

Factsheet

Date: September 2020

Programme for Government 2020/ 21:

Employment

Inclusion Scotland is a 'Disabled People's Organisation' (DPO) – led by disabled people ourselves. Inclusion Scotland works to achieve positive changes to policy and practice, so that we disabled people are fully included throughout all Scottish society as equal citizens

Background

In employment, as with many areas of everyday life, disabled people went into this pandemic worse off than non-disabled people, but we have a right to expect employers not to discriminate against us and for our Government to deliver support that meets our needs.

The recent Programme for Government 2020 to 2021¹ rightly talks about a 'new national mission to help create new jobs, good jobs and green jobs' in light of the pandemic. This is essential because we know that jobs are being lost and that future employment opportunities are going to be fewer and possibly different. Especially for disabled people.

This factsheet looks at the scale of the problem and its causes. Does the Programme for Government go far enough to redress inequality and to promote equality? What needs to happen?

The Scale of the Problem

- Disabled people have rights to work and employment on an equal basis as non-disabled people, to have the equal opportunities to choose the work we do, to work in inclusive and accessible environments and not to be discriminated against².
- The Employment Gap between disabled and non-disabled people of working age is higher in Scotland than elsewhere in the UK.
- The average employment rate of working age disabled people in Scotland was 47% in 2008/9 whilst the employment rate of non-disabled people was 80%, an employment gap of 33%³.
- By 2018 the employment rate of non-disabled people in Scotland had risen to 81% whilst the employment rate of disabled people was 45% - that is the employment gap had increased to 36%. In contrast the employment rate of disabled people in England had increased from 47% in 2008 to 53% by 2018 and the employment gap had narrowed to 29%.

Covid-19 and employment

- The economic impact of Covid-19 is likely to be disproportionately high on disabled people in terms of redundancy and reduced hours.
- The Institute of Fiscal Studies found that one third of employees in the bottom 10% of earners work in shut down sectors, compared to 5% in the top 10%⁴.
- A survey of 6,000 people in England and Wales by Citizens Advice found that disabled people were at twice the risk of redundancy as

non-disabled employees. One in four disabled people surveyed were facing redundancy⁵. The situation is unlikely to be better in Scotland.

- Social Metrics Commission commissioned research, carried out by YouGov, of 80,000 participants also shows that disabled workers are at substantially higher risk of being made redundant or having their hours reduced due to the economic impact of the pandemic⁶.

Youth employment

- Despite having achieved one of the lowest youth unemployment rates in Europe (9%, 2019), young disabled people do not benefit. Six months after leaving school young disabled people are twice as likely to be Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) than their non-disabled peers⁷. By age 19 young Scots disabled people are three times as likely to be NEET⁸.
- The Resolution Foundation⁹ have predicted a rise in youth unemployment of around 600,000 across the UK. In 2019 Scottish “youth” (16-24 year old) unemployment represented around 6% of the UK total – this would suggest an increase in youth unemployment in Scotland of over 37,000.
- Being unable to secure work in the early years after leaving school can have a permanent impact on later employment prospects and earnings potential. This is because employers are unlikely to recruit someone with a CV showing several years’ unemployment and little or no work experience.
- This inability to secure work and the resultant poverty of living on benefits also has a scarring impact on young disabled people’s

confidence, mental and physical health resulting in poor health and premature mortality and subsequent high public expenditure on social care, health, etc.

The Devolved Employability Programme

- Before the devolution of Employability support funding the DWP's UK-wide Work Programme was contracted out to private sector providers including Ingeus, Working Links, Maximus, Serco, A4E and G4S. No Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) were given contracts.
- Scotland's devolved Employability service is Fair Start Scotland. It is delivered by a mix of private, public and third sector providers including the Wise Group (Third Sector), People Plus Ltd (Private), Start Scotland Ltd (Private & Third Sector Partnership) and Falkirk Council (Public Sector). The majority of contracts were awarded to the private sector. No DPOs were awarded contracts.
- Before the devolution of Employability funding to Scotland just 5% of long-term disabled people in the ESA WRAG group (Employment Support Allowance, Work Related Activity Group) on the Work Programme obtained employment that lasted 13 weeks or more¹⁰.
- In terms of outcomes for Scots disabled people it appears that just under 5% of all those referred to Fair Start Scotland were disabled people who were still retained in employment 3 months after starting work.¹¹
- As can be seen the performance of the devolved Employability, Fair Start Scotland service was barely better than the Work

Programme. This could be because of a continued reliance on mainly private sector providers who have a record of failing to move disabled people into work.

- In contrast employability schemes run by Disabled People's Organisations such as the internship programmes run by Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living and Inclusion Scotland have a much higher success rate in placing disabled people in employment and supporting them in sustaining it.
- DPO provided employability support not only works with disabled people but with employers. Work is carried out to identify and address any barriers to disabled people's recruitment in the advertising of posts, in the interview process, when they start employment and throughout the placement. By anticipating physical and informational barriers and supporting employers to address them ingrained attitudinal barriers held by employers can also be overcome.
- However, when DPOs have applied to be partners in larger employability contracts they are often caught in a Catch 22 situation. On failing to secure a contract they are informed that their own employability programmes are small, and they have no experience of delivering larger scale schemes - but how are they to obtain such experience unless they are awarded a larger contract?

What needs to happen?

Despite human rights and the needs of people with protected characteristics being front and centre in the overarching aims of this

Programme for Government, there was little detail about what and how new or extended initiatives will benefit disabled people.

- The many employability programmes, both mainstream and those designed for disabled people specifically, should be designed and operated in partnership with disabled people and their organisations.
- The **Scottish Government Programme for Government** announced £100 million of additional funding for employability work to assist people to move into work or to retrain. The package of support will see at least £50m of that funding set aside to help young people get into work.
 - Young disabled people need to be treated as a priority group for access to the Jobs Guarantee Scheme and other employability support or they could suffer life-long scarring.
 - The Job Guarantee Scheme must be fully and equally inclusive of young disabled people and a proportion of the budget should be set aside to support full accessibility.
 - DPOs should be involved in ensuring that this happens and be funded to contribute to this.
- The Scottish Government **Programme for Government** announced that the Fair Start Scotland scheme has been extended for a further 2 years. Inclusion Scotland believes that if Fair Start Scotland is to improve on its current poor success rate with disabled job-seekers change is needed.

- Both the leaders of the programme and the individual providers need to work in partnership with DPOs who could provide insights into their experience and practice in supporting successful work experience placements.
- Realistic targets should be set for providers for supporting disabled people in chosen and sustained employment, with full transparency and accountability for achieving those targets.
- A portion of the £50 million in additional funding for Fair Start Scotland should be set aside for the involvement of DPOs in providing Employability support to disabled people.
- The **Programme for Government** announced help for those at risk of redundancy due to Covid-19, 'fair flex' trained advisors, support for businesses, help for working from home and plans to work with others to help align the employability. These are all useful steps to take however the approach to them has to be the right approach and disabled people and our DPOs should be fully part of the decision making, planning, design and delivery of these programmes and changes if disabled people are to benefit equally from them.

For more information, or to discuss the evidence and recommendations in this Factsheet, please contact Heather Fiskien, Head of Policy and Research: email heather@inclusionscotland.org or leave a message on 0131370 6700.

Endnotes

¹ The Scottish Government's 2020-2021 Programme for Government:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/protecting-scotland-renewing-scotland-governments-programme-scotland-2020-2021/>

² <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-27-work-and-employment.html>

³ "Employment Among Disabled People", JRF, 2020

<https://www.jrf.org.uk/data/employment-among-disabled-people> - based on Labour Force Survey averages.

⁴ "Sector shutdowns during the coronavirus crisis: which workers are most exposed?", IFS, 6 April 2020

<https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14791>

⁵ "Parents, carers and disabled at twice the risk of redundancy", Citizens Advice, August 2020, <https://www.yourmoney.com/household-bills/parents-carers-and-disabled-twice-as-likely-to-face-redundancy/>

⁶ "Poverty and Covid-19", Social Metrics Commission, August 2020

<https://socialmetricscommission.org.uk/poverty-and-covid-2/> .

⁷ "Consequences, risk factors, and geography of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET): Scottish Longitudinal NEET study", Scottish Government, 2015

⁸ Ibid

⁹ "Class of 2020 ", Resolution Foundation, May 2020

<https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/class-of-2020/>

¹⁰ "Spartacus ESA Mythbuster", Centre for Welfare Reform, July 2015 - Figures obtained from an analysis of DWP statistics of the percentage of attachments to the Work Programme that achieve a Job Outcome (i.e. 13 weeks of sustained employment) from June 2011 to March 2015.

¹¹ Figures based on statistics reported in “Scotland’s Devolved Employment Services: Statistical Summary”, Scottish Government, August 2020 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-devolved-employment-services-statistical-summary-7/>