



Scottish Union of Supported Employment

Annual Report

October 2024

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Introduction & Summary



We bring organisations together to campaign, network, improve how we work and share our experiences.

Our aim is to support disabled people to find and retain paid work by increasing the availability, quality and impact of supported employment services in Scotland.

The major event in the past year was the final year and conclusion of the Apt Disability Employment Gap Public Social Partnership, which operated from August 2020 and completed in March 2024. A Blueprint of a future service was created that the public sector can commission, this included a host of support materials and resources.

Apt PSP

SUSE also worked with Enable Works and other partners to deliver a 'mini PSP' in Glasgow on behalf of the local authority. We are now using this model to promote the services to other councils and we feel this has great potential as it compliments No One Left Behind initiatives and local supported employment services.

The PSP has taken up most of our time over the past 4 years and the end of the project has challenged us to find a new focus and to source alternative funding to sustain the charity.

Strategy & Projects

The SUSE Strategy 2022-25 has been implemented successfully and we will be working with the Board and members over the coming months to agree the priorities for the next 3-year strategy. This will include more training delivery and consultancy (such as Digital Recruitment Reviews), following on from activities we are piloting in autumn 2024.

We will also look to deliver more strategic projects. We have just started a new project - the EASE App - following an award from the Alliance Self-Management Fund. This will run through to June 2027.

The Board

The past year has seen some changes on the SUSE Board. Lianne Williams and Karen Motherwell both stepped down. We would like to thank them for their service and contribution to SUSE. We have recently recruited new trustees to join the Board and a new Chair has been appointed. We will introduce them to the members at the AGM.

Apt PSP Conclusion

The past year was the conclusion of the Apt Disability Employment Gap Public Social Partnership, which operated from August 2020 and completed in March 2024. The PSP aimed to contribute to the reduction of the Disability Employment Gap (DEG) by piloting new approaches to supporting employers to be better able to attract, recruit and retain disabled people. 32 partner organisations and individuals continued to engage regularly with Apt either through project delivery or participating in our regular meetings through to the end of the project.

In the final year of the PSP we:

- Worked with 24 employers representing a broad range of industries including food & drink, tourism, hospitality and manufacturing.
- Undertook a total of 33 interventions, including Digital Recruitment Reviews, Scottish Mental Health First Aid and employer assessments.
- Introduced an improved assessment tool in response to feedback from partners and employers, which includes a new self-assessment section for employers.



Feedback and Analysis

We collected feedback from employers and compared this to the start of their journey. It shows that the training and services have been highly effective across a number of key areas, including employer confidence; employer awareness of available services and support; employers feel more prepared to be able to support their disabled employees and new candidates. Crucially we are able to show comparable levels of success in our Glasgow project.

The Blueprint

The PSP created a Blueprint of a future service that the public sector can commission and a host of support materials and resources. These included a comprehensive Employer Assessment process, a Training & Services Catalogue, with 50 training courses and 35 interventions, a Quality Assurance system, a wide range of resources and campaigning materials, core training & development recommendations and resources, a Baseline Training & Mentoring programme and a Workplace Accessibility audit.

The Scottish Government now need to decide on the next steps. We are continuing to look for funding opportunities to create an independent Centre of Excellence for Scotland's employers that takes the learning from the PSP into a commercial enterprise that can be sustained by generating income from training, consultancy and sponsorship. A major focus of the Centre will be the creation of opportunities for people who have lived experience of disability at all levels including governance, management and front line delivery.

Why you askin'? Campaign



Because we want our disabled employees to succeed.

Talking about your unique needs helps to create a workplace where you can thrive.

#DisabilityDisclosure

Our work with employers during Apt PSP told us that in many workplaces there is likely to be considerable underreporting on the number of employees who are disabled or have long-term health conditions.

We developed a campaign for employers that was launched in early 2024 called Why You Askin' that attempts to encourage people to disclose, and explains why this is valuable and useful for all parties. The campaign was developed with our Experience Network and includes materials and guidance.

In January, we rolled out the campaign to 18 employers who were working with Apt. The selected employers were located across Scotland, from Shetland, Inverness, Aberdeen and across the Central Belt.

They represented national and international organisations, of varying sizes and from very different sectors. The purpose of this was to gain insight into how the campaign message reached different employees and the impact the messages would have in different settings. We teamed up with an MSc student from the University of Strathclyde who is researching disability disclosure.

The feedback from employers showed the campaign had the potential to:

- Spark important and respectful conversations
- Challenge stereotypes
- Foster an understanding of disability disclosure
- Contribute to positive changes in attitudes

So far, there are strong indications that when implemented consistently, and as part of the wider organisation culture of open dialogue and trust, employers can create a workplace that works for everyone.



Supported Employment Review

In September 2022, the Scottish Government published their Supported Employment Review and since that time we have been waiting for their response to the report's recommendations. The recommendations were of particular interest to SUSE as we had suggested several of them to the report's authors. The 9 recommendations are:

- Design a Scottish "Supported Employment Guarantee" over the next 18 months, to include co-design of service delivery with people with lived experience.
- Drive consistency and oversight of supported employment provision through data collection, including access, outcomes and information on the needs and disabilities of individuals accessing support.
- Develop a supported employment quality standards and assurance approach.
- Develop and commission a national infrastructure programme to support the implementation of the Supported Employment Guarantee, drive performance data and support workforce development.
- Support the professionalisation of the supported employment workforce, by developing materials, reviewing existing training programmes and creating a career pathway for supported employment professionals.
- Encourage employers to deliver more support to people with disabilities, potentially by taking forward the work of the PSP, including setting up a Scottish Centre of Excellence for employers, with people with lived experience fully involved.
- Explore options with DWP to allow SE providers to claim Access to Work directly.
- Explore how "anchor institutions" can increase the number of jobs available for disabled people.
- Make changes to Fair Start Scotland contracts to remove the requirement for 16+ hours of work and require data reporting on disabled participants.

In September 2024 the Scottish Government finally issued a response to the recommendations (and those for the IPS review they had also commissioned). The No One Left Behind Strategy was also published on the same day. The response was disappointing as there were no commitments to deliver the Supported Employment Guarantee, the Quality Standard and enhanced professional development opportunities. The government have grouped Supported Employment, IPS etc under the umbrella term Specialist Employment Support but have not prescribed what services disabled people should have access to. There is an aspiration but not a requirement that Supported Employment will be offered by each local authority. However, there was no firm commitment in the NOLB strategy to deliver Supported Employment or IPS for everyone who may benefit from those services.

**Moving forward SUSE intends to work with our members to engage with Local Employability Partnership to advocate for the recommendations to be implemented and the development or expansion of services that deliver the full 5 stage Supported Employment model for disabled jobseekers.
We will be talking to members to agree a suitable strategy for this.**

Supported Employment & IPS Services in Scotland

Estimated Demand Levels 2024

There are an estimated 33,877 people in Scotland who could benefit from Supported Employment and 18,127 people who could benefit from IPS.

If Supported Employment services were to include people with sensory loss, there could be an additional estimated 161,190 people who could benefit. If services were also to include people with a physical disability, there could be a further potential 147,680 people who could benefit from Supported Employment.



In total, there are an estimated 360,874 people who could benefit from Supported Employment and IPS in Scotland.

Earlier this year we were asked by the Scottish Government to provide an estimate of service demand levels in Scotland for Supported Employment and Individual Placement and Support services.

We worked with members and collated the latest available research.

[The full report is available on the SUSE website.](#)

An independent review of IPS was commissioned by the Scottish Government, undertaken by Social Finance and published in January 2023.

The service is currently designed to support people with severe mental illness that are engaging with CMHT. In Scotland it is estimated this number is 60,424.

The report estimates that 30% are interested in finding work and would be eligible for IPS, which is 18,127 people. However, if the service was open to other candidates, such as people with mild to moderate mental ill-health or in drug and alcohol recovery, then this figure would be much larger (SAMH).

SUSE Projects

What SUSE have been working on in 2023/24

EASE App Project

SUSE secured funding for the EASE (Early Action to Sustain Employment) App Project, which is intended to contribute to reducing the Disability Employment Gap by increasing the number of disabled people who successfully sustain paid employment.

We aim to do this by building the self-management skills of disabled workers and enable people to identify when they might need some support to overcome a problem and help them to find the support or information that works for them. The project will develop and pilot an app that disabled workers can use to do this.

We are thrilled to be at the forefront of self-management activities and look forward to making a real impact with this project.

Digital Recruitment Reviews

This service tests employers' digital recruitment processes and records and evaluates the users' experience and the technical barriers, from initial search to submitting an application.

Since Oct 2023 we have:

- Undertaken a further 15 DRRs taking the total employers we've worked with to 38.
- Upgraded the reports to make it even easier for employers to implement changes, highlighting low, medium and critical priority issues.
- Established new branding.
- Developed a user-friendly guide to creating accessible application forms.
- Designed marketing materials to promote commercial DRRs.

100% of employers we met to discuss their reports, stated that they agreed with the recommendations in the reports and found them to be very helpful; with the majority stating that they will apply the recommendations to other areas of their work also.

SUSE Projects

Inclusive Workplaces Week Scotland

In 2023 we launched IWWS, which aimed to help employers increase their knowledge about the support that is available to recruit and retain disabled talent. We also hosted DuoDay as part of the week, a day to promote equal employment opportunities and highlight the positive contributions disabled people make at work.

By hosting information sessions, learning opportunities and DuoDay, our first IWWS aimed to:

- Increase the knowledge employers have about services and projects in their local areas,
- Develop partnerships between employers and SUSE members,
- Create training, placements and job opportunities for disabled people,
- Introduce a new pool of talent to employers,
- Promote Supported Employment.

388 people from 52 different organisation registered for the 12 information sessions which ran over the week in November. We asked attendees how helpful the week was:

100% of the responses stated the sessions were very or extremely helpful and they learned something new.

IWWS 2024 will take place from 18th to 22nd November and this year we have involvement from Skills Development Scotland, SAMH, DWP, Able Futures, Values Into Action Scotland, The Pain Association, Age Scotland, DFN Project SEARCH, See Me, Neuroinclusive Works CIC and Social Enterprise Scotland.

DuoDay 2023

14 organisations hosted or supported job shadowing opportunities for 11 interns last November. A wide variety of roles were on offer and we received extremely positive feedback from everyone involved.

[Watch the DuoDay video from 2023.](#)

This year DuoDay will take place on Thursday 21st November.

SUSE Annual Conference

The SUSE Annual Conference was held on 21st May at The Golden Jubilee Conference Hotel, Glasgow. The theme of the conference was Creating our Future: How Supported Employment can diversify Scotland's workplaces.

We aimed to give delegates some food for thought: what's the economic and policy outlook for the year ahead as we approached a General Election? Is our sector diverse enough and how can we attract people from all parts of our community? What's happening next with the Supported Employment Review recommendations?

Our conference anticipated a UK General Election, as it happened, this was announced the following day. The discussion topics were prescient and confirmed our desire to be ready for potential policy changes at UK level and how this will impact the employability sector. The programme was about facing the challenges ahead; about being prepared for a future that is changing. Here are some of the key points from the day...

Emerging Themes

Are employability services reaching the people who need them?

30 Local Authority areas reported they were delivering some form of specialist employability support provision and 86% were focused on disabled people. The challenge is volume, variety and the methods of delivery are very different across the country. We need to ensure we are meeting the needs of disabled people who want to access good quality services locally.

No-One Left Behind has to get more strategic in its vision and connect across Government to ensure change can be delivered.

Funding for education, employability and social care are funded as three distinct areas but we need to think about how these can be better coordinated.

Multi-year funding is essential to the professionalisation of the sector and achieving quality in services.

Targeted funding and more sustainable investment is required to half the DEG by 2038, not a short-term approach that loses people due to lack of investment.

Conference Overview

A conference overview report was produced after the event and distributed to everyone who participated to provide a summary of what we discussed, the workshops and the conference themes. [Read it here.](#)

SUSE Membership

Our membership is higher than it was at this time last year. We welcomed new members Passion 4 Social, Alliance for Inclusion, Moray Council, CVS Inverclyde and The Wise Group.

However some members are facing funding issues, which has meant they have had to leave due to budget limitations.

We applied a small increase to our membership fees this year, the first time we have done this for several years.

Our refreshed membership offer is still attracting new members and it is our plan to continue to grow membership over the next year.



In 2024



12.8% of members are new in 2024

Member Events

We made a commitment in our strategy to hold a number of member events, as part of our membership offer, to encourage discussion and learning across the sector.

We held workshops in conjunction with members and partners late in 2023 and early 2024. These were:

- Mental Health Stigma in the Workplace (See Me)
- Age Inclusion in the Workplace (Age Scotland)
- What Happens Next – Capacity Building for the Future (50 Degrees)
- How do we make our sector more diverse? (Diversity Scotland)
- Capacity Building: Implications of the New Labour Government (50 Degrees).

Our next series of Member Events will include:

- Capacity Building: Implications of the Autumn Budget statement, on 4th December 2024
- Vicarious Trauma and Building Resilience, on 23rd January 2025.

If you have any suggestions for future member events, please email us at info@susescotland.scot with your ideas.

National Member Survey

We set out to gather some baseline data from our members across Scotland. We can use this to campaign for more long-term resources for the sector and to highlight any gaps there may be in services. Those who took part represent 20% of the SUSE membership, some of the interesting findings were:

- 38% of job seekers moved into employment in 2023/24.
- Members told us they expect to greater demand for services this year.
- Members' staff teams have an average of 32% of people with lived experience. 9

SUSE Accounts

The SUSE Annual Accounts for 2023/24 are available for review by SUSE members. In this section we have provided some headline information.

Income in 2023/24

SUSE was awarded funding of £260,000 by the Scottish Government on behalf of the Apt Disability Employment Gap PSP. This was a fourth year of funding, one more than had been originally anticipated.

The total spend for the project was £212,219.80 for Project Delivery and £39,474.66 for Project Management, for a total of £251,694.46. SUSE drew down the funding for actual expenditure incurred in the PSP on a quarterly basis and submitted claims in arrears. As with previous years we were awarded the grant late in the year (October 2023) which created a challenge to utilise the full grant by March 2024.

The charity also delivered a project on behalf of Glasgow City Council for a mini PSP to work with employers, that started in October 2022. In 2023/24 the income from this was £53,967.66. The project completed in March 2024.

We carried out some consultancy activity for Inverclyde Council that generated income of £2,200.00.

Membership Fees, Conference income and Training income totalled £18,013.22. Membership income dropped significantly due to late payments. We are following these up with members and expect to get payments up to date soon.

In addition, some funds were received from Access to Work and intermediate labour market programmes.

Income Extract	Value
Scottish Government: Apt Disability Employment Gap PSP	£260,000
Glasgow City Council Mini PSP	£53,967.66
Inverclyde Council Consultancy Services	£2,200
Membership Fees, Conference & Training	£18,013.22

SUSE Accounts

Expenditure 2023/24

Expenditure Extract	Value
Staff Salaries	£145,853.56
PSP Spending (excluding salaries)	£141,370.64
Operating Costs (rent, insurances and staff travel)	£10,293.68
Operating Costs (IT, website, online licenses)	£12,300.85

Our largest single item of expenditure was on staff salaries, totalling £145,853.56. This reflects the significant staff time devoted to bringing the PSP to a successful conclusion and developing the Apt Blueprint and supporting materials that the Scottish Government requested.

PSP spending (excluding salaries) was £141,370.64. This includes funds that were distributed to partners for project delivery activities and developing resources.

Operating costs for the charity in 2023/24 were modest at £10,293.68. This includes rent, insurances and staff travel. There were significant costs for IT, website and online licenses at £12,300.85. Some of this was required to ensure the successful delivery of the PSP, to ensure that all of the partners could participate fully. However, for the most part these are now recurring annual costs and as members will know these have risen considerably recently and are unavoidable despite best efforts to secure voluntary sector discounts when that is possible.

There were no trustees' remuneration or other benefits for the year ended 31 March 2024 and there were no trustees' expenses paid.

The Financial Position in 2023/24

During the year the charity incurred a deficit of £10,130.00 (in 2023 the deficit £6,288.00). The deficit incurred was partly a result of utilising restricted funds held at 31 March 2023 for activity carried out in 2023-24. Throughout the year we have maintained a minimum of 3 months reserves at all times in line with our finance policy.

The Future

SUSE Plans for the Year Ahead

In addition to the projects outlined above, SUSE will prioritise the following activities:

Inclusive Workplace Training

SUSE and our training partners have been working over the summer months to bring together a comprehensive package of training which will be offered on a commercial basis.



SUSE quality assured courses

Inclusive Workplace Training covers the key topics employers and SUSE members need in one convenient place, from understanding disability in the workplace to implementing inclusive practices.

The package aims to provide:

- A wide range of topics all in one place for ease of booking
- Sessions which are focused on a workplace context
- Quality assured trainers
- Lived experience trainers
- Support to affect culture change with a package of training.

Apt for Local Authorities

Since the successful completion of Apt, SUSE has been engaging with local authorities across the country to promote this service. SUSE has also engaged with Improvement Scotland who were able to organise an opportunity for us to present to the SLAED Thematic workshop about the success of Apt. This has led to positive discussions with several local authorities who are interested in hearing more about the services Apt can offer.



We are pleased to announce the next stage of our partnership with Glasgow City Council to carry out more capacity building, training and consultancy with Glasgow employers. The project will run for 12 months through to September 2025 and will be delivered in partnership with a range of stakeholders in the city to compliment the services already available for disabled jobseekers.

The Future

SUSE Plans for the Year Ahead

Member Events

Capacity Building: Implications of the Autumn Budget statement – 4th Dec 2024

Vicarious Trauma and Resilience Building – 23rd Jan 2025

Annual Conference 2025

Please save the provisional date of Tuesday 20th May. We have viewed potential venues and will be launching sponsorship packages very soon.



Goals for 2024

- Work with SUSE Members to take forward the Supported Employment Review recommendations
- Develop a new 3-year strategy in consultation with our members and Board
- Establish links with Local Employability Partnerships to promote the Supported Employment model and our members
- Establish SUSE as a training agency that meets the needs of our members and employers
- Deliver the Glasgow employers' project and EASE App project
- Work with SQA to review the PDA in Supported Employment and partner with the Open University to create new learning opportunities for practitioners
- Grow SUSE membership
- Source funding to take forward our ambition to deliver a Centre of Excellence for Scotland's employers, building on the work of the PSP
- Create more opportunities for the Experience Network to advise and consult.

Challenges

- Engage with all 32 LEPs
- Secure funding for the roll out of the Quality Standard
- Source funding for the Centre of Excellence
- Create more professional development opportunities for Supported Employment workers
- Ensure the needs of disabled people are met within the No one Left Behind agenda
- Create new opportunities for the record number of people who are economically inactive.

Contact us



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