

Barnardo's Scotland Response to Equal Opportunities Committee Inquiry into Women and Work

Barnardo's Scotland operates six employment services across Scotland, Barnardo's Works supporting young men and women into sustainable employment.

From our experience in our employment services we have encountered a number of issues specific to young women and entering work.

Supporting Young Women into Work

We have found issues around young women engaging with our employment services. Young women face issues such as peer pressure not to take on employment. For many young women from deprived backgrounds there is a general assumption that for them a positive destination on leaving school is to have a baby.

Those that do participate in our employment services often lack confidence, particularly in group settings, which can affect their chances of moving from the programme into employment.

It is crucial that more be done to challenge stereotypes and assumptions as well as provide more intensive and specific support to young women to give them confidence and skills and to help introduce them into employment.

Barnardo's Works in the Highlands currently delivers a programme aimed at young mothers-to-be and young lone parents to introduce them to the world of work (Bump programme) and to help them in to work (Baby Steps). This is supported by the Equalities Funded programme. ***(Tommy – do we have any success rates for this programme?)***

Adequate Childcare

For many parents, particularly women, access to affordable childcare remains a significant barrier to work. Barnardo's Scotland welcomes the Scottish Government's commitment to increase childcare to 600 hours for all 3 and four year olds. However, there remains far too little support available for those parents, particularly lone parents, with children under the age of 3.

Without accessible and affordable childcare the choice to work for many young women is simply not one they can make.

There is also a considerable concern that as local councils face further budget cuts this may impact on childcare services and facilities across Scotland.

The Impact of Welfare Reform

Many lone parents are women who will be considerably affected by the impact of welfare reform. The Universal Credit (UC) tapering model looks to provide more financial support for a lone parent in work, however, the UC credit system encourages more people to take part-time jobs with short hours, the incentive to work full-time only increases marginally for some. This means that for many parents the cost of entering work (childcare costs, loss of benefits) will outweigh any income.

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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