

**Briefing: Scottish Labour Party Debate on Employment  
September 2015**

**Key Points**

Back to work programmes are failing to meet the needs of disadvantaged young people who are furthest from the labour market. 68% of young people return to Jobcentre Plus after two years on the Work Programme having not found sustained work for 6 months<sup>1</sup>.

Young people furthest from the labour market often face insurmountable barriers to training and employment unless they have personalised, holistic support. This support is vital if vulnerable young people are to fulfil their potential.

For these young people there needs to be a move away from the current 'work first' approach where the focus is on moving the young people into work as quickly as possible while the particular barriers to employment faced by some young people often go unaddressed.

The redesign of employability support should be used as an opportunity to develop tailored services rather than simply relying on generic programmes.

There should be a segmentation of employability support based on age and need.

Barnardo's Scotland and Action for Children work with young people who face multiple challenges securing work in order to support them to access training and employment opportunities. Through our employability programmes, our aim is to remove the barriers these young people face when accessing training and work. These barriers can often prove insurmountable without the type of personalised, holistic support that our organisations provide. This support is vital if these young people are to fulfil their potential. This briefing is focussed on those young people who are furthest from the labour market and in need of the most help.

**Young people furthest from the labour market**

In July 2015, 67,000 young people age 16-25 in Scotland were unemployed.<sup>2</sup>

These young people are an important part of the workforce of the future. It is welcome that the Scottish Government has committed to reducing youth unemployment by 40% by 2021. If this is to be achieved we must make sure that the right support is available to **every** young person regardless of their level of need. For the young people that we work with the challenge is to ensure that the support they receive is suited to their needs but that it also meets the needs of employers. It is our experience that personalised support is the most effective way of doing this.

Figures from the Department of Work and Pensions show that 68% of young people return to Jobcentre Plus after two years on the Work Programme having not found sustained work for 6 months.

<sup>1</sup> DWP Work Programme Statistics

<sup>2</sup> Labour Force Survey:ONS

To effectively support young people furthest from the labour market there needs to be a move away from the current 'work first' approach. Currently, the focus is on moving young people into work as quickly as possible, while the particular barriers faced by some young people go unaddressed. This needs to be corrected.

Our organisation's experience leads us to conclude that a capability approach is required, where young people furthest from the labour market are supported in terms of self-confidence, resilience and motivation alongside work to address external factors such as housing, money management, and substance misuse. Young People need to have the opportunity to develop their capability for work and this is what taking a holistic approach would achieve. This quite often requires long term support and needs to be recognised in any future Scottish Employability Service. It is also crucial that the young person's voice is heard when determining the type of support and work they are looking for and that future programmes are not designed on a 'job at any cost' basis.

### **Future employability support**

In Scotland there is an opportunity to ensure that we get support into employment and training right for all young people. As part of the Scotland Bill it is proposed that the current Work Programme is devolved. The Scottish Government are currently consulting on what a distinctly Scottish approach to offering more appropriate and targeted support for those furthest from the labour market could look like. Barnardo's Scotland and Action for Children will be responding to that consultation and will include the views of the young people we work with. It is our view that:

- The current 'pay-by-results' model is often more focused on helping young people 'closest' to the jobs market rather than helping young people who face the biggest barriers when trying to find work.
- The current system can often be inflexible, with the rules that are in place often preventing some young people furthest from the labour market from taking advantage of the training and support on offer.

The redesign of employability support should be used as an opportunity to develop tailored services rather than simply relying on generic programmes, and therefore, a separate tailored approach for disadvantaged and vulnerable young people is needed. There should also be a balanced payments structure that recognises engagement, progression and positive outcomes.

**There should be a segmentation of employability support based on age and need.** This approach would ensure that employability support for young people is tailored to their needs. The Scottish Government's Youth Employment Strategy recognises that the needs of young people are different and an employability support model should reflect this.

This would also be an opportunity to ensure that any conditionality in relation to work does not punish individuals for requiring additional support to get work and to stay in a job. To achieve this it is important that future employability services have protected funding to tackle youth unemployment, particularly for the most disadvantaged and marginalised young people.

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