

# **CONNECTING COMMUNITIES TO ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES**

**Fiona Malcolm**  
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**Communities Scotland**

## THE ISSUE

- 1. In local economies, from time to time there are major developments (e.g. big construction projects, new supermarket openings, major expansions of existing employers)**
- 2. These can create significant employment opportunities where getting in at the start is crucial.**
- 3. Typically, more disadvantaged groups (e.g. long term unemployed) and members of poorer communities benefit little – even if located close to development.**
- 4. We need to do better by developing more effective processes – and this was focus of research.**

## **POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1. Connecting communities and economic opportunities fits with Closing the Opportunity Gap strategy of previous administration, so clearly this may now be revised or replaced.**
- 2. Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire collaborated on Workforce Plus Action Plan to fit with Scottish Executive's Employability Framework – and Workplace Plus is likely to be endorsed by the new administration.**
- 3. There is also potential contribution to NEET strategy – also likely to be endorsed by new administration, but rebranded.**
- 4. Fits Scottish Enterprise's Linking Opportunity and Need (LOAN) framework.**

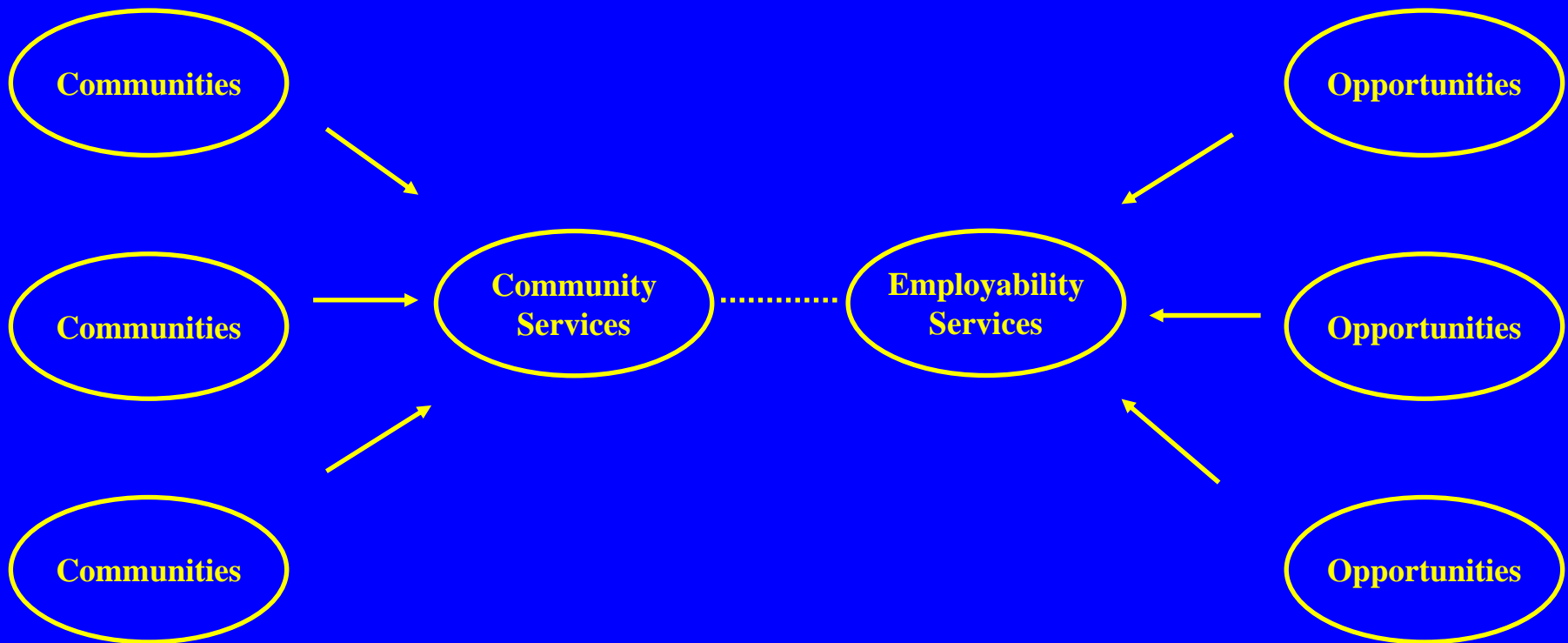
## **RESEARCH EVIDENCE ON THE PROBLEM**

- 1. Worklessness in proportionate terms low in Aberdeen City and Shire – but nonetheless over 26,000 people and little decline over past year**
- 2. Gap between poorest communities on average has not been closing – and may now be widening. Number of worst 15% of Scotland's data zones in City and Shire grew from 20 to 33 on latest SIMD**
- 3. Some of poorest communities now on par with Glasgow's worst – although problem less widespread**
- 4. Strategic awareness of the need to become more effective in linking opportunity and need – but no clear operational responsibility for making this happen**
- 5. Full spectrum of services required to move people from joblessness to sustainable employment appears to be in place – with possible issues around specialist services such as money advice.**

## **THE PROBLEM (CONT'D)**

- 6. Concern about coordination between 'community' and 'employability' services – see diagram. Not an effective pipeline or pathway for jobless people.**
- 7. Concern about effectiveness of engagement process with employers – despite employers reporting willingness to engage**
- 8. Management information systems lacking for assessing effectiveness of engagement, progression and sustainability of employability services for residents of most disadvantaged communities**

# EMPLOYABILITY PIPELINE



## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1. The Local Economic Forum (ACSEF) should take responsibility for driving forward on LOAN agenda**
- 2. The strategic emphasis on LOAN needs to be sharpened. ACSEF should review and revise strategic position, merging objectives 2 and 6**
- 3. Need to bring other organisations into process – particularly Jobcentre Plus**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS (CONTD)**

- 4. A LOAN Action Plan needs to be generated**
  - **Objectives and targets**
  - **Plugging service gaps**
  - **Improve flow from ‘community’ to ‘employability’ services**
  - **Develop more effective employer engagement processes, building on new Local Employment Partnerships and Public Sector Academies**
  - **Public sector demonstration of commitment – jobs**
  - **Performance measurement and management system**
  
- 5. A number of building blocks need to be put in place to create operational mechanisms for maximising LOAN benefits**
  - **Dedicated project management – a must do**
  - **Build small team around project manager – a should do**
  
- 6. Move towards more co-ordinated approach to procurement of employability services**



## **RECOMMENDATIONS (CONTD)**

- 7. Deliver all of this as essentially a Workforce Plus pilot, or certainly well integrated into Workforce Plus Action Plan.**