

Economy and Fair Work Committee
Wednesday 15 May 2024
15th Meeting, 2024 (Session 6)

Disability Employment Gap

Note by the Clerk

Background

1. “Disability employment gap” is the term used to refer to the difference in employment rates between disabled and non-disabled people. Statistics show that disabled people in Scotland have a lower employment rate than non-disabled people.
2. The Committee agreed on [21 February 2024](#) to undertake an inquiry to identify the barriers that limit the ability of disabled people to get and keep a job and consider how these might be addressed.

Previous Work

3. The Committee undertook some initial work on the disability employment gap in 2023. This included visits, [an evidence session with stakeholder organisations](#), and [an evidence session with the then Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work](#).
4. A [letter with the Committee’s initial findings](#), and [the then Cabinet Secretary’s response](#) can be accessed online.
5. The Committee agreed to undertake an inquiry to build on this initial work.

Remit

6. During this inquiry, the Committee will consider—
 - the help available for disabled people to get back into the labour market;
 - the support available for employers for more inclusive recruitment practices and workplaces;
 - specific barriers faced by people with learning disabilities and neurodivergent people; and
 - the employment support systems for disabled people.

Call for Views

7. The Committee previously undertook a call for views. This ran from 20 December 2022 to 16 February 2023 and received [41 responses](#).

Witnesses

8. Today's evidence session will focus on the barriers faced by people with learning disabilities and neurodivergent people when accessing the labour market.
9. The Committee will hear from—
 - Carmel McKeogh, Operations Director, [DFN Project SEARCH](#);
 - Charlie McMillan, Chief Executive, [Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities](#); and
 - Joanna Panese, Practice & Community Development Lead, [Scottish Autism](#);
 - Alan Thornburrow, Chief Executive Officer, [Salvesen Mindroom Centre](#)
10. [DFN Project SEARCH](#) and [Scottish Autism](#) previously responded to the Committee's call for views.
11. DFN Project SEARCH and the Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities have also provided additional written evidence which can be found at **Annexe A**.

**Clerks to the Committee May
2024**

Additional written evidence from DFN Project SEARCH

The following documents are attached—

- Information about DFN Project SEARCH and how it works
- Our latest data set for our programmes in Scotland
- A list of DFN Project SEARCH programmes in Scotland
- A case study of a DFN Project SEARCH intern

At the heart of change

DFN Project SEARCH believes that everyone deserves the right to aspire to the very best future, yet nationally **less than 6% of people with a learning disability** who are known to local authorities go on to secure full-time paid employment.

Our vision is to ensure that everyone with a learning disability or autism can attain high-quality, integrated employment in their local area.

Offering a high aiming one-year transition to work programme in their final year of school or college, our approach is so much more than work experience, it is education and training at its very best!

Students get to use and apply their skills and learning every day, ensuring that they are ready to move seamlessly into the workplace as skilled and effective employees.

Best Practice Education and Training

DFN Project SEARCH is a business-led, one-year transition to employment programme for young people with a learning disability and autism.

70% of our graduating interns secure paid employment with an impressive average of **60% securing full-time roles**, creating life changing opportunities and transforming outcomes for young people with additional learning needs.

We offer an evidence based model and professional resources that deliver results through developing great relationships with high aiming and committed partners.

DFN Project SEARCH students throughout the country are already seeing the benefits of the innovative learning experience and the opportunity to fully immerse themselves in the host business.



Social Value

Evidence shows that being in employment improves health and wellbeing and is central to individual identity, social roles, and social status.

People in work tend to enjoy happier and healthier lives than those who are not in work.

Transitioning people from education straight into competitive employment also saves money for health and social care by creating opportunities for people with a learning disability to become **net contributors** rather than recipients of adult social care and health services.

- Once a **DFN Project SEARCH** partnership is established, it is sustainable year after year and keeps delivering increasing numbers of full-time paid jobs and careers.
- Over time, community expectations are raised along with the belief that people with a learning disability can work in many different skilled jobs.
- The pathway from childhood to adulthood and work becomes smoother for young people and their families.
- A variety of local businesses benefit from the talent pool created, they can access a new, diverse, workforce with skills that match labour needs.
- This opportunity transforms the life chances and improves social mobility of young people with additional needs.
- Communities become more inclusive and people with a learning disability more visible.
- Social justice is achieved for people who have been frequently marginalized from the world of work.

Our unique programme is changing lives for the better, bringing students:

- ✓ Competitive, transferable and marketable job skills
- ✓ Increased independence, confidence, and self-esteem
- ✓ 800 hours of structured support from teacher, job coaches, host business managers and mentors

A Team Of Teams

DFN Project SEARCH is a partnership between a host business, education, and professional adult supported employment. The goal is to provide on-site internship experiences that

allow necessary skill development opportunities for young adults with a learning disability to compete for employment.

Host Business

Provides an on-site base and a variety of internships that teach core skills related to that business or organisation.

School or College

Provides a teacher and student interns from the local area.

Local Authority

Commissions appropriate partners and ensures access to the programme across a community. Individual life planning guidance, care management and individual budgets for job coaching and other support.

Department for Work and Pensions

Provides 'Access to Work' funding for job coaching and other follow on support. Provides advice to the young person and their family about better off in work calculations.

Supported Employment Agency

Provides professional job coaching and job development for interns at the host business.



Benefits to Local Authorities

- Evidence value for money and track positive employment destinations.
- Invest to save, research shows that £3.96 is created for every pound of investment when 60% of **DFN Project SEARCH** interns move into paid work of more than 16 hours per week.*

For every pound

£3.96

is created for society

- Continue to drive standards. 70% of **DFN Project SEARCH** interns move into paid work with the opportunity to increase those hours over time and develop their independence skills.

70%

DFN Project SEARCH
interns move into
paid work

- Support transition from education to employment at a time that is appropriate for individual learners.

- On average 19% of **DFN Project SEARCH** interns are aged 18, 21% are aged 19, and 17% are aged 20 when they join and will see their plans cease on completion of the programme year.
- Taking a range of college courses until aged 24 is not necessary as interns as young as 16 or 17 years old have the same (or slightly better) chances of finding employment.

That means they
find a career early
and have much
better chance of
an independent
and fulfilled life!



Benefits to the Host Business

- Organisations gain access to a new, diverse, talent stream with skills that match labour needs.
- Departments improve communication and teamwork.
- Businesses experience increased local, regional, national and international recognition through marketing of this unique programme.
- Organisations dramatically improve performance and retention in some high turnover or hard-to-fill posts.



Benefits to Education

- Full access to a best practice International Employability Curriculum.
- Full access to the world's largest vocational profiling tool for people with SEND which allows you to track and measure progress against learner skill acquisition.
- Robust and clearly evidenced data demonstrating in year Intent, Implementation and Impact relating to learner progress and aspirational destinations.
- A seamless approach to transition that develops preparation for adulthood skills.

To find out more or to partner with DFN Project SEARCH, please get in touch.

admin@dfnprojectsearch.org

 dfnprojectsearch.org

 [@dfnsearch](https://twitter.com/dfnsearch)

“ We are important, we can do things, we can talk to employers what we are capable of... We shouldn't call it disability but ability. We might think differently but we can share wonderful ideas. ”

Mohammed Hamza, A graduate, now an apprentice mechanic and a member of the Youth Advisory Group

DFN Project SEARCH

Scotland

Data Class of 2021-22



People with a Learning Disability and Autism in the UK

Work is Good For You
Young and old: prevention matters

Life Expectancy for people with Learning Disabilities

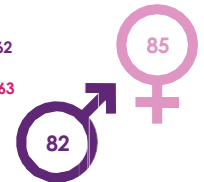
Median Age of Death General Population

Public Health England

Young and old: prevention matters

Best start in life	Adulthood	Later life
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pregnancy services Childhood immunisations School environment Secure home Healthy eating and physical activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A safe and secure job Mental wellbeing Exercising Healthy diet Not smoking Drinking moderately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safe and accessible home environment Keeping physically active Eating a healthy diet Maintaining social connections

Median age of death for different levels of impairment



SOURCE: UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL NORAHBY CENTRE FOR DISABILITY STUDIES, 2019



The DFN Project SEARCH model



DFN Project SEARCH has a number of model fidelity components that define the programme, its values and goals. These critical components include:

1. The outcome of the programme is integrated, competitive employment that is:
 - In an integrated setting
 - year-round work (not seasonal employment)
 - 16 hours/week or more
 - Paid the prevailing wage
2. The focus of the programme is on serving young adults with learning disabilities and autism who can benefit from personalised support in an intensive year of career development and internship experience.
3. The programme is a collaborative partnership using support and resources from: Education, Local Authorities, Adult Supported Employment Agencies, Families and Host Businesses.
4. The programme is business focused.
5. The programme is committed to continuous improvement.
6. The programme leads to acquisition of competitive skills.



DFN Project SEARCH Employment Outcomes class of 2021/22 (Overall figures)



368 (68%) interns secured paid employment



327 (61%) interns found full-time, non-seasonal jobs paid at prevailing wage and in an integrated workplace.



Average hourly wage was **£9.78**



Interns work on average **27 hours** per week.



DFN Project SEARCH Employment Outcomes class of 2021/22 (Scotland)



89 (72%) interns secured paid employment



77 (63%) interns found full-time, non-seasonal jobs paid at prevailing wage and in an integrated workplace.

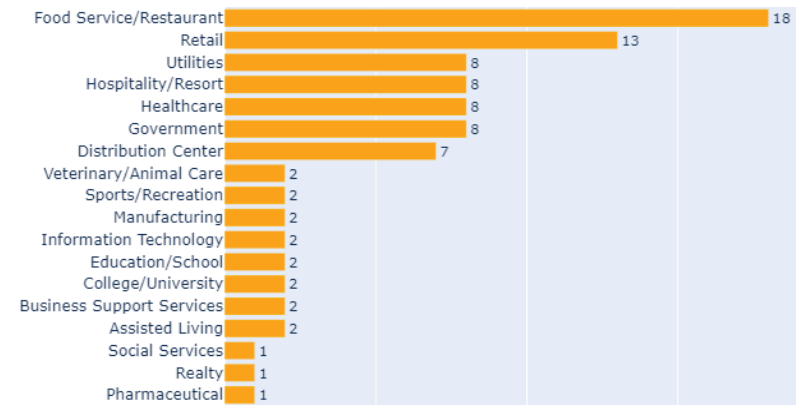


Average hourly wage was £9.66

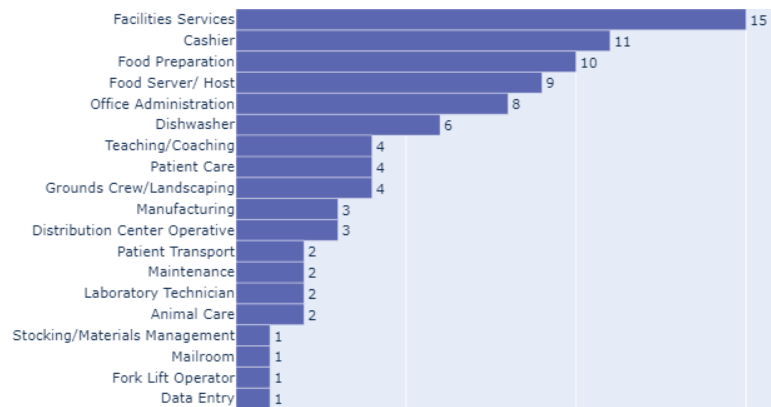


Interns work on average 26 hours per week.

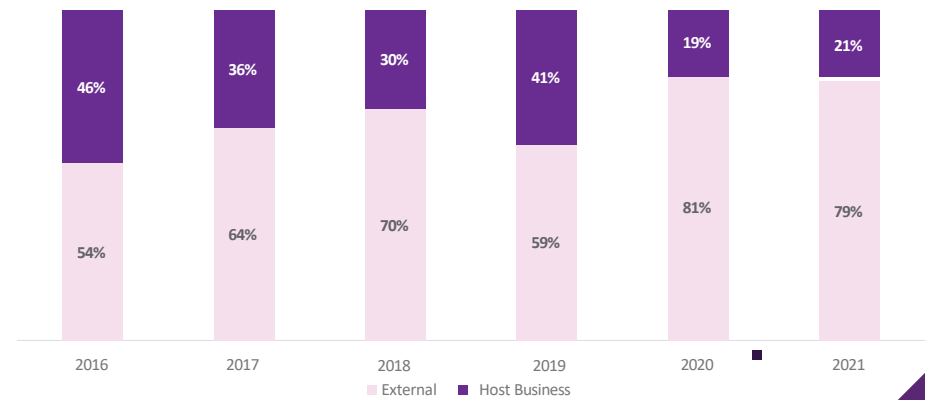
Number of jobs by sector (Scotland)



Number of jobs by role (Scotland)



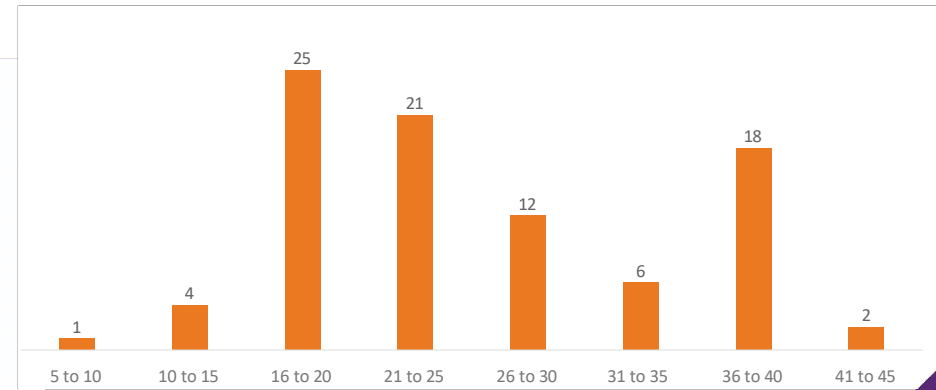
Host Business and External Employers (Scotland)



Hours and wages by countries



Weekly working hours by number of jobs (Scotland)



Sites with 100% employment outcome meeting criteria

100% employment outcome meeting criteria

Deer Park Golf and Country Club, Livingston, Scotland
Shetland Islands Council, Lerwick, Scotland



Sites with 70% - 80% employment outcome meeting criteria

70% - 90% employment outcome meeting criteria

Forth Valley Royal Hospital & Serco, Larbert, Scotland
University Hospital Wishaw, Wishaw, Scotland



Sites with lower than 70% employment outcome meeting criteria

60% - 70%	3
50% - 60%	2
50% - 40%	1

Top Tips for 100%

1

Follow the DFN Project SEARCH **model** as closely as possible and keep checking you are all working to the critical success factors, the GPPW and keep all eyes on the prize – full time paid employment! "What you think about comes about..." We also have in our base rooms now a couple of posters with a phrases we adopted from key points Erin made at the conference last year.

2

Relationships... work hard to maintain good strong working **relationships**, particularly with managers and mentors in the host business so interns can get the most of out of their rotations in terms of skills building, a full immersive experience in the work place and by so doing be considered as an obvious and great candidate for any upcoming vacancies, that job coaches will be made aware of because they have those strong relationships!

3

Start **job development** early, don't wait! Use the second week of the Easter break to run Job Club and set the bar high. Set up third rotations as working interviews where possible, whether internal or external to the host business. Celebrate the early successes, as this is highly motivating for others who may still be on their pathway into work.



Number of jobs that did not meet criteria (with overlaps, Scotland)



Protected Characteristics



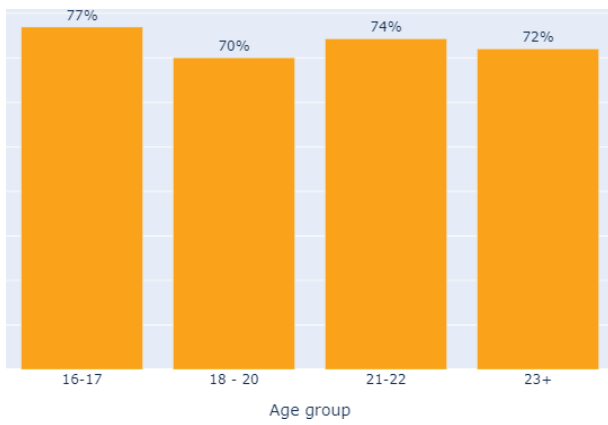


Outcomes by age group (Scotland)

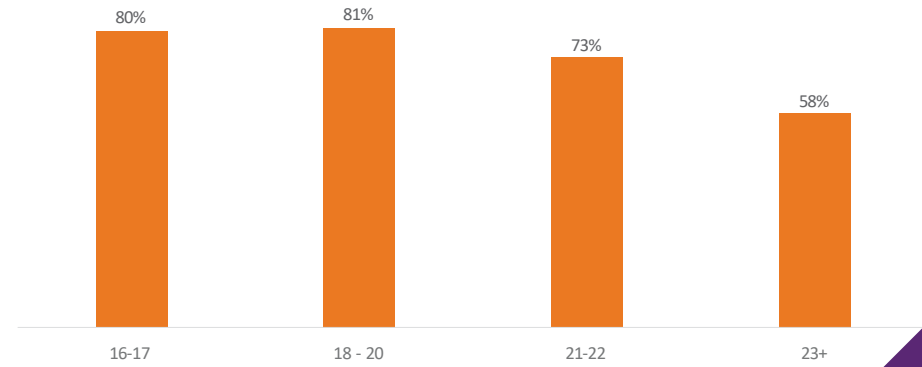
Age Group	Enrolled	Completed	Completed %	Employed	Employed %	Employed Criteria	Employed Criteria %	Average Wage	Average Hours
16-17	14	13	93%	10	77%	10	77%	£8.53	30.6
18 - 20	52	50	96%	35	70%	31	62%	£9.51	25.6
21-22	39	35	90%	26	74%	22	63%	£10.01	26
23+	26	25	96%	18	72%	14	56%	£10.09	24.2
Total	131	123	94%	89	72%	77	63%	£9.66	26



Employment by age group (Scotland)



Historical data – Employment rate by age groups (Scotland)



Wage by age group (Scotland)



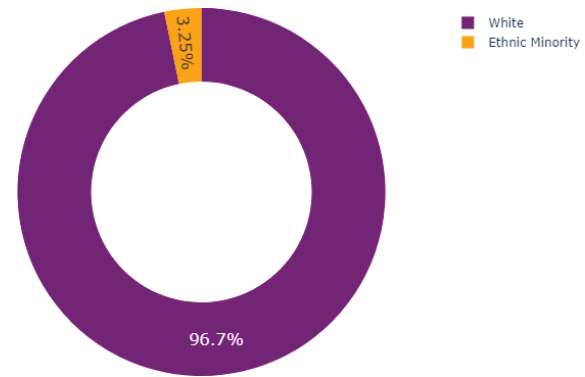
Wage by age group vs minimum wage (Scotland)

Age Group	DFE Average Hourly Wage	UK minimum wage	Hourly wage difference	Estimated wage difference in the year
16-17	£8.53	£4.81	£3.72	£5925.63
18 - 20	£9.51	£6.83	£2.68	£3570.60
21-22	£10.01	£9.18	£0.83	£1130.07
23+	£10.09	£9.50	£0.59	£740.85





Enrolment by ethnic background (Scotland)

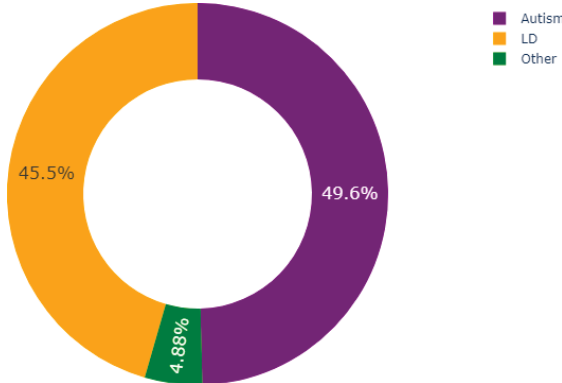


Scotland ethnic minority population: 4.5%





Enrolment by primary disability (Scotland)

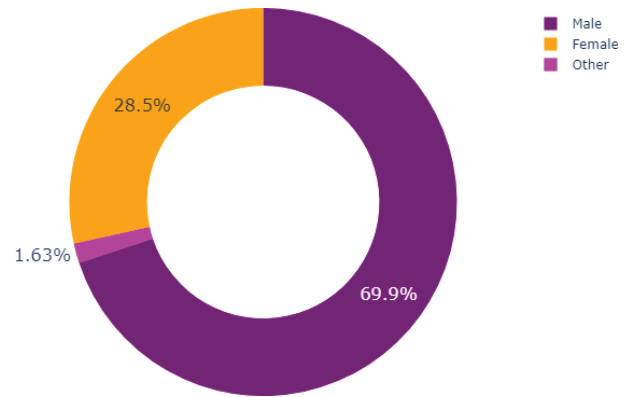


Outcomes by primary disability

Primary Disability	Enrolled	Completed	Completed %	Employed	Employed %	Employed Criteria	Employed Criteria %	Average Wage	Average Hours
Autism	66	61	92%	46	75%	39	64%	£9.78	26.1
LD	59	56	95%	38	68%	34	61%	£9.63	26.6
Other	6	6	100%	5	83%	4	67%	£8.91	20.7
Total Scotland	131	123	94%	89	72%	77	63%	£9.66	26



Enrolment by gender (Scotland)



Outcomes by gender (Scotland)

Gender	Enrolled	Completed	Completed %	Employed	Employed %	Employed Criteria	Employed Criteria %	Average Wage	Average Hours
Female	39	35	90%	24	69%	19	54%	£9.84	26.0
Male	90	86	96%	63	73%	57	66%	£9.63	26.1
Other	2	2	100%	2	100%	1	50%	£8.61	25.0
Total Scotland	131	123	94%	89	72%	77	63%	£9.66	26





DFN Project SEARCH Scotland Key findings – 2021-22



- ✓ Highest employment rates (including jobs that meet criteria) and completion rates (94%)
- ✓ Increased wages and working hours compared to previous year
- ✓ Younger interns have slightly higher employment rate than older groups
- ✓ All ages groups earn considerably more than the minimum wage



Youth Advisory Group & Alumni Membership



ALUMNI MEMBERSHIP



MISSION

To create a network to support DFN Project SEARCH graduates, whether they are starting or looking for employment.

A UK wide network of fellow alumni, who as a community will help people reach their own aspirations.



PRIORITIES

- Follow on support
- Community
- Marketing



KEY AREAS

- LIVE training sessions
- Resources
- Opportunities



GOALS

Deliver webinars, training sessions and meetings.

Ensure we review, reflect and research in partnership.

Create case studies, events, interviews. Speak at events & awards

Resources available on our app



VISION

Improving the lives of young people by evidencing the short term and long-term effectiveness of a supported internship.

DFN Project SEARCH App

Find on Play store/ App Store

Register by clicking on the lock icon in the right-hand corner

Once registered you can get access to all alumni Information

Stay connected.
Join a community.



Pre-Project SEARCH Curriculum



The History and Evidence Base of the Curriculum

- Twenty-five experienced Project SEARCH instructors from across the world have developed the curriculum.
- The teachers developed eight units with corresponding objectives they feel are critical for interns to know to be ready to make the transition to competitive, integrated employment.
- They created activities that reflect critical objectives adults need to live and work successfully.
- Funded by the Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation



Who is it for

- This pre-transition curriculum is available to Colleges and Schools that are engaged with a DFN Project SEARCH programme and other transition programmes that serve people whose end goal is competitive integrated employment.
- The lesson plans can complement a daily schedule for school and college students and adults with learning disabilities and autism to facilitate a successful transition to employment.
- It is free to use - you just sign up and tell us how you are using it



Sign up now and encourage others to do so

- Go onto the portal
- Go into the Curriculum
- Click onto Flyer called [Lessons for Living Learning and WorkingV2.pdf](#)
- Click into the QR code
- Sign up and gain access
- Tell your Schools and colleges about it (we can provide you with a presentation to use)





Join the
INCLUSION
REVOLUTION

DFN Project SEARCH Annual
Conference 2023

150+

150+ Current sites



Get in touch



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Programmes in Scotland

April 2024

1. Borders General Hospital, Melrose, Scotland
2. City of Edinburgh Council, Edinburgh, Scotland
3. Culzean Castle, South Ayrshire, Scotland
4. Dumfries and Galloway Council, Scotland, Dumfries,
5. Forth Valley Royal Hospital & Serco, Larbert,
6. NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Royal Infirmary, Glasgow, Scotland
7. NHS Lanarkshire-University Hairmyres Hospital, East Kilbride, Scotland
8. NHS Lothian Western General Hospital, Edinburgh
9. NHS Tayside/ Dundee Health and Social Care Partnership
10. Renfrewshire Council, Paisley, Scotland
11. Stirling Highland Hotel
12. University Hospital Monklands, Airdrie, Scotland
13. University Hospital Wishaw, Wishaw, Scotland
14. University Hospital, Crosshouse, Kilmarnock, East
15. University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire,
16. University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland

On hiatus in 23/24 academic year

17. Shetland Islands Council, Lerwick, Scotland
18. West Lothian Council, Livingston, Scotland

Megan

Megan started on DFN Project SEARCH at Glasgow Royal Infirmary in August 2019. Megan has a mild learning disability and had previously completed a Pathways to Employment course at a local college. Before starting DFN Project Search, Megan didn't have a lot of confidence and although very capable, Megan didn't always see herself in that way.

Megan's first rotation was a retail assistant with WH Smith and this was the first time DFN Project SEARCH had used the shop for a rotation. Megan excelled here and was great with both the customers in the shop and the patients she met when she took the sweet trolley around the wards. Rotation number two

saw Megan working as a Healthcare Support Worker with the Maternity department, working both on the Outpatient clinic and the postnatal ward, helping the new mums with their babies. Megan's bright and bubbly attitude was regarded positively with the department, so much so that Megan stayed with Maternity for her final rotation. This time Megan worked alongside the domestic team enabling her to layer on new skills as well as consolidate the skills she had already learnt.

Midway through her final rotation, Megan applied for a domestic position with the NHS at Queen Elizabeth University Hospital. She was able to talk about her real-life work experience and was coached by the onsite team in interview skills, enabling her to show her abilities to the best advantage. This built her confidence, enabling her to share all her newfound abilities. Megan began working in the Children's Hospital just as the country went into lockdown and Megan has adapted and taken the changes in her stride. Although the hospital is quieter with patients, Megan still has lots of tasks to do and has quickly proven herself to be a hardworking and committed member of staff.

Megan feels that she is part of a team now and this view is mirrored by her new colleagues. She is happy at work and is glad to have been working during lockdown. Megan feels like she is contributing by holding a valued job role that is a vital part of the NHS. Megan has been able to use a lot of the skills she learnt on DFN Project SEARCH in her new job, but she has also been taking part in more training, so she is constantly building on her skills and knowledge. Megan's supervisors are full of praise of how well she has done in a short space of time. The NHS set very high standards





of cleanliness and Megan is working to these standards and makes sure that they are consistently being met.

Working for several months now, Megan is really enjoying her new role and is making friends within the team. Megan is more independent; her confidence has increased and she feels more mature. The fact that Megan is now working means that she can also help her family out at home... and indulge in her favourite hobby of shopping! Megan has also just applied for her driver's license and she intends to start driving lessons as soon as she can. Megan has worked very hard over the year and everyone at DFN Project SEARCH is incredibly proud of how well she has done and what she has achieved.

DFN Project SEARCH is a Transition to work programme that is committed to transforming the lives of young people with autism and learning difficulties. DFN Project SEARCH work in partnership with the NHS across the UK, supporting young people through real life work experience combined with employability training and independent life skills. The collaborative approach between the NHS, local authorities, colleges and schools and supported employment providers, helps with transition into a productive and fulfilling adult life specifically for this marginalised cohort.

Megan is one of hundreds of young people who through DFN Project SEARCH and our partners at the NHS, has developed and grown through the innovative and integrated provision. With over 60% of graduates achieving competitively paid employment of over 16 hours a week, the figures show that working in a collaborative way makes a substantial difference to young people affected by Learning disability and Autism.

For more information about DFN Project SEARCH or to find your nearest DFN Project SEARCH programme please visit <https://www.dfnprojectsearch.org/>

Additional written evidence from the Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities

The following document is attached—

- Employment Taskforce Report (2018)



SCLD

**The Route to Employment for People with
Learning Disabilities in Scotland**

**Scottish Commission for Learning Disability
Employment TASK Group**

Report to Scottish Government Ministers



**The Scottish
Government**

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Foreword



People with learning disabilities have skills and talents and want to achieve their full potential.

The lives of people with learning disabilities have changed in recent years, including the move from institutional care to community living, but this hasn't translated into substantial numbers of jobs that change lives.

People with learning disabilities have told us they want to contribute, have a lifetime disability not a condition, and can adapt to new opportunities with the right kind of consistent support.

In our 5 meetings over 16 months, we heard about the building blocks needed to create more and better employment opportunities for Scots with a learning disability. These include: accurate data on participation to drive investment; clear transition planning, not just into further education but into work with training and bright prospects; ongoing support to enable people to stay in work; and ambitious targets for successful employment outcomes in funded programmes.

We await the Disability Employment Action Plan with high expectations. More importantly, the people served by the organisations taking part in the TASK Group do as well. We have already seen what is possible, as shown in the [accompanying film](#). This report sets out our estimate of the bigger number of people who stand to benefit if we are serious about halving the disability employment gap. We are confident that significant progress will be made if the Scottish Government, wider public services and many more employers commit to meeting the everyday ambitions of an under-served group in the population.

I would also like to offer my thanks to the TASK Group members who have individually contributed to this report.

Jim McCormick,
Employment TASK Group Chairperson

Mary Berrill	Amanda Currie	Rachel Le Noan	Lorraine Scott
JulieAnn Bilotti	Shirley Cuzen	Pauline MacDonald	Pamela Smith
Ruth Boyle	Michelle Fisher	Ian Menzies	Andrew Stewart
Ian Bruce	Andy Foreman	Karen Murray	Ian Tasker
Fiona Burns	Jackie Galbraith	Gail Novek	Dougie Taylor
David Cameron	Michelle Gibson	Patricia Rainey	Darren Tierney
Gregg Cassidy	Pauline Graham	Steve Robertson	Helen Tominson
Ivan Cohen	Jeanette Hägerström	Jamie Rutherford	
Norma Curran	Caroline Kingston	Viv Sawers	

1. Introduction

This report is about the employment of people with learning disabilities in Scotland and the action needed to increase their participation in Scotland's workforce. It follows 16 months of deliberation by SCLD's Employment TASK Group on the recommendations of research commissioned by SCLD on behalf of the Scottish Government.

In Scotland an opportunity exists to transform the lives of the first generation of young adults with learning disabilities who have never experienced institutional care - and to pave the way for future generations.

The Scottish Government Policy launched in 2000 '*The same as you?*' was the catalyst to move people from long stay institutions into the community.

The policy was reviewed in 2010, prior to the launch of the current learning disability strategy, *The keys to life*, in 2013. A key outcome of the review was that people with learning disabilities wanted better access to employment training and life-long learning.

It is important to be clear about who we mean when we talk about people with learning disabilities. Following a consultation exercise in 2018, SCLD with support from People First (Scotland) and the involvement of a number of other learning disability organisations refreshed the definition of learning disability in *The keys to life*.

"A learning disability is significant and lifelong. It starts before adulthood and affects the person's development. This means that a person with a learning disability will be likely to need help to understand information, learn skills and live a fulfilling life. Some people with a learning disability will also have healthcare needs and require support to communicate."

The keys to life 2018 - 2021

While the move from institutional care was transformational for some people with learning disabilities, for others the opportunity to effectively participate in their community - including getting a real job - has been slower to materialise.

In 2018 a commitment exists from the Scottish Government to produce a Disability Employment Action Plan which will deliver the policy intent highlighted in 'A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People' (2016).

The Scottish Government's Policy 'A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People' prioritises:

Decent Incomes and Fairer Working Lives

Making sure disabled people can enjoy full participation with an adequate income to participate in learning, education, voluntary work or paid employment and retirement.

People with learning disabilities consistently indicate that they want to work. However, there is an estimated employment rate of 7% for people with learning disabilities compared to over 74% for the general population and 45% of disabled people at large¹.

Using the statistics available from Learning Disability Statistics Scotland for younger people in the age range 21-34 years this drops to 6.5%, increasing to 7.9% in the 35-44 age range before the level decreases again to 6.0% for the 45-54 year olds².

It is clear that the employment aspirations of people with learning disabilities are far from being met.

The cumulative action required by national bodies, employers, disabled people's organisations and the wider public comes at a time when the Scottish Government has pledged to adopt an all-government, all-Scotland approach to addressing this issue.

The recent approach by the Scottish Government's 'Supporting Disabled Children, Young People and their Families' looks to communicate national policy in an inclusive manner. This approach is to be welcomed and seen as essential in providing accurate timely information in a format that can be used by the young people, their parents and carers.

The SCLD Employment TASK Group was established by the Scottish Commission for Learning Disability (SCLD) in February 2017 and launched by the Minister for Mental Health, Ms Watt.

The report has been informed by research commissioned by Scottish Commission for Learning Disability (SCLD) and the considerations of the SCLD Employment TASK Group.

This report sets out four **Priorities for Action** following a programme of meetings of the Employment TASK Group from February 2017 to May 2018. The **Priorities for Action** are for the Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills, the Minister for Mental Health and the Scottish Government Expert Group on Disability Employment to be considered as part of the 2018 Scottish Disability Employment Action Plan.

¹ Scottish Government, 2017. Regional Employment Patterns in Scotland: Statistics from the Annual Population Survey.

² SCLD, 2017. Learning Disability Statistics Scotland.

2. Background

SCLD is the lead strategic partner to the Scottish Government in the development and delivery of the national learning disability strategy, *The keys to life*.

As the Scottish Government's strategic partner, SCLD supports the development of policy and practice that improves the lives of people with learning disabilities in Scotland, including promoting equal opportunities in employment.

The SCLD Employment TASK Group was formed to take forward the recommendations arising from the scoping study in 2016, "Mapping the Employability Landscape for People with Learning Disabilities in Scotland". SCLD had commissioned the study, on behalf of the Scottish Government, to establish the national position in terms of both the level of employment of people with learning disabilities and the issues to be addressed to improve this position, while identifying the collective response required to address this issue.

Membership of the TASK Group was drawn from: The Action Group, Ayrshire College, Education Scotland, Down's Syndrome Scotland, ENABLE Scotland, Skills Development Scotland, Social Firms Scotland, Scottish Funding Council, Scottish Government, Scottish Local Authority Economic Development, Employer Representative (Hospitality Sector), Scottish Trades Union Congress, Scottish Union of Supported Employment, National Education Scotland, Inclusion Scotland, People First (Scotland), Values into Action Scotland.

The members of the TASK Group met 6 times. At each meeting a designated organisation would feed back on the progress made on addressing the recommendations from the scoping study which applied to their own organisation.

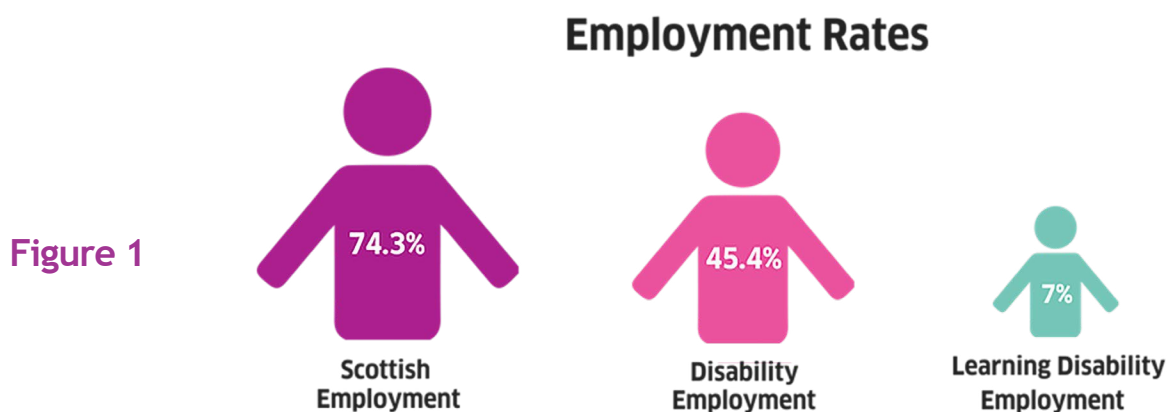


3. Research Findings

“Mapping the Employability Landscape for People with Learning Disabilities in Scotland” highlighted that the employment position of people with learning disabilities in Scotland is significantly poorer than the general population and other disabled workers.

In 2017, the employment rate (Figure 1) for the general population in Scotland was **74.3%**. The comparable rate for people with disabilities was **45.4%**. However, the employment rate for those with a learning disability is estimated at only **7%**.

The analysis also provides specific information on employment profiles in areas of deprivation.

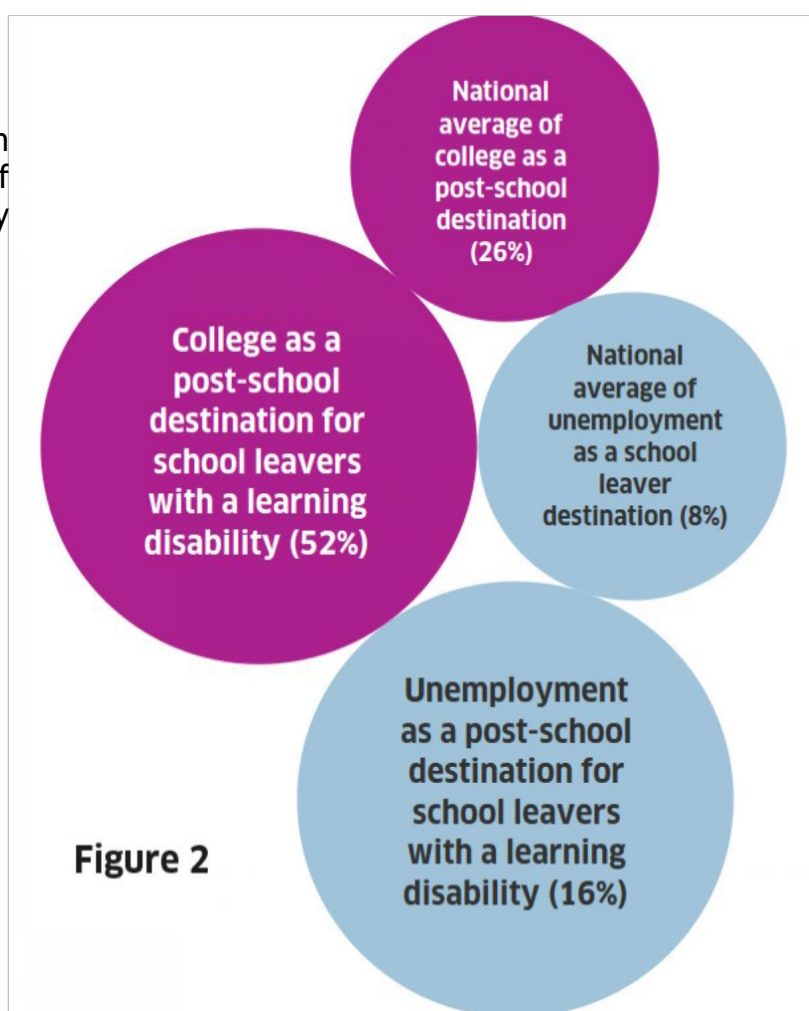


3 Statistics from the Annual Population Survey 2017

The experience of young people with learning disabilities post-school demonstrates that they are twice as likely to be unemployed: 8% of Scottish school leavers are unemployed, 16% of school leavers with a learning disability are unemployed.

College is a post-school destination for 26% of Scottish school leavers. However, for school leavers with a learning disability, this figure is double the average at 52% (Figure 2).

In 'A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People', the Scottish Government has pledged to reduce the employment gap for disabled people by at least half. It is important to clarify the implications of halving the gap for people with learning disabilities in Scotland.



Comparative analysis of Learning Disability Statistics Scotland (LDSS), and the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), highlights the level of deprivation likely to be experienced by people with learning disabilities in Scotland.

- More than half of adults with learning disabilities live in the 40% most deprived areas of Scotland
- Younger adults tend to live in the least deprived areas, while older adults are over-represented in the most deprived areas (anecdotal family carer effect)
- Adults with learning disabilities from BME backgrounds tend to live in deprived areas, even when population size is taken into account
- Adults with learning disabilities living in the 20% most deprived areas of Scotland are least likely to be in employment
- The number of adults with learning disabilities attending further education increases as levels of deprivation decrease.

The deprivation profile of adults with learning disabilities by employment opportunities shows that those who live in Quintile 1 (the most deprived areas) are underrepresented in employment compared to those living in the other four Quintiles.

Number per 1,000 of adults with learning disabilities in Scotland 2017:

	Has employment	Does not have employment
Quintile 1	42	536
Quintile 2	57	562
Quintile 3	57	599
Quintile 4	62	580
Quintile 5	51	457

Table 1

The analysis identifies that in Scotland people with learning disabilities have the additional burden of systemic deprivation in addition to the cultural and societal barriers.

The SCLD commissioned research highlighted the lack of accurate data on the opportunities and experiences of people with learning disabilities in Scotland.

It was therefore decided to use the 2011 census data as the most verifiable data available at this time.

It is possible, utilising 2011 census data, to quantify the task of reducing the employment gap for disabled people by at least half:

- 523,000 people in Scotland of working age (16-64 years) have a limiting health condition or disability
- 237,442 (45.4%) of these people are employed (the disability employment rate)
- The employment rate gap is 28.9% (74.3% less 45.4%). Half is 14.5%
- To halve this 'gap' would therefore mean increasing the disability employment rate from the current 45.4% to 59.9%, equivalent to 313,227 people being in work
- This increase would mean an additional 75,835 disabled people in work.

If this same calculation is applied for people with learning disabilities:

- The 2011 Census identified 21,115 people with learning disabilities
- There were 18,660 people of working age (16-64 years old)
- 1,306 (7%) of whom were employed
- The employment rate gap is 67.3% (74.3% less 7%). Half is 33.7%
- To halve the 'gap' for people with a learning disability would therefore mean increasing the employment rate from the current 7% to 40.7%, equivalent to 7,595 people being in work
- This increase would mean an additional 6,289 people with learning disabilities in work.

The TASK Group discussed the need to set a target and proposed that the target year should be set at 2030 in line with the targets to address child poverty as outlined in the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017.

4. The Task in Hand

The Scottish Government has committed to at least halving the disability employment gap in a 'Fairer Scotland for Disabled People' 2016.

Employment - Action 28

We will reduce barriers to employment for disabled people and **seek to reduce by at least half, the employment gap** between disabled people and the rest of the working age population. Together with disabled people their organisations and other key stakeholders we will develop this action in more detail, including timetable and plan for achieving the reduction.

A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People Delivery Plan - 2016

While SCLD clearly supports that ambition, it is important to ensure that people with learning disabilities, who are among the furthest from employment, are included in this target and that the means of achieving this target are clearly identified.

Therefore the target should be an additional **629 adults with learning disabilities per year entering sustained employment**, assuming the measurement starts from **2020**.

Applying this to each local authority area on a pro-rata basis produces specific targets to be achieved annually (as set out in Table 2 overleaf).



Table 2

Rank	Council Area	Total Population	5,404,900	Target 629 people with LD in employment per year for 10 years
1	City of Glasgow	615,100	11.38%	72
2	City of Edinburgh	507,200	9.38%	59
3	Fife	370,300	6.85%	43
4	North Lanarkshire	339,400	6.28%	39
5	South Lanarkshire	317,100	5.87%	37
6	Aberdeenshire	262,200	4.85%	31
7	Highland	234,800	4.34%	27
8	City of Aberdeen	229,800	4.25%	27
9	West Lothian	180,100	3.33%	21
10	Renfrewshire	175,900	3.25%	20
11	Falkirk	159,400	2.95%	19
12	Perth and Kinross	150,700	2.79%	18
13	Dumfries and Galloway	149,500	2.77%	17
14	City of Dundee	148,300	2.74%	17
15	North Ayrshire	135,900	2.51%	16
16	East Ayrshire	122,200	2.26%	14
17	Angus	116,500	2.16%	14
18	Scottish Borders	114,500	2.12%	13
19	South Ayrshire	112,500	2.08%	13
20	East Dunbartonshire	107,500	1.99%	13
21	East Lothian	104,100	1.93%	12
22	Moray	96,100	1.78%	11
23	East Renfrewshire	93,800	1.74%	11
24	Stirling	93,800	1.74%	11
25	West Dunbartonshire	89,900	1.66%	10
26	Midlothian	88,600	1.64%	10
27	Argyll and Bute	87,100	1.61%	10
28	Inverclyde	79,200	1.47%	9
29	Clackmannanshire	51,400	0.95%	6
30	Western Isles	26,900	0.50%	3
31	Shetland Islands	23,200	0.43%	3
32	Orkney Islands	21,900	0.41%	3
Total		5,404,900	100%	629

It is worth noting that under the Equality Act 2010 public authorities must comply with the public sector equality duty and in particular:

- To eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by the Act
- To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who don't share it
- To foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

It will be important that the targets highlighted are blended into the existing priorities at a local level. Local Employability Partnerships could lead this activity by ensuring that it is part of any future Regional Economic Partnership, as well as the activity under the national programme Fair Start Scotland.

Breaking down the learning disability employment target into local authority areas produces a manageable figure which can be reported on annually.

By way of illustration:

There are 13 Project SEARCH sites in Scotland working with 150 young people per year, achieving on average 70% employment per site. This partnership between the employer, a supported employment service and a local college provides an example of what can be achieved when the appropriate support is in place. If a Project SEARCH site in the Scottish Borders achieves the national average of 70% employment success from the 8 young people who are on the programme, and 5 of those individuals go into work, the Scottish Borders will have contributed substantially towards halving the learning disability employment gap in that area.

5. Policy Drivers

The Scottish Government has a range of policy interventions that seek to address the employment needs for individuals with learning disabilities.

The keys to life highlighted the need to prioritise employment for people with learning disabilities in Scotland.

That by 2018 the Learning Disability Implementation Group works with local authorities, NHS Boards and Third Sector organisations to develop a range of supported employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities and that those organisations should lead by example by employing more people with learning disabilities.

The keys to life, 2013

The keys to life implementation framework published in 2015 included employment opportunities as a key priority for 2015-17.

We will contribute to relevant outcomes across key policy areas to further develop employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities.

The keys to life Implementation Framework and Priorities 2015-2017

SCLD also seeks to promote the rights highlighted in **Article 27** of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

Article 27

The right of persons with disabilities to work on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD)

The Scottish Government has sought to raise the issue of disability employment with employers through the **Scottish Business Pledge**, which encourages employers to adopt progressive and sustainable employment practices.

Balanced Workforce

There are a huge range of benefits for businesses in employing people with disabilities. Most importantly, employers can gain access to a wider pool of talent and skills that is largely untapped. There is evidence that despite fears to the contrary, employees with disabilities take less sick leave and contribute extensively to the organisation.

Scottish Business Pledge - Scottish Government

Supported businesses potentially have a contributing role to play. Historically supported businesses were required to have a workforce where 50% of employees were disabled. Now that the definition of supported businesses has changed to 30% of employees being disabled or disadvantaged, it will be important to scope the participation of people with learning disabilities and their success in gaining and progressing in employment.

At a time where disability employment is a prominent government priority, there is an opportunity to use the procurement powers of public sector bodies to direct spend to supported businesses.

Additionally, the change in the funding of protected places from April 2019 to Access to Work funding of £5,000 per place for 2 years provides a new opportunity to tailor appropriate support.

This new funding route must be targeted in an accessible format to ensure people with learning disabilities are able to gain employment in supported businesses.

In order to establish the scope of the task and identify the progress required to meet the vision in the UN directive, SCLD commissioned Glasgow University's TERU Unit and Cambridge Policy Consultants in 2016 to specifically:

- Clarify the employment position of people with learning disabilities in Scotland
- Identify best practice
- Recommend action on what needed to be achieved in order to improve the employment position and opportunities for people with learning disabilities.

In 'A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People' Delivery Plan there were actions that specifically highlighted supporting people with learning disabilities into work.

Ambition 2 - Decent income and fairer working lives

Making sure disabled people can enjoy full participation with an adequate income to participate in learning, in education, voluntary work or paid employment and retirement.

A Fairer Scotland For Disabled People Delivery Plan - November 2016

Opportunity - How to improve fair opportunity and work

Investigate and interrogate the workforce profile in your organisation and sector, identify where any barriers to opportunity arise and address these issues creatively.

Fair Work Framework - 2016

Growing the Economy

We aim to achieve economic growth in Scotland that is inclusive. This means growth that combines increased prosperity with greater equality, creates opportunities for all, and distributes the benefits of increased prosperity.

Inclusive Growth - Scottish Government

Action 31

We recognise the success already achieved by **Project SEARCH** in enabling young people with learning disabilities and autism to secure sustainable employment. We will **explore opportunities to promote the Project SEARCH model** as we develop plans for greater alignment of learning and skills provision.

A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People Delivery Plan - November 2016

This reinforces the finding from Glasgow University/Cambridge Policy Consultants' research which highlighted the significant employment outcomes from the Project SEARCH programme in Scotland.

The new franchise agreement with DFN Project SEARCH gives the opportunity to have a European approach to the model and enables Scotland to increase the scope and effectiveness of this particular supported employment model.

From April 2018 Fair Start Scotland was established to provide tailored person centred support to a minimum of 38,000 people in Scotland.

Nine contracts over 5 years were awarded:

	Contract Value
City of Glasgow - People Plus Group Ltd	£19.1 million
North and South Lanarkshire - Remploy Limited	£12.6 million
Tayside - Perth and Kinross, Angus and Dundee - Remploy Limited	£7.3 million
Forth Valley - Falkirk, Stirling and Clackmannanshire - Falkirk Council Partnership	£5 million
East - Edinburgh Midlothian, East and West Lothian, Fife and the Scottish Borders - Start Scotland Ltd	£21.3 million
South West - Dumfries and Galloway, North, South and East Ayrshires - Start Scotland Ltd	£10.1 million
North East - Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire - Momentum Scotland	£5.6 million
Highlands and Islands - Argyll and Bute, Eilean Siar, Highland, Moray, Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands - People Plus Group Ltd	£6.2 million
West - East and West Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire and Inverclyde - The Wise Group	£8.8 million



The research report highlighted that the success rate into employment of national and local interventions vary from the 70% employment success through the Project SEARCH programme to the 32% average success of supported employment services and the 20% success from the DWP programmes.

There was general consensus the Scottish Government's Supported Employment Framework launched in 2010 remained best practice.

Key to this process is the role of Fair Start Scotland as a national source of employment data. Recording the employment of people with learning disabilities on the Fair Start Scotland programme against the local authority targets previously highlighted.

This data should be used to track the participation and employment rate of people with learning disabilities and be monitored through *The keys to life* implementation framework 2018-2021.

6. Progress by TASK Group Members

The TASK Group members had two distinct roles:

- To report on the progress their own organisation had made on the recommendations arising from the SCLD commissioned report "Mapping the Employability Landscape for People with a Learning Disability in Scotland" 2016
- To identify, discuss and agree a set of national priorities to be taken to the Minister to ensure that the policy intentions were realised.

The TASK Group members were extremely generous with their time and contributed to the collective discussion. Members were clear that although the base line employment rate of 7% was exceptionally low, they were committed to changing this position.

Members were able to inform others of their own organisational progress and collectively identify actions which would make a difference to the employment of people with learning disabilities in Scotland.

The following progress has been achieved by TASK Group members over 16 months, against the recommendations from the scoping report "Mapping the Employability Landscape for People with a Learning Disability in Scotland" 2016.



Recommendation 1

Substantially improve recording and reporting of learning disabilities data.

Scottish Government Progress:

Fair Start Scotland (FSS) service providers collect demographic information on long term health conditions including learning disability on those individuals who join the programme. The first statistics reporting on Fair Start Scotland are due to be published at the end of 2018.

In April 2018, at a major Congress on Disability, Employment and the Workplace, the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, articulated that more must be done to support the ambitious plan to at least halve the disability employment gap. In addition to launching a consultation on public sector disability employment targets, which closed in 2018, Ms Sturgeon announced up to £1million to fund advice and support for employers recruiting disabled people, and committed to the publication of a cross-Government disability employment action plan.

The Scottish Government is clear that employers are key and that the public sector must lead by example.

Recommendation 2

Give greater priority to employability and employment of people with learning disabilities. Renewed promotion of the Supported Employment Framework.

Scottish Government Progress:

Project SEARCH is one of the options available for those with learning disabilities, and the Scottish Government sees it as a valuable resource in assisting young people with learning disabilities to achieve positive employment outcomes. The Scottish Government will continue to support and promote the model as and when appropriate. The Scottish Government will look at the opportunities presented through the new arrangement with DFN Project SEARCH, to ensure that the model continues to deliver a significant number of people with learning disabilities into full time employment, in a career of their choice.

A Learning Disability Employment Programme will be delivered by NHS Scotland supporting NHS Health Boards to increase the number of employees with learning disabilities. National Services Scotland NSS will host a digital toolkit to support this work. The Equality and Diversity leads working within NHS Health Boards and the Business Disability Forum will take forward this work.

Scottish Government Progress:

From 3 April 2018 the Scottish Government introduced a new Scottish employability service - **Fair Start Scotland** - aiming to support a minimum of 38,000 referrals, who want to find and stay in work and for whom work is a reasonable objective.

Scottish Government Progress:

Fair Start Scotland aims to support people to achieve their full potential and contribute to the Scottish Government priorities to at least halving the disability employment gap, through sustainable economic growth, fair work and social justice. It will seek to reduce the employment gap for people with learning disabilities.

The Scottish Government approach will require more effective **integration and alignment** of support and services to make the current landscape easier to navigate, particularly for those people who are most disadvantaged.

Providers of new employment services will be required to offer **supported employment** services.

This is embedded in the contracts for Fair Start Scotland, and providers will be expected to ensure supported employment and Individual Placement Support (IPS) are available for those who need it.

The Supported Employment Framework is also a commitment in 'A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People'. The Scottish Government will continue to look at options for including the Personal Development Award PDA for supported employment as one of the tools to improve the delivery of supported employment.

Recommendation 3

Set Scotland's employers the target of 4% of all new employees to be people with learning disabilities.

Scottish Government Progress:

The Scottish Government is looking at the options available to improve the national position.

The Scottish Government has committed to seek to increase the number of disabled people in employment, which includes focussing on people with learning disabilities where the position is particularly significant.

Recommendation 4

Continue to raise the profile and promote learning disability employment and employability.

Scottish Government Progress:

Further actions will be set out in the **Disability Employment Gap Action Plan**, recognising that unemployment is particularly large for people with learning disabilities.

Recommendation 5

Increased employer commitment to recruiting people with learning disabilities.

Scottish Government Progress:

The Scottish Government has made a commitment to work with employers to support a greater proportion of disabled people, including those with a learning disability, into work.

Recommendation 6

Develop directories of employability services for people with learning disabilities.

Establish supported employment services in all Local Authority areas.

Scottish Local Authorities Economic Development (SLAED) Progress:

A supported employment proposal, which looks particularly at the Apprenticeship Levy, was taken to COSLA in 2018. The proposal is looking at ring-fencing approximately 5% of the total levy for learning disability employment. The lead taken by SLAED should be taken forward by local government HR staff, recognising people with learning disabilities as talented individuals who can be employed within the public sector.

Recommendation 7

Collect and report learning disability data. Embed learning disability good practice in contracted provision.

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) Progress:

SDS has published disaggregated data that breaks down performance into different disability categories. Learning Disabilities is included within the 'Social/Communication' category.

SDS aims to upskill providers on areas they feel they could ultimately benefit underrepresented groups. Employer training will be undertaken in relation to supporting individuals through the new Enhanced Modern Apprenticeship programme.

The new programme is aimed at supporting disabled people with complex needs into a Modern Apprenticeship (MA) and is being delivered by Open Doors Scotland.

SDS has published an Equality Action Plan update which highlights some of their work in relation to disabled people, including the provision of enhanced funding for providers where an individual declares a disability.

Recommendation 8

Set higher targets for providers working with people with learning disabilities.

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) Progress:

SDS has embedded Key Performance Indicators into its contract obligations, monitoring long term outcomes and proactively supporting positive action on learning disability employment outcomes.

Recommendation 9

Establish more effective joined-up employment pathways for people with learning disabilities.

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) Progress:

SDS has thirty-two regional ASN guides. The Regional Equality Team is embedding regional approaches.

Recommendation 10

Double employment outcome rates for people with learning disabilities.

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) Progress:

SDS has set up the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board Employer Equality Group. SDS has also had a disability marketing campaign, and will continue to focus on in-work support.

Recommendation 11

Secure additional resources and funding for learning disability employability services.

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) Progress:

SDS has been signposting individuals, training providers and employers to the DWP Access to Work fund, promoting in-work support, enhanced contribution rates and the ASN discretionary fund.

Scottish Funding Council (SFC):

All college regions have an access and inclusion strategy in place detailing how they meet the support needs of their students and evidencing their use of access and inclusion funds. These strategies are detailed and clearly evidence each college region's use of access and inclusion funding and it is a condition of funding that these strategies be published on the college region website.

Scottish Funding Council (SFC):

It is difficult to amalgamate these plans and report on the overall impact for Scotland. For this reason SFC is working on providing each college region with evidence of the outcomes of their students in a standardised format. This will be broken down by groups of access students and will include outcomes including those achieved by people with learning disabilities, to enable college regions to set improvement targets and put plans in place to address any areas where they are under-performing, either in the intake or outcomes of their students. It is hoped this will enable more comparability and consistency between college regions.

This strategy covers the time period 2017-2020 and new guidance will be provided next summer for the period 2020 onwards. It is likely that this will include a template to support more standardised and comparable reporting. In addition to this, SFC and Lead Scotland aim to deliver a national conference on disabled students and their outcomes, including the outcomes of people with learning disabilities.

Recommendation 12

Greater focus on progression into real, sustainable employment.

Education Scotland Progress:

Education Scotland will continue to identify and share effective practice in relation to the development of employability and career management skills and work placements for young people with learning disabilities.

Education Scotland will encourage establishments to focus on equality, including learning disability, as they embed the Career Education Standard in their practice.

Education Scotland will continue to ensure a strong focus on equality, including learning disability, as part of all post-16 review activity, comprising reviews of career information and guidance, modern apprenticeship programmes and college provision.

Education Scotland will work with the Scottish Commission for Learning Disability to support the implementation of the TASK Group actions which relate to our work.

Recommendation 13

Continue to raise the profile and promote learning disability employment and employability.

Scottish Commission for Learning Disability (SCLD) Progress:

SCLD has committed to an annual "Learning Disability Week" and a national "Learning Disability Awards" event to 2020.

SCLD is looking at a national campaign to promote successful people with a learning disability linked to these events.

Recommendation 14

Develop an agreed definition of 'Learning Disabilities'.

Scottish Commission for Learning Disability (SCLD) Progress:

A national consultation exercise has been undertaken with People First (Scotland) with the aim of having an agreed national definition of "Learning Disabilities" by 2018. The initial consultation has taken place and come up with a proposed definition. This definition will form part of the new strategic focus in the next stage of the national learning disability strategy *The keys to life*.

Recommendation 15

Increased employer commitment to recruiting people with learning disabilities.

Scottish Government Progress:

The Scottish Government is committed to work with employers to support a greater proportion of people with a learning disability into work.

The Scottish Government has committed an additional £1 million investment to provide better support and advice to employers, confirming the intention to work across all sectors to achieve the stated ambition.



7. TASK Group - PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

The scoping research undertaken by Glasgow University TERU and Cambridge Policy Consultants identified 4 **key priorities**. At the subsequent meetings of the TASK Group, members deliberated these points and agreed the following **priorities for action**.

PRIORITY FOR ACTION 1

Overcome the low expectations held by parents, schools, colleges and employers.

The TASK Group members recommended running a national awareness campaign (similar to “See Me”). Such a campaign would target the general public with a focus on employers, parents and educators. People with learning disabilities would be seen as contributors, individuals who have skills and talents to offer. This could be part of a wider Scottish Government anti-stigma campaign that addresses a number of issues faced by people with learning disabilities.

A marketing strategy that aligns local delivery with national awareness raising could have significant impact. Measuring success will be important to ensure that the campaign achieves its ambition.

While the intention behind the “Disability Confident” campaign was welcomed, the TASK Group recommended a more effective method of supporting employers and measuring their contribution.

There exists a ‘cycle of low expectation’ (see Figure 3). If people with learning disabilities are only ever seen volunteering in charity shops, clearing tables and collecting supermarket trolleys, training providers will only put on courses to help people gain those basic skills. If the only courses that are available are ones addressing basic skills, people with learning disabilities and their carers will think that’s all that they can do. If these are the skills that people with learning disabilities have, job coaches will only look for jobs in these low skill areas. For employers this reinforces the perception that people with learning disabilities can only undertake basic skill jobs⁴. This is not true.

Figure 3



⁴ Riehle, E. (2018, June 22). Speech presented at DFN Project Search European Conference, London.

PRIORITY FOR ACTION 1 (continued)

To break this cycle requires appropriate training for people with learning disabilities in marketable, complex and systematic skills. In particular, targeting growth sectors where there are opportunities, two specific examples of this are the need for additional childcare staff and the demand from the tourism and leisure sector. This will raise the expectations and shift the perceptions of people with learning disabilities, parents and carers, training providers, job coaches, employers and the wider public.

In addition, frequently the language used when supporting people with disabilities into work assumes that there is a significant problem to overcome. For example, phrases such as “self-declaration” or “reasonable adjustments” are regularly used. An alternative proposition is to explain to employers that there are talented, skilled people with disabilities who need modest changes in the workplace and/or their terms of employment to enable them to work. This form of flexibility is no different to that of the practices that employers are more used to exercising when agreeing “flexible working” or “family friendly” practices. There is considerable merit in normalising the adaptations in the workplace to individual need.

The Scottish Government, through its relevant agencies, should work with employers to establish a national standard which will recommend on the support required by individuals with learning disabilities through the Scottish Government’s Supported Employment Framework, specifying staff training/qualifications and mentoring practice.

Future Scottish Government contracts would be linked to the attainment of the national standard. Commissioning bodies would specify the standard in contracts. Procurement professionals would acknowledge the standard in tender documents.

Disabled People’s Organisations (DPOs) have an important role working with the government and business; advising on the best ways to support people with learning disabilities into and during their employment, promoting the standard as best practice to ensure that people are adequately supported in the workplace.

PRIORITY FOR ACTION 2

Gather data more effectively and invest funding where people with learning disabilities in Scotland secure both employment and support to develop in that job.

The TASK Group recommends that The Scottish Government should seek to have the Access to Work Fund devolved to Scotland.

The TASK Group agreed on the importance of the DWP Access to Work Fund. As the DAS report "End the Gap" highlighted only £9,639 was spent on promoting Access to Work across the UK in 2016/17.

The Access to Work Fund is only available in Scotland at the point an individual is about to gain employment. The experience from the Supported Internship Programmes in England and Wales is that Access to Work has an important role supporting people both pre- and post-employment, in particular dealing with sporadic issues and in-career development.

The TASK Group acknowledged that the devolvement of social security powers to Scotland provided an opportunity to also transfer the Access to Work Fund to Scotland.

As the Scottish Government promotes social security as an investment in the people of Scotland, the availability of Access to Work funding could positively complement this approach. This policy alignment in Scotland provides a level of synergy with Personal Independence Payment (PIP) that could make employment a realistic option for people with learning disabilities where historically work was not seen as a viable option. The transfer of Access to Work to Scotland could provide the personalised support that is crucial to gaining and staying in employment.

As the Scottish Government seeks to engage large public sector employers in reducing the disability employment gap, Access to Work funding could aid the process, providing individual packages of support where required.

The Centre for Social Justice recently highlighted a YouGov poll that identified only 25% of UK businesses were aware of Access to Work.

Engaging and promoting the fund to businesses is clearly critical. The TASK Group also recommends that the Scottish Government requests that NHS Health Boards, local authorities, job centres, Chambers of Commerce and local Rotary Clubs promote the fund.

PRIORITY FOR ACTION 2 (continued)

The TASK Group requests that the Scottish Government routinely gather and publish data on the employment outcomes for people with learning disabilities who have participated in both national and contracted programmes. This data should be published annually and broken down by provider.

Particular comment was made about the substantial number of school leavers with learning disabilities who enter further education, more than twice the national average.

The TASK Group was keen to emphasise the need to start the discussion about future career plans with young people and their families as early as possible and not to leave the discussion until 'Transition'.

The Scottish Government should ensure a direct link between further education and labour market demand, and that further education training courses prepare people with learning disabilities with the skills they require to compete in the employment market.

Further education and training providers should ensure that training is also available in recognised growth areas, e.g. leisure and hospitality, childcare, social care and construction.



PRIORITY FOR ACTION 3

Use this data to invest in post-school funding of services that can deliver employment outcomes of at least 50%.

The TASK Group considered the issue of setting employment targets for disabled people into employment. Members agreed that the Scottish Government **should** set a national employment target for people with disabilities.

Importantly, where there is a national disability employment target, the Government must ensure that people with learning disabilities with specific needs are included in the national target and that their participation in the labour market is identified.

Following a review of national employment outcomes for people with learning disabilities in Scotland, the research report recommended that all providers should aim to reach at least 50% employment outcomes from employability programmes aimed at people with learning disabilities.

For some supported employment organisations, 50% employment outcomes might be seen as a stretching target. Where organisations need support to reach this target, this must be recognised as a reasonable contract cost. The aim must be to only commission providers who can demonstrate an ability to reach this target.

The research report also highlighted that the five stage model within the Supported Employment Framework was acknowledged by practitioners as good practice. Taking a person centred approach was not only about helping people with learning disabilities into work but also providing support throughout their careers.

Data collection for people with learning disabilities should be consistent across all local authorities and delivery bodies. Data should be underpinned by clear and defined quality assurance indicators. Fair Start data collection will identify people with learning disabilities through their reporting processes highlighting where targeted positive action is required.

The positive integration and alignment of national policies should recognise the particular needs of people with learning disabilities and the success of this alignment be reported back to local and national government by SCLD.

PRIORITY ACTION 4

Recruit and train job coaches that can support people with learning disabilities into employment and throughout their careers. Recognise job coaching as a profession, with nationally monitored quality standards.

The TASK Group was clear that the Scottish Government should acknowledge the importance of supported employment and establish a national service.

The Scottish Local Authorities Economic Development (SLAED) endorsed a proposal earlier this year to set up such a service which was to be funded by the Apprenticeship Levy.

This national supported employment service could be funded by the levy or through the Disability Employment Action Plan, which is to be launched in 2018. It is clear that any successful employment initiative for people with learning disabilities must have supported employment available as a universal free national service.

The provision of supported employment to the standards detailed in the Supported Employment Framework is essential to the Scottish Government achieving its ambition to at least halve the disability employment gap.

Any future supported employment service must acknowledge digital skills, future technological challenges and skill changes in the workplace.

Supported employment services should be available throughout a person's career and in times of need, not just to get someone into their first job.

Job coaching should be recognised as a career and be rewarded appropriately. Continuous professional development should be designed and delivered across Scotland.

All job coaches would be required to undertake training in Systematic Instruction. Accredited staff would have to demonstrate that their practice met national standards as outlined in the Scottish Supported Employment Framework.

Any national approach to supported employment must be seen as part of an inclusive offer in Scotland, embedding supported employment in employability service provision.

8. Next Steps

This report highlights the actions undertaken by national partners to address the recommendations from the Scottish Commission for Learning Disability's TASK Group.

The report goes further to identify **4 PRIORITIES FOR ACTION** which are required to address the employment gap for people with learning disabilities.

It is important that the work of the TASK Group forms part of the Government's future plans for both disability employment and in new policy priorities.

To this end the TASK Group report should:

- Contribute to the Disability Employment Action Plan in 2018 and be considered by the Scottish Government's Expert Group on Disability Employment, ensuring that a complementary target for learning disability is also included in any national disability employment target prioritising a population poorly represented in the workplace
- Inform the next implementation phase of *The keys to life*, the Scottish national learning disability strategy in its ambition to highlight 'Working' as a policy priority.



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