

Individual Placement and Support Review

Scottish Government's Response

Scottish Government's Response to the Report Findings and Recommendations

A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Employment Action Plan (2018), outlined the Scottish Government's commitment to at least halve the Disability Employment Gap in Scotland by 2038. As part of activity to realise this ambition, we undertook to review Individual Placement and Support (IPS) delivered through Fair Start Scotland. In the tender specification, we stated that this would be benchmarked against wider provision of IPS. In July 2020, we commissioned Social Finance to undertake this review, with support and guidance from a Steering Group led by Professor Colin Lindsay, University of Strathclyde.

Individual Placement and Support is a model of supported employment proven to work particularly well in offering assistance to people with additional support needs, especially those with severe and enduring mental ill health, to help them find or re-enter sustainable employment that fits their needs and interests. This approach is important to delivering many of our ambitions around inclusive growth, tackling child poverty, and delivering public health reform. It is also in line with our No One Left Behind approach - our joint vision with Local Government for the future of employability support. This sets out our intention to create a system that is integrated and aligned with other services and puts the user at the heart of service design, providing flexible, person-centred support to ensure we can assist more people into the right job at the right time. IPS is also in line with the Scottish Government's Mental Health Strategy, which aims to explore innovative ways of connecting mental health, disability, and employment support in Scotland.

The purpose of this review was to consider the most appropriate approach to delivery of IPS in Scotland. We recognise the challenges expressed in the findings, but we and our officials are committed to a test and learn approach. This includes building on work in progress to further strengthen our existing partnerships with Public Health Scotland and Local Authorities, as well as the third sector and employers, and as part of the implementation of No One Left Behind.

The findings of this review reflect the significant potential of IPS in bringing people affected by mental ill health closer to the labour market, not only to access, but to sustain and progress in employment.

The Scottish Government welcomes the findings and recommendations of the review. Our response to the report is framed mainly by the current employability landscape in Scotland, with particular reference to Fair Start Scotland.

We note that the COVID-19 pandemic had a considerable impact on many areas of society, in particular health, but also on the economy and the labour market. We are aware that the effects of the pandemic have, in many cases, compounded existing issues for those already facing barriers within the labour market, including people with severe and enduring mental health issues. Therefore, in responding to the report we will seek to ensure that progress made in recent years in reducing the disability employment gap is not reversed as a result of labour market impacts (not

only of the COVID-19 pandemic, but also leaving the European Union, and the prevailing cost crisis).

The Scottish Government recognises that the employability response to labour market inequalities must address the needs of individuals of all ages and circumstances, and build on the well-established services managed by Scottish and Local Government and others across the Scottish employability landscape. This also includes the complex interactions between economic inactivity and health outcomes. Work is underway to consider how health and employment services best align, including where IPS would sit within No One Left Behind to best support individuals who could benefit from the model.

Fair Start Scotland

Fair Start Scotland (FSS), the Scottish Government's devolved employability service, supports people towards and into work through personalised, one-to-one support, tailored to an individual's circumstances, treating them with fairness, dignity and respect. It is aimed at supporting those facing the greatest challenges accessing the labour market, including disabled people, and contributing to tackling inequalities and growing Scotland's economy.

Statistics published in November 2022 show that to September 2022, FSS had supported over 51,000 starts on the service, with over 17,500 job starts since its launch in 2018. Those who started work have high rates of sustained employment¹:

- 73% of starts that entered employment went on to sustain employment for at least 3 months;
- 81% of those who sustained employment for 3 months reached 6 months;
- 77% of those who sustained employment for 6 months reached 12 months.

Statistics also show that 63% of people receiving FSS support reported a long-term health condition and 45% were disabled.

There were over 22,500 starts on the service by participants that reported a disability, with over 6,500 job starts. Disabled participants who started work also achieved similarly high rates of sustained employment¹:

- 72% of starts reporting a disability that entered employment went on to sustain employment for at least 3 months.
- 81% of those reporting a disability who sustained employment for 3 months reached 6 months.
- 79% of those reporting a disability who sustained employment for 6 months reached 12 months.

On 16 July 2020 the Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills announced the extension of FSS delivery with the current contractors up to 31 March 2023, providing stability and continuity for FSS participants and to allow the anticipated COVID-19 related increase in demand for support from the most disadvantaged in

¹ The number of starts to the service, job starts and number of starts sustaining employment for 3 months includes re-joins to the service during the respective time periods.

our communities. The extension also ensured there is sufficient support in place for disabled people and those with long term health conditions.

Extending FSS services allows further development time to deliver on our No One Left Behind ambitions, our strategy for the transformational change of the employability system in Scotland. Building on the successful implementation of Fair Start Scotland, we are working with local government partners and the public, third and private sector to develop an employability system that delivers joined up, flexible, responsive, person-centred provision.

Recommendation 1

In future, IPS for people with severe and enduring mental illness should be commissioned outside of FSS through a partnership between health and employability commissioners.

Progress has been made in moving towards a more aligned approach with local partners, enabling us to effectively align services within our wider COVID-19 economic response. This has helped to ensure that our employability services are responsive to the changing labour market situation and provides the flexibility to allow us to meet the anticipated increase in demand for support from the impacts of the pandemic. We will build on this when designing the future model of employability support and strengthening our No One Left Behind approach.

Our Mental Health Transition and Recovery Plan, published in October 2020, outlines the Scottish Government's response to the mental health impacts of COVID-19. Included in this are a number of key employment commitments, ensuring that our mental health response focuses on the central importance of meaningful employment and seeks to mitigate the negative impacts on mental health of unemployment.

In taking forward these employment commitments, we are working to strengthen links between Employability and Mental Health policy, with a particular focus on improving support for those with mental health issues to secure and sustain employment. We are also working with a wide range of stakeholders, including employer groups, trade unions and mental health organisations, to promote mentally healthy workplaces. As part of this work, we recently launched a digital platform, in partnership with Public Health Scotland, that signposts Scottish employers to a wide range of resources to enable them to support the mental health and wellbeing needs of their workforce. The digital platform can be found at:

www.healthyworkinglives.scot/mentalhealth

The development of our new Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, due to be published in the coming year, will build on the direction set out in our Mental Health Transition and Recovery Plan and will guide the work that the Government, and our partners, will do over the coming years to improve mental health and wellbeing in Scotland.

As we develop and design the future model of employability support, officials from across Government and key public sector partners - notably from Employability, Mental Health, Fair Work, Public Health Scotland and Local Authorities - will work collaboratively on agreeing the best approach to delivering this recommendation.

Recommendation 2

Existing IPS delivery within FSS could be improved through capacity building support and future contractual changes.

In considering recommendations around capacity building, and in line with our 'test and learn' approach, we have, since this review was conducted, worked with colleagues in Health Improvement to deliver National Institute of Disability Management and Research (NIDMAR) training for frontline staff from each Fair Start Scotland service provider, to drive improvements in the service offer. NHS staff (including clinicians and a range of Health and Social Care staff who provide vocational rehabilitation) from the respective areas also attend the training to support partnership building. The training enhances participants' understanding of work as a health outcome, offers practical skills in completing the Allied Health Professionals' health and work report, and provides a deeper understanding of mental health and reasonable adjustments in the workplace.

To date, over 90% of the staff have successfully passed the Certified Disability Management Professional exam and have gained their Professional Registration Certificate. Through attendance on the course, professional relationships have developed and, as a result, Service Providers are now engaging with Community Mental Health teams in their respective areas and have been invited to attend the Scottish IPS peer support group.

Additionally, three out of the five FSS providers have obtained fair, or above, IPS Fidelity Review results from an independent assessor, with the remaining two confident of achieving at least a fair rating in their upcoming reviews. We will continue to closely monitor IPS delivery over the remaining lifetime of the FSS contracts, with all learning shared across providers and used to inform the future delivery models of IPS as we move towards further implementation of No One Left Behind.

We have listened to the views of disabled people's organisations and feedback from disabled participants, who indicate that finding and maintaining a job of 16 hours per week is unachievable for some disabled people. As a result, we will be implementing changes to the Fair Start Scotland contracts to allow providers to claim job outcomes for participants who work at least 8 hours per week, in specific circumstances, which will allow more people to benefit from the service offer.

Early discussions are already underway on how to increase the wider reach of the IPS offer to straddle both Employability and health and work holistically with individuals who do not interact with current referral routes, with advice being sought from the Scottish Government's Mental Health Professional Advisors.

We have also commissioned a Disabled People's Organisation (DPO) delivery contract, which was awarded to a consortium led by Inclusion Scotland and supported by Glasgow Disability Alliance and Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living. The purpose of this work is to help enable provision of better support to disabled people during their time with the Fair Start Scotland service. Drawing on disabled people's lived experience and underpinned by the social model of disability, this contract supports Employability providers and employers to develop their disability equality capability and knowledge across all stages of the employment process, including in-work support. Key learning from this will help to shape further improvements to Employability provision in Scotland.

Ensuring that access to IPS within FSS was not linked to conditionality and sanctions removed a barrier that there is evidence can cause hardship, including potential emotional and mental distress. In consideration of the review recommendation regarding the need to develop both capacity and capability, we recognise that this extends beyond individual skills and knowledge to include organisational processes and approaches.

The Scottish Government has worked closely with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to ensure that, where appropriate and dependent on the individual, the referral process encourages effective working between Job Centre Plus and FSS service providers.

A key theme which emerged from the review was the need to strengthen cross-policy working, including between employability and health in particular. Through collaboration with service providers and other stakeholders, and building on the implementation of *A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Employment Action Plan*, we will focus on promoting collaboration and alignment of our respective services. To achieve shared outcomes will call for closer partnership arrangements, aligning plans, strategies, and spending decisions towards improving outcomes. Cross-policy collaboration around quality standards for secondary mental health services, linked to the national outcomes, will provide an opportunity to link this to cross-cutting policy issues, including Employability.

This is part of a wider ambition to develop a suite of standards for mental health services. This will allow us to address transitions between inpatient and community services which has been identified as a key area for improvement. The aim of these standards is to improve the quality and safety of mental health services. We want to ensure that individuals, their families and carers know what they can expect from mental health services, ensuring our approach is person-centred. The standards should reduce scope of unwanted variation of quality of care and therefore reduce inequalities in experiences and outcomes. In addition, they should provide an opportunity to build a collective understanding of performance and enable effective benchmarking to drive improvements in quality of care. This should provide a basis

for continual improvement through enabling greater scrutiny and assurance of services against the standards.

The Scottish Government is confident that the current Fair Start Scotland delivery model is flexible enough to ensure that providers can commission any bespoke support needed to help overcome a wide range of barriers to accessing employment, whether that be through IPS, supported employment, or another combination of specialist support services.

The success of this model is very much dependent on effective partnerships at a local level with other support organisations (e.g., the Scottish Prison Service, drug and alcohol rehabilitation services, and those that support people with complex health conditions). We are committed to continuous improvement of Fair Start Scotland and will explore all opportunities to enhance the local integration of services and ‘test and learn’ about what works best to support those with more complex barriers towards and into work. IPS forms an important part of the FSS offer to help participants find sustainable, competitive jobs that fit their needs and interests, and we know that from the [Year 3 Evaluation report](#) that 82% of participants felt that the support received while on the service helped improve their general quality of life and wellbeing.

We will consider the remaining elements of this recommendation in the future development of devolved employability services.

Recommendation 3

IPS provision within FSS should be expanded further to all participants with complex health and disability-related barriers to work. This would make Scotland a pioneer in demonstrating how to achieve outstanding outcomes within mainstream employment support.

Under the current FSS contractual arrangements, IPS is available to anyone with a complex disability or health barrier. As our Employability service is person-centred, all participants who meet the criteria for IPS will be offered it. Officials will consider this recommendation further to ensure the policy position on eligibility for IPS is considered in the development of future devolved employability services.

Conclusion

Tackling the root causes of health inequalities remains a top priority for the Scottish Government. The impact of persistent deprivation, poverty and other inequalities precipitated by, among other factors, mental ill health, have been thrown into sharp relief by COVID-19. This is why our commitment to build a wellbeing economy is now so vital, with fair and healthy work being an integral part of our commitment.

We are grateful to the Review Steering Group, and to all stakeholders who engaged with Social Finance in undertaking this review. We are delighted to publish the key findings of this review, along with this Scottish Government response to the recommendations.

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