

News release

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Urgent action needed on workforce skills planning

The Scottish Government needs to take urgent action to ensure essential progress in improving how workforce skills are planned and provided.

In 2017, the Scottish Government, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) agreed to work towards skills alignment – a more integrated approach to equipping people with the workforce skills Scotland needs. This is a key element of economic growth and recovery and aims to benefit individuals, employers and the economy.

A report by the Auditor General for Scotland finds the Scottish Government has not provided the necessary leadership or oversight for joint working between SDS and the SFC, with insufficient clarity on what it wanted to achieve and what success would look like. In addition, SDS and the SFC have not been able to agree how integrated approaches to skills planning should work.

Current arrangements are unlikely to achieve the Scottish Government's ambitions for skills alignment at the pace required. The Scottish Government should clearly set out its strategic aims and objectives for skills alignment, and how progress will be measured. It should also agree with SDS and the SFC how they will work together to deliver shared outcomes.

Stephen Boyle, Auditor General for Scotland, said:

"The Scottish Government recognises that workforce skills are central to inclusive and sustainable economic recovery and growth, but it has not provided the leadership needed to deliver on its skills alignment agenda. As a result, the anticipated benefits have not been achieved and opportunities for more efficient and effective investment have been missed.

"The Scottish Government now urgently needs to set out what it intends to achieve and how it will measure progress, as well as clarifying the governance and oversight arrangements for skills alignment activity."

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Notes to Editor:

1. 'Skills alignment' is an objective from the Scottish Government's [Enterprise and Skills Review](#) in 2017. The aim is for SDS and the SFC to work together on skills planning, provision, review and evaluation, to help equip Scotland's people and employers with the right skills and experience to succeed in the economy.
2. [Skills Development Scotland](#) (SDS) and the [Scottish Funding Council](#) (SFC) are the main public bodies responsible for providing access to post-school skills and knowledge. Together, they spend over £2 billion each year on training and post-school education. This covers a wide range of activities, including supporting apprenticeships and funding colleges and universities. It is not possible to identify how much SDS and SFC expenditure specifically relates to skills alignment activity.

3. This audit assessed progress from 2017 up to the end of November 2021.

4. Audit Scotland has prepared this report for the Auditor General for Scotland. All Audit Scotland reports published since 2000 are available at www.audit-scotland.gov.uk

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