



A4e Scotland
Skills for
Scotland's
People –
Proposals for a
Partnership with
Scotland's
Policymakers



improving people's lives

A4e Scotland

Who we are

A4e is a successful international business that delivers services for individuals, organisations and governments. We have made a difference to the lives of well over one million people since we were founded in 1991. A4e began operating in Scotland in 2001.

What we do

The work we do is focused on three things: improving productivity and performance, tackling inactivity and inequality and driving social mobility. Directly and in partnership with governments, their agencies, local government and employers, we deliver:

- employment and training
- business support and services
- fund management and distribution
- financial inclusion services; and
- education and skills

How we do it

A4e's strength lies in developing innovative solutions to long established problems, working with a number of government departments and agencies, nationally and locally, to help them develop strategy and policy. We excel at taking these new programmes and pilots to market, directly delivering services that bring a fresh approach and make a significant impact on the disadvantaged and marginalised. Because we are a commercial organisation, we have the freedom to innovate and be different because doing things differently may be the only hope for people for whom everything else has failed. Crucially, we tailor what we do so it is always people-led. Also, we know that working in partnership with others can be critical in providing these solutions as any one organisation may not have all the expertise to provide the outcomes to what in many cases are complex challenges.

Where we do it

A4e works with people in many countries: from Jerusalem to Methil and from Paris to Kilmarnock! In Scotland we currently operate in Ayrshire, the Scottish Borders, Dunbartonshire, East Lothian, Edinburgh, Fife, Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Midlothian and Tayside. We are confident that the new skills landscape will allow us to reach new areas that were previously closed to us.

Why we do it

Our vision is to improve people's lives and deliver social change. We employ people who want to make a difference for others who, in turn, can grow their skills and confidence. We pride ourselves on helping people and organisations access high quality training, employment and advice, doing whatever we can to drive social change and provide opportunity. We do things the right way, not the easy way: doing well by doing good.

What we want to do for Scotland

As a business we are committed to growing and investing within the Scottish marketplace. To date we have invested over £5 million in Scottish people and places to deliver services for an ever-increasing number of people in Scotland. Over the next five years we will invest more than the same again – but we know that this figure will be much larger if we are able to roll out all the programmes we want, to make the difference for thousands of people in Scotland.

Skills for Employment

What we do

- We give opportunities to people who are below the poverty line, who have been out of work for many years, who are disadvantaged, who have lost faith in themselves or society.
- A4e develops clients who want to work and actively seek employment to become job-ready and attractive to employers.
- We deliver programmes in Scotland, England, Wales, Ireland, France, Germany and Israel.

What we want to do

- We want to roll out a model of demand-led services so that more people in Scotland are equipped with the skills they need for employment.
- We want to be part of an open marketplace for skills providers that allows employers choice and the encouragement to invest in their workforce.
- We want to build new relationships with employers so that people who have invested in building their own skills can be rewarded with jobs they can be proud of.
- Broader choice in training will make a real difference to releasing resources to front line delivery as part of continuing reform of public services – we want to help turn that into a reality in Scotland.
- The Prime and Managing Contractor models can make a real difference in driving forward social change and we want to prove it. These models can open up public service partnership delivery to smaller private, not-for-profit and voluntary organisations, spreading best practice while retaining local flexibility.



How Scotland's policymakers can help

- In the run up to the Scottish elections A4e called on policymakers to deliver a demand-led skills strategy where employers can choose the type of learning provider that is right for them. A4e therefore welcomes the Scottish Government's new *Skills for Scotland* strategy and the opportunity to offer our own experience working with individuals, agencies and organisations over the past 20 years.
- *Skills for Scotland* offers an exciting new focus on skills provision with a single driving agency. But this is only the start. Providers and potential users must be engaged in the detail of policy formulation.
- While the creation of the new integrated skills organisation is welcome, the organisation must be designed to maintain an overview of all skills provision with the management of services, where appropriate, being devolved to others with the necessary skills.
- Policymakers should learn from experience from elsewhere in the world of opening up the learning supply market, which has contributed to greater success for programmes.
- Recognition should be given to the Managing and Prime Contractor models as means of delivering more flexibility, responsiveness and cost-effectiveness in managing skills providers.

Skills for Life

What we do

- A4e is a major provider of programmes to support people moving from reliance on benefits to being able to succeed in working environments.
- For the hardest to reach young people, A4e's Life Academy model seeks to equip them with the skills and confidence to move into further education, work-based learning, or a job after two years.
- A4e has worked for many years alongside people with disabilities including the delivery of New Deal for Disabled People in Scotland. This provides a highly successful supported job broking service to clients on incapacity or other health-related benefits.

What we want to do

- We believe innovative approaches in education and skills are needed to help the more disadvantaged members of our communities.
- We want to take A4e's 'Circle of Activity' model, which has a track record in keeping people out of unemployment and extend it across all Scotland's more excluded communities.
- We want to see achievement, shared purpose and social mobility as something that every person in Scotland can have.
- We want A4e's Life Academy initiative to offer new ways to give a fresh start to disenfranchised school-age children in Scotland.
- We want to demonstrate that fully integrated academic and vocational learning can benefit hard to reach students.
- A bolder approach is needed to reduce the large number of people claiming incapacity benefit – and we have some of the answers.
- The New Deal for Disabled People is proving highly effective but more pathfinders are required and we want to make them work.

How Scotland's policymakers can help

- Policymakers must allow those commissioning skills programmes the freedom to promote and reward delivery innovation.
- Innovators in the skills sector must be allowed to re-invest in their organisations.
- Real steps must be taken to reduce the bureaucracy drowning service providers in this sector.
- Government should allow good ideas to be tried out as programme pilots.
- Policymakers must ensure that the needs of users are put before misplaced loyalties to local suppliers, using a robust and consistent procurement process that recognises experience regardless of whether it was originally gained in Scotland.
- Service providers should be encouraged to always develop robust links with employers.
- Scotland's politicians must take ownership of skills development policy.

Skills for Communities

What we do

- We help small businesses start up and grow; we take investment funds to market and deliver training and consultancy to businesses, effecting economic regeneration. We do this where we are needed most.
- A4e has exported its Welfare to Work expertise to deliver projects for communities, and across communities, in Parisian suburbs and parts of Jerusalem.
- We are pioneering “Working Neighbourhood” projects in the UK.
- A4e is a managing agent for the Scottish Prison Service where, working in partnership with Alfred McAlpine, we deliver short courses in telehandling and construction skills to move the individual learners into employment on release. This partnership has produced some of the highest job outcomes and non-reoffending levels to date. We are also trying, with another employer partner, to extend the scheme to provide further guaranteed jobs to offenders on release.

What we want to do

- A4e wants to broaden the number of areas where it can deliver support to new businesses and skills development to people working at the heart of communities.
- We want to roll out Working Neighbourhood projects in some of Scotland’s most challenging communities, building on our experience of working in one of England’s most deprived neighbourhoods. In this case, residents were reluctant to travel or work outside their locality and economically inactive residents found new hope through involvement in our intermediate labour market scheme.
- We want to achieve the full potential for Scotland of those who come to live here. One of the challenges is to support immigrant workers coming to Scotland who have qualifications which are not always recognised or cannot be applied locally. We want to see our successful collaboration with the Bridges Charity in Glasgow, which is helping highly skilled and qualified new Scots into the workplace, extended across Scotland.
- We want to help tackle the 68 per cent reoffending rate of Scottish prisoners by working with the Scottish Prison Service to provide skills initiatives for offenders and real opportunities for employment on release. A4e is delivering a sustainable job rate of 50 per cent for people leaving prison against the national average of 25 per cent – and we want to expand this scheme across more communities in Scotland.



How Scotland’s policymakers can help

- Politicians must insist on an enlightened approach to programme management in communities, based on partnerships and the recognition that big players from outside an area are not a threat but an opportunity to broaden experience for everyone’s benefit.
- Government should commission intermediate labour market pilot initiatives where appropriate, because many people in the most deprived neighbourhoods have little chance of meaningful employment without a stepping stone.
- Politicians must insist that flexibility is built in to the system to allow national programmes to deal with local issues pragmatically. We have found that the one-size-fits-all programmes that drive people down certain avenues may neither fulfil individual aspirations or the meet the requirements of the local market.
- Resources must be made available for the provision of Scotland-wide offender employment initiatives because their success will soon mean the nation saves money on prisons.
- Politicians can help ensure flexibility. Flexibility is required as the Justice system often fails to see the bigger picture and gets in the way to prevent people from leaving prison to start work on an agreed day or block day release when arrangements have been made “outside”. There needs to be flexibility that allows the savings from early release to support skills and employment.

Skills for Families

What we do

- We enable people to regain control of their finances by combating financial exclusion through support and education.
- To promote financial inclusion and education on money matters, A4e runs MoneyHelp in Edinburgh, which is delivered in association with the high street bank, HBOS. We also run a pilot project called MoneyHelp Schools which is aimed at both pre and post-16 year olds.
- Working on behalf of the Department of Work and Pensions, we have successfully delivered an impartial support service to more than 50,000 of the hardest to reach individuals (in 13 languages) who are now receiving their benefits through direct payment.
- A4e has joined forces with citizens' solicitors Howell's to deliver Community Legal Service Direct, a telephone-based legal advice service designed to allow people to access professional and confidential legal advice on issues such as debt, welfare, tax credits, housing, employment and education problems.

What we want to do

- A4e wants to deliver bolder initiatives to reduce the vulnerability of more low income families to financial exclusion and multiple debts.
- We want to see MoneyHelp workshops, in partnership with HBOS, reach tens of thousands of people rather than just the 1,300 clients so far supported in and around Edinburgh.
- We want to help government to improve access to high quality financial support services for the most disadvantaged groups and individuals in rural communities.
- Through the creation of a new type of bank, we want to provide the financially excluded, who most lenders see as high risk, with access to the banking services other people take for granted. Our venture draws on the experience of a major financial services partner from outside the UK and will represent a significant inward investment.

How Scotland's policymakers can help

- Scottish Parliamentarians need to develop bold new strategies to combat the current failure of the market to address the needs of the financially excluded in disadvantaged communities.
- Initiatives such as MoneyHelp should be rolled out across Scotland, promoted and celebrated.
- Policymakers should welcome, support and promote the new type of bank that A4e wants to set up in Scotland to offer those currently excluded from financial services access to low cost banking that gives them a real chance of saving and the opportunity to take on affordable, responsible credit.
- Government should ensure that any new model of banking that is aimed at more deprived communities is allowed a trading environment, under the FSA, free from interference from any vested interest.

For more information

Visit our website at:
www.a4escotland.co.uk

A4e will be pleased to discuss service provision in your area, and the solutions we are providing, or can provide.

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