



Skills and Labour Market
to raise youth employment



SALM

Skills and Labour Markets to Raise Youth Employment

Work Package 2: “Trends in youth unemployment and policies to contrast it: a mapping exercise”

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Table of contents

Executive summary	Page 3
Youth unemployment in Scotland: figures and trends	Page 4
Changing trends in employment	Page 8
Types of unemployed youth and the Scottish government youth employment policy	Page 10
The strategy	Page 12
The skills and employability pipeline	Page 18
Concluding remarks	Page 20
References	Page 21

Executive summary

Scotland shares with many European countries specific youth employment issues: young people are likely more exposed to unemployment than senior citizens; youth from ethnic minorities along with youth with disabilities and those with low educational qualifications are more likely to be unemployed than, respectively, white Scots, able young people, and youth with higher educational achievements; unemployment is not equally distributed across the country, rather it hits hardest on specific local areas which have experienced at least a two decades long history of deprivation and underdevelopment.

Moreover, following a typical path of economic development at the time of globalization and post-fordism, sectors that used to employ large number of workers, like manufacture, have drastically diminished their capacity of workers' absorbers, while others, like social work or health, have increased their potential although they remain far from the 'workers absorbing capacity' of what used to be traditional sectors. But in Scotland too work has become less regularized and more 'flexible' and precarious. As a consequence, young Scots are employed more and more under non-standard forms of employment and with lower wages than previous generations.

To contrast youth unemployment, Scotland has elaborated a proper 'strategy' which focuses on: modern apprenticeships to ease transition from school to work; involvement of private and public actors, including the voluntary sector, in the creation of training opportunities; making youth employment a cross-cutting priority in the overall Governmental activity; reforming the post-16 education system; continuing with the 'no tuition fees' for Scottish students in higher education.

Recent data on youth unemployment (May 2013) showing an improvement compared to last year (and even compared to the rest of the UK) seem to provide evidence at support of such a strategy. Criticism to the Scottish Government youth employment strategy points out, though, that the strategy's decision to focus on unemployment neglects the multiple problems arising from precarity and underemployment which characterize the current labour market for the youth in Scotland like in many other European countries.

Youth unemployment in Scotland: figures and trends¹

Scotland has not been immune from the international economic and financial crisis that has hit the global economy from 2008 onwards. In fact, since the beginning of the downturn in early 2008 the number of youth (16-24 years old) being jobless rose from 49,000 to a peak of 113,000 reached in the summer 2011 (The Scottish Government 2012: 3). Youth unemployment figures have then remained at a medium level, e.g. in the period April 2011 to March 2012 the number of young unemployed was 88,000 while in the last available figures (March 2013) they were 84,000.

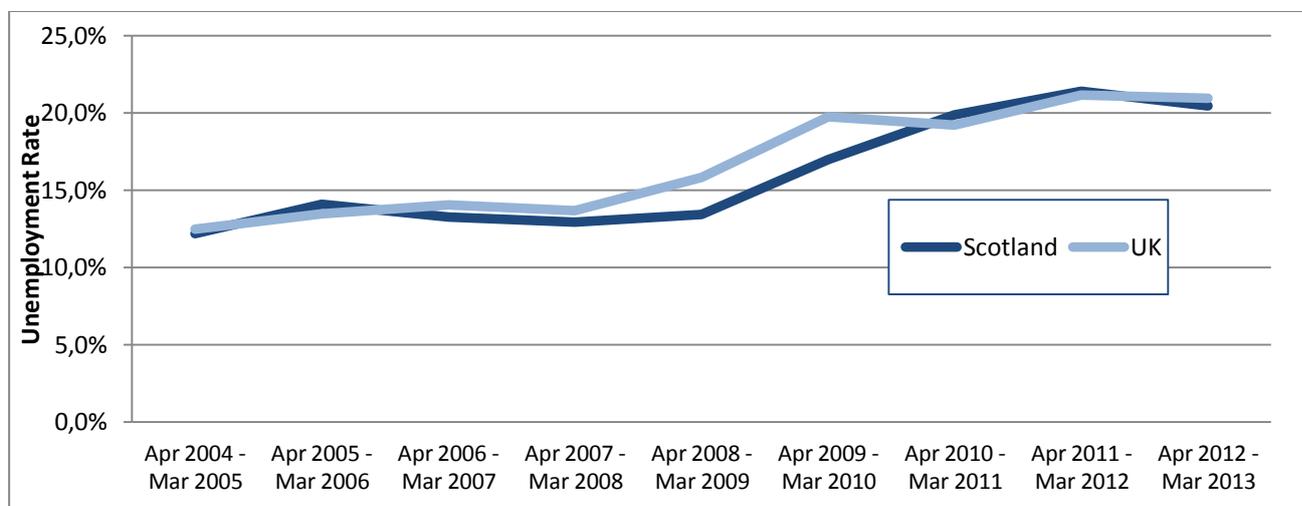
In terms of percentage points, in March 2013 Scotland had a youth unemployment rate of 20.5%, slightly lower than the UK rate (21.0%)², with an improvement of 0.9% from the previous year (0.2% is the improvement registered for the UK). Figures 1a and 1b provide an overview of youth unemployment and employment rates for Scotland and the UK from April 2004 until March 2013.

Figure 1a shows how unemployment has started increasing since 2008 and has only begun decreasing in March 2012 with the partial recovery of the Scottish and global economy. Figure 1b shows the declining employment rate effect of the crisis which has not reversed its trend yet. But the declining rate of youth employment is also due to more young people having opted to remain in full time education, hoping for a recovery of the economy in the near future. In fact, in the period 2007-2011 the proportion of people aged 18-24 engaged in full time education has grown from 28.3% to 36.4% (Cook 2012: 7).

¹ This report draws on two main documents: Scottish Government 2012 and Cook 2013.

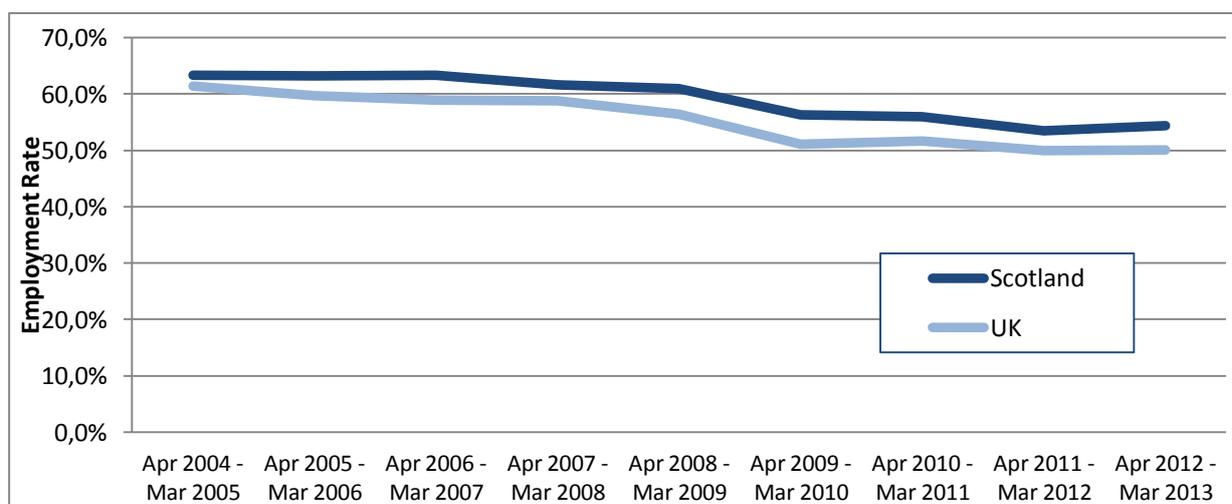
² These data refers to the Annual Population Survey (APS), whereas another source, the Labour Force Survey (LFS) provides slightly better results for Scotland as it estimates that in May 2013 the country had an unemployment rate of 17.8 percentage points (while the UK was at 19.7 percentage points). According to LFS data, the unemployment rate in Scotland decreased of 3.0 percentage points in the last year (compared to the 1.0 percentage point of improvement in the UK). However, I prefer using the APS as a primary source of reference here because it is considered a more reliable source for employment/unemployment data due to its larger sample size and its not being affected by seasonality.

Figure 1a: Youth Unemployment rate in Scotland and the UK



Source: APS, ONS (Apr-Mar)

Figure 1b: Youth Employment rate in Scotland and the UK



Source: APS, ONS (Apr-Mar)

Unemployment is not equally distributed across the country, on the contrary, it has historically hit hardest specific localities, and the economic crisis has only worsened the situation as those localities having suffered from a sustained high rate of unemployment since decades have being further weakened by the crisis. Table 1 provides an overview of youth unemployment (by youth claimant rate in percentage points) distribution across local authorities.

Table 1: Youth Unemployment by Local Authority

	Rank Order - Youth claimant count (%)					Rank Order on Average
	2012	2007	2002	1997	1992	
North Ayrshire	1	1	1	5	4	1
East Ayrshire	2	3	2	8	5	3
Clackmannanshire	3	5	6	4	17	5
West Dumbartonshire	4	2	3	2	2	2
North Lanarkshire	5	13	7	6	6	6
South Ayrshire	6	6	5	10	10	6
South Lanarkshire	7	18	17	18	12	16
Falkirk	8	10	8	13	14	9
Glasgow City	9	7	9	3	1	4
Dumfries and Galloway	10	8	13	15	15	12
Renfrewshire	11	12	16	12	8	11
Midlothian	12	20	21	23	18	20
Dundee city	13	9	10	9	13	10
Inverclyde	14	4	4	16	7	8
Fife	15	11	11	17	16	14
West Lothian	16	14	18	22	19	19
Angus	17	15	12	14	20	18
Scottish Borders	18	22	20	21	25	21
East Lothian	19	24	32	30	23	26
Argyll and Bute	20	17	15	7	11	14
Highland	21	21	14	11	9	17
East Dumbartonshire	22	27	26	20	21	23
Stirling	23	25	25	24	27	24
Moray	24	19	24	19	24	22
East Renfrewshire	25	28	30	29	26	28
Edinburgh, City of	26	23	28	27	22	25
Eilean Siar	27	16	19	1	3	13
Perth and Kinross	28	26	27	26	28	27
Orkney Islands	29	32	23	28	30	30
Shetland Islands	30	29	22	25	32	28
Aberdeen City	31	30	29	31	29	31
Aberdeenshire	32	31	31	32	31	32

Source: Cook 2012: 11

Other features of Scottish youth unemployment are that it affects more a) ethnic minorities than the white population and b) those with fewer education than those who complete higher education. Table 2 shows how unemployment and inactivity rates have remained very high across the past two decades for ethnic minorities, for whom more than one third of young people have remained unable to find a job regardless of the economic cycle.

Table 2: Unemployment and Economic Inactivity Rates for Ethnic minorities

Year	Unemployment and Economic Inactivity rates (%)
1992	40.1
1997	42.5
2002	40.0
2007	36.0
2012	47.6

Source: Cook 2012: 12

The same pattern of ‘selectivity’ of unemployment is found among young people with different levels of educational qualification. Table 3a presents the distribution of employment rates by educational levels in 1992, 1997, 2002, 2007 and 2012: young graduates will likely obtain an employment regardless of the economic cycle, whereas for young people with a standard educational qualification, for example, the opportunities to find a job will heavily depend on the economic cycle (the percentages of young people with a standard education having found a job will range from 78% in a period of economic relative prosperity, like in table 3a the period just before the economic crisis of 2008, to 56% in the post-2012 world). Similarly, as table 3b shows, in a period of economic downturn (e.g. the year 2012) young people with no education are almost four times more likely to be unemployed than young graduates.

Table 3a: In Employment, by Educational Qualification (rounded percentages)

Highest qualification held	2012	2007	2002	1997	1992
HE	83.3	85.7	86.6	85.0	85.2
Highers	80.0	81.0	86.8	82.0	84.1
Vocational	75.0	79.0	80.7	70.1	73.3
Standard	55.6	77.9	71.0	66.0	69.0
Other	70.0	50.0	70.0	54.0	60.9
None	20.0	31.3	39.0	44.3	43.1

Source: Cook 2012: 13

Table 3b: Not in Employment, by Educational Qualification (rounded percentages)

Highest qualification held	2012	2007	2002	1997	1992
HE	16.7	14.3	13.4	15.1	14.7
Highers	20.0	19.1	13.2	18.0	15.9
Vocational	25.0	21.1	19.4	29.9	26.7
Standard	44.4	22.1	29.0	34.0	31.2
Other	30.0	50.0	30.2	46.2	39.1
None	80.0	68.8	61.1	55.7	57.0

Source: Cook 2012: 13

Similarly to young people with standard or low levels of educational qualifications, also disabled youth's employability strongly depends on the economic cycle. Table 4 presents figures (percentages) for the three available time series 2002, 2007, and 2012 of disability and employment.

Table 4: Disability and Employment Status

		In Work	Gov Training	ILO Unemployed	Inactive
2012	Not disabled	54.5	4.5	31.8	9.1
	Work limited	12.0	18.0	50.0	20.0
	Disabled	0.0	10.0	50.0	40.0
2007	Not disabled	58.7	9.9	19.2	12.1
	Work limited	13.3	36.0	26.7	24.0
	Disabled	4.76	15.9	39.7	39.7
2002	Not disabled	78.4	1.6	12.9	7.1
	Work limited	72.4	3.4	6.9	17.2
	Disabled	46.6	1.4	13.7	38.3

Source: Cook 2012: 14 (Work limited is a self declared status, whereas 'disabled' refers to young people who are recognized as disabled under the Disability Discrimination Act -DDA-)

Changing trends in employment

Before presenting the Scottish Government youth employment strategy, it is useful to consider the key changes that have occurred in youth employment in Scotland across the past two decades. Firstly, there has been a change in the sectors where young people have been employed: some of such sectors have ceased offering significant employment opportunities to young generations while others have become more relevant. Manufacture,

for example, absorbed almost 18% of youth employment in 1992 but it employed ‘only’ 7.7% of them in 2012 (Office for National Statistics, Labour Force Survey, as presented in Cook 2012: 17). Human health and social work, on the contrary, has doubled its share among employed youth (from 2.16% in 1992 to 4.3 in 2012) while other sectors like Wholesale and retail trade (which absorbed 15.4% of youth employment in 1992 and still absorbed 14.8% of them in 2012) have remained unchanged in their capacity to offer employment opportunities to the youth (Ibidem).

Secondly, employment has changed dramatically in terms of job security: in Scotland, like in many European (and non- European) countries employment for young people has become not only more difficult to find than for previous generations but it has lost some of its protection in terms of rights and entitlements, the average amount of worked hours has diminished and consequently wages have decreased too. This situation is well reflected by table 5 presenting various measures of underemployment and their evolution across time: temporary jobs have increased of five times from 1992 to 2012 when one every two Scots in employment worked with a temporary job. Part time work has more than doubled from 1992 to 2012 and the overall amount of hours worked has decreased across time. Such results are consistent with European trends, and as per other countries, such a change in employment patterns has contributed deteriorating working conditions with serious implications for workers’ health and well being (Benavides 1999, Benach and Benavides 2002).

Table 5: changes in employment patterns

	Average Hours	Working Part Time	Temporary Jobs	Want Extra Hours
2012	29.0	44.2%	50.1%	42.9%
2007	30.5	37.5%	42.6%	35.0%
2002	30.2	32.8%	37.3%	27.1%
1997	28.2	31.2%	15.1%	30.7%
1992	34.5	21.7%	9.8%	Not available

Source: Cook 2012: 18

Types of unemployed and the Scottish Government Youth Employment Policy

If we consider the young unemployed who are not in full-time education, it is possible to cluster them in two broad groups requiring different support:

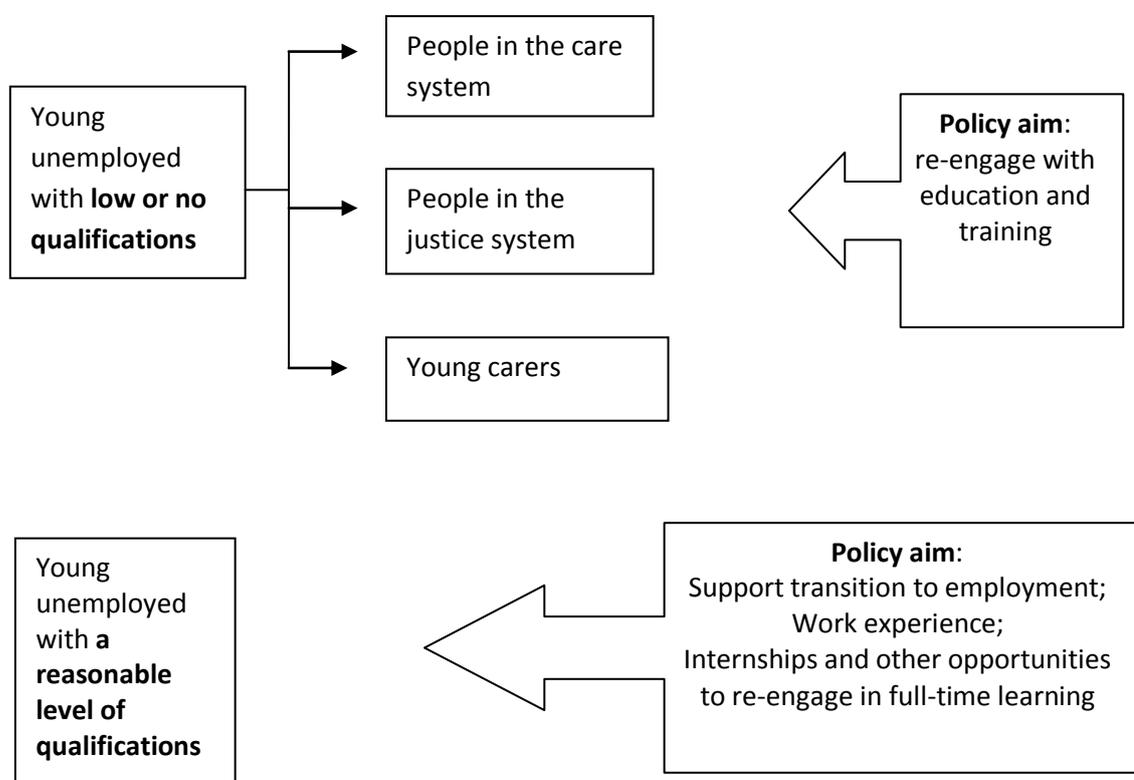
1. Young unemployed not enrolled in full-time education, with low level of qualifications or no qualification at all. This group is largely made of young people with multiple disadvantages in childhood and consequent disrupted education, in particular:
 - a. Young people in the care system;
 - b. Young people in the justice system;
 - c. Young carers.

For this group of young unemployed, policies aim at re-engaging them with education and training.

2. Young unemployed with a reasonable level of educational qualifications and who are not enrolled in full-time education. The size of this group increased of 45% since 2008/09. The policies for this group seek to support transition into employment, work experience, internships and opportunities to re-engage in full-time education.

Figure 2 in the following page presents a graphic elaboration of such clustering of unemployed youth.

Figure 2: Types of unemployed youth and policies addressed to them, an overview



The Scottish Government has focused its youth employment action on measures such as expanding the number of Modern Apprenticeship places, protecting college and university places and retaining the Education Maintenance Allowance. Moreover, to coordinate and inspire policy action in the field, a dedicated Minister for Youth Employment has been appointed in December 2011. The post is currently occupied by Angela Constance, a Member of the Scottish Parliament for the ruling Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP). The Youth Employment Minister reports directly to the Prime Minister but works closely with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning and with the Cabinet Secretary of State for Finance, Economy and Sustainable Growth. Although the Scottish Government puts strong emphasis on its activities in employment issues, one has to consider that on the matter, responsibility is shared between the Scottish Government and the British Government that maintains full responsibility for unemployment benefits through the Department for Work and Pensions.

The strategy³

The Scottish Government youth employment strategy is built upon three strategic issues:

1. Adopting an all-Government, all-Scotland approach to supporting youth employment;
2. Enhancing support for young people;
3. Engaging with employers.

1. An all-Government and all-Scotland approach

The commitment of the Government in creating employment opportunities for young people is realized by adopting a cross-sector or cross-policy strategy.

Urban and Rural Focus: Scotland has a variety of different local contexts with specific needs and problems in terms of employment: cities, towns and villages spread across rural and urban areas. Although urban areas host the higher percentages of youth unemployment (82 per cent of young unemployed not in full-time education live in urban areas) rural regions are not immune from unemployment neither. Actually, many young people living in rural areas decide to move to urban centres with the attempt to find a job, increasing the pressure on urban labour markets which are already incapable of absorbing local needs. The Government is working to create employment opportunities in rural areas in particular through developing low carbon economy and renewable industry. The Energy Skills Investment Plan has been designed to support training opportunities for young people to enter the Scotland's energy renewable and low carbon labour market. An ad hoc academy, the Nigg Skills Academy is also part of this specific policy. At the same time the Government will maintain its incentives for potential employment in traditionally work-absorbing sectors in rural areas such as oil and gas but also food, drink and farming.

Infrastructure and Procurement: the Scottish Government, as many other governments, uses its resources for infrastructure to create jobs. In some of such investments in infrastructure, the Government has included specifications for part of the jobs being created to go to young (16-24 year-olds) unemployed. For example, out of 380 new jobs created by the New South Glasgow Hospitals 80 have gone to unemployed youth, 140 of the 180 work placements on offer are also destined to young people and 88 apprenticeships are going to be created. Moreover, the Government has decided to use its funding for procurement (£9 billion) to foster new

³ This section follows: Scottish Government 2012.

employment targeted to young people. This has been realized by: a) asking companies receiving a major Government contract to produce a training and apprenticeship plan aimed at engaging the youth; b) using community benefit clauses to support employability through public sector contracts; c) introducing a Sustainable Procurement Bill introducing a systematic use of community benefit clauses within public procurement targeted at creating youth employment.

Scottish Government and its Agencies: Government agencies and public bodies are requested to implement as well policies which encourage young people employability through direct creation of jobs or apprenticeships and similar solutions offering work experience to young unemployed. All Government bodies have to support the youth agenda and report to the Minister for Youth Employment.

Digital: a Digital Participation Action Group has been created to support the development of digital skills among young people as a way to strengthen their employability. The Group should work on digital skills focused on work and specific market/employers needs.

National Health Service: the NHS is another public body offering opportunities of apprenticeship and work experience to young people. The NHS Boards are encouraged by the Government to consider in their recruitment strategies the need to offer opportunities to the youth.

Justice: the Government has created the programme “CashBack for Communities” which implies that money gained through crime which is then recovered through the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 is re-invested in communities affected by crime and antisocial behavior. Such money is used for creating opportunities of socialization, education, and work for young people. Opportunities are offered in a broad range of sectors and activities like sport, culture, education and mentoring for children and young people (10-19 year-olds). Until 2012 the programme has invested £44 million pounds engaging 600,000 young people across Scotland.

Culture: all public culture and heritage organizations, living with Governmental funding, are encouraged to develop specific plans for young people including trainings, volunteering and work experiences. Prominent organizations in the sector, like Historic Scotland, National Records of Scotland and Creative Scotland have already implemented apprenticeship schemes.

Sport: the Government has managed to win international bids to host large sport events like the Commonwealth Games (to be held in Glasgow in 2014) or the Ryder Cup. Such events will offer opportunities fostering a lasting youth employment legacy by providing new jobs but also apprenticeships and volunteering. In addition, the Government will invest funds in the Commonwealth Games Legacy Funding to foster youth employment by means of: a) adapting existing models easing people employability through volunteering, like the Personal Best, to youth employment; b) providing an Employer Recruitment Incentive for Modern Apprentices accessing opportunities related to large scale events in sectors such as tourism, hospitality, horticulture, and creative.

Local Authority Support for Young People: local authorities are given responsibility to promote youth employment at local level through the “Local employability partnerships” which have the task of not only favoring the matching between local employers’ needs and ready to work youth, but they also serve to provide opportunities which are not yet offered by the Scottish and UK authorities. The Scottish Government uses also the European Social Fund and the Social Enterprise and Third Sector Challenge Fund to support the work of local authorities, for example via the Community Planning Partnerships, in promoting employability and skills delivery.

Social Enterprises and the Third Sector: the Third Sector is considered by the Scottish authorities as particularly capable of dealing with youth employment issues, as the Sector is able to offer opportunities to young people at risk of disengagement as well as those who are ready to work and closest to the labour market. The Scottish Government supports the Third Sector capacity to create youth employment by means of allowing the sector a strategic access to the European Social Fund through the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, but also the sector’s participation in the implementation of Activity Agreements, its role in the delivery of pre-employment training programmes, but also funding for Community Jobs Scotland. In its Strategy for Youth Employment document, the Government confirms its engagement with the third sector by mentioning its will to continue a) supporting Community Jobs Scotland to create 1,000 subsidized jobs for 16-19 year-olds in the third sector; b) incentivize employers to support up to 1,000 young people in a disadvantaged situation, including care leavers and young carers; c) supporting the Inspiring Scotland model; d) launching a Social Enterprise and Third Sector Challenge Fund enabling social enterprises and third sector organizations providing specific support to easy young people moving into work.

Youth Work: the Government funds organizations and programmes developing and implementing youth work, like YouthLink, Young Scot, and Youth Scotland.

2. Enhancing Support for Young People

Opportunities for All: in April 2012 the Government has launched the “Opportunities for All” programme which focuses on 16-19 year-olds who are not in work, education nor training and as such are at greatest risk of becoming long term unemployed. The programme aims at engaging such young people in learning and training to keep them ‘employable’. To secure an effective implementation of the programme, the Government has committed to: a) prioritize 16-19 year-olds in the 46,000 training places offered in each of the next four years; b) prioritize provision in Scotland’s colleges for 16-19 year-olds; c) protect the quality and quantity of higher education without asking students to pay high fees; d) support local authorities in their Activity Agreements which provide a set of learning activities to re-engage young people; e) maintain the Education Maintenance Allowance for young people in need to secure they remain in education; f) provide careers support services also through social media; g) use the My Work Coach programme to support young people at risk of disengagement.

Reforming Post-16 Education: the Government is working on a reform of the post-16 education system to tailor it better to the needs of the labour market. Envisaged changes include: a) refocus college places to those who need them most and make sure that every 16-19 years-old who wants one has a place in the learning and training system; b) engaging employers in the design of education and training provision; c) reducing college drop-out rates; d) develop a regional delivery model of college provision.

Making Training Work Better: included in the post-16 education reform the Government has carried out a review of training provision, Making Training Working Better. The outcome of this review has led the Government to modify its training policy. In particular, the Government decided to develop higher level Technical and Professional Apprenticeships, to provide incentives to employers to support 16-24 year-olds from disadvantages groups, to introduce a contribution rate for 20-24 year-old Modern Apprentices across all frameworks instead of only for selected ones.

Support for Graduate Recruitment: the Government has funded in 2010 the Adopt-an-Intern programme run by the Centre for Scottish Public Policy to match graduates with

business and offering paid internships. Moreover, places for unemployed graduates are offered also by Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise through the TalentScotland Graduate Placement Programme. A programme specifically devoted to small enterprises is also provided through the Scottish Chamber of Commerce.

Support for Young Entrepreneurs: policy to foster youth entrepreneurship is pursued among others by the Scottish Enterprise allocation of £1 million in 2012/13 to be used as loans for young people willing to starting up or growing their business. The loan is delivered through the Scottish Investment Bank and is administered by the Prince's Trust Youth Business Scotland. The Government expects such a loan to generate nearly 500 new businesses, creating over 600 jobs. Such loan complements existing programmes supporting start up of unemployed people aged over 18 like the Scottish Government's Training for Work self-employment option or the Department of Work and Pensions' New Enterprise Allowance.

Support for High Quality Work Experience: to encourage employers recruiting young people, the Government has designed, through Skills Development Scotland, an employer-led Certificate for Work Readiness, in partnerships with Scottish Qualifications Authority and employers aiming at recognizing the work readiness of 16-19 year-olds. In fact, very often employers refrain from recruiting young people straight from the school, college or university as they would prefer employing someone with some work experience. With the "Support for High Quality Work Experience" the Government wishes to solve the problem of the 'lack of work experience' by securing young people gain work experience (at least 192 hours) when enrolled in the programme.

Youth Contract and the Work Programme: this programme has been put in place by the UK Government (Westminster) in April 2012 and the Scottish Government acts as an implementer/supporter of it. The programme provides additional work experience opportunities prior to entering the Work Programme at nine months of claiming unemployment benefits and recruitment subsidies of £2,275 for those employers who employ young people from the Work Programme and Work Programme and Work Choice for disabled young people. Participation in work experience for young people under benefits is voluntary and there are no benefits sanctions for young people who withdraw from it.

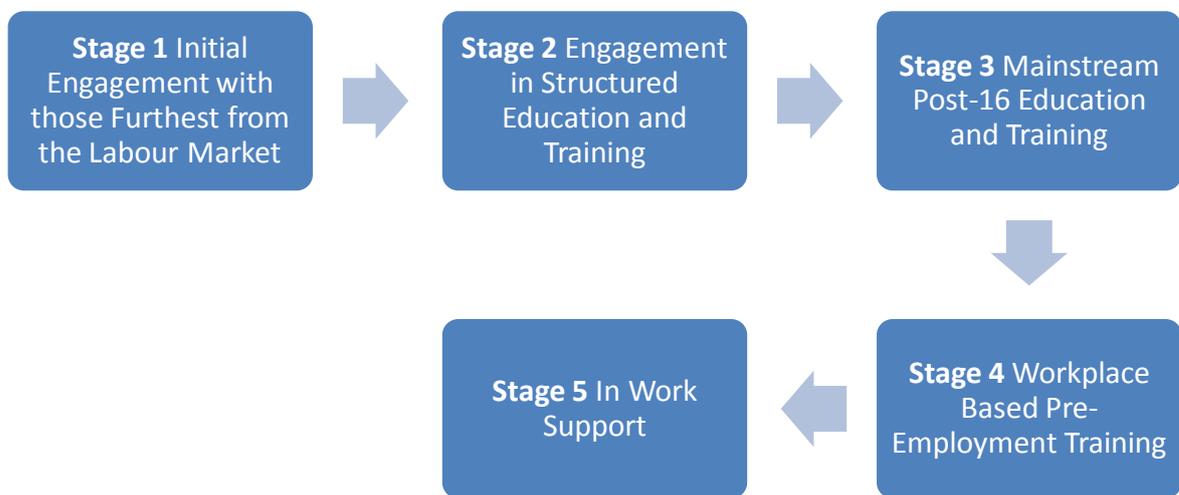
3 Engagement with Employers

The Scottish Government considers the private sector as the most relevant potential source for youth employment, at the same time, evidence has suggested that employers are in general reluctant to employ young people. As such, the Government has deployed a series of programmes and practices to create confidence among employers about the value of hiring young people. Modern Apprenticeships, new education programmes and various incentives, as presented in the previous sections, are aimed at easing matching employers needs and youth employment. However, in the Government's youth employment strategy, the role of employers in offering work opportunities to young people is considered as an "act of social responsibility" where the Government itself consider its own function primarily the one of a facilitator which acts through education, economic incentives and funding (including making EU money available)

The Skills and Employability Pipeline

The Scottish Youth Employment Strategy presented in the previous section is inspired by a pipeline approach organized in five stages (summarized in figure 3). Although there is flexibility about progression rates of individuals across the pipelines and also about the stage at which young unemployed enter or leave it, the Government considers this ‘pipeline’ approach as a useful model to secure a sustained employment to young generations.

Figure 3: the Skills and Employability Pipeline



Stage 1: Initial Engagement with those Furthest from the Labour Market

A poor educational capital which often results from a disrupted school education due to the accumulation of several disadvantages, is a real problem for a young person looking for a job. The first concern of the Strategy is thus to re-engage with education and training this group of young people through a package including various types of support tailored on the needs of the individual. In this first step of the pipeline, a key role is devolved to local authorities who support young people through the Activity Agreements, which includes several private and public partners working jointly to re-engage young people in various types of learning activities. The involvement of local authorities allows such activities to include community learning and development, volunteering and tailored educational and training provision. The Lifeskills strand of

the Get Ready for Work provision plays a relevant part in this step too: it provides young people the opportunity to start developing some of the personal qualities required by employers.

Stage 2- Engagement in Structured Education and Training

When a young person obtains a place in the post-16 education and training system, the strategy aims at supporting the person into more structured provision. In fact, at this stage of the pipeline, young people still need a strong support to help stay engaged and progress in terms of educational, skills and social development needs. A variety of actors offer support at this stage, including Skills Development Scotland through the Lifeskills strand of Get Ready to Work, but also local authorities through their funding community learning and development provisions, but also the third sector through various kinds of activities. At this stage, for young people aged 18 and over who could not find a job, the Work Programme of the Department of Work and Pensions begins offering support.

Stage 3- Mainstream Post-16 Education and Training

Young people who have successfully moved across the previous steps, like for the majority of the youth leaving school, the ‘natural’ destination is entering the mainstream post-16 education and training system (colleges, universities and training programmes). Here, young people are supported in developing knowledge and skills necessary to enter the labour market. Most of the support in this stage is provided by colleges and universities.

Stage 4- Workplace Based Pre-Employment Training

When young people reach a level of knowledge and skills who can be considered enough to allow them finding an employment, very often what they lack is work experience per se. But employers tend to prefer workers with previous work experience, hence it becomes crucial to offer educated and skilled young people a minimum base of work experience who would be recognized by potential employers as a meaningful experience. Key-actors in this step are Skills Development Scotland with its programme “Get Ready to Work” which includes a relevant work experience component, but also the Department of Work and Pensions through its offer of eight week work experience to young people aged 18 or more who have been unemployed for less than nine months as part of the Youth Contract.

Stage 5- In Work Support

Support to young people does not stop once they have found a job. In fact, many young workers benefit from receiving continued forms of support. In this stage, the support provided by the strategy includes training directly related to the sector and occupations in which young people are employed. Of course, this type of support cannot be delivered without the active participation of the employer. The Modern Apprenticeship programme occupies a core place in this stage of the pipeline, as apprenticeships provide specific training to young people while they are employed. Moreover, there are also publicly subsidized employments at this stage through local authorities and government programmes such as Community Job Scotland and the Work Programme.

Concluding remarks

Scotland shares with many European countries specific youth employment issues: young people are likely more exposed to unemployment than senior citizens; youth from ethnic minorities, youth with disabilities and those with low educational qualifications are more likely to be unemployed than respectively white Scots, young people without disabilities, and youth with higher educational achievements; unemployment is not equally distributed across the country, rather it hits hardest on specific local areas which have experienced at least a two decades long history of deprivation and underdevelopment.

To contrast such a multifaceted phenomenon Scotland has set a breadth of measures ranging from the appointment of a Youth Employment Minister reporting directly to the Prime Minister to the adoption of a rather comprehensive youth employment 'strategy'. Such a strategy, which sets the terms of reference for an ambitious policy cutting across various fields, focuses on: modern apprenticeships to ease transition from school to work; involvement of private and public actors, including the voluntary sector, in the creation of training opportunities; making youth employment a cross-cutting priority in the overall Governmental activity; reforming the post-16 education system; continuing with the 'no tuition fees' for Scottish students in higher education.

Recent data on youth unemployment (May 2013) showing an improvement compared to last year (and even compared to the rest of the UK) seem to provide evidence at support of such a strategy.

However, as some critics have pointed out (Cook 2012), such a strategy does little to address another very important concern about youth employment: its changed nature. Work, in fact, has changed in terms of sectors of activity but also in terms of rights, entitlements, career perspectives and wages. Following a typical path of economic development at the time of globalization and post-fordism, sectors that used to employ large number of workers, like manufacture, have drastically diminished their capacity of work-absorbers, while others, like social work or health, have increased their potential although they remain far from the ‘work-absorbing capacity’ of what used to be traditional sectors. Furthermore work has become, also in Scotland like in Europe, less regularized and more ‘flexible’ and precarious, as a consequence, young Scots are employed more and more under non-standard forms of employment and with lower wages than previous generations.

Thus, it could be wise for the Government to include policy really tackling issues of underemployment or work precarity in its strategy, especially for it gives strong emphasis to trainings and apprenticeships which are often work surrogates where young people are de facto employed but at zero salary and with poor career perspectives.

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