

**The third sector as an employability partner for
people with barriers to employment:**

Insights from Community Jobs Scotland

February 2022



Executive Summary

Evidence on the impact of policies is a critical part of building evidence-based policy in Scotland, particularly at transition points when funding or delivery decisions are made. Community Jobs Scotland (CJS) is an employability programme that funds work placements in the third sector for young people with significant barriers to the labour market to gain experience and on the job training within the third sector. It has been in operation in Scotland for a decade and is funded by the Scottish Government and run by SCVO, who have provided the data analysed in this report.

This report analyses quantitative data from 2016/17 to 2019/20 and insights from a small number of in-depth interviews of account managers to provide evidence on impact, value for money, and the lessons learnt that could be applied elsewhere. The findings suggest that the scheme has been able to help around 40% of participants to move into paid work after the placements finish, with slightly higher rates for people with disabilities.

This analysis includes some disaggregation of data by different disabilities, including learning disabilities, where rates of employment are understood to be very low on average in Scotland. After involvement in CJS, the rates of employment for people with a learning disability are in line with the average across the whole cohort and much better than in the other employability scheme for which we had broadly comparable data: Fair Start Scotland (FSS).

The cost of CJS is higher on average than for Fair Start Scotland but, given available data, it is difficult to know how comparable cost-effectiveness estimates are. We also do not know the counterfactual, for example, whether the young people who succeed in CJS would be successful in other employability programmes such as FSS. In the qualitative research, all those interviewed pointed to the suitability of the third sector for supporting people with sometimes complex additional support needs in their first step into the labour market due to the empathy they demonstrate and the flexibility they can offer.

Funding for CJS will transfer to local programmes under No One Left Behind later this year. In the absence of a fully resourced evaluation exercise (which was not commissioned), this report aims to provide evidence and insights that will hopefully inform local areas considering whether to proceed with or expand their employability schemes in partnership with the third sector. We also reflect on how they could think about their monitoring and evaluation in the future to ensure that they can continually build on and improve their employability offer and ensure that those with additional support needs are indeed not being left behind.

I. Introduction

Community Jobs Scotland (CJS) has been part of the employability scene in Scotland since 2011, creating job placements with third sector hosts for young people who have a range of additional support needs. The work placements and training are provided to help young people progress into sustainable employment after the work placement has finished. It is funded by the Scottish Government and has been run since its inception by SCVO. In 2021 CJS created its 10,000th job placementⁱ.

CJS began in response to high levels of youth unemployment after the financial crisis. The groups engaged with the scheme have employment rates far below the average for their age group. The CJS approach was built to help address their particular needs and provide additional investment in the third sector.

SCVO expects that its current cohort of Starts will be the final CJS starts directly funded by the Scottish Government as a national programme. The Scottish Government's [No One Left Behind strategy](#) will move all national employability programmes to a local delivery model. Centralised schemes such as CJS will end with local partners deciding their delivery model. Their offer could include a scheme that works similarly to CJS.

CJS has been previously evaluated firstly in 2012ⁱⁱ and again in 2015ⁱⁱⁱ. No formal evaluation has been commissioned since as far as we are aware. The findings from the analysis conducted for this report provide some evidence that a fuller evaluation would be able to look at in more detail. The purpose of this analysis is to provide some additional analysis to help those looking to understand impact of schemes like CJS, both now and in the future.

The quantitative analysis in the report replicates some of the calculations used in the Fair Start Scotland (FSS) Economic Evaluation published in 2021^{iv}, namely value for money, performance, reach, costs and job outcomes achieved. These variables are looked at in isolation and then compared to benchmarks in the same way (and using the same data) as the FSS economic evaluation. This approach to evaluating impact provides insights into the performance of the schemes, but cannot provide full evidence on the causal impact i.e. we have no information on what would have happened to people involved in the schemes had they not existed at all. This is always likely to be an issue in analysing these types of schemes. Still, we provide some reflections on how evaluations could improve to help address this issue of attribution.

This report also provides some qualitative evidence from a few in-depth interviews with account managers at SCVO, third sector employers currently hosting CJS work placements, and those currently on work placements. In these interviews, we explored what works well in CJS and potential for improvement. We also explored feelings about the future of the CJS model. Again, these interviews provide additional insight which may be helpful for those considering CJS type schemes as part of No One Left Behind, but do not provide causal evidence of the impact of the scheme on their own.

This research has been taken forward in partnership with SCVO. SCVO has provided the data and asked for volunteers for the in-depth interviews. Account managers from SCVO also participated in one of the in-depth interviews. Otherwise, this report has been independently produced by the Fraser of Allander Institute on a pro-bono basis. Alongside

this report, SCVO has circulated a survey to the current cohort of third sector employers, the results of which will be published in due course.

The report proceeds as follows: Section 2 provides an overview of CJS, Section 3 provides results from quantitative analysis of data from the scheme, Section 4 reports the findings of the qualitative research, Section 5 provides reflections on how similar programmes could be better evaluated in the future and Section 6 concludes.

2. Overview of Community Jobs Scotland

Community Jobs Scotland funds placements with third sector employers for the following groups of young people (aged under 29).

- care leavers/care experienced
- young people with convictions
- carers
- military service leavers (serving less than six years)
- disabled people (includes those with long term limiting health conditions)
- homeless people (including temporary or unstable accommodation)
- person affected by drug misuse (i.e. alcohol, drugs)
- person with lower than SCQF level 5 qualification
- work programme completers who remain unemployed
- refugees with immigration status allowing them to undertake employment
- ethnic minority groups

The placements are all within the third sector. The role of SCVO is to administer the scheme, including vetting employers and advertising the jobs on behalf of the employers. Work placements also need to have a community benefit component and provide a suitable position for employees that will allow them to develop and progress in their career once the placement has come to an end.

The candidates need to meet referral criteria to be eligible. Most of the time, CJS is accessed through existing channels such as the Jobcentre Plus and Skills Development Scotland, although there have been instances of recruitment-type events with employers and potential employees.

CJS jobs offer a minimum of 25 hours of paid work each week or 16 hours per week for part-time posts and pay at least the age appropriate minimum wage. Where possible, SCVO encourages employers to offer more hours and a higher wage rate.

CJS employees also have access to a training fund of £200 per CJS employee to assist with identified support and additional training costs.

Figure 1: Typical payments to employers

Type of opportunity	Weeks	Hours	Total unit cost	Living wage (LW) supplement	Additional support /training allowance (recommended)	Total unit cost with added supplements
Full time	52	25	£10,500	£1,924	£200	£12,624
Part-time	78	16	£10,500	£1,847.04	£200	£12,547

3. Quantitative review of outcomes 2016/17 – 2019/20

In summary:

- Around 40% of those who entered the scheme over this period were in paid employment 13 weeks after the end of the work placement.
- The largest group represented in CJS is people with a disability or long term health conditions. Their employment outcome at 13 weeks was slightly higher than the whole CJS cohort average.
- CJS outperforms Fair Start Scotland in terms of the proportion of people and disabled people in paid work 13 weeks after the end of the work placement.
- The costs of a CJS placement are, on average, higher than participating in the pre-employment support in Fair Start Scotland.
- On a value for money basis, CJS is more expensive on average than FSS. For disabled people, the gap in cost-effectiveness narrows, but we cannot calculate to what extent.
- The key question that cannot be answered conclusively with the publicly available data is the extent to which this is true for those furthest away from the labour market, for example, people with learning disabilities.
- Other questions remain over longer-term outcomes and wider social benefits of CJS.

Data & Methods

SCVO provided data on those who took part in CJS between 2016/17 and 2019/20, taken from their administrative records. No data was provided that could identify the individual. Information on typical costs was provided separately by SCVO (Figure 1) and actual costs were calculated using information in the administrative data.

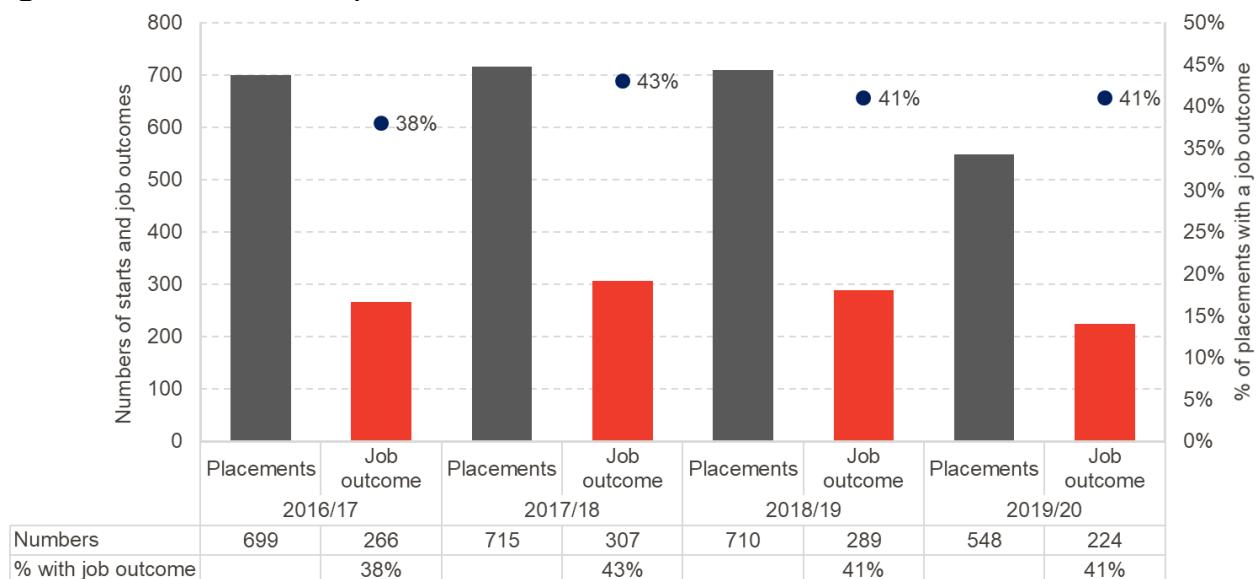
We used the available data to calculate value for money, performance, reach, costs and job outcomes achieved for CJS. These figures are available for Fair Start Scotland (FSS) and we followed the same method as the FSS economic evaluation to benchmark CJS performance against FSS. All data on FSS was taken from publicly available information published by the Scottish Government and available (at time of writing) on their website.

It is important to note that this approach to evaluation can only provide a partial understanding of impact because if it is not possible to identify the counterfactual: i.e how many people would have found a job in the absence of the scheme. Benchmarking helps provide additional information on success compared to other approaches. Still, structural differences in participant characteristics and the absence of a control group limit causal inference of the impact of the scheme.

Community Jobs Scotland outcomes

Over 2016/17 to 2019/20, 2,672 CJS placements were recorded. 1,086 CJS work placement participants (41%) had a paid job 13 weeks after their placement finished either with their third-sector host or elsewhere. Figure 2 shows how this data is split by year of placement.

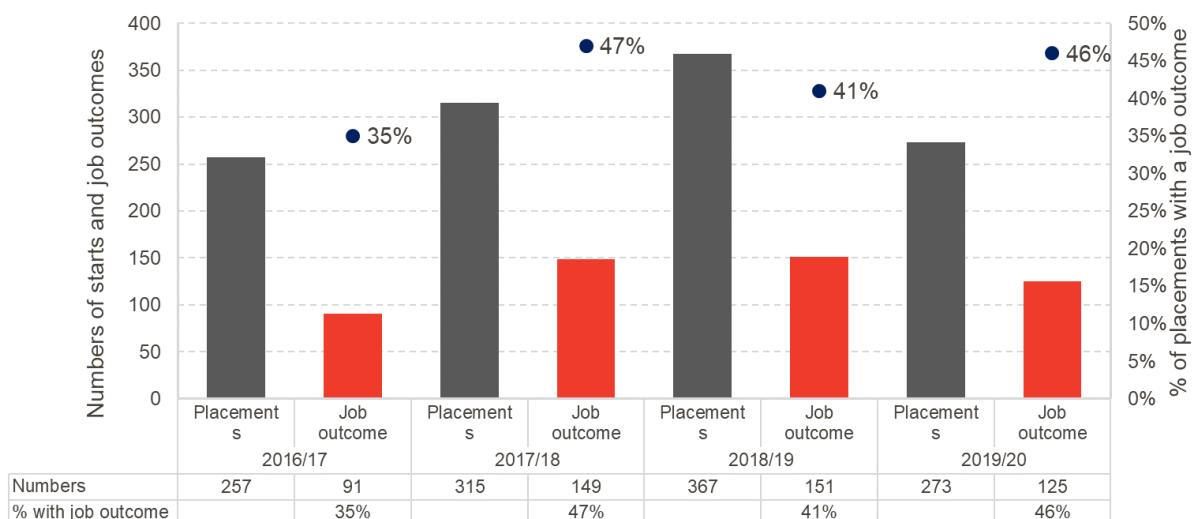
Figure 2: CJS Starts and job outcomes



The largest group in CJS (45%) over this period was eligible primarily due to being disabled under the Equality Act definition^y.

Of 1213 work placement participants, 516 (43%) had a paid job 13 weeks after the job placement ended. Figure 3 shows how this data is split by year of placement.

Figure 3: CJS Starts and job outcomes, disabled people



Further insights into the range of impairments and health conditions are summarised in Figure 4.

Figure 4: CJS placements and job outcomes where a health condition or disability is reported (total 2016/17 to 2019/20)

	Placements	Job outcome
Sensory Impairment	72	26
		36%
Developmental Disorder	114	49
		43%
Physical Disability	155	63
		41%
Learning Disability	388	147
		38%
Mental Health Condition	541	223
		41%
Long-term illness, disease or condition	336	91
		27%

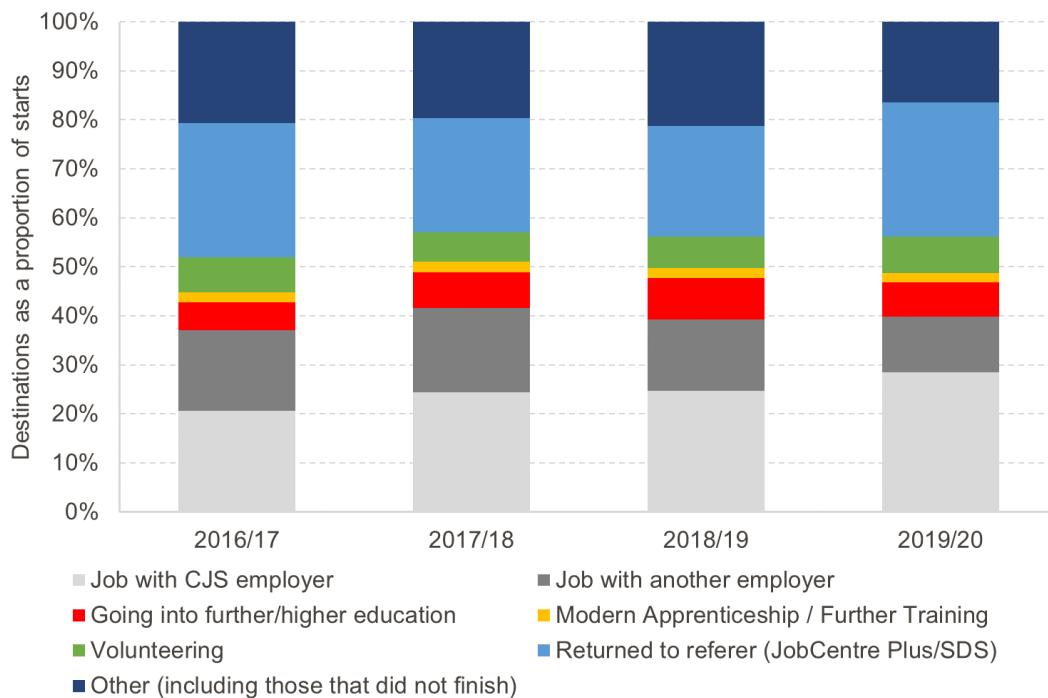
Other non-disabled groups e.g. carers, sometimes noted additionally that they had a disability or long-term condition. These are included in Figure 4, but not in the total disability figures used elsewhere. There are also instances of more than one condition being listed, meaning some people are counted twice in Figure 4.

Available national data suggests that employment rates for learning disabilities are well below the average for other disabled groups^{vi}. Therefore it is encouraging to see that in CJS, people with learning disabilities have outcomes relatively close to the average for the scheme.

Other destinations

The figures so far count those with a job outcome. Other ‘positive’ destinations include moving into further or higher education, going into a modern apprenticeship, or further training. A noticeable proportion of people also subsequently took up volunteering opportunities. A significant proportion either remained unemployed or dropped out of the scheme early. Figure 5 provides a breakdown by year.

Figure 5: CJS destinations as a proportion of those who started on a placement



Comparison with Fair Start Scotland

To provide more context for the results published, we have looked at Fair Start Scotland (FSS) evaluations, a scheme that has been in place since 2018/19 for people of all ages in Scotland.

FSS and CJS have similar aims, to help people into sustainable job outcomes, but are set up very differently.

CJS

- Funds work placements for disadvantaged young people aged 16-29 years to enable them to gain experience and on the job training within the third sector
- Aim is to help young people into sustainable employment whilst also supporting the development of third sector organisations.
- Extensive on the job support for that individual and to ensure the placements offer work experience and training.

FSS

- All-age service focuses on the long-term unemployed and those with significant barriers to work.
- Aim is to help people into sustained employment
- Provides up to 18 months of person-centred pre-employment support – including specialist services to overcome health and other barriers - to get participants ready for work and then supports them and their employer for 12 months when in work.

The aims of the two schemes are similar. However, the cohorts are not identical. For example, CJS participants are under 29 whereas FSS has participants of all ages.

A process of benchmarking FSS to other employability schemes is presented in the recent FSS economic evaluation. For example, it compared FSS to the UK wide work-choice programme focused on disabled people. The same caveats as stated there apply here: comparisons must be considered carefully with the knowledge that the analysis may not be comparing like-with-like. Still, nevertheless it is important to use benchmarks to understand how well CJS compares to other programmes.

We have combined data for the two years (for which we have data) when CJS and FSS were both in operation (2018/19 and 2019/20). For CJS, outcomes are measured on whether they were in paid employment 13 weeks after the placement had finished. FSS data is available on those who found work at any point and those who were still in this employment at 13 weeks. There may be others who left FSS and were employed at this stage that are not captured in these figures and the same may be true of some of the CJS cohorts who left the scheme early.

Figure 6: Fair Start Scotland and Community Jobs Scotland job outcomes after 13 weeks – combined data for 2018/19 and 2019/20

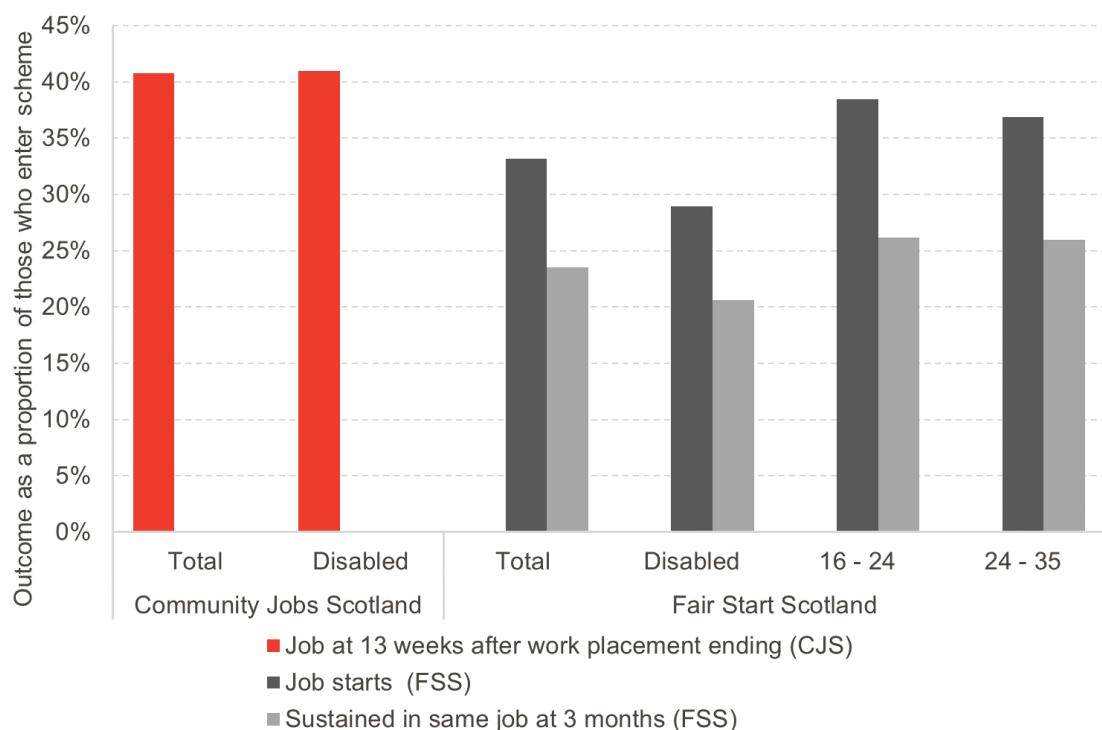


Figure 6 shows the comparison between 13 week job outcomes for Fair Start Scotland and CJS across a different range of categories that overlap with the CJS target group^{vii}. Although there is no one directly comparable category, the available evidence suggests that CJS compares favourably to FSS in helping people across the groups we have identified that potentially overlap.

People with a learning disability

As highlighted earlier, people with learning disabilities are particularly of interest due to very low reported employment rates. Both FSS and CJS show progress in supporting this group into work, although CJS has a larger cohort and performs better in terms of job outcomes at 13 weeks.

Figure 7: Job outcomes for those with learning disabilities - combined data for 2018/19 and 2019/20

	Community Jobs Scotland	Fair Start Scotland
Started in scheme	782	303
Job at 13 weeks after work placement ending (CJS)	41%	-
Job starts (FSS)	-	22%
Sustained in same job at 13 weeks (FSS)	-	17%

Costs

In public policy, to understand best value for money it is important to understand costs as well as benefits of a project to look at value for money/ cost effectiveness.

The Fair Start Scotland economic evaluation considered the cost effectiveness of Fair Start Scotland compared to two schemes that operated in Scotland in previous years^{viii}. The comparator schemes did not have an identical client group to Fair Start Scotland but similar aims. Success in reaching these aims was calculated based on cost per successful outcome, as defined by the scheme in question.

To provide a cost-effectiveness figure for CJS that is consistent with the Scottish Government's analysis, we have used two figures.

1. Amount required in wages for placements plus training budget
2. Total amount paid by SG to SCVO to run the scheme (as per SCVO accounts). This will include all administration costs.

Both figures are presented. We used the published three-year costs for Fair Start Scotland for 2018/19 to 2020/21 and calculated an average over two years that overlaps within this period for CJS^{ix}. All data is in 2021 prices.

Figure 8 reproduces the Fair Start Scotland evaluation analysis and adds CJS. As Figure 8 shows, the CJS model, on average is much more expensive than FSS per participant and successful job outcome.

Figure 8: Comparing CJS to Fair Start Scotland, the Working for Families Fund and New Futures Fund (£, 2021 prices)

	Cost per participant	Cost per job start	Cost per job outcome (13 weeks)
CJS: Wage subsidy + training budget	12,653	-	31,028
CJS: Total amount paid to SCVO by Scottish Government	14,996	-	36,774
Fair Start Scotland	2,181	5,630	9,918
Working for Families ^x	2,430	5,004	n/a
New Futures Fund ^{xi}	3,395	21,100	n/a

Disabled people

Both Fair Start Scotland and Community Jobs Scotland support people with a disability.

Cost-effectiveness based on job outcomes at 13 weeks for disabled CJS participants is better than for the average CJS population, in the region of £29,000 to £33,000 per successful job outcome.

The FSS evaluations do not provide a breakdown of cost-effectiveness for disabled people, but there is information on cost-effectiveness broken down by client group as shown in Figure 9. Job start here refers to anyone starting a job, regardless of how long it lasts.

Figure 9: Cost and cost-effectiveness by client group, Fair Start Scotland (2018/19 - 2020/21)

	Average	Core	Advanced	Intense
Average cost per job start (£)	5,630	4,835	6,394	8,102

The “intense” group has the most barriers to work and needs specialist support services. Those in the “advanced” group include less severe support needs. The “core” group does not have anyone with a health condition or significant support need. Based on these descriptions we therefore assume that disabled people are in either the advanced or intense group.

There are currently no published figures of cost-effectiveness by client group at 13 weeks for Fair Start Scotland. From Figure 8, we know that the average cost-effectiveness at 13 weeks is £9,918 a figure 75% higher than the average cost-effectiveness per job start (£5,680).

Although the difference in cost-effectiveness narrows when we assume that disabled people will be in the advanced and the intense group, the likelihood is that CJS will still be a more expensive model when viewed in terms of financial comparisons. Therefore, a key question is the extent to which the two schemes can substitute for each other. For example, can CJS support people that schemes such as FSS would not ordinarily be able to. For example, the larger cohort of people with a learning disability in CJS and better job outcomes than FSS imply that CJS is likely more suitable for this group of people. The qualitative review in Section 4 provides more insight into some of the reasons why CJS may have worked well for people with a learning disability.

There are a number of areas that this analysis has not considered. For example, longer term outcomes and social benefits. Data on longer term outcomes for CJS is not available. A social cost benefit model was a key feature of the FSS economic evaluation and could be replicated for CJS if the resources were available.

4. Qualitative review of the strengths and weaknesses of CJS

Qualitative evidence has been gathered from interviews with CJS employers (3 in total), employees (3 in total), and SCVO account managers (3 in total) held during September and October 2021. Interviews were semi-structured and explored a number of areas of Community Jobs Scotland, including what worked well and where improvements could have been made. The University of Strathclyde granted ethics approval.

These interviews were in-depth qualitative interviews and did not necessarily represent all involved with CJS.

This section explores where those who have interacted with CJS see its strengths and areas where improvements could be made.

- The schemes operation within the third sector was thought to be a crucial part of its success. Account managers, employers and employees felt that the third sector provided empathy and flexibility that would not be available in other sectors.
- For people with a learning disability, those who came from a scheme such as [DFN project search](#) onto CJS tended to be more successful than those who came straight into CJS without any pre-employment support.
- The support that SCVO offered to employers was highly regarded. Employers valued that they were not left to deal with problems on their own.
- The impact of CJS on employees was marked. CJS was felt to be critical in (re)building confidence.
- The training budget was viewed as an essential part of the programme and highly valued.
- Looking forwards, interviewees saw both opportunities and challenges of moving towards local delivery.

The third sector

Community Jobs Scotland is not the only employability route for people with additional support needs. However, all participants in our research highlighted the particular benefits of the third sector with the opinion that the private or public sectors may not provide the same level and type of support.

SCVO account managers stated that they believed a large proportion of those that come through CJS, at the time they come onto the scheme, would not have been able to take on a similar job or placement in a private or public sector setting. It was felt that the third sector has the empathy and sympathy to ensure an environment where people with additional support needs can have a positive workplace experience. Account managers described employers going above and beyond, for example selecting the person they judge

to be furthest away from the labour market to maximise their impact as an employer and the community benefit.

Third sector employers themselves viewed the third sector as having more compassion and the ability to flex around the needs of the young people than would be the case in the private or public sector. One spoke about it being a safe environment for young people to find their feet. One person felt that it was important to have this route open to young people and that most of those with additional support needs who become part of CJS would probably not have been able to compete for a job in the private sector before they gained experience through their placement.

Those on work placements echoed this. They spoke about the third sector allowing for a diversity of views and perspectives and that it valued the skills and experience that people referred through CJS can bring. One person spoke of the impact of unsuccessful periods of working in the private sector where each job “ended in flames”. Working in the third sector had given them the confidence that not all periods of employment had to be short and end badly.

It was felt that CJS placements provided much more than a volunteering role would offer. Employers said that the certainty and income provided meant more responsibility and defined tasks could be allocated to those on work placements. Because of the length of the posts, employers said it was worthwhile to invest in the CJS employee. Employees reflected that taking on the responsibility offered by a paid placement had helped them build confidence that they did not have before. Some had, and will again, volunteer, but this CJS paid placement felt very different from previous volunteering opportunities.

For some of the employees we spoke to, this was the first time they had received a paycheck. They described this as very significant for them. It gave them the independence to plan and choose what to do with their own money. However, all were aware that the placement was temporary, so they enjoyed it while it happened rather than feeling they had the certainty to plan financially.

How people come on to CJS

Account managers spoke about a variety of routes that people come on to CJS through. These included SDS and the Jobcentre. Having a Work Coach to support the client into CJS during the application, the interview, and the early stages of the placement worked well. Often, their help was not needed, but the continuity of support provided reassurance to those starting on CJS.

For people with learning disabilities, account managers spoke about the benefits of coming onto CJS after DFN Project Search. DFN Project Search is a scheme that helps young people with a learning disability learn work related skills with short work placements. It was felt that, having gone through this scheme, young people with a learning disability were well equipped to transition into a paid placement via CJS. It was noted that without this preparation through the DFN Project Search programme or something similar, young people with a learning disability did not do as well in CJS. It was also noted that DFN Project Search already works with a range of local authorities across Scotland.

We asked the employees what they would have been doing if not for CJS. Responses included volunteering, college courses, working on creative projects, and being unemployed on Universal Credit. Employers reflected that in many cases, before CJS, people seemed to be stuck in volunteering or college courses without really knowing where they would go next. This would be an area where data collection would have been useful to consider more fully the difference that a CJS placement made.

The impact of CJS

Employees stated that the work placement had had a beneficial effect. The key word used was confidence. Before CJS, one person spoke about feeling incredibly nervous about talking to anyone, but now they are used to meeting and chatting with a diverse group of people. Hearing about other people's experiences had also helped them realise that more employment opportunities were out there for them.

Another person spoke about how critical this placement had been in helping reverse the feeling of isolation that they experienced during the lockdowns due to the pandemic. All found the social aspect of their jobs enjoyable and a crucial part of building social skills and confidence.

All felt they had been able to adapt to changes in regulations during their placement and knew this was a strength they could take forward into other jobs in the future.

Employers saw a marked difference in the people they worked with by the end of their placements, with confidence and self-esteem much improved. The community's recognition was also felt to be a crucial part of how the scheme was structured, as people who previously saw the young person as not contributing much to society could now see what they were capable of doing given the right opportunity.

Making the placements work in practice

Flexibility seemed vital in ensuring that the placements worked well for young people. Working out how to balance hours around public transport was something that one employer spoke about. In general, it was felt that the part-time basis of the placements was an excellent idea to allow the flexibility needed.

The account managers spoke about how the length of placements had become longer over time, with a movement from full-time six month placements to more extended 12 -18 month part-time placements. This was in response to learning from early CJS placements.

The employers we spoke to felt that 12 months was the minimum time, and longer than that was better. It tended to take six months for people to find their feet, and the longer they had after that, the better it was for their development. An even longer time scale was thought to be a possible area for improvement in the future as this would potentially open up opportunities for further development, for example, taking on management responsibilities.

The training budget

All the people we spoke to felt the training budget was essential to the scheme. Up to £200, and occasionally more than this, is available for the young person to engage in a training course of their choice. It could be directly related to their placement or something different.

Employers reported that the training budget was well used, and the fact that it was on offer helped with self-esteem and allowed the young person to try new things, which could be especially useful if the placement was not quite the right fit for what they wanted to do next. All the employees we spoke to were planning on using the training budget during their placement and were grateful that the resource was offered.

The relationship between employers and SCVO

The account managers we spoke to at SCVO felt that they had built up a strong rapport with the employers engaged in CJS. A crucial part of their role was answering questions and providing any support needed from employers. Even if the assigned account manager could not answer a particular question, they would make sure that an answer was found even if this meant asking outwith the employability team. For example, this may have meant asking the SCVO HR Service team to answer an HR query from a third sector employer.

Employers spoke about the ease of speaking to and receiving advice quickly and knowing that there was someone on the end of the line to help if things were not running smoothly.

The portal that SCVO has set up to manage some of the administration around CJS worked well from employers' point of view, although they felt some aspects could be improved. For example, the requirement to go on each week to the portal to confirm that the employee was still engaged with the scheme, rather than a requirement to inform SCVO if the staff member left, felt onerous.

Employers found that the administration around booking training for individuals was straightforward to complete through the portal. There were no hoops to jump through regarding approved trainer lists or any onerous conditions attached, making it straightforward to set up.

Moving away from Community Jobs Scotland to a localised approach

The account managers we spoke to felt trust in the SCVO CJS brand, both from employers and people looking to take up placements. There was some concern about this brand being lost in the move towards localisation. Some employers thought that this would be an issue for young people who may have had negative experiences with their local authorities in the past and would be less likely to engage than they would with a wholly third sector run scheme.

While generally in favour of the principle of localisation, account managers did have concerns that third sector employers may be seen as the poor relation by some and that trust in the approach of third sector placements may suffer as a result. Account managers at SCVO also now have a network of employers who are willing and able to provide placements. They feared that much of this knowledge would be lost in the transition to localised support.

However, it was acknowledged that some local authorities around Scotland are engaged in this type of programme already and may therefore be well equipped to scale up.

Some of the employers we spoke to are linked up to local authority programmes, but there were fears about moving entirely away from the approach of CJS, which they felt worked well. Another employer commented that the key thing was that the money is there to operate the scheme well. There was some apprehension that funding for placements with the third sector would be squeezed, and some elements that work well, for example, the training budget, might be lost.

5. How could future schemes be evaluated

As noted throughout this report, the findings presented provide a useful insight into CJS but do not provide a robust basis for attributing causal impact. The benchmarking to FSS also provides additional evidence, but it was not possible to construct a robust comparator group due to lack of publicly available data. It is possible that if we had more time and resources, we may have been able to work with the Scottish Government to see if they could provide better comparator data. Ideally, more data would be publicly available with the data meeting appropriate standards enabling it to be used easily in policy focused research.

Even if building a robust comparator group had been possible, it would still have fallen short of best practice in evaluation due to the lack of a control group to help understand outcomes in the absence of any schemes. For example, it may have been the case that a significant proportion of CJS and FSS participants would have found work if these schemes had never existed. However, ethically, it can be problematic to construct control groups if this denies assistance to those identified as needing it.

Benchmarking can provide a lot of robust information if there is sufficient consideration of comparator groups. Essentially, it involves the outcomes of a group of people with the same observable characteristics being compared before and after entering different employability schemes.

There are other options that go beyond benchmarking. For example, if a staggered rollout of a programme is required this could provide enough evidence for a study that takes advantage of different rollout dates to test whether outcomes are directly linked to progress in the programme.

Some programmes have an age cut-off and comparing people just under and just over that age cut-off could provide enough evidence to find a causal impact. For this approach, the non-eligible group must be monitored the same way as the eligible ‘treated’ group to gather enough data.

Evaluations aim to test whether a change in outcome pre and post-treatment can be causally linked to programme or intervention. The outcome of interest may be job outcomes, or it may be something else – for example, impact on household income, or life satisfaction. Therefore, it is important to think carefully about what ‘success’ looks like before schemes are set up so that the right data can be gathered from the outset – particularly regarding the situation before the programme started for both treatment and control/comparator groups.

Due to the localisation of employment support through No One Left Behind, there is an opportunity to think about evaluation as new schemes are developed. In some areas, the scale of the schemes (especially those for particular groups) may be small, and it may take a number of years to gather sufficient data. However, the information will be invaluable in building evidence-based policy on how best to support people into employment. Ensuring this is done well from the start will prevent situations where evidence has been gathered and collated (potentially at great expense) but has limited value in future policy making due to limitations in quality or quantity.

6. Conclusion

The evidence presented in this analysis indicates that Community Jobs Scotland has been a relative success in terms of its aims of getting people into sustained job outcomes. The CJS model is, however, relatively expensive, albeit with additional benefits that are difficult to measure quantitatively. These include community benefits that all the placements are expected to fulfil. The third sector employers clearly benefit from the additional workforce and the range of skills and perspectives that those on the work placements bring.

On a strict value for money comparison, programmes like CJS are always likely to be relatively expensive, especially if the target group are those who face the most significant barriers to the workplace.

One of the key questions in thinking about how CJS compares to other programmes is the extent to which those who were successful in CJS would have had the same outcome if they were in another type of (less resource intensive) support. For example, the people we spoke to during this research, including those on work placements, did not feel that the young people involved in CJS would be successful in a private or public sector environment due to the nature of the issues they faced as individuals. The quantitative analysis on people with learning disabilities adds weight to this, and showed far more progress in CJS than Fair Start Scotland.

CJS has evolved over the years to provide more extended placements based on previous learning. This information may be helpful for others planning similar schemes. Indeed, employers we spoke to in this research felt that placements of at least 12 months were the most beneficial, and longer would be better. The training budget was spoken about as being very important to the success of the scheme.

As CJS ends in its current form, it is currently unknown whether funding transferred through No One Left Behind will be used for CJS-type schemes. The schemes that do develop will hopefully be able to instil good monitoring from the outset to measure and evaluate the outcomes that they are trying to achieve. Although not a full evaluation, this report provides evidence that we hope will be helpful to those considering the future of employability in the coming months and years.

Data does not exist to explore the long term impacts of CJS, for example, whether or not people remain in subsequent jobs for longer than a year. For future employability schemes, including those that will begin as part of No One Left Behind, gathering this data on outcomes is critical to understand the most effective programmes to invest in, especially if there is interest in understanding longer-term impacts on household finances (poverty) and quality of life. Building the right monitoring structures at the start is key to ensuring that this can be achieved.

ⁱ <https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/official-report/what-was-said-in-parliament/meeting-of-parliament-16-09-2021?meeting=13300&io=120668>

ⁱⁱ McTier, Clelland, McGregor (2012) *Evaluation of Community Jobs Scotland Programme*, University of Glasgow. Available here: <http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/68684/1/68684.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ McTier, McDougall & McGregor (2015) *Evaluation of Community Jobs Scotland Phase 3 and Phase 4 Care Leave and Young People with Convictions Pilots*, University of Glasgow. Available here: https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/24482/2/00487266_Redacted.pdf

^{iv} Fair Start Scotland economic evaluation available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/economic-evaluation-fair-start-scotland/pages/5/>

^v You're disabled under the Equality Act 2010 if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities" from <https://www.gov.uk/definition-of-disability-under-equality-act-2010>.

^{vi} <https://fraserofallander.org/publications/report-scotlands-employment-landscape-for-people-with-learning-disabilities/>

^{vii} Fair Start Scotland figures on disability refers to the Equality Act 2010 definition: those who list a disability or long term health condition that limits their day to day life "a little" or "a lot". CJS figures use the same definition.

^{viii} Working for Families (ran from 2004 – 2008 aimed at parents) and the New Futures Fund (ran from 1998 – 2005 aimed at young people aged 16 – 34 with a broad range of additional support needs).

^{ix} We are aware that the Scottish Government is planning to revise these figures. An update to this analysis will be provided once these figures are made public

^x Available at: <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/1393/2/0080320.pdf>

^{xi} Available at:
<https://www.evaluationsonline.org.uk/evaluations/Browse.do?ui=browse&action=show&id=289&taxonomy=EEO>