



PRESS RELEASE

‘Valuing Careers’ Campaign Launches to Enable Adults in Scotland to Thrive

New research reveals the opportunity for lifelong career development to offer greater support to adults in Scotland amid skills gaps, an ageing workforce, and the drive towards a digital and green economy.

Edinburgh, 20 May 2024 — The Career Development Institute (CDI) today launches its Valuing Careers campaign in Scotland, highlighting the critical role of career guidance in addressing the nation’s skills challenges, aging population, and talent retention pressures.

The event follows successful launches at the House of Lords, Stormont, and the Senedd, reinforcing the UK-wide push to empower individuals and businesses through targeted career support.

In Scotland, sectors from digital tech to healthcare are sounding the alarm over a lack of skilled workers. Add to this an ageing population and significant numbers of people not working, and the scale of the challenge becomes clear.

CDI’s UK-wide survey of adults revealed that 8 in 10 adult Scots identified barriers to career goals—most commonly low confidence (28%) and perceived lack of opportunities (24%).

In Scotland, the Career Services Collaborative united a wide range of partners who lead, enable, or deliver career services, to work in partnership to advance Scotland’s career services

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is the national skills body delivering free, expert Careers Information Advice and Guidance services to customers of all ages, based in every state school, in centres and community spaces nationwide, and online.

The CDI research showed that 89% of adults who accessed the service offered by SDS stated that it helped them, and 75% would recommend the service. This reinforces the findings that, where people do recognise the value of professional career development, it can make a massive difference in helping them achieve their career aspirations.

Dave McCallum, Head of Career Information, Advice and Guidance Operations at SDS said: “CDI’s findings highlight the continued benefits of an all age, inclusive career

service, adding to the rich picture developed by our own extensive research and partnership working with others.

“In local communities, SDS expert advisers work collaboratively with partners, use labour market intelligence and understand customer needs that enables them to provide well informed and tailored support.”

David Morgan, CDI Chief Executive, emphasised the potential of addressing Scotland’s unique challenges:

“Scotland faces multiple challenges - skills shortages in growing sectors like tech and green energy, an aging population needing extended career support, and high levels of economic inactivity. Our research demonstrates that career guidance isn’t a luxury - it’s a necessity. With 50% of adults in Scotland saying they have few career options, yet only 34% actively thinking about their careers – the lowest rate in the UK, there’s a pressing need to re-engage workers across all life stages. Continuing to invest in comprehensive career development is an investment in Scotland’s future prosperity, productivity, and social equity. This event brings together key stakeholders to discuss how we can build a more skilled, adaptable, and resilient workforce for Scotland.”

Effective career development is seen as a vital tool to alleviate the pressures facing Scotland, helping individuals gain the skills needed for in-demand jobs, supporting businesses to find and retain talent, and enabling people to enter or return to the workforce.

Event Highlights:

- Opening remarks by Graeme Dey MSP, Minister for Further and Higher Education, emphasising Scotland’s commitment to career development as a solution to national workforce needs.
- Presentation of CDI’s research, based on a UK-wide survey of 5,000 adults, revealing stark gaps in career support accessibility and outcomes. Key findings include low career optimism, with only 59% positive about their career to date, 46% positive about their career prospects and 50% believing there are few career options available to them.
- Panel discussion on Scotland-specific challenges, including 80% of Scots identifying barriers to career goals—most commonly low confidence (28%) and perceived lack of opportunities (24%) - alongside high economic inactivity, rapid digitalisation, and demographic shifts.
- Questions from an audience of policymakers, educators, and industry leaders to shape Scotland’s career development strategy and align it with the needs of key growth sectors.

Key Research Insights for Scotland:

The Valuing Careers Full Report underscores a pressing need for action, resonating strongly with Scotland's labour market dynamics:

Only 15% of UK adults have accessed professional career guidance post-education, despite 74% of Scots having career aspirations and 80% anticipating barriers. This gap hinders Scotland's ability to reskill workers for sectors like green energy and tech.

While only 53% of adult Scots are aware of Skills Development Scotland's services - significantly higher than the recognition in England of its National Careers Service - 89% of those who accessed the service stated that it helped them and 75% would recommend the service. This reinforces the findings that where people do recognise the value of professional career development it can make a massive difference in helping them achieve their career aspirations.

However, analysis of the data has shown that around 20-30% of UK adults who could most benefit from careers support – those with low education outcomes, low salaries and low confidence – are least likely to see how careers support could help them and are least likely to engage with it.

The CDI recommends decisive steps from policymakers, employers, and educators in Scotland:

1. **Continued expansion of access** to professional career guidance for adults, especially those in mid-career needing to adapt and those currently outside the workforce.
2. **Address the outdated idea** that career support is just for school leavers. Lifelong learning and career management are essential to thrive in today's job market.
3. **Target investment** in career support for vulnerable groups, aligning with Scotland's Fair Work agenda to ensure no one is left behind as the economy transforms.

The Valuing Careers Full Report is available at [thecdi.net/ValuingCareers].

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Notes for Editor:

About the CDI: The CDI is the UK's professional body for all aspects of career development, supporting its members to work to the highest standards and advocating for high-quality career guidance to enhance social mobility and economic growth across the UK.

It sets standards for professional practice, including the CDI Code of Ethics, manages the UK Register of Career Development Professionals, awards the Qualification in Career Development, delivers training via the CDI Academy, and provides resources, training events and networking for members.