional skills delivery across Scotland.



- 50,000 individuals living in poverty will receive targeted support to connect them to higher-skilled, better-paid jobs, helping them to move out of poverty and achieve long-term economic stability.
- Support 3,000 low-income Universal Credit claimants across the City Region to move into better-paid, higher-skilled jobs.
- Deliver a 10% increase in unemployed clients progressing into employment (circa 1,500 individuals) through LEP funded employability activity

IRES activity will target the following underrepresented groups

Ethnic minority groups	Disability
Redundant or at risk of redundancy	Care experienced
Women returning to work	History of or at risk of offending
Health and mental health	Women seeking career progression
Armed forces veterans	SIMD 40

Community Impact



IRES 2027+ Next Steps

January – December 2026



Consultation:



Follow IRES on [LinkedIn](#)

Citizen Consultation: <https://forms.office.com/e/qECRdEhZZ6>

IRES PMO Contacts:

Adam Dunkerley

adam.dunkerley@fife.gov.uk

Nicola Raine

nicola.raine@capitalcitypartnership.org

Graeme Rigg

graeme.rigg@edinburgh.gov.uk



Supporting Progression: Edinburgh College's In-work Offer

Neale Gardiner

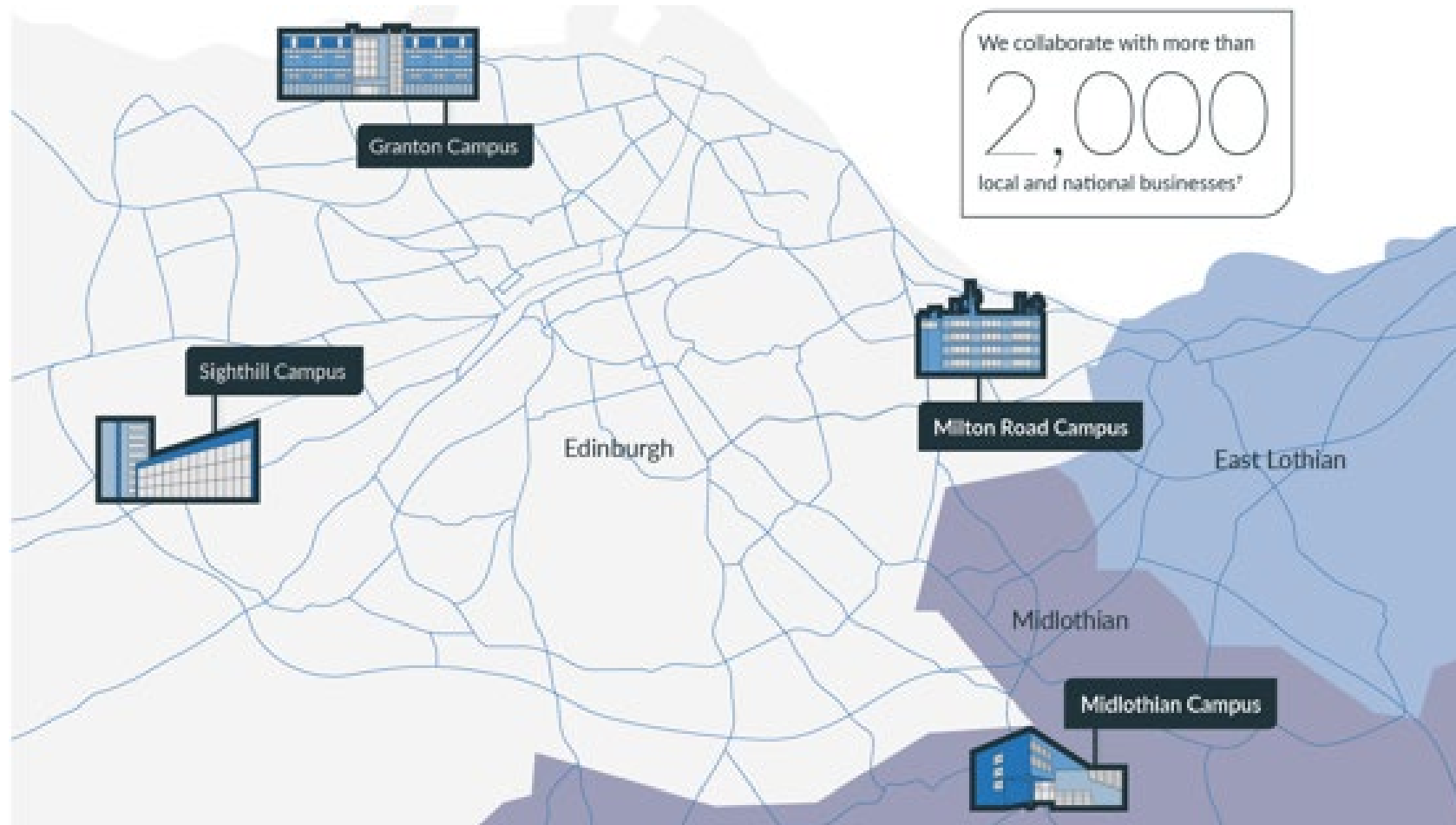


For the future you want

The Context

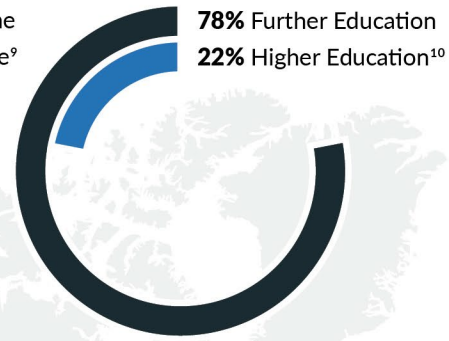
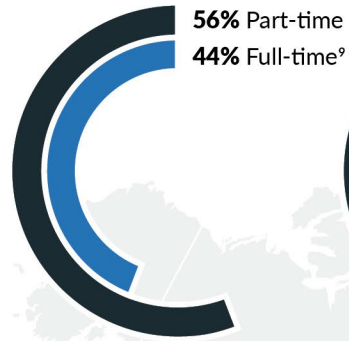
61% of people living in poverty in Edinburgh are in a household where at least one adult is working.

The Context: Our College



For the future you want

Our Students at a Glance

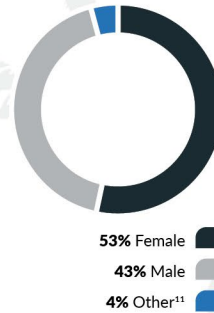


96%
of our students go on to a positive destination¹⁷

90%
of our students stay for the duration of their course¹⁸

90%
of students are satisfied with their overall college experience¹⁹

57.6%
of our students articulating to university did so with advanced standing²⁰



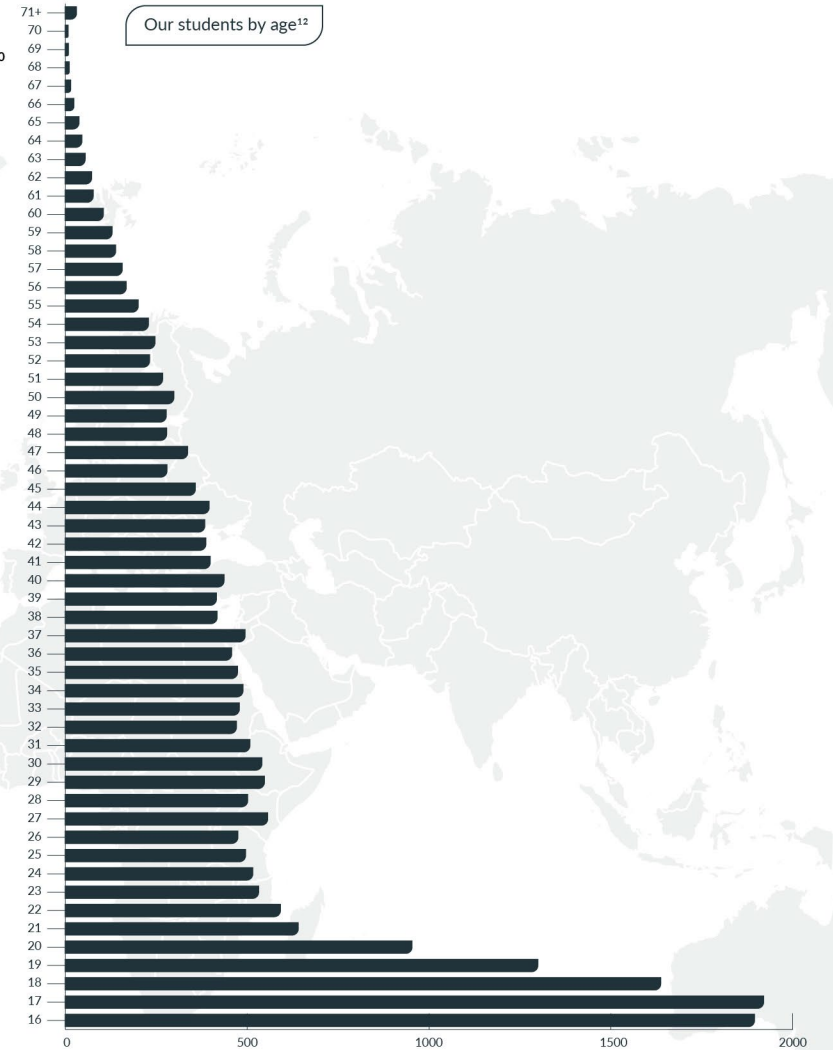
Around 10.4% of our students come from a Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority (BAME) background¹⁴

20% of students report having a disability¹⁵

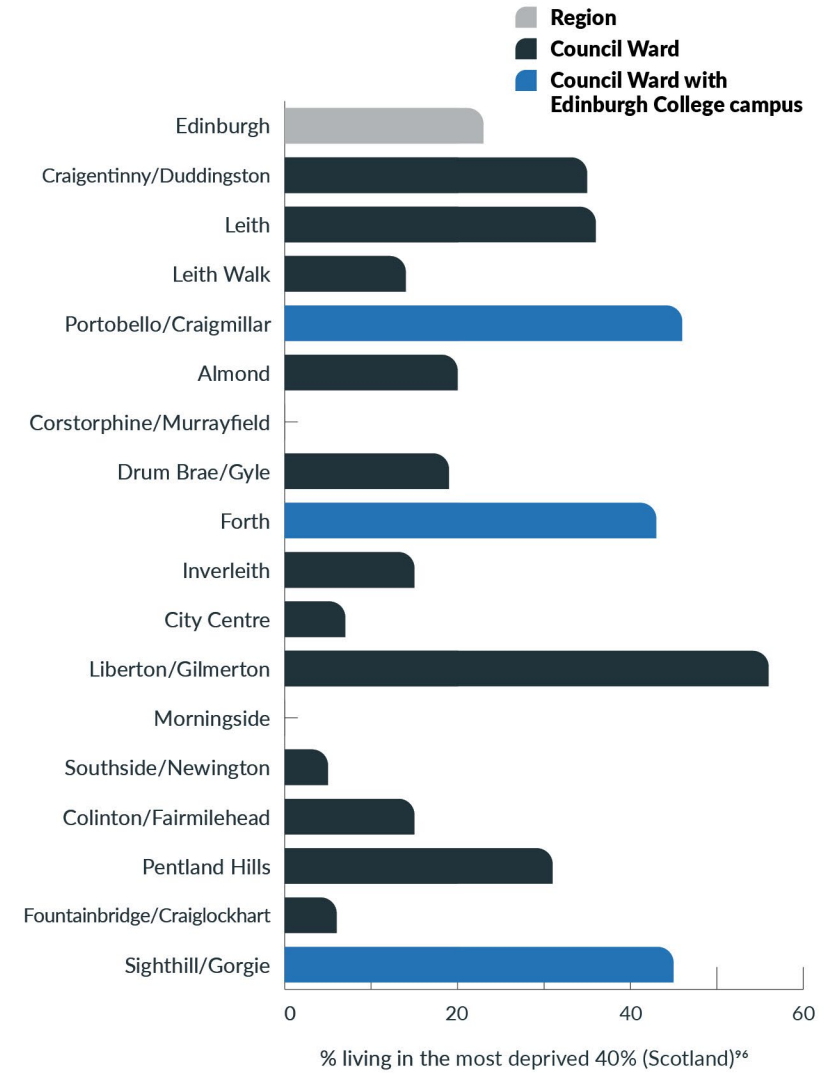
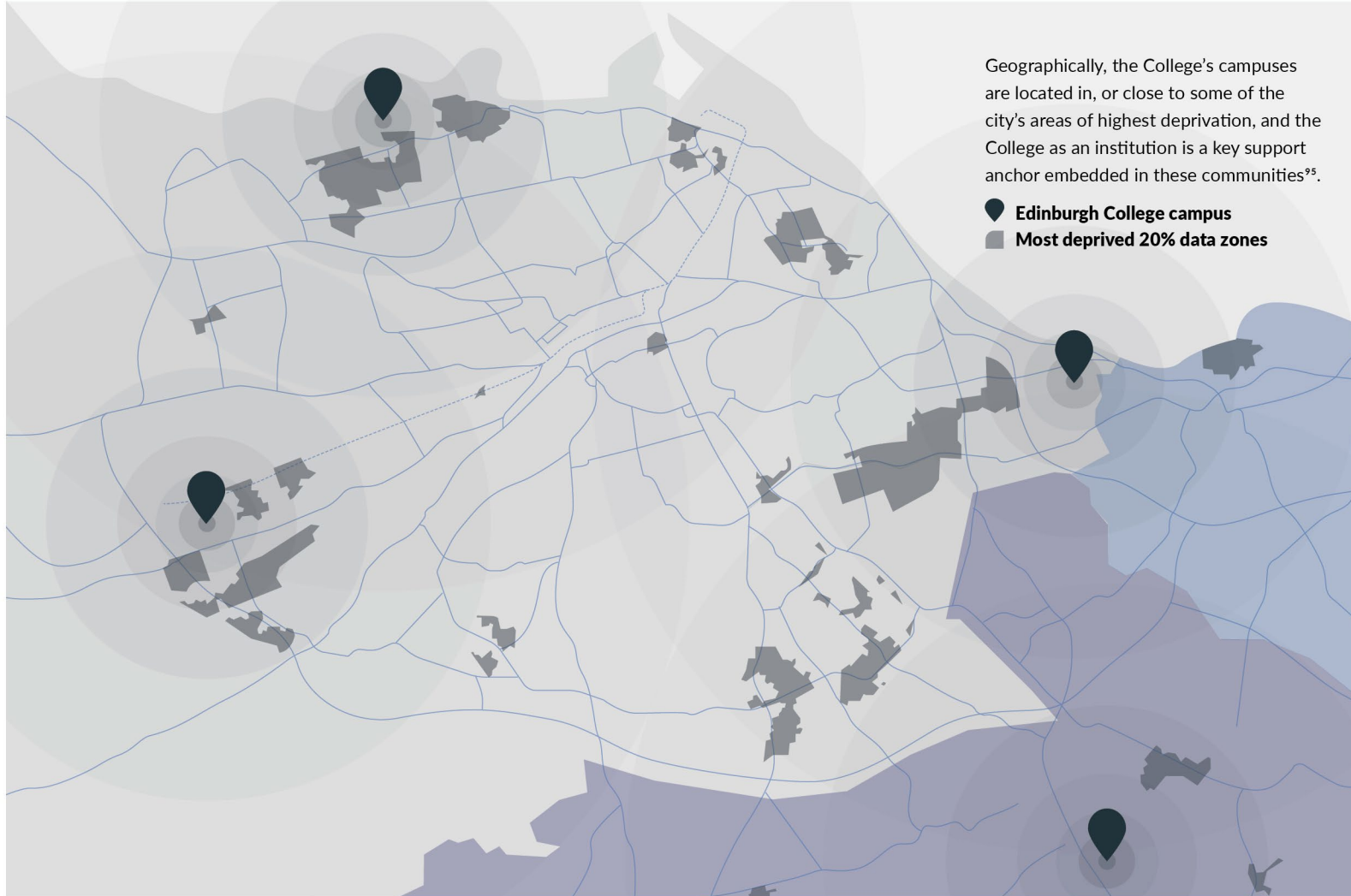
1,213 of our students are care experienced¹⁶

Our students come from more than

135
countries¹³



Equality



End Poverty in Edinburgh Delivery Plan

- “Explore potential for further placements and apprenticeships for parents”
- “Work with industry to make sure that people have the expertise to apply for new higher skilled jobs in data and the green economy”
- “Support positive destinations for the hardest to reach young people by working with education and intervening earlier”
- “Launch the new ESOL for Employability programme for job seekers for whom English is not a first language”

Edinburgh College's in work offer:



- Courses and qualifications (statutory and non-statutory)
- Management and Leadership programmes
- Apprenticeships
- Bespoke programmes for employers
- City Region Skills Programmes
- ESOL for Work

Our English for Work course

Current



ESOL for Access to Health and Care professions



Computing with ESOL



Childhood Practice with ESOL

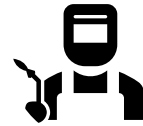


ESOL for Work

Future



Construction



Automotive



Professional Cookery



Hair and Beauty

For the future you want

Addressing Language as a Barrier to Work and Progression

The Impact of Edinburgh College's
English for Work programmes

Neale Gardiner
Director of Income Generation and Partnerships
neale.gardiner@edinburghcollege.ac.uk