

Scottish Government's Position on the Supported Employment Review Report

The Scottish Government delivers supported employment through Fair Start Scotland, our first iteration of devolved employability provision in Scotland. The review of supported employment in Scotland was commissioned to conduct an evaluation of supported employment delivery within Fair Start Scotland, benchmarking with other delivery across Scotland, in order to identify areas of improvement for future delivery. The **Scottish Government accepts the findings and recommendations of this report**. We will use this as a foundation on which to build a specialist supported employment offer within our future devolved employability services.

Reach of Supported Employment

The Scottish Government believes that supported employment plays an important part in helping disabled people and people with additional support needs, including those with learning disabilities and autistic people, who would otherwise struggle to gain employment in the open labour market. Supported employment can make a contribution to our ambition to at least halve the disability employment gap in Scotland by 2038. To that end, we recognise that targeted support is required to help those who would secure and sustain employment opportunities through supported employment.

Next Phase of the Devolved Employability Service

With only 9 months remaining on the extension of current Fair Start Scotland contracts, we need to be practical on what can realistically be implemented from the recommendations within this timeframe and achieve the desired outcomes. Therefore, at this time, we are not providing specific responses to each recommendation because we need to carefully consider the recommendations as we work with our partners, including local government, to map the next phase of our devolved employability services after March 2023. In doing so, we will think holistically about how to take the review recommendations forward and improve the supported employment offer in general, and outcomes for people with learning disabilities and autistic people in particular.

Responding to the review report and next steps

The Scottish Government has listened to the concerns and feedback of the Supported Employment Review Steering Group regarding the current employability offer through Fair Start Scotland. Members of the Steering Group have requested that specific details for how the Scottish Government responds to each recommendation be clear. Under the current Fair Start Scotland contract, which was extended without contractual changes, we can immediately explore two recommendations: 7 and 9.

- **Recommendation 7.** *Options are explored with DWP to allow Supported Employment providers to claim Access to Work directly.*

This is an operational decision for the UK Government and discussions are ongoing between Scottish Government officials and DWP.

- **Recommendation 9** which calls for the “*removal of 16 hours of work for that to be counted as an outcome*”.

We have committed to promote Living Hours employer accreditation as part of wider promotion of fair work principles. Living Hours includes a guaranteed minimum of 16 hours a week unless the worker requests otherwise. It would be legitimate for an employer to agree with a worker a contract involving less than 16 hours a week if the worker was unable to sustain a longer working week. This would not prevent an employer from gaining Living Hours accreditation (because it has been requested and agreed by the worker). This adjustment would enable an appropriate person-centred response to be provided, based on the number of hours the individual was able to work.

We are reviewing the other remaining recommendations and will consider our response as we develop and design the next iteration of our devolved employability services through No One Left Behind.

We agree and hereby give a public commitment that officials from across Scottish Government policy areas and the members of the review Steering Group will work with local government partners, as per our Partnership Agreement, to develop a policy position on supported employment within the next phase of our devolved employability services. Officials will also work with other stakeholders (including people with lived experience and employers) to consider and take account of the learning, best practice and value for money of supported employment models across Scotland.

We will ensure each of the outstanding seven recommendations is fully responded to.

Conclusion

Once a clear policy position on specialist services including supported employment is agreed, a supplementary publication detailing our response to each of the recommendations will be made public.