

**Press release****For immediate use****Business and college celebrate results**

A local business and college has scooped a prestigious national award in recognition of their partnership working which has helped the company develop and grow.

Jobcentre Plus at Falkirk along with Forth Valley College won the Impact – Public Sector category at the 'Business to College Awards' held on Wednesday night (24 March) at Dynamic Earth in Edinburgh.

Although the economic downturn has affected all areas of Scotland, Clackmannanshire is rated highest for the level of unemployed young people, with Falkirk in the top ten council areas for both youth unemployment and annual increase in overall unemployment rates. Jobcentre Plus in Forth Valley was determined to challenge this trend by offering unemployed people access to skills training which could lead to jobs.

The organisation contacted Forth Valley College to set-up a one-stop shop for unemployed and redundant members of the local community who wanted to retrain and develop skills.

Their partnership, along with association with other local partners – the local PACE team (Partnership Action for Continuing Employment), Skills Development Scotland, and the Scottish Funding Council – established the Future Plus initiative.

Accepting the award, Etta Wright, Jobcentre Plus, said: ““We are absolutely delighted to have won with Forth Valley College. It has been a real pleasure working with them over the past year and numerous innovative ideas are coming forward. Links between the colleges and Job Centre Plus are making a real difference to unemployed people, getting them back to work and helping them develop new skills.”

Billy Howie, Account Manager for Jobcentre Plus in Forth Valley and Perthshire, said: “By working in partnership with the College we have developed an employability training strategy. We proactively engage with local employers, identifying job opportunities and offering individuals appropriate pre-employment or up-skilling programmes.

“By encouraging local businesses to recruit from our pool of available labour we achieved a 55% employment rate within the first three months of the initiative, which is a fantastic result.

“We are delighted to be working alongside the College and to be a part of this innovative project, it's a great opportunity for local people to build on existing skills or even gain new ones with a view to getting back into work as quickly as possible.”

The 'Business to College Awards', sponsored by the Scottish Funding Council and organised by Scotland's Colleges, is part of the *Scotland's Colleges Mean Business* campaign which aims to raise awareness of the support available to businesses from Scotland's network of 43 further education colleges. This year, colleges have been encouraged to take part in a week-long campaign – dedicated to highlighting the college sector's expertise, experience and facilities which are available to businesses – by staging events on campus, aimed at engaging with the local businesses community.

Now in their second year, both the campaign and awards are this year bringing together Scotland's leading business and skills organisations – the Scottish Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, Alliance Sector Skills Councils, Business Gateway, CBI Scotland, Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Qualifications Authority and Highlands and Islands Enterprise - to support the initiative.

Attending the awards, Keith Brown, Minister for Skills and Lifelong Learning, said: "These awards are a great way of acknowledging the huge contribution colleges make in supporting the business community, helping to secure Scotland's economic recovery and our future prosperity.

"As a Government we have always acknowledged the way colleges have stepped up to the mark and continued to deliver for learners in Scotland. In recent times, just as the demand for college places has risen, so too have colleges themselves risen to the challenge of meeting that demand.

"Too often in previous recessions, the damage to young people has lasted a generation, and sometimes a whole lifetime. We are working hand in hand with Scotland's colleges and businesses to make sure we do not repeat the mistakes of the past."

Ray Harris, Chief Executive Scotland's Colleges, said: "The Business to Colleges Awards is a great opportunity to celebrate the creative and innovative ways in which colleges and businesses are working together. Scotland's colleges provide real value and benefits to the businesses they engage with. With a practical 'can-do' approach to solving the challenges of the businesses that operate in a modern thriving economy, they contribute a great deal towards Scotland's economy.

"The constant investment in the skills of college staff as well as the development of many state of the art training facilities ensure that our colleges continue to meet the demands of all the businesses they engage with."

Joe Mooney, Chair of Scotland's Colleges Knowledge Action Group and Principal, Reid Kerr College, said: "The awards highlight the flexible, local solution colleges are able to offer to businesses. They also underline the amount of work they do across Scotland in supporting businesses – identifying and implementing solutions to tailor-fit the company's requirements – which ultimately lead to a real step change in performance and profit.

"Colleges offer a wide range of expertise and experience and the campaign and awards are designed to encourage companies, no matter what sector or size, to contact their local college and discuss the services on offer."

Scotland's College's Mean Business is part of the wider knowledge transfer and employer engagement agendas for both higher and further education.

Businesses can obtain further information on *Scotland's Colleges Mean Business* by visiting [www.scotlandscollegesmeanbusiness.com](http://www.scotlandscollegesmeanbusiness.com).

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### Notes to editors

**Photo Caption:** Kaye Adams, Adam McInyre, Royal Mail (category sponsors), Elaine McGeorge, Forth Valley College, Henrietta Wright, Jobcentre Plus, Keith Brown MSP

### Business to College Awards 2010

#### Winners

Workforce Development Up to 50 Employees	All1 Smile Orthodontics & Coatbridge College
Workforce Development more than 50 Employees	Servite Housing Association & Dundee College
Sustained Relationship	McGill Electrical & Dundee College
Impact – Public Sector	JobCentre Plus & Forth Valley College
Impact – Private Sector	Print Matters & Dundee College
Business Start Up	Discovery Packaging & Design & Dundee College
Innovation	Dawn Homes & South Lanarkshire College
College of the Year	Dundee College

#### Highly Commended

Workforce Development Up to 50 Employees	Gary Hoffman & Clydebank College
Workforce Development more than 50 Employees	ChesapeakeBranded Packaging & Motherwell College
Sustained Relationship	Dumfries & Galloway Housing Partnership & Dumfries & Galloway College
Impact – Public Sector	Ministry of Defence & Carnegie College
Impact – Private Sector	Burntisland Fabrications & Carnegie College
Business Start Up	The Outpost & Perth College
Innovation	OPITO & Forth Valley College

#### Commended

Workforce Development Up to 50 Employees	Orchardhead Care Home & Carnegie College
Workforce Development more than 50 Employees	IQA Utilities & Reid Kerr College

Sustained Relationship

Impact – Public Sector  
Impact – Private Sector  
Business Start Up  
Innovation

Scottish Water & Cardonald  
College  
NHS Tayside & Dundee College  
Mechanex UK & Central College  
Studio 19 & Adam Smith College  
Northlink Ferries & Orkney  
College

**The Scotland's Colleges Mean Business** marketing campaign was first launched in March 2009. It aims to make business more aware of the support services that exist from colleges which can help achieve a step change in performance and profit.

[www.scotlandscollegesmeanbusiness.com](http://www.scotlandscollegesmeanbusiness.com)

Independent research published in November 2007 showed that as a network, Scotland's colleges are in regular contact with more than 10,000 businesses and are providing support services worth almost £40million.

**The Scottish Funding Council** is responsible for allocating £1.7 billion of public funds each year to colleges and universities in support of Scottish Government priorities. The Council's funding contributes towards the costs of learning and teaching, skills development, research, innovation and other costs such as staff, buildings and equipment in Scotland's 20 universities and higher education institutions (HEIs) and 43 further education (FE) colleges. The £14 million funding SFC provided for knowledge transfer and developing employer engagement was announced in circular [SFC/30/2007](#).