

Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee
COVID-19 inquiry
Focus group with young people – North East
Held remotely on Microsoft Teams
7 December 2020

Colin Beattie MSP and Graham Simpson MSP met a number of young people from the North East of Scotland to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on young people. This notes sets out the points made by young people in the focus group.

What would help young people at this time?

- More opportunities to help young people are needed;
- The Scottish Youth Parliament has agreed a policy on the need for job creation and access to training, work placements and quality job placements; many of these things are not available at the moment;
- Opportunities should be better advertised through social media;
- More education is needed for young people on issues that will affect them later in life (e.g. finances, etc). One participant is a graduate and spoke of transitions (e.g. from school to university or from university to employment) that have a big impact on the economic future of young people;
- It is important to take a 'rights-based' approach and to recognise the importance of the voice of young people; 'if you take a rights based approach, everything flows from that';
- Employability services at university/school/college are pointing young people in the direction of different opportunities and helping them to address gaps in CVs.

Impact on young people?

- One participant is in S4; he was working a part-time job when lockdown hit and the schools closed; he was then 'pushed out' of his job. He is saving up for leaving school and moving on to further education. He said that people are struggling to get shifts at work following periods of self-isolation;
- One participant is a 4th year student; he has 2 jobs – one in Aberdeen one abroad. One job was on a zero hours contract and no furlough was made available; he has not been contacted about starting the job again (at the local stadium);
- The Jobs, Economy and Fair Work Committee at the Scottish Youth Parliament is considering the impact of zero hour contracts on students and is concerned about the job retention scheme not applying to people on such contracts;
- One participant's friend lost her job. She was initially on furlough but 2 weeks ago her company went out of business and she lost her job; she's now 'left with nothing' and relies on a student loan - but her income has gone;
- One participant spoke of someone with a visual impairment's bad experience of trying to secure employment; she stressed the importance of not discriminating on the grounds of disability. Advice givers (e.g. in schools,

colleges, etc) should be given training on visual impairment and also on people's rights;

- One participant is trying to work to provide sight loss training to schools and companies to give them the opportunity to learn about sight loss and how they can help; she has been doing videos on being blind and how it impacts her daily life.

Have young people been consulted on policies and measures to help them deal with the impact of COVID-19?

- Participants said that they have not been consulted on measures being developed to support young people but were happy to be consulted as part of the focus group;
- The Scottish Youth Parliament and Youth Councils can help with consulting young people (e.g. working with Aberdeen City Council on housing issues).

Young person's guarantee

- Nobody in the focus group had heard of the young person's guarantee;
- More transparency is needed around support available to young people; details of any schemes should be well communicated. It is important to think about where the information is made available and how to make it accessible.