

Falling Through the Cracks

Despite the positive response from Government to the Covid-19 youth unemployment crisis, some young people will fall through the cracks. These young people face complex personal barriers and require personalised, flexible, holistic support which extends beyond employability into many aspects of their lives.

It is now widely accepted that we are facing an unprecedented rise in youth unemployment as a result of Covid-19. This is likely to peak around the end of this year at 21% which is 100,000 young people in Scotland. This crisis will be more severe than the situation that resulted from the last recession and despite initial hopes of a v-shaped recovery it is becoming increasingly likely that the effects will be long term particularly for those that are most disadvantaged.

In Scotland, we had reduced youth unemployment to a sustained low level pre Covid-19. This was achieved through the building of solid infrastructure and high quality services that met young people's needs. As recommended by Sandy Begbie in the recently published Young Person's Guarantee initial report we must consolidate, stabilise and extend existing provision to ensure that we can deliver for young people now, when it is needed. The Scottish Training Federation (STF) has also strongly advocated for continuity and at least a further two years financial commitment to organisations with momentum and track record.

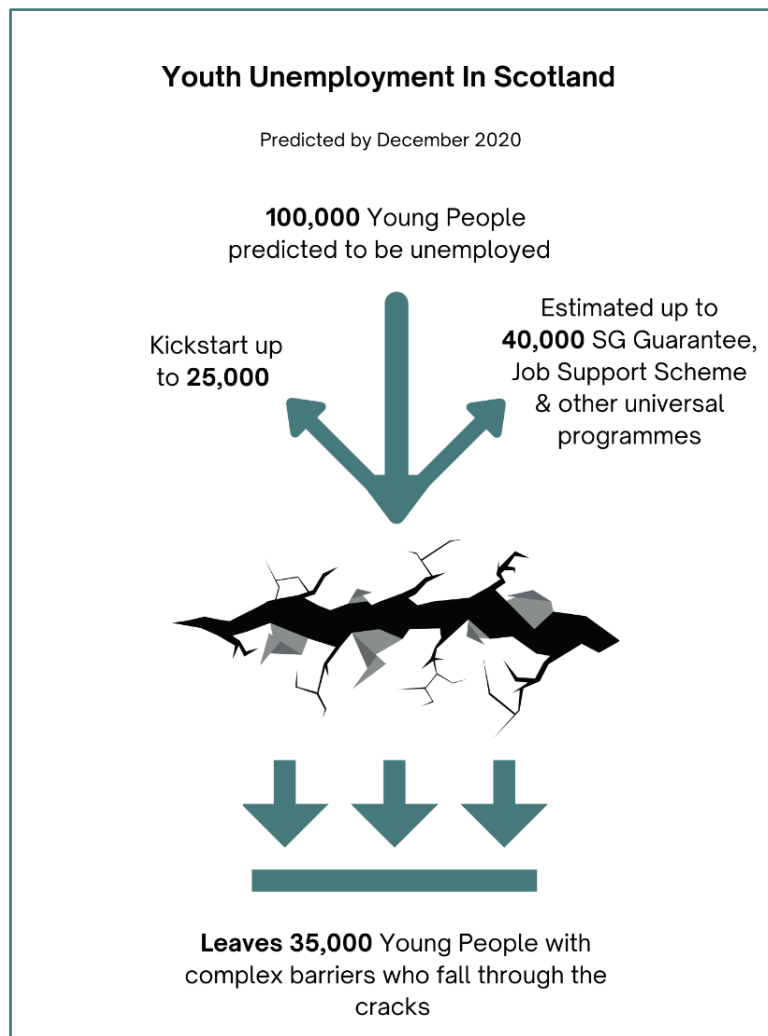
Although the level of challenge that we face cannot be over-stated, in Scotland we have a very solid foundation of employability services that can respond and on which we can build back better.

The Challenge and The Gaps

Based on the solid assumption that youth unemployment will reach 100,000*, it is hoped that Kickstart (under the Young Person's Guarantee) will benefit up to 25,000 individuals mainly aged 18-24 years old in Scotland. This cohort is likely to be the most job ready, who will be able to re-enter employment and succeed. This leaves approximately 75,000** young people in need of support – circa 40,000 of whom were already unemployed pre Covid-19. This cohort were struggling to access and sustain employment even when opportunities existed due to the individual barriers they faced. The Scottish Government's Guarantee will assist young people aged from 16 years old and is likely to benefit a proportion of the 75,000 young people that are job ready.

* IPPR The 100,000 Challenge 2020

** The recently announced Job Support Scheme will go some way to keep young people in employment and may therefore reduce this number.



What is clear is that there is a cohort of young people aged 16-24 which we can reasonably estimate is approximately 35,000 in Scotland that are not job ready and will fall through the gaps in universal provision.

This includes young people living with addictions, caring responsibilities, experience of trauma, poverty, relationship breakdown, bereavement, lack of education, learning disabilities and fragile housing. This cohort will be at an even greater disadvantage now that opportunities are fewer and competition is greater.

Their already difficult, complex circumstances will be further exacerbated by the many and varied additional impacts of the pandemic including:

- The loss of at least six months of face to face intensive support and development resulting in regression, lost motivation and lack of hope.
- The increased competition in the labour market with an additional 60,000 individuals who are job ready competing for fewer opportunities.
- The demise of the industries and types of jobs that this cohort would in the past have been able to access. Hospitality, retail and service industries which are hardest hit, would typically provide the majority of entry level jobs for this group of young people.

These young people are at greatest risk of scarring that can result in a lifetime of poverty and periods of unemployment at great social and economic cost.

Young People Profiles

Alex's Story



Alex (18 years) was homeless and in need of help and support with life-skills, including budgeting and cooking. Alex suffers from ADHD, dyslexia, and hip problems, which are real barriers preventing his participation in training and employment. His school experience was poor, his lifestyle chaotic and he was using alcohol and drugs, and still does, although not so much. Alex disengaged after the loss of his baby. With intensive personalised support, Alex was re-engaged with a trusted third sector organisation and is now developing a more positive view of the future. His initial priority is to secure a more stable home and lifestyle.

Nadia's story



Nadia (17) has been in temporary accommodation since the beginning of the year, when her relationship with her parents broke down and Social Work found a place for her to stay. She suffers from anxiety and depression and has endured significant previous trauma. Nadia felt conflicted on whether she should move back in with parents but ultimately decided she wanted to follow her own path into college and work. A trusted third sector organisation, has worked with her through lockdown, providing a constant in her life helping build her confidence. Nadia has started a professional cookery course, to which she is travelling the 13 miles independently (having been supported to learn to use public transport).

Laura's story



Laura is 17 years old and is still living at home and is a carer for a parent. She is an only child in a single parent household with no extended family nearby. She is isolated and is often unable to attend school due to her caring responsibilities and anxiety which she has suffered with since childhood. Her mum is loving but is very reliant on Laura. Laura has no qualifications and is very isolated. Laura's school made a referral to a specialist third sector support organisation which resulted in access to unclaimed benefits and respite for Laura. Support is being given to Laura to help build her confidence, engage in learning with a view to eventually undertaking qualifications and develop her social skills.

The Response

We must respond quickly and appropriately if we are to avoid the loss of a generation of young people and a decade of success in reducing youth unemployment to record low levels.

The third sector is ideally placed to provide the holistic, flexible very person-centred support that the young people in greatest need require. This support is built on a trusted, non-authoritarian relationship that is consistent and the ability to respond how, where and when required for as long as it takes.

For those that are able, support can be provided to transition to and sustain the universal initiatives that Government has put in place that would otherwise be unattainable. A range of activities that can support progression are needed including qualifications, workplace skills, digital skills, literacy and numeracy support, job placements and supported employment. These stepping stones, alongside development of crucial core skills and support to address their barriers can and will enable their successful transition to Modern Apprenticeships, employment, further education and structured volunteering however the process will not be linear.

Re-skilling is required on a large scale to equip young people for the 'less impacted' industries including e-commerce and the green economy. Entry level jobs in financial services, life sciences and utilities will also be a target. This will require a shift in aspiration and understanding among young people to expand their awareness of the emerging labour market and the opportunities that presents. This must be delivered via cross sectoral partnerships with employers to match the skills that young people require for the jobs of the future.

Inspiring Scotland

A challenge on the scale that we now face requires a collective effort to ensure effective deployment of resource and expertise, with the young person at the heart of our efforts. Inspiring Scotland attracts investment from the private and public sector and invests in portfolios of capable third sector organisations with a clear focus on outcomes. Funding is flexible and long-term and this is augmented with bespoke business support to ensure strong governance, effective evaluation, high accountability and increased sustainability. The focus above all else is to achieve the maximum social impact possible and the best possible outcomes for young people in Scotland.

Our Future Now

Our Future Now was launched in 2019 and succeeds Inspiring Scotland's 14:19 Fund which ran from 2009-2018. Across these Funds we have supported more than 40,000 young people into employment, education and training with over £100m pounds of investment from Scottish Government, Trusts & Foundations, corporate donors and philanthropists.

Our model is scalable and we can respond to increasing demand quickly and effectively. We bring cohesion across what can appear to be a disparate third sector with clear, transparent reporting of collective impact.

The Our Future Now portfolio has not stopped providing support to young people despite lockdown restrictions. Young people were even more reliant on this support given the effects of the pandemic and the organisations quickly pivoted to on-line/remote provision. Qualifications and support were offered digitally and this proved to be a lifeline for young people. When other agencies closed and were unable to provide support, the portfolio increased their activity, innovating and thinking creatively about how to sustain their important, trusted relationship with young people when they needed it most.

To have a conversation about this paper and our work in this area please contact:

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