

SUBMISSION FROM BARNARDO'S SCOTLAND

Barnardo's Scotland operates six Barnardo's Works employment services across Scotland, which supports young men and women who are distant from the labour market into sustainable employment. Our target group includes young people who may have been in care, have had a history of substance misuse or involvement in the criminal justice system or face other barriers to employment.

From our experience in our employment services we have encountered a number of issues specific to young women who are seeking to enter and sustain employment.

Supporting Young Women into Work

Through our services experience we have found that there are specific issues for young women in engaging with our employment services. Young women appear to be more likely to face issues such as peer pressure not to take on employment. For many of the young women we work with, such as care leavers, there can be a general assumption that for them a positive destination on leaving school is to start a family.

Those that do participate in our employment services can often be practically prone to having confidence issues, particularly in group settings, which can affect their chances of moving from the programme into employment.

It is crucial that more is done to challenge stereotypes and assumptions as well as provide intensive and specific support to young women to give them confidence and skills and to help introduce them into employment. Care leavers in particular can suffer from the very low expectations that others have for them.

Barnardo's Works in the Highlands currently delivers a programme aimed at young mothers-to-be and young lone parents to introduce them to the world of work (the Bump programme) and to help them in to work (Baby Steps). This work is supported by the Scottish Government Equality Fund.

Adequate Childcare

For many parents, particularly women, access to affordable childcare remains a significant barrier to work. Barnardo's Scotland welcomes the Scottish Government's commitment to increase childcare to 600 hours for all three and four year olds. However, there remains far too little support available for those parents, particularly lone parents, with children under the age of three or in school. Lone parents can face particular difficulties in combining employment with a school drop off at around 9am and pick up before 3pm, and this is an issues consistently raised by the young parents we work with.

Without accessible and affordable childcare the choice to work for many young women is simply not one they can make.

There is also a considerable concern that as local councils face further budget pressure that this may impact on the provision of childcare services and facilities across Scotland.

The Impact of Welfare Reform

One of the UK Governments stated priorities in changing the current UK benefits system is to make work pay for everyone. However, employment opportunities for many young mothers may still be limited under the UK Government welfare reform programme, especially lone parents, who tend to be women.

A recent Barnardo's report 'Paying to work: childcare and child poverty'¹, highlighted how high childcare costs could interact with the proposed new system of Universal Credit and the tax system, potentially causing parents to lose a substantial proportion of any extra money they earn. In the worst cases, for example lone parents with more than one preschool child, parents could actually face losing more money than they earn from working longer hours due to the interaction between the 'taper' and the tax system..

Barnardo's Works

Our Barnardo's Works programme has a simple mission: to get the most disadvantaged young people and young adults into jobs. It is a carefully structured programme based on many years of experience. As described below, we focus on industry relevant, in-demand skills and seek to line up real jobs with real prospects.

We currently have Barnardo's Works service in six areas of Scotland: Renfrewshire, Dundee, Highland, Edinburgh, Glasgow and the Cairngorms National Park. We support young people in both urban and rural employment contexts.

To do this it is vital that we form strong partnerships with employers, from very large enterprises like Scottish & Southern Energy and Scottish Water to local shops and small businesses. We have partnered with a number of public sector employers, the NHS in particular, but the vast majority of our placements are with the private sector. Our partnership working with Scottish & Southern Energy has been nominated for a number of awards and we won the top prize at the Scottish Social Services Council Care Accolades 2010.

What we demand from all our business partners is real commitment to the programme and support for each young person with an on-site mentor. But probably the most important demand is that each employer identifies real jobs that need doing.

¹ A copy of the report is available at www.barnardos.org.uk/ptw_childcare_and_child_poverty.pdf

Barnardo's Works takes a capabilities approach, which focuses on helping young people overcome internal barriers such as literacy/numeracy, confidence and motivation while also supporting them to overcome external barriers such as housing, money management, and lack of vocational skills etc.

Last year we supported 284 young people of whom 202 found employment. this represents a 71% success rate despite the economic challenges for the most disadvantaged young people who are furthest away from the labour market. When re-contacted 6 months later, 65% of the young people were still in their jobs. Those who weren't were picked given further support by Barnardo's Works and assisted with other employment opportunities.

Richard Meade
Public Affairs Officer
Barnardo's Scotland
8 February 2013