

**Barnardo's Scotland Briefing:
Scottish Government Debate on Action to Support Youth
Employment**

Barnardo's Scotland welcomes the commitment and action taken by the Scottish Government to tackle youth unemployment in Scotland.

However, we still believe that not enough is being done to support those furthest from the labour market, particularly care leavers, and that the Scottish Government should refocus its efforts in order to prevent many of them from falling into a life time of unemployment and all the poor outcomes that this brings.

Key Facts

- 1.** 87,000 16-24 year olds are unemployed (November 2012) – a 40% increase in 3 years
- 2.** In 2008/09 there were 368,000 16-24 year olds in employment, in 2011/12 the number fell to 323,000 (13% reduction)
- 3.** Only 54% of 16-24 year olds are currently employed in Scotland.
- 4.** 7,000 18-24 year olds have currently been claiming JSA for more than 12 months. In 2009 there were 500 – a 1400% increase in 3 years.
- 5.** Close to 4,000 young people leave care each year.
- 6.** Only 55% of looked after children are in a positive destination 6 months after leaving school.
 - 36% of looked after children six months after leaving school are looking for employment compared to 10% of other school leavers
 - 24% of looked after children are still in further education six months after leaving school compared to 59% of other school leavers.

Barnardo's Scotland welcomed the appointment of a minister for youth employment and the development of a youth employment strategy, which has highlighted the importance of this issue and seen progress in this area.

However, we have a number of concerns and believe that there are additional actions that the Scottish Government must undertake in order to give all young people the opportunity to gain meaningful and sustained employment. We have highlighted these below.

1. Barnardo's Scotland believes that the third sector is not being sufficiently involved in the development of *Opportunities for All* at a local level.

We have noted that in some instances there hasn't always been a full meaningful offer for the young people on the cusp of leaving school, particularly those young people who have disengaged with school and unlikely to make a successful transition from school into a positive destination, such as care leavers. For those aged 16-18 this can lead to a number of years before they come back in contact with employment services.

It is at this point we believe the third sector can play a crucial role with these young people, but this need is not being fully recognised yet or being addressed.

2. Barnardo's Scotland believes there remains a serious gap in long term, nurturing and supportive provision for care leavers. The Scottish Government must give special focus to care leavers.

Only 55% of looked after children are in a positive destination 6 months after leaving school. This is compared to 87% of all other school leavers. Care leavers face many issues that most of their peers do not have to when accessing the labour market. Care leavers generally need to find employment (and income) that can adequately support them into independent living, as they do not have the support, financial or housing, of their parents. Care leavers often need to make the transition to independent living much younger than other young people, many as young as 16 or 17.

Many care leavers also have to overcome numerous internal and external barriers before being able to enter the labour market. These can include little literacy and numeracy skills, a lack of confidence and motivation, or issues such as housing, money management and lack of vocational skills. Addressing these issues requires specialist and often intensive support. This is where projects like Barnardo's Works make a huge difference with the expertise to support these young people to move them to a position where they can enter the labour market.

With a reduction in available low-skilled jobs across Scotland many care leavers do not have the education or qualifications to access work capable of sustaining independent living, particularly at a younger age. Many have left school with low or no education and can not access further education due to lack of school

education, no qualifications, limited financial resources, and personal circumstances. This is reflected in the low number of care leavers in further education.

There needs to be much better linking between services such as Barnardo's Works (See details below) with through-care and aftercare services (either provided by the local authority or the third sector). This would give more care leavers the chance to address employment barriers, get qualifications and access to employment and improve their long term outcomes.

3. The Scottish Government must ensure that the third sector is involved in developing all local Youth Employment Action Plans.

Skills Development Scotland are currently developing Youth Employment Action Plans in partnership with each local authority, Barnardo's Scotland has been involved in the development of these plans in the six local authority areas where Barnardo's Works services are operating, which we believe adds important component to the work. However, the Scottish Government must ensure that similar representation is present in all other areas where Youth Employment Action Plans are being developed.

4. Barnardo's Scotland understands that the fastest route out of poverty is not just employment, but employment that pays and we support the concept of a 'living wage'.

However, a 'living wage' cannot just be backed or delivered by those who believe it is the right thing to do. There needs to be leadership from the Scottish Government and local authorities not only through the employment they offer within their own workplace, but through the contracts they enter into. Government and local authority procurement must ensure that all staff employed to deliver a service on their behalf must be paid at a living wage.

Barnardo's Works

What we do with our Barnardo's Works programme is simple. We get the most disadvantaged young people and young adults into jobs. It is a carefully structured programme based on many years of experience. As it says here, we focus on industry relevant, in-demand skills and line up real jobs with real prospects.

We work out of six areas across Scotland from service bases in Renfrewshire, Dundee, Highland, Edinburgh, Glasgow and the Cairngorms National Park. We support young people in both urban and rural employment.

To do this it is vital that we form strong partnerships with employers. This is a list of just some of them from the very large like Scottish & Southern Energy and Scottish Water to local shops and small businesses. We have partnered with a number of public sector employers, the NHS in particular, but the vast majority of our placements are with the private sector. Our partnership working with Scottish & Southern Energy has been nominated for a number of awards and we won the top prize at the Scottish Social Services Council Care Accolades.

What we demand from all our business partners is real commitment to the programme and support for each young person with an on-site mentor. But probably the most important demand is that each employer identifies real jobs that need doing.

Barnardo's Works takes a capabilities approach, which focuses on helping young people overcome internal barriers such as literacy/numeracy, confidence and motivation while also supporting them to overcome external barriers such as housing, money management, and lack of vocational skills etc.

Last year we supported 284 young people of whom 202 found employment – that's a 71% success rate despite the economic challenges for the most disadvantaged young people who are furthest away from the labour market. When we followed up 6 months later 65% of the young people were still in their jobs. Those who weren't were picked back up by Barnardo's Works and assisted with other employment opportunities.

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