

Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee

COVID-19 inquiry

Focus group with young people – urban

Held remotely on Microsoft Teams

23 November 2020

Committee Member Rhoda Grant MSP met a number of young people based in urban areas across Scotland and spoke to them about the impact of the pandemic on young people.

What is the impact of the pandemic on young people?

- A lot of students are worried about their part-time jobs;
- Some employers, such as supermarkets, are offering positions to experienced people who have lost their jobs and not to young people;
- A lot of students have taken a gap year this year as they do not feel safe going into further education – but they are unable to find a job; this has had an impact on people's mental health;
- It is difficult leaving school without qualifications; there are not many opportunities out there. It is very difficult to find work without qualifications; 'older people have the edge';
- More volunteering opportunities and apprenticeships should be open to people without experience. Businesses should be incentivised to hire somebody with less training and qualifications (e.g. help with salaries, etc);
- Lack of security is the biggest impact, i.e. not knowing that there will be a job after the pandemic so that students can pay for their studies;
- There has been a strain on mental health along with challenges in finding part-time jobs;
- Some young people are not able to get employment at all;
- One participant is pursuing a career in construction; he did his training to work on site and was made redundant; he has been unable to get sit his final test to complete his qualification due to the pandemic;
- One participant did beauty therapy at college and had to do the written work online; 'it's a nightmare getting in to do the practical experience'.
- One participant is a student at Napier University and is doing home learning; however home is not a good studying environment, which 'makes things very difficult';
- The Scottish Youth Parliament has a policy to give people adequate support to transition to university; this is another issue that needs to be addressed;
- The majority of weekend or holiday jobs are in sectors that have been shut down. A lot of young people have been hit hard by the pandemic and there is a lack of support;
- People are taking gap years this year due to the pandemic; they could not get into university this year, and could not get a job in their gap year therefore there is no clear way forward for them.

What support is being made available to young people?

- Participants were not aware of any help available to young people except the furlough scheme;
- Local support, such as mental health first aid and care packages, has been helpful to young people.

How to raise awareness of help available to young people?

- Targeted marketing on social media and physical advertising on bus-stops, TV ads, etc are most likely to reach young people;
- Going to universities, high schools, etc and talking to young people about opportunities would be helpful; a lot of people do not know about opportunities coming from the Scottish Government;
- The Scottish Government should work with local authorities to disseminate information to young people; most have a weekly newsletter and this would be a good place to advertise initiatives such as the young person's guarantee.

What would help?

- A lot of people have had to leave school or college early due to the pandemic – so lower entry requirements for jobs would help – focusing more on skills and aptitudes;
- It would be helpful to have opportunities to develop interview skills;
- In Dundee, simple signposting services are good, e.g. there is a hub where people can find out what services are available to them. Such hubs are very helpful;
- All participants agreed that the Community Jobs Scotland scheme is a good initiative and would be keen to get involved but there are not aware of vacancies being advertised at the moment.

Are young people being consulted?

- It is important that young people are involved from the start of the policy development process;
- The Scottish Youth Parliament is good at surveying young people, etc – this work should be done before the policy is finalised.