

RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM

Please Note this form **must** be returned with your response to ensure that we handle your response appropriately

Views and comments can be made to EmployabilityinScotland@scotland.gsi.gov.uk by 9th October 2015.

1. Name/Organisation

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3. Permissions - I am responding as...

Individual / Group/Organisation

Please tick as appropriate

(a) Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government web site)?

Please tick as appropriate

Yes No

(c) The name and address of your organisation **will be** made available to the public (in the Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government web site).

(b) Where confidentiality is not requested, we will make your responses available to the public on the following basis

Please tick ONE of the following boxes

Are you content for your **response** to be made available?

Please tick as appropriate

Yes **No**

Yes, make my response, name and address all available

or

Yes, make my response available, but not my name and address

or

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(d) We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Please tick as appropriate

Yes

No



About YouthLink Scotland

YouthLink Scotland is the national agency for youth work. We are a membership organisation, representing over 100 regional and national youth organisations from both the voluntary and statutory sectors. We champion the role and value of youth work and represent the interests and aspirations of our sector.

Scotland's youth work sector is as rich and diverse as the nation itself. Our sector has a workforce in excess of 75,000 – including over 70,000 adult volunteers. We reach in excess of 380,000 young people in youth work opportunities each week. Youth Work has three essential and definitive features:

- Young people choose to participate
- Youth work must build from where young people are
- Youth work recognises the young person and the youth worker as partners in a learning process

The activity, venue, and approaches utilised to deliver this are varied – and include youth clubs, youth projects, specialist or targeted provision, social activism, outdoor learning, awards programmes, uniformed organisations, and democratic participation.

YouthLink Scotland champions the role and value of youth work, challenging government at national and local levels to invest in the development of the sector for the benefit of our young people. Our vision is of a nation which values its young people and their contribution to society, where young people are supported to achieve their potential.

Activity Agreements and YouthLink Scotland

Activity Agreements provide support, post-school, to young people (16-19) who have been identified prior to leaving school, or who are already not in education, employment or training and whose learning and skills needs have been assessed as requiring first step engagement support and tailored learning in order to make a successful transition toward and into further learning or training and ultimately employment. Integral to the Scottish Government's Opportunities for All Commitment they provide a key intervention for those young people furthest from the labour market and for whom this is the most appropriate offer of further learning or training. The Scottish Government fund YouthLink Scotland to host the National Development Manager for Activity Agreements. This has allowed those involved in working with the most disadvantaged to develop a broader understanding on how the Activity Agreement approach to learning, post school can have an impact on young people's progression towards the labour market.

Fairer Scotland – Discussion – Our Approach

As the national agency for youth work, and in our role as an intermediary we have endeavoured to respond to this response in the best interests of the youth work sector. YouthLink Scotland hosted two discussion events for our members to explore the content of the Employability Discussion Paper. One of these events engaged directly with youth employability practitioners, who are currently working with young people who are furthest from the labour market. The response below is informed by the views and experiences of the members who contributed, however the views contained within this response may not be held by each of our individual members.

The response we make is exclusively focused on the Employment Support needs of young people, as this is our primary client group.

CONSULTATION PAPER QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1

What types of employment support services work best in Scotland, reflecting the very different needs of individuals who are unemployed?

Comment

Employment Support Services (ESS) should be as diverse and personalised as the individuals whose needs they seek to address. From our experiences, approaches which work best are those which have the following characteristics:

- Person-centred – which promote human dignity and are free from stigma
- Address the needs of the whole person – not just their employment needs
- Address basic skills – pre-employability; including literacy and numeracy
- Multi-agency and Multi-disciplinary – Partnership
- Account for, and address structural inequalities
- Are competency based
- Provide intensive support by establishing trusted professional relationships
- Value the person – with financial support

The Activity Agreement is an existing programme which we believe illustrates and exemplifies what works for young people, particularly those who are furthest from the labour market or may be regarded as harder to reach.

“An Activity Agreement is an agreement between a young person and an advisor that the young person will take part in a programme of tailored learning and activity which helps them to become ready for formal learning or employment.” The key principles of the model are:

- Early identification of need
- Strengths based assessment
- Defined outcomes and progression
- Tailored/Flexible programme of learning
- Consistent 1:1 support
- Access to financial support
- Strong partnerships

QUESTION 2

How best can we ensure the needs of different businesses and sectors in Scotland, are aligned with employment programme outcomes?

Comment

QUESTION 3

What are the strengths and weaknesses of existing employment support programmes and delivery mechanisms in Scotland?

Comment

Work Programme

Our members typically had second hand experience or knowledge of the Work Programme – typically informed from the views and experiences of young people who were also engaging in youth work activities. Those who did have views on the Work Programme said that it was stigmatising, and it did not stimulate the young people who were involved. The Work Programme lacked ambition, personalisation or choice. The Work Programme does not work for those who are furthest from employment and who have multi-barriers to gaining meaningful employment. It was also said that the Work Programme did little to address gaps and needs for basic literacy and numeracy support. An example was given where young people who were on the Work Programme became ineligible for other community based employability opportunities therefore the structurally restricts the progression of the individual.

Associated with the Work Programme we heard concerns about the culture and structure of the Job Centre Plus. Like the Work Programme the JCP has stigma attached. Young people seeking employment tell youth workers that the JCP is punitive, unsupportive, and for some it appears to be ‘more hassle than it’s worth’. This is particularly the experience of young jobseekers living in rural areas where the availability and cost of public transport can be a burden. An example is illustrated within the Citizens Advice Scotland – Remotely Excluded Report¹:

“A West of Scotland CAB reports of a client who works less than 16 hours a week and earns £60. The client is eligible for £13.10 a week job seekers allowance however costs to get from her home to the jobcentre to sign on is £5.40.”

Finally, we heard that young people’s negative experience of the Work Programme has created a barrier to the young person’s willingness to engage with other employment support opportunities.

Community Jobs Scotland (CJS)

CJS creates jobs for unemployed young people in Scotland’s Third Sector. YouthLink

¹ <http://www.cas.org.uk/publications/remotely-excluded>

Scotland has employed young people through this SCVO programme. This is an example of a programme where participation in the Work Programme or Work Choice makes a young person ineligible for CJS. The strength of CJS is the access to in-work support, in-work benefits, and help with managing money and future job searching and careers advice. This model is characterised by the supportive relationship between the employer and the young person. It is a referral based programme ensuring that it can create opportunities for some of Scotland's most marginalised groups of young people – including care leavers, young carers, and ex-offenders.

Activity Agreement

Evidence has shown that Activity Agreements are successfully providing early intervention and wide ranging, sustained support for young people at risk of disengaging from education and for those who have already done so. With a clear focus on preparing young people for employment, education or further training, Activity Agreements seek to address the inequalities different groups of young people experience, which impact on their choices and chances, as they move from school towards the economic participation. Research undertaken with participants in 2014 showed that over 90% of those consulted felt they had learned new skills, gained confidence and had improved chances of gaining a job or training.

The key principles of the Activity Agreement approach, focusing on early identification, tailored learning and activity and consistent one-to-one support has allowed Activity Agreements to accurately identify supported routes into work, further education or training, with 70% moving on to a positive destination.

Strategic Skills Pipeline

The Strategic Skills Pipeline offers a model and acceptable framework for the strategic planning of employability support both locally and nationally. The youth work sector would see this model as a foundation from which to build a new Employability Support Service around. This would require the Pipeline to have greater flexibility across stages and personalisation to meet the needs of individuals.

Employability Fund Programmes which are currently available within the SSP are too rigid to meet the needs of all individuals. There needs to be space for transitional or intermediate support between Stage 1 and Stage 2. There are also young people who are not yet ready for Stage 1 – and working to offer a pre-activity agreement or earlier intervention of the Activity Agreement would go some way to address this. Ultimately the Pipeline must have the capacity for flexibility of movement between stages as the needs of young people are identified.

The varied structure and support of programmes available at the different stages of the pipeline can be disruptive and unsettling to young people, particularly those with learning disabilities, including those with autistic spectrum disorders.

QUESTION 4

Where are the current examples of good practice in relation to alignment of services to most effectively support a seamless transition into employment?

Comment

Robust transition planning with schools and other partners enables early identification of those young people likely to need support and allows Activity Agreement partners to ensure that the responding range of learning options in the local area offers choice and flexibility.

Early identification allows individual planning and preparation with young people pre-16, thereby reducing the number of school leavers lost at the point of transition. The commitment to Early Intervention within Developing Scotland's Young Workforce has enabled local authorities providing Activity Agreements to begin work earlier with identified young people.

In East Ayrshire, early-in school identification of need and the opportunity for young people to receive consistent and sustained support post-16 resulted in fewer young people being lost at transition points. Young people are receiving one-to-one support from the Activity Agreement team, building a trusting relationship through which they can co-design a plan to meet their individual needs, ensuring seamless transitions and progression.

QUESTION 5

What are the key improvements you would make to existing employment support services in Scotland to ensure more people secure better work?

Comment

It is the view of the Youth Work sector that investment in to early intervention is the best way to improve outcomes for individuals to secure better work. We would welcome a tailored approach which meets the needs of individuals and equips individuals with the skills for work and wellbeing. These skills are pre-employment skills; they include basic literacy and numeracy and should be achieved during primary and secondary school ages – with additional interventions from youth work, colleges and tailored support before the school leaving age.

- around one-quarter of the Scottish population (26.7%) may face occasional challenges and constrained opportunities due to their literacies difficulties, but will generally cope with their day-to-day lives; and within this quarter of the population, 3.6% (one person in 28) face serious challenges in their literacies practices. (Scottish Survey of Adult Literacies, 2009)

In the experience of our members, the existing work programme is not adequately addressing illiteracy and supporting numeracy. With reduced resources available to local communities and fewer Community Learning and Development provisions in local authorities this means that there are less community based literacy, numeracy, and wellbeing interventions - therefore the support, capacity of communities and social capital is also reduced. We would advocate for investment in community based lifelong learning – through youth work, adult learning and community capacity building as a pillar for the future of employability support in Scotland and furthering the ambitions of Developing Scotland's Young Workforce.

We would welcome interventions and approaches which address the nation's health and wellbeing – tackling health inequalities, both physical and mental wellbeing. It is only when we have a nation of citizens who are healthy, well, skilled, optimistic, resilient and confident will we have made improvements to the employment market and in turn employment support services. Resilience and Agency are significant contributing factors to improved outcomes for employability support services. Definitions of success for employability programmes should be broadened to reflect this (and recognition of the longer-term impacts).

The quality of jobs is crucial, and YouthLink Scotland believes that work should pay – this in itself is a significant contributing factor to young people's employment. The outcome should be Fair Work, and not simply 'any job.' The existing age-discrimination within the minimum wage, makes it difficult for young people to make work pay. The very fact that 16 and 17 year olds in full time work would earn £6,500 less than their 25 year old colleague undertaking the same work is shameful.

Current programmes are funding-driven rather than designed to meet the needs of the individual. Employment support services should take a person-centred approach. This is especially important for those young people furthest from the labour market who need flexibility from support services – in terms of activities, time or type of intervention. Evidence from our members demonstrates the role of the youth work sector in achieving positive and sustained outcomes through flexible, tailored employability interventions. This includes achievements through informal learning including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Youth Achievement Awards etc. This is an opportunity for Scotland to invest in truly person-centred employability support services, with funding linked to the individual – giving each person the means to procure what and they need to meet their needs, from the provider best placed to do it.

We would welcome an Employability Support Service which values volunteers and volunteering and the introduction of Mentoring in support individuals – where adults would volunteer to give capacity and support to individual or groups young people on employability support programmes. We know from youth work and the Activity Agreement approach that young people are motivated by meaningful and trusting relationships – where adults believe in the highest potential of the individual they are working with. Approaches for young people must give due regard to the young person's circumstances and family values – youth employability workers have experience of young people are actively dissuaded from participation in employability programmes by their family due to parental loneliness or because it would economically disadvantage the household income as parents lose access to child benefit.

QUESTION 6

How best can we assess the employment support needs of an individual and then ensure the support they receive is aligned with their requirements?

Comment

There are numerous tools and approaches currently utilised to assess employment support needs – many of these local tools, tailored to specific interventions and approaches. In our

discussion surrounding this question we established two further questions – What needs are being assessed? And Who is doing the assessment?

It is the view of the youth work sector that any needs assessment should be holistic and consider the individual as a whole. This would create space to consider literacy, numeracy, wellbeing and social and economic needs. It would also be able to establish the individual's relationship to others and their community. It would be welcomed that the assessment of needs also considered the assets and contributions that an individual is able to make – starting with their strengths.

The individual who is being assessed must also be equipped with the tools they require to be meaningfully engaged and active within the assessment process. Providing young people with a lifelong single point of collating all their skills, experiences, evidence, awards, relationships and attitudes would go some way to address this. It may also be appropriate that this profile tool be accessible for training providers, employers and support agencies on request. Tools for assessment were valued by our sector to create a space for dialogue, but only when the information in the assessment is owned by the young person. Youth employability organisations told us of the current range of assessment tools they are using, and those which are most effective are strengths-based and take account for a range of factors including finance, health, confidence, aspiration, and networks.

The experience of assessing needs and strengths must begin earlier in life – through school transition planning – from primary to secondary; secondary to positive destination; but, as described above, assessing the holistic needs and strengths of the individual. This experience of identifying strengths and needs would contribute to developing agency and resilience. The GIRFEC methodology and use of the child's plan could become a mechanism for early intervention to ensuring positive outcomes for young people as they transition out of school or training providers and in to the labour market.

QUESTION 7

How best can the employability pipeline framework help providers best assess and deliver services people need?

Comment

As outlined in our response to Question 6, we would support assessment which is owned by the individual – and where opportunities are made for co-design of services.

Some current employment/employability programmes are funding-driven rather than designed to meet the needs of the individual. This is particularly evident where funding is aligned to one stage of the SSP. Experience suggests employment support services should take a person-centred approach. This is especially important for those young people furthest from the labour market who need flexibility from support services – in terms of activities, time or type of intervention. Evidence from our members demonstrates the role of the youth work sector in achieving positive and sustained employment outcomes through flexible, tailored employability interventions. This is an opportunity for Scotland to invest in truly person-centred employability support services, with funding linked to the individual –

giving each person the means to procure what and they need to meet their needs, from the provider best placed to do it.

QUESTION 8

How can early intervention best be integrated into employment support and the design of future programmes?

Comment

YouthLink Scotland whole heartedly supports the principle and approach of early intervention in the design and delivery of future employment support programmes. This would further the ambitions and recommendations of the Developing Scotland's Young Workforce, creating a coherent and consistent approach to employability.

We would welcome a 'back to basics' approach which meets the needs of individuals and equips individuals with the skills for work and wellbeing. These skills are pre-employment skills; they are basic literacy and numeracy and should be achieved during primary and secondary school ages – with additional interventions from youth work, colleges and tailored support before the school leaving age.

The role of parents and families in early intervention must also be recognised. Parents/Carers need to be informed and supportive of the whole myriad of employment support and employability supports and routes that are available to young people. Young people need to be supported to remove barriers – physical and altitudinal – that may prevent them from access employment support. Youth employability workers have experience of engaging with young people who have been actively dissuaded from participation in employability programmes by their family due to parental loneliness or because it would economically disadvantage the household income.

We believe in the contribution of a range of partners in achieving early intervention supports and advocate for the youth work approach within employment support programmes. Youth Work builds from where young people are; recognises the young person as freely and voluntarily participating; and recognises the young person and the youth workers as partners in the learning process.

Youth Workers are making the provision of achievement awards and programmes and offering meaningful opportunities which further young people's skills for employment. Whilst many of these provisions do not exist solely for the purpose of employability the experiences and outcomes that they deliver most certainly contribute to the skills for learning and work. Youth Work is well positioned in to work with those young people who may face multiple barriers to the world of work.

To integrate early intervention into employment support we propose that the full range of learning organisations, and in particular youth work organisations, are adequately resourced and recognised as contributing to the early identification of need and in the delivery of employment skills.

QUESTION 9

What is the optimal duration of employment support, in terms of both moving individuals into work, and then sustaining their employment?

Comment

With the desire for flexible and personalised approaches to employment support, then we would advocate that there is no prescribed optimal duration of employment support. Experience tells us that when employment support stops and starts, or a young person is moved from A to B then this can create a negative impact. Support should be tailored to meet the needs of the individual – and for example may include mentoring, in work support, employer flexibility or adaptability. An effective tracking, monitoring and progression framework could facilitate this approach.

QUESTION 10

What are the benefits and challenges of a national contracting strategy for Scotland's future employment support service(s)?

Comment

We would support the development of a national commissioning framework – establishing values, measures and outcomes; but that contracting and procurement of services was achieved locally and individually. Commissioning framework must be able to fund services in the long term – to enable services and individuals to build trust, relationships, reputations and certainty in to the workforce and the needs of clients.

It is our sectors experience of delivering employability support that when these opportunities are procured locally they are more responsive to need and can be delivered through existing and emerging local mechanisms which is more inclusive of the third sector or other innovating providers. The current Local Employability Partnerships (LEP) are best placed to help inform this.

Local commissioning creates a space in which to understand the specific context and labour market needs; and quality and trusting relationships can be built between providers and between clients and providers. Local commissioning is the most desirable way in which services can be designed to meet local needs and which reflect Scotland's geographic communities and realities.

Local commissioning allows local economies to identify their different needs – it would provide a role for economic development and sharing of labour market intelligence unique to a locality or region. This approach would support local providers to sustain local relationships with local employers.

It is our view that both local and national commissioning frameworks must be co-designed with service users and key stakeholders, and that the monitoring of commissioned service

measure the experience and quality of the support, not just the employability outcome.

There is a national need to support national employers to engage with local people; and equally to support job matching and signposting to national job opportunities for those without any significant barriers to employment.

QUESTION 11

How best can we secure effective regional and local delivery of employment support in future?

Comment

Further to our response to Question 10, we believe that improved sharing of local and national data, intelligence and information between agencies would improve performance and effectiveness of employment support.

The future delivery must ensure that individuals are progressing rather than just being buffered between service providers. There has to be increased trust between service providers and the culture of 'cherry picking' those individuals who are more likely to succeed must end. The current reality is that training providers have varying opinions of the quality of the work or other providers and are selective as to which organisations they refer the young person to, or equally the training providers are selective in who they will take on as they want to achieve outcomes and receive payment incentives. There must be a commitment to ensure that those furthest from the labour market are supported to reach their potential. Service providers should increasingly be open and transparent of what approaches and interventions they are offering to avoid duplication.

QUESTION 12

Do national or more localised employment support programmes work better for different client groups? If so, which ones and why?

Comment

We have informed our response from the perspective of supporting young people within the context of employment support. It is our experience, that young people seek trusting reliable relationships, which can be accessed locally and without stigma. For this reason local support is preferable.

We would ask that in the future modelling of employment support that the intersectionality of people's identities is accounted for.

QUESTION 13

Who should be the contracting authority for devolved employment support provision?

Comment

It is our strongly held view that there is no need to create a new body for the purpose of contracting. We believe that this can be done within existing national public bodies.

We would welcome a strategic review of the function and purpose of Skills Development Scotland, to establish the viability and capacity of this agency to become the commissioning authority. Consideration should also be given to the current LEP structure and its role regarding employability programmes in different local authority areas.

Employment support is not a statutory requirement within local authorities, but from the views of our members and experiences of young people local arrangement either single or multi-agency are best placed to respond to need. However small local authorities may be concerned that they lack the infrastructure to deliver this, unless placed on statutory footing with funds to deliver and this increases the risk is of inconsistency and inequality of outcome.

QUESTION 14

Which client groups would benefit most from future employment support in Scotland and why?

Comment

QUESTION 15

What should be our ambitions for these client groups?

Comment

QUESTION 16

How can we maximise the effectiveness of devolved employment support in Scotland, in relation to the broader range of resources and initiatives available in Scotland?

Comment

QUESTION 17

What are the advantages, or disadvantages, of payment by results within employment support? What would form an effective suite of outcomes and over what period for Scotland? What does an effective payment structure look like?

Comment

Experience of our members has informed the view that Payment by Results can have a negative impact on the inclusion of young people who are furthest from the labour market. A culture of 'cherry picking' those individuals who are more likely to succeed, to ensure payment by results, must not be allowed to continue to thrive.

This is an opportunity for Scotland to invest in truly person-centred employability support services, with funding linked to the individual – giving each person the means to procure what and they need to meet their needs, from the provider best placed to do it.

An effective suite of outcomes would include clearly defined terms and measures. Outcomes must include intermediate outcomes which recognise progression and contribution – and may not always be the 'end' outcome of employment. Measures should place value on the individual's increased resilience and agency.

QUESTION 18

What are the advantages, or disadvantages, of payment for progression within employment support? What measures of progression and over what period? What does an effective payment structure, which incentivises progression, look like?

Comment

Payment for Progression would work if employment support reimagines the outcome, and allows for intermediate or alternative outcomes to be achieved. This would account for the needs of the most vulnerable / furthest from the labour market or who face multi barriers to employment. A payment framework must account for factors out with the control of the employment support provider – such as pregnancy, leaving the area, or offending behaviour.

QUESTION 19

What are the key aspects of an effective performance management system, to support the delivery of employment support outcomes in Scotland?

Comment

Effective performance management systems is desirable, but our experience and members tell us that with so many agencies and organisations contributing to this agenda there are multiple barriers to overcome to ensure a system which is reliable, transparent, and works across agencies and providers.

The features of an effective performance management system are:

- that it should have the capacity to record case-notes, not just end outcomes
- have capacity to include service user feedback and quality measures of the service provision

- should flag up and support transitions of individuals between providers

QUESTION 20

Collectively, how best do we encourage active participation and avoid lack of participation on employment support programmes?

Comment

This will only be achieved through collaboration of service providers, agencies, local and national agencies and communities. We cannot expect the client/young person to navigate this complex landscape alone – and the design and experience must be clear, simple and accessible.

Employment Support Programmes should:

- Start with strengths not needs.
- Take away the stigma.
- Value the contribution of the individual in social as well as economic terms.

QUESTION 21

Do you have any other comments/views in relation to future employment support that have not been covered in the questions above?

Comment

Our sector would welcome as part of this opportunity consideration to be given to professionalising the employability work force – to ensure a suite of occupational standards, ethics and values for the provision of employment support.

End of Questionnaire

Thank you for participating