

From: *[redacted]*
Employability Division
24 October 2019

Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills
FAIR START SCOTLAND- ANNUAL REPORTS

Purpose

1. To update on our proposed approach to reporting our progress on Fair Start Scotland including the publication of the Fair Start Scotland Annual Report and the associated evaluation reports to be published alongside the report.

Priority

2. **Routine.** *[redacted – not in scope]*

Background

3. We wrote to the Minister in January 2019 about our approach to monitoring and reporting of Fair Start Scotland and again in July about the shape of the Fair Start Scotland (FSS) annual report.

FSS Annual Report

4. *[redacted – not in scope]*

FSS Evaluation

5. The evaluation reports bring out some of the key headline findings from the annual report and covers the first full year of FSS service delivery. The primary report provides an overview of externally commissioned research with FSS participants, providers and delivery partners, along with our own analysis of FSS management information to consider the reach of FSS services. The other two reports provide further details of the commissioned research and were authored by the external contractors. A summary of the evaluation findings is enclosed at Annex A.

6. The commissioned research activity in year 1 involved:

- a representative telephone survey of over 1000 FSS participants to gather their views on referral, induction and experience of FSS support; and
- three local area case studies (in Alloa, Irvine and Wick), providing an in-depth exploration of the experiences of participants, providers and other partners involved in FSS delivery in each of these areas. We have planned a case study for each FSS Lot and will report three studies each year.

[redacted – not in scope]

7. *[redacted – not in scope]*

Timing

8. To allow time for the evaluation reports to be published alongside the Annual Report it is proposed that the timing of the reports is w/c 4 November. This would still be consistent with our public commitment to publish in Autumn. Officials will explore and work with Cabinet Secretariat on understanding any impact if a general election is called ahead of the proposed dates.

Communications and handling

9. Officials are working closely with Communications Economy to develop a plan for launch. Special Advisors have suggested that Sandra White MSP asks the GIQ question. We will also write to the relevant Convenors of Parliamentary committees as well as looking at options for a visit in Edinburgh to support the publication.

10. Conclusion

We invite you to;

- *[redacted – not in scope]*
- *[redacted – not in scope]*
- Advise if you are content for publication of the reports to take place w/c 4 November with a supporting visit to take place in Edinburgh.

[redacted] X40849

Copy List:

[redacted]

Executive Summary

Fair Start Scotland (FSS) is Scotland's first fully devolved employability support service. FSS was launched on 3 April 2018, with the aim of supporting 38,000 people into the labour market. The key focus for the service is to provide tailored and personalised support to all those who participate.

This is the second FSS evaluation report published by the Scottish Government. This report presents an overview of research relating to the first year of service delivery up to 31 March 2019, and includes a telephone survey of over 1,000 participants, local area case studies in Alloa, Wick and Irvine, and analysis of management information of the 10,063 participants who joined FSS in the first year.

10.1 Reach of services

- 10,063 participants started on FSS in year 1, equivalent to 58% of all referrals. A fifth of participants sustained employment for at least 13 weeks and 4.1% sustained employment for at least 26 weeks. A greater proportion of men, people aged over 35, people with a disability and people living in an urban area took part in FSS than are represented in the Scottish unemployed population. Additionally, FSS participants were more likely to be from the 15% most deprived areas in Scotland.
- **Having a conviction, being care experienced and being in receipt of benefits were significant barriers to work.** FSS participants in these groups were less likely to achieve and hold a job for 13 weeks than other participants. However, some of the hardest to reach groups are more likely to sustain employment once they've had FSS support. People from minority ethnic communities and those aged 16-24 are under-

represented in the numbers starting on the service, but are proportionately more likely to sustain work for 13 weeks.

10.2 Values and principles

- **Most respondents were very positive about the support they received from FSS. Nine out of ten respondents felt they were treated with dignity and respect (92%)** and this did not differ by gender, ethnicity or presence of a health condition.
- **Around four fifths felt they had choices about the type of support they received, and felt that the service took account of their individual needs.** Most participants also agreed that the service offered support to improve their general quality of life and wellbeing (78%), although some differences existed across different areas.
- While FSS participants overall had lower than average mental wellbeing scores, those participants in work, and receiving in-work support had the highest wellbeing scores, well above the wider population average. **This suggests that both work and FSS support have positive mental wellbeing effects.**

10.3 Moving towards work

- **Participants who had worked at one point in the last 5 years were more likely to be working at the time of the phone survey.** A participant's level of education was correlated with their working status, with those with higher levels of education were more likely to be in work.
- Of those in work, half were in full time employment (49%) and two fifths worked between 16 – 29 hours per week. **Woman were more likely than men to be in part time work**, reflecting national employment patterns.
- **FSS had a positive effect on motivation to find employment for two thirds of participants (65%), with 41% reporting their motivation to find work had increased “a lot”.** FSS appears to be less likely to have a positive effect on motivation levels for those with long term health conditions than other participants.
- **Having a health condition was the most commonly mentioned barrier to returning to work**, with a lack of skills, qualifications or experience the second most frequently mentioned.
- **Of those who moved into work, more than 8 in 10 started their job in the first 6 months of service delivery**, reflecting the 12 – 18 month pre-employment support period available to participants.

10.4 Awareness and motivation

- Most year 1 participants were referred to FSS through their local Jobcentre (70%).

- **Almost all phone survey participants were aware that the service was voluntary**, however those aged over 50 were slightly more likely to believe the service was mandatory.
- The most common reasons for engaging with the service were receiving support to go back to work (45%) and receiving additional help and support (40%). Men and those aged 16-34 were more likely to say receiving additional support was a key motivation.
- Interviews with people who had similar characteristics to FSS participants but were not engaging with the service suggest the two main reasons for lack of engagement were not being aware of FSS or that the individual was already receiving another form of employability support. These reasons suggest **there is nothing about the FSS service itself that is putting people off participating**.

10.5 Process, referral and service delivery

- **Nine out of ten phone survey respondents felt it was very easy to engage with the service (89%)**, with seven in ten rating the experience as 'very easy'.
- Those who were in work at the point of the interview were more likely to describe the service as straightforward (46% vs. 35%) and less likely to say the Jobcentre facilitated their FSS engagement (11% vs. 24%). Only 3% of participants considered the referral and engagement process difficult.
- **Across all of the local area case studies, participants reported very positive experiences of service delivery. Participants valued the voluntary, comprehensive and respectful nature of the service**, commonly reporting FSS was tailored to them and that their key workers provided them with support suited to their skillsets, interests and experience.
- **Most participants preferred FSS to their previous experience of other employability provision**, as key workers provided more personalised support and were more understanding of individual circumstances.
- **Participants reported various positive outcomes from taking part in FSS, including enhanced confidence, skills and experience as well as reduced isolation**. For some, this helped them get back into work, whilst others felt more confident and positive about their ongoing job search.

10.6 Employability support

- **Most respondents took up the offer of pre-employment support**. One to one appointments and a dedicated key worker were the most popular option (86%), with two thirds of those who took up the offer meeting their key worker about once a week.

Restricted- Advice to Ministers

- The survey suggested not all participants were offered all of the support available, with 46% saying they were not given access to work tasters or work experience opportunities. Fewer participants were offered support for a physical or mental health condition (39%) or help with an addiction (14%).
- Uptake of support varied across age groups: those aged 35-49 were more likely to decline the offer of a key worker and help with job searches.
- Around four fifths of respondents who received pre-work support of any kind felt it was useful. **When asked what other support they would have wanted, almost three quarters felt no other support was needed.**
- **The most common in-work support taken up by participants was a dedicated key worker (47%) and one to one appointments (36%).**