

Barnardo's Scotland Briefing– *Opportunities for All*

Barnardo's Scotland welcomes the Government's *Opportunities for All* initiative. Too many young people aged between 16 and 24 are not in work, training or employment. Recent unemployment figures have seen an increase in those aged between 16 and 24 claiming unemployment benefit. Scotland is at risk of losing another generation to lifelong unemployment and the consequences that come with that.

There is a particular issue in Scotland regarding the employment outcomes of those young people leaving care. Over two thirds of the nearly 4,000 of them are not recorded as entering into employment, training or education when they leave care.

Care leavers, and other young people who are a long way from the labour market because of issues like substance misuse, homeless or experience of the criminal justice system need specific and targeted support and training. Without this they are likely to be permanently excluded from the labour market. Current Government initiatives do not focus enough on these hard to reach people.

For the Scottish Government to meet its target of ending youth unemployment it needs to focus support on young people who are furthest from employment.

We would therefore like to see the Government commit to:

- identifying those hidden young people between 16-19 who have not sustained employment, education or training on leaving school and have not presented at Jobcentre Plus.
- a guaranteed maximum waiting time for young people to go into an *Opportunity for All* programme
- there should be a focus on providing training and support to those furthest from the labour market, particularly those leaving care, and targeting areas of high deprivation and rural communities.
- all training must lead towards individuals achieving a work-based or vocational qualification.
- all training or learning programmes should include comprehensive soft skills to support young people make the transition into adulthood and employment e.g. housing, benefits, health advice and coping skills.
- new and extended training and learning programmes developed by the Scottish Government must include clear pathways to work programmes and be integrated in order to be effective.
- outcomes from all programmes, including 16+ Learning Choices and others should be clearly monitored and reported back to Parliament annually.

How Barnardo's works with young people who are distant from the labour market

Barnardo's Scotland currently provides six Barnardo's Works projects across Scotland, which work with those aged over 16 to 24. Barnardo's Scotland provides employment services to support those young people furthest from the labour market, with specialised training and work placements. This has proved to be a highly successful programme that has made a real difference with many participants securing employment for the first time.

Last year Barnardo's Works supported 284 young people and of those 202 went on to find employment, around 65% of these remained in employment at 26 week stage. Those who dropped out of employment before then were picked back up by Barnardo's Works with a focus on helping them back in to work.

At Barnardo's we know what works and have established an expert understanding in supporting young people from the most disadvantaged communities into work and a track record in keeping them there.

Current Schemes and Programmes

Barnardo's Scotland values the 16+ Learning Choices approach and the work undertaken by the Scottish Government, Local Authorities and schools to offer of a place in post-16 learning for every eligible young person who wants it. However, there are those who do not take up these opportunities, do not complete them or do not have a positive destination on completion of their placement. The Government's proposed *Opportunities for All initiative* must target these individuals, and aim to intervene before they present at Jobcentre Plus at 18.

In Scotland there is a range of employability and work programmes that sit along side the UK-wide Work Programme provided by DWP. These are either Scottish Government or EU funded/supported work programmes. These work programmes often focus on different priorities and different qualifying criteria and categorisations. This frequently causes considerable confusion not only to job seekers, but also to service-providers. Barnardo's recognises that there is a need for locally appropriate solutions, but they should be consistent and integrated.

There also a number of concerns regards the sharing of information with various agencies and bodies working across learning, training and employment. Government must work to facilitate the effective sharing of information to ensure that young people are placed on the right programme and can move between programmes in an integrated way.

The right learning and training

Barnardo's Scotland has worked with a number of 16 to 19 year olds that have had learning and training that either doesn't resonate with them or engage them in feeling that it will lead to work in the future. There needs to be a focus on learning/training that specifically leads to a job for 16 to 19 year olds.

A key part of our help for young people is we ensure we can provide them an unwaged job placement in a sector and area that they are interested in working long term. As part of this we identify any formal training needs for the young person to support them in this placement. We are clear that these formal training needs must link to helping the young person achieve their job goal, as a result of that, in the last year Barnardo's Works has helped young people achieve around 260 accredited qualifications, these included: Construction Skills Certification, Manual Handling, PASMA scaffolding, Food Hygiene Certificates, First Aid and Forklift Licence.

By helping young people achieve these qualifications/certificates we are improving their chances of sustaining employment in the long term.

New and existing learning and training programmes must work towards individuals achieving a work-based or formal qualification.

However, despite the work we put in to securing formal qualifications, we recognise that it is more than just a lack of qualifications that prevent the young people we work with from securing and sustaining employment. Issues in their home life or just making the transition into adulthood can have a significant impact on the ability of a young person to remain in work. Housing issues, drug and alcohol, domestic abuse, health and hygiene, peer and family pressure, are just some of the barriers that can stop young people from gaining and continuing in a job. Barnardo's Works supports young people in every aspect of finding and sustaining employment. This is what makes Barnardo's Works different from many other employability organizations, see J's story below.

Any commitment to supporting young people into work must include comprehensive support beyond work and skills-based training. This approach has been recognised in the Scottish Government's Child Poverty Strategy under section 2.2.2 where it calls for an assets-based approach to supporting people out of poverty.

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Barnardo's Works Case Studies

J's story

When J first started with us he was quite down and de-motivated as he had not worked for a while and had serious personal problems to deal with. He found it hard to get up in the morning and had responsibilities at home which made it hard for him to sustain a placement or a job.

J had several placements before becoming settled in a general labouring job with a construction company. Since the recent death of his father J has matured and become determined to work and provide for his family. He is committed to his job on site and feedback from his supervisors and colleagues state he has an excellent attitude to work and gets on well with everyone. J has also shown he is keen to develop himself and takes any training opportunity offered to him even choosing to carry on with training the day after the death of his dad. In October 2010 J received the Runner Up Prize in The Youthbuild UK Awards ceremony held in House of Commons Westminster.

J says, 'I love getting up in the morning and crossing the Clyde to make the journey to work. It feels good to be up early with everyone else who is going to work. I like the guys I work with and feeling part of the team and I like the banter and the laugh we have every day. I like coming home from work and seeing my Mum's face when I bring my wages home on a Friday. I also like seeing something being built from scratch and knowing that I helped to build that.'

On the support he received from Barnardo's Works he said: 'They are here to help you and get to know you – they don't just see you as a 'case' if you know what I mean. They congratulate you and it makes you feel good – they want you to achieve and keep going and all that. If the worst and you don't get kept on they'll be there to help you again and stuff. It feels like they enjoy their work.'

Lyndsey's Story

Lindsey and school didn't mix. 'Put it this way, I wasn't a good child in high school,' she remembers. 'I thought I was a bit of a rebel and could talk to the teachers how I liked.' Moving to a new area and school in the second year didn't help. 'I started refusing to go to school because I didn't like it, it wasn't for me. After the first week of the fourth year, I never went back.'

Lindsey needed to find work to support herself. Her careers service contacted Barnardo's Works, a project which enables disadvantaged young people to secure sustainable employment. 'I told Barnardo's I wanted reception work and two days later they took me to meet the staff at the local hotel. I started a

placement at the reception desk and got on really well with everyone. When I was offered the permanent job, it was a big, big opportunity for me and I was really grateful for it.

‘Barnardo’s Works isn’t like most places. They tried their hardest to get me something I felt I wanted to do. If Barnardo’s hadn’t been there, I just don’t know here I’d be now. ‘They supported me financially throughout my placement by paying some of the wages and for my bus pass. Emotionally, they built up my confidence so I felt able to do the job well. ‘Getting this job has made me feel a lot happier in myself because I’ve actually achieved something with my life. The general manager says I’m a wee gem!’

Now Lindsey loves the variety of her job. Her only regret is she wasn’t on shift when The X Factor winner Matt Cardle checked in!