



# A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Employment Action Plan

YEAR 2 – PROGRESS REPORT



Scottish Government  
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# 1. Ministerial Foreword



**I am delighted to publish this, our second annual update to 'A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Employment Action Plan'. When I published that plan in 2018, I did so with the knowledge that a long-term commitment to reduce the disability employment gap was only achievable if the underlying strategy was agile, and responsive. This has served us well in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic – however, to say that the past year has been a challenging time for all Scots is an understatement. For many of us, it has been one of the toughest years ever experienced, and one we will remember and continue to recover from for some time to come.**

While the pandemic has affected us all, it is clear that it has not affected everyone equally. It is not yet possible to describe in detail *all* of the ways in which the current public health crisis has impacted Scotland's diverse communities, but we know that in many ways it has held a magnifying glass to existing inequalities faced by disabled people, women, and those who are not in Fair Work. That is why we are publishing our latest annual progress report alongside updates on the Fair Work and Gender Pay Gap action plans. In addition, later this month we will publish the final progress report on a Fairer Scotland for Disabled People which will include an analysis of the national performance framework's indicators from the perspective of disabled people, and the views from our Disability Summit on what the Scottish Government should focus on for disabled people in the next Parliamentary session. It is increasingly evident that it is not possible to consider the barriers that face disabled people in isolation, and this joint publication is one of many steps we have taken to address the intersectional nature of the challenge.

Our response to the pandemic has been swift. We have put in place a support package worth over £2.3 billion to enable businesses to close down safely, in addition to a further £570 million to help mitigate some of the further financial challenges faced by businesses. We know that young people are often those most affected by economic downturns, which is why we have acted quickly to ensure that all of Scotland's young people will benefit from the Young Person's Guarantee – ensuring that everyone between the ages of 16-24, including disabled young people, will have the opportunity of a job, placement, or further training. In addition, recovery will depend on the provision of high quality, tailored pre-employment support, which is why we have continued to progress our No One Left Behind transformational change agenda and ensured that Fair Start Scotland will continue until March 2023.

Disabled people have told us, via disabled people's organisations, that while the impact of COVID-19 has been overwhelmingly negative, it has accelerated the adoption of much more flexible workplace policies across the economy. Home and flexible working are expected to better enable some disabled people to enter and stay within work but the role of employers will be crucial here, and we are committed to ensuring that we do not lose the rare positive elements that the public health crisis has brought us.

The Scottish Government's commitment to disabled people is clear: we will continue to tackle and reduce the barriers that disabled people face; where appropriate, we will respond to systemic shocks such as COVID-19 and the UK's exit from the European Union; and we will continue to pursue our goal to reduce the disability employment gap by at least half, by 2038.



Pre-COVID we had continued to make steady progress in reducing the disability employment gap, with the gap continuing to fall from 35.5 percentage points in 2018 to 32.6 percentage points in 2019 (Annual Population Survey, Jan-Dec), a substantial decrease driven primarily by an increase in the employment rate of disabled people. Evidence of the impact of COVID-19 on labour market outcomes of disabled people is still emerging, but there are indications from the latest data that the disability employment gap is starting to widen<sup>1</sup>. While any increase in the disability employment gap is disappointing, it is important to recognise that we have still made progress from our 2016 baseline of 37.4 percentage points.

Over the past year, we have continued to work to remove and reduce the barriers that will prevent disabled people from benefiting from our economic recovery. This includes having undertaken a review of Individual Placement and Support (IPS). The findings and recommendations, to be published in spring 2021, will help to enhance the delivery through Fair Start Scotland moving forward, as well as informing provision developed under No One Left Behind.

The UK Government Access to Work programme continues to provide essential support to disabled people in employment and whilst it remains a reserved matter, we are committed to doing all we can to help enhance delivery. In conjunction with the Department for Work and Pensions, we have therefore established an Access to Work stakeholder forum for Scotland – ensuring that for the first time disabled people in Scotland have a formal mechanism through which to shape and improve this vital support.

Despite difficult financial circumstances, after engagement with Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) and disabled parents to help inform delivery, we invested a further £1 million into the Parental Employment Support Fund (PESF). This funding boost focuses on supporting unemployed disabled parents in

households impacted by child poverty to move closer to and into employment. In addition, we recently announced that we will invest a further £5 million to support disabled parents, building on the first phase of PESF, and delivering on our original commitment to invest up to £6 million.

In year one we established a Public Social Partnership (PSP), bringing together employers, government, third sector, and disabled people's organisations (DPOs) to develop and test solutions to the barriers employers face in attracting, recruiting and retaining disabled people. Since its establishment, the PSP has developed governance structures and work streams, and with the guidance of the Scottish Union for Supported Employment (SUSE) as lead partner, has been developing the work plans for each of its five work streams.

I have been clear from the outset that reducing the disability employment gap is only possible with an all-Scotland approach. We will continue to develop our collective approach to employability with local government, through our partnership agreement, and we will build on our strong relationships with DPOs, as well as driving further collaboration with employers.

I am deeply grateful to everyone who has, and continues to be involved in the development and delivery of the plan. Its importance increases with each passing year, and whilst we are encouraged that more employers are realising the depth and breadth of talent that exists within Scotland's disabled community, recent events mean that we must build on the work to date to further address structural inequalities. Large challenges remain, but we are committed, and together with you we will work to ensure that disabled people are able to, and continue to play a full and active part in Scotland's future.



**Jamie Hepburn**  
Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills

<sup>1</sup> See Measuring Progress section for further information.



## 2. Introduction

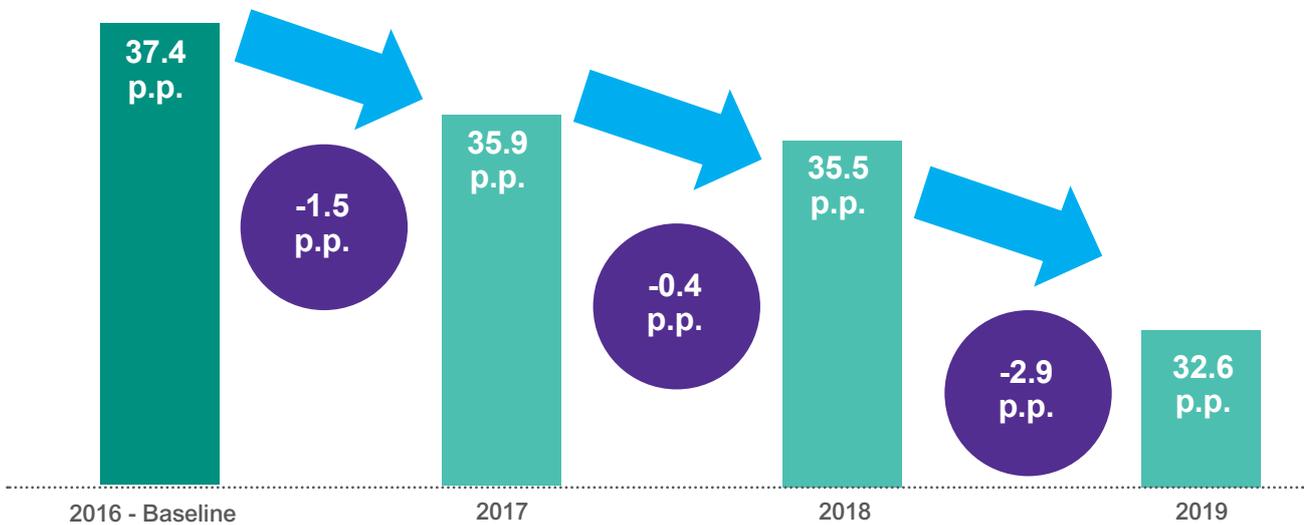
When we published the Action Plan in 2018, we also committed to publish annual updates reporting on progress. This, the second progress report, sets out the main activity over the past year under the Action Plan’s three key themes: Supporting employers to recruit and retain disabled people; Supporting disabled people to enter employment; and Young people and transitions. Case studies are also included, to bring to life the impact of the action being taken. This report forms part of a suite of Labour Market Action Plans developed by the Scottish Government to help focus policies and resources on achieving sustainable and inclusive growth, and a wellbeing economy. This also includes the: [Fair Work Action Plan](#)

[Annual Report \(2021\)](#) and [A Fairer Scotland for Women: Gender Pay Gap Action Plan Annual Report \(2021\)](#).

The original commitment to at least halve the disability employment gap in Scotland was announced in 2016<sup>2</sup>, making that year our baseline year. In this report we refer to January – December 2019 data from the Annual Population Survey, which is the latest and most robust data that can be compared with our baseline, although we recognise it does not reflect the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The figure below shows the progress that has been achieved in reducing the disability employment gap across this period.

**Figure 1: Disability Employment Gap, Scotland, 2016-2019**



Source: ONS Annual Population Survey, Jan-Dec 2016-2019

2 The publication of the final progress report for this action plan is due this spring: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/fairer-scotland-disabled-people-delivery-plan-2021-united-nations-convention/>



## 3. Key Progress to Date

### 3.1 Supporting Employers to Recruit and Retain Disabled People

#### Social Security Scotland – improving recruitment practice

Since its inception, Social Security Scotland has taken a proactive approach to recruiting and supporting disabled workers - however due to the impact of COVID-19, recruitment activity was paused from March 2020 to September 2020.

To ensure all reasonable adjustments were in place for those that needed them and all impacts had been identified, the agency worked with stakeholders, the staff disability network, and trade union reps to gather information to inform an Equality Impact Assessment before progressing with virtual recruitment methods. Candidate workshops have subsequently continued, moving online, and work is underway to record information sessions for prospective applicants, which will be hosted on the Social Security Scotland website.

Social Security Scotland actively encourage all colleagues to disclose diversity information and this has resulted in an increase of employees identifying as disabled. In March 2019, 58.4% of staff had not disclosed any information regarding disability, whereas by September 2020 this has reduced to 25.7%. In March 2019, 8% of Social Security Scotland workforce had identified as being disabled, which had increased to 12.1% by September 2020.

#### Scottish Government Recruitment and Retention Plan for Disabled People

The [Recruitment and Retention Plan for Disabled People](#) was published in 2019, setting out the actions we would take as an employer to support more disabled people into work in Scottish Government and to enable existing disabled employees to thrive and succeed at work. It was developed in partnership with the Council of Scottish Government Unions, with advice and insight from Disabled People's Organisations and, importantly, through dialogue and engagement with disabled people who work for the Scottish Government.

The Plan set 4 outcomes: increasing representation of disabled people; building an inclusive culture; improving policies and practices; and creating accessible workplaces.

Progress was hampered by the pandemic, which resulted in a number of action owners being re-aligned to support the organisation's response. However, we have made progress with some key areas of the plan, most notably in relation to workplace adjustments, enhancements to our Senior Civil Service recruitment processes, and talent development. We have:

- piloted a new model around workplace adjustments for all new staff entering Scottish Government (see case study, page 8);
- introduced a range of improvements to our recruitment into the Senior Civil Service, designed to increase diversity and candidate experience, and for 100 middle manager posts we have implemented a Recruitment Outreach campaign, engaging around 140 external organisations;



- delivered our Future Leaders Diversity Conference in November 2020 – a positive action initiative to market graduate opportunities to disabled people, minority ethnic communities, and those from less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds;
- continued to invest in our future talent pipeline and increase the diversity of the applicant pool for our Graduate Development Programme. Disabled candidates made up 51.8% of those invited to the assessment centre and 62% of those that were selected for the final GDP 2019 cohort.

In addition to the above, we have ensured that the Plan’s principle of advancing disability equality and inclusion was a core aspect of our response to the pandemic, which presented opportunities to drive improvement. For example, we continued to support staff to adapt to changing work requirements, including through an inclusive wellbeing series of communications providing support, tips and advice. As we moved to working from home, nearly 3,000 workplace adjustments were put in place, including transferring adaptive equipment to people’s homes.

Overall, progress continues to be made towards the Scottish Government becoming a more diverse workforce that is representative of Scotland’s population. Using data for the core Scottish Government workforce<sup>3</sup> as of September 2020, 12.9% of employees who chose to share their personal information identified as disabled. This has increased from 6.3% in September 2013. Scottish Ministers remain committed to achieving a representative workforce by 2025, which would mean 19% of the workforce being disabled.

As part of this commitment, Scottish Ministers have set a target for the Scottish Government regarding the proportion of disabled people recruited through external campaigns: currently 25%<sup>4</sup>. This was based on the assumption that we would undertake large-scale, external, co-ordinated recruitment exercises but these have reduced since 2019 – recruitment of disabled staff for the core Scottish Government peaked at 21.0% in 2018-19. In the most recent financial year, 2019-20, recruitment of disabled people fell to 13.9%. At this time, Ministers are currently reviewing the equality outcomes for the Scottish Government, as an employer, as part of the Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming reporting process and new outcomes will be set in March 2021. Following this, a review of the disability recruitment target will take place based on complete 2020-21 data, which will also take into account the impact of COVID-19 on recruitment patterns during this period.

We recognise that to deliver on our recruitment ambitions we will need to do things differently, at pace and at scale. We are currently investing in senior capacity and skill within our resourcing team to drive forward the required changes across our Band A-C recruitment. For Senior Civil Service recruitment, we will continue to evaluate the impact of the improvements we are piloting as outlined above.

3 It should be noted that the data presented in this section refers to SG core only, in keeping with the data and methodology used to produce the target for disabled employees.

4 For SG core based on SG core data.





## CASE STUDY: Scottish Government Workplace Adjustments

A project team was established to pilot a new approach to workplace adjustments, focusing on the co-ordination of adjustments during on-boarding – the period between new employees being offered a contract and starting work.

The team focuses on fostering good relations between new starts and line managers, providing a named point of contact for the new employee, who deals with the case until completion. The emphasis is on early, direct and open communication. Depending on the wishes of the employee, the team will also liaise with line managers to discuss workplace adjustments for their new member of staff and provide information about ways of working to help to remove any barriers. The team then takes the responsibility for putting all workplace adjustments in place, allowing for a much smoother induction for both employees and managers.

The project team undertook an equality impact assessment early in the process to ensure its work is both evidence-based and user-led. Senior management had previously commissioned research on the experiences of existing disabled staff in Scottish Government in terms of recruitment, retention and progression and this has proven invaluable in informing the approach.

The team are learning as they work through cases and engage with providers, but have also drawn on the expertise of external stakeholders such as the Business Disability Forum, Workplace Adjustments Network, and Public Sector Partnership. The team also continues to engage with Scottish Government's Disabled Staff Network.

To date, the team have co-ordinated adjustments for more than 50 new recruits and feedback from both staff and line managers has been overwhelmingly positive. The pilot concluded at the end of December 2020, with resultant learning informing how the service is now expanded and rolled out to existing staff. A fully functioning service is expected to be in place for April 2021, with a Communications plan in development for the new service.



## Public Appointments

The Ethical Standards Commissioner has set the Scottish Government a target that 15% of applications for boards of public bodies should be from disabled people. In 2019, 13% of applications received were from disabled people. Although we did not fully achieve the target in 2019, it was a marked improvement on 2018 when 9% of applications were from disabled people.

In 2019, 12% of the people appointed were disabled people, which also represented an increase compared to only 7% in 2018, although this is slightly lower than the aforementioned level of applications. In 2020 we worked with Inclusion Scotland to provide disabled people with opportunities to shadow public body boards. We also introduced training for disabled people to become Independent Panel Members and sit on selection panels.

Looking forward, in 2021 we will progress actions that were delayed due to the pandemic response and will focus on trialling different sorts of application processes to test if the outcomes for disabled applicants are improved. We will also continue to offer advice and support to disabled people considering applying for public appointments, and will take steps to improve accessibility of our information, forms and application portal.

## Health and Work

Tackling the root causes of health inequalities remains a top priority for the Scottish Government. The impact of persistent deprivation, poverty and other inequalities 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.

The **Health and Work Support pilot** (2018 to 2020) looked to improve access to support for people at risk of losing their job or who were recently unemployed in Dundee City and Fife. In order to support the NHS response to COVID-19, the Health and Work Support pilot was concluded in March 2020, 3 months earlier than originally intended.

The pilot brought together existing national services in Scotland as well as offering further support to unemployed people to simplify the landscape. The aims of the pilot included:

- To increase the numbers accessing health and work support services;
- To help individuals and their employers to improve and manage their health to support them to stay in work or to go back into employment;
- To understand whether the pilot, as a primary entrance point for NHS-led support, was a streamlined alternative to the complex and confusing landscape of existing health and work support services.

There were 2,683 referrals into the pilot from its launch in June 2018 to the end of the pilot in March 2020. Of these, 2,490 were enrolled into case management within the same period. Findings from an [implementation review](#) were published in March 2020. Initial analysis suggests that the pilot appeared to have had a positive impact on health and wellbeing and employment outcomes for people accessing the service. A final evaluation is due to be published in spring 2021 – however COVID-19 may impact this timeline.



**Fair and Healthy Work for All: A review of Scottish Government’s Health and Work Strategy** was published at the end of 2019. It made a number of recommendations on addressing barriers for disabled people and those with health conditions to entering into and remaining in work, and promoting health and wellbeing throughout the workplace.

Due to COVID-19, and the need to re-deploy staff, we have not been able to progress the report’s recommendations during the course of 2020, as we had intended to do. However, in recognising the importance of this work, we will commit to carrying out a review of the recommendations made in the report. We will work closely across Scottish Government Directorates and Public Health Scotland to ensure the recommendations continue to remain relevant and robust in light of the wide impact of the pandemic across society. The review will identify (or reaffirm) key actions that we will take forward to progress our shared objectives around fair and healthy work.

Health improvement colleagues have continued the rollout of training for supported employment case managers based on the National Institute of Disability Management and Research (**NIDMAR**) programme. As at December 2020, 153 case managers from across Health and Social Care Partnerships, local authorities, third and private sectors have engaged in the NIDMAR Training Programme. Involvement has helped develop strong networks and a collaborative approach to improving local case management, across both general and specialist services. Sixty-nine participants successfully completed the training and passed the exam to become registered as Certified Disability Management Practitioners (CDMP) with the International Disability Management Standards Council UK and Ireland, exceeding the target for the first full year of the programme. Whilst the pandemic resulted in a number of students having to withdraw due to job changes and new work demands, it is hoped some of these students will be able to re-join the programme at a later date if they

return to the supported employment service. In the meantime, the current cohort are scheduled to finish the training and sit the CDMP exam in May 2021.

## Supporting Positive Mental Health

“We know that meaningful, fair work is an important driver for good mental health and wellbeing for everyone and can be a positive tool for recovery for those with mental health conditions. We are committed to embedding mental health support in our employability services so that appropriate and timely support is offered to those who need it, when they need it. This will support, among others, those further away from the labour market and prepare them to enter and sustain employment. Stigma and marginalisation of those who suffer from mental ill-health have no place in Scotland and must be challenged. We have committed to working closely with stakeholders, including trade unions and employer groups, to promote mentally healthy workplaces where mental health and wellbeing is meaningfully discussed, promoted and supported and where stigma and discrimination are addressed.”

**Clare Haughey MSP,  
Minister for Mental Health**

It is recognised that the economic impacts of COVID-19 are likely to have a significant effect on the public’s mental health in the coming years, and these impacts are likely to be unevenly distributed. An Institute for Fiscal Studies briefing suggests that if the economic downturn is similar to that experienced after the 2008 financial crisis, the number of people of working age experiencing poor mental health in the UK would rise by half a million<sup>5</sup>.

5 Institute for Fiscal Studies (2020): [Recessions and health: the long-term health consequences of responses to the coronavirus](#).



The Scottish Government provides funding to *See Me*, Scotland’s national campaign to end mental health stigma and discrimination. This includes a *See Me at Work* Programme to help workplaces continuously improve their culture, policies and practices. As part of our Mental Health Transition and Recovery plan we will continue our work with *See Me* to further develop our approach to tackling the fundamental barriers of stigma and discrimination, building on the conversations about mental health that have taken place across communities over the course of the pandemic and lockdown.

Working in collaboration with our Mental Health colleagues, we will ensure 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 (or the risk of unemployment), redundancy, and unhealthy workplace practices. We recognise that changing circumstances (e.g. the rapid change to home working, many now having to juggle work and unpaid care, and uncertainty in the labour market) could create new challenges and increase demand for mental health support. The anxieties that some may feel about returning to workplaces is also likely to be a factor. We will also consider the disproportionate impact that COVID-19 may have had on groups who were already experiencing inequalities.

We are bringing together the learning from projects linked to the Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027 to develop pathways that enable those seeking to enter or remain in work to access appropriate and timely mental health and employability support. In driving this work, NHS Public Health Scotland: Health and Work Directorate delivered a range of programmes over the course of 2020, including: Mentally Healthy Workplace Training for Line Managers (over 300 people trained); Resilience and Wellbeing Workshops; and Managers’ Competency Workshops. The Work Positive

Programme has also been promoted through the introduction of an improved electronic platform, and a new Stress in the Workplace online learning resource. The Health and Work Advice Line has received over 130 enquiries from employees/employers regarding mental health in the workplace. Work on the development of a framework of standards to promote mentally healthy workplaces and testing of the standards was paused as a result of the pandemic, but will resume in the coming year.

Working in partnership with NHS Education for Scotland, the development of [resources](#) to support improved knowledge and skills of the Scottish workforce around mental health improvement, self-harm and suicide prevention has been completed. This includes a series of animations to support better communication around mental health, thus contributing to more mentally healthy workplaces. Digital facilitation resources are now available which provide workplaces with the opportunity to deliver their own awareness raising training – these are available via [NHS Education for Scotland | NES](#).

We are also supporting the Rural Mental Health Forum and RSABI to provide mental health support to rural and agricultural communities, through £450,000 of direct support. With 170 organisations engaging in the Forum, its reach is now extending to over half the population of rural Scotland. They also work directly with the Equality Network and Carers Trust to engage with young carers in rural areas. RSABI provide direct emotional, practical and financial support to families across Scottish agriculture, including addressing the impacts of Covid-19 and Brexit. RSABI also support the Yellow Wellies initiative, to promote good mental health and wellbeing for all ages in agricultural communities.





## CASE STUDY: Fife Council – Just Ask Listen Talk

Fife Council Supported Employment Service consulted with small to medium local businesses to learn more about their view of mental health in the workplace. This led to the production of the Just Ask Listen Talk (JALT) toolkit, which helps employers to support people at work or off sick and struggling due to poor mental health, and outlines the building blocks of how to create and sustain a mentally healthy workplace.

The JALT Toolkit is particularly useful for small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) who may not have in-house HR or Occupational Resources to support them. JALT takes away legal jargon and provides practical step by step guidance to help the employer have sensitive conversations about mental health in the workplace. Information is also provided about organisations in Fife who can improve employer’s responses, and the actions they can take to ensure mental health at work remains an on-going effort of every business success plan.

**Employer 1 Quote:** This is exactly what we would utilise to signpost and support our staff more effectively. We’ve seen the difference of having open communication with staff about mental health – it’s made us more approachable and able to resolve issues regarding mental health.

**Employer 2 Quote:** We know for a fact staff have cited other physical reasons for absences because they feel unable to talk openly about the real reason – poor mental health. It would be a positive step to be able to promote a mentally healthy workplace and encourage open and candid conversations about it. Normalising this type of conversation and promoting good mental health practices frequently amongst staff would probably encourage employees to feel more able to approach us when they aren’t feeling great.

### The Workplace Equality Fund

The Workplace Equality Fund (WEF), which was relaunched in November 2020, provides funding to collaborative projects between the private, public and third sector organisations. These groups include (but are not limited to) women, disabled people, older workers and minority ethnic workers. Through this fund, employers will build their capacity to address equality issues and further develop their efforts to create diverse and inclusive workplaces.

As outlined in our Action Plan we had proposed initiating a specific campaign to promote the positive business case for employing disabled people to employers – however in scoping this work it was identified that the objectives of this piece of work overlapped with both the WEF and the work of the Public Social Partnership

(PSP – see below) and therefore risked duplication. The decision was therefore taken to pause this proposal and instead to provide a boost to the WEF in 2020-21. We will review the proposal later in 2021 once the PSP’s work programme has been further developed, to consider if such a campaign would add value to this existing work.

Through WEF 20/21 we are funding four projects specifically focusing on disabled people – these will be delivered by Deaf Action, Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living (GCIL), SUSE and Inclusion Scotland. In addition, Borders College will expand their programme that supports young parents, including providing support to improve mental health.





## CASE STUDY: Helping people stay in work: Fife Prescription for Work

Prescription for Work is for people engaging with GP surgeries – who are either getting repeat prescriptions, or who are off sick or struggling at work due to disabilities or health issues. The goal is to support people through a Supported Employment offer that leads to negotiating accommodations/adjustments with the employer, an employer offer of Equality, Diversity and Disability Awareness training in the Workplace, and retention support for as long as required, or supporting someone onto an employability pathway to find a job and improve their physical and mental wellbeing thus reducing reliance on more costly medical interventions.

There has been increased demand for support from some disabled people who were already employed, but where changes in working requirements as a result of the pandemic have impacted on their ability to continue working.

Many employees who previously required little to no support to work independently have been affected by the need to shield, increased caring responsibilities, and/or having inadequate equipment or adaptations to allow them to work from home. We increased our Prescription for Work offer for employers and employees to reduce the likelihood of individuals losing their job, and enable employers to make the necessary changes to support their staff.

Staff supporting this offer are trained to an international standard in Vocational Rehabilitation, completing the relevant training to become Certified Disability Management Professionals.

Case study: Claire has a learning disability and has been working full-time for the last 12 years as a dining room assistant at KFC with no requirement for support. Claire was furloughed due to COVID-19 for five months and on return to work, her job looked very different with new health and safety regulations and changes to her role. Claire found these changes difficult and struggled to process new information. A digital walk around of the work site was provided, to assess the environment, which helped produce a description of the changes. A series of one-to-one digital sessions was provided to support Claire to learn and understand the new regulations and changes, along with a three-way digital session with her employer and a work buddy, to help them understand the areas Claire needed additional support. Claire has now been back at work for four months, has adapted well to the new working conditions, and no longer needs additional support in her job.



## Public Social Partnership

We have established a Public Social Partnership (PSP), led by SUSE, assisted by Ready for Business. Over the past year, the PSP has established its governance and project management structures, and used co-production to develop projects to test, and learn from. The focus of this activity has remained firmly on ensuring employers are equipped to recruit and retain disabled people, by targeting and trialing solutions to identified gaps in employer processes, practice and knowledge. Five work streams have been identified, with business plans developed for each: Attract and Recruit; Retention; Public Sector; Transitions; and Under-represented Groups.

A focus on employers is important to us, which is why in addition to testing and learning from the five distinct projects, the PSP will also engage up to 150 employers over the coming months, delivering taster sessions to increase their knowledge, confidence and capacity to recruit and retain disabled employees. We will also ask employers who take part to sign up as Strategic Employer Partners.

## Business and Enterprise Support

Scottish Enterprise (SE), and Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) strive to ensure that case managers have the skills and knowledge to promote the business benefits of the employment of disabled workers to businesses seeking to expand. During the past year, HIE has held staff webinar sessions on the importance of Fair Work and promoting the benefits to clients. SE is mapping existing support and advice on employment of disabled people to better inform and equip all client-facing enterprise agency staff. The intention is to build on this throughout the coming year, ensuring that disabled people can benefit from the economic recovery in a post-COVID Scotland.

## Fair Work First

Through our [Fair Work First](#) flagship policy, we are working to ensure that fair and sustainable employment practices are adopted by employers across Scotland. We have extended our Fair Work First criteria to ask employers to take action to create more diverse and inclusive workplaces, explicitly reflecting the Scottish Government's priority for tackling barriers preventing disabled people from entering and participating fully in work.

In January 2021 we published [guidance](#) to support employers and those involved in awarding public sector grants, sponsorship and other funding, to implement Fair Work First. It provides examples of good practice for each of the criteria, explains the benefits for workers and organisations, and illustrates action employers can take to develop greater diversity and inclusion in the workplace, including for disabled people.

We have recently published a [Fair Work Employer Support Tool](#) to enable employers to self-assess their working practices against the dimensions of Fair Work and access support to help with continuous improvement. Targeted at small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), it will be further developed in 2021-22 to help small and micro businesses and employers in the Gig Economy adopt fairer work practices.

Through the COVID-19 Fair Work Statement – issued jointly by the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work, and Culture, the STUC and leaders across the public, private and third sectors – we have maintained a focus on promoting fair work practice, including by encouraging employers to facilitate flexible working arrangements to protect disabled people from the virus and enable them to continue working.

Further detail on the progress in implementing our overarching Fair Work Action Plan can be found [here](#).



## 3.2 Supporting Disabled People to Enter Employment

### Fair Start Scotland

In April 2018, the Scottish Government launched its first fully devolved employability service: Fair Start Scotland (FSS). FSS provides person-centred support for people who are long-term unemployed, are disabled, have health conditions, or face other barriers to moving into work.

Our latest FSS statistics covering up to end December 2020 show that in total we have supported 29,473 people, of whom 9,484 have moved into work. The equivalent numbers for disabled people are: 12,929 disabled people started on the service (to 30 Dec 2020), and so far 3,584 have started a job. 44% of people joining FSS reported a disability. The proportion of disabled participants decreased from year 1 to year 2: from 55% to 44%, and decreased further during the COVID-19 pandemic to 27% in April – June 2020. However in October – December 2020 the proportion of disabled people was 44%, similar to pre-pandemic levels. The pandemic and restrictions on face-to-face meetings have had a significant impact on FSS service delivery, as people with health concerns have been less likely to engage with services during this time. As part of our continuous improvement activity, we are working with FSS Service Providers to enhance our engagement with equalities groups who are under-represented on FSS services, disabled people, people from minority ethnic groups and people living in Scotland’s rural communities.

Our [evaluation findings for year 2](#) show that the majority of participants are positive about their experience of FSS support. Considering the core principles of the service, of those surveyed: 91% felt they were treated with dignity and respect; 80% felt the service took account of their individual needs and circumstances; and 81% felt the service offered support to improve their general quality of life and wellbeing.

We continued to invest in our employability services throughout 2020-21 and in 2021-22, the FSS budget will increase to £27 million – approximately £5.8 million more than the previous year in order to ensure that FSS is appropriately funded to deliver for those who most need support. Ministers have extended the delivery of FSS services with the current contractors up to 31 March 2023, providing stability and continuity for participants.





## CASE STUDY: Fair Start Scotland

David has spent the last two years out of employment experiencing poor mental health. Speaking about his experience he said: *“I felt like I had no real career path or way of getting out of the rut I was in. I wanted help but couldn’t face it, until I discovered Fair Start Scotland.”*

At times, David’s health was such that he struggled to leave the house and when he had to, he would *“wear sunglasses to avoid eye contact and earphones so I didn’t have to interact with anyone.”*

Since accessing the service, David has been supported by a Key Worker at a pace that suits him. As part of the ongoing Vocational Profiling process, his Key Worker identified that David needed additional development in communication and interacting with people. David gradually gained more confidence in these areas and enhanced his employability skill set. After several meetings with his Key Worker, they both agreed that he would benefit from attending courses on confidence building and interview skills.

David said: *“I attended the course with my confidence rising and my Key Worker reassured me this would be a really positive experience and she was right! I came back feeling on top of the world and Fair Start Scotland continued to help develop me on the back of this.”*

David suggested a career in retail was of interest as he felt a real improvement in his interpersonal skills and was keen to see how he would get on in this sector. A placement opportunity with Marks and Spencer was sourced through the Employer Service team.

David is in regular contact with his Key Worker as part of his in-work support, to ensure he continues to feel supported and can chat through any concerns he may have. Following the success of his placement, David was offered a fixed term paid role and is loving the opportunity.

He says: *“I have a purpose and a reason to get up in the morning, and coming from someone who was unemployed for two years, that is definitely a help in dealing with my mental health.”*



## Review of Individual Placement and Support

It is recognised that participation in work can play a vital role in recovery for many people with mental health issues. Individual Placement and Support (IPS) is an established evidence-based approach to supporting people who experience mental health issues to enter and sustain paid employment through intensive support, rapid job search until a job is secured, and ongoing in-work support.

A review of IPS delivery within Fair Start Scotland was commissioned in 2020, to consider the most appropriate approach to delivery of IPS in Scotland going forward. An independent consultant engaged with all FSS Service Providers to better understand current IPS delivery and how this fits within the FSS approach, and to assess the extent to which IPS delivery as part of FSS has achieved the desired policy ambition of offering a flexible employment support service tailored to meet individual needs. Delivery of IPS by local authorities and third sector organisations was also considered.

Fidelity reviews were undertaken using the 25-point IPS Fidelity Scale with those providers currently delivering IPS, whilst Readiness Reviews were undertaken with providers not yet delivering IPS so that they could start focusing on practical steps they can take to deliver this support. The review findings are currently being finalised and will be published in spring 2021.

## Access to Work – Scottish Stakeholder Forum

Access to Work, the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) employment support programme, aims to help more disabled people enter or stay in work. It can provide practical and financial support for disabled people or those with a long-term physical impairment or mental health condition. Support can be provided where someone needs help or adaptations beyond reasonable adjustments, and is available to both employees and self-employed people.

Whilst Access to Work remains a reserved matter, we will continue to work in collaboration with DWP to help improve the delivery of the programme in Scotland. One of the commitments in our action plan was to develop a programme of support similar to Access to Work for work experience or work trials. However, when scoping this work and after consultation with DWP colleagues, it was established that this type of support was already available through the Access to Work Programme. Rather, what was required was clearer guidance for advisors as to when this support could be accessed and to try to ensure this funding had better uptake amongst future applicants. We therefore worked with DWP to improve the guidance, a revised version of which has now been produced.

For the first time, disabled people now have a formal mechanism through which to help shape the delivery of Access to Work in Scotland, with the launch of the Scottish Access to Work Stakeholder Forum in October 2020. The Forum comprises 19 stakeholder organisations consisting of third sector and local authority partners, as well as Scottish Government, the DWP and Supported Businesses. The Forum, led by Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living – a DPO – will meet quarterly to represent the views of service users and offer advice to DWP on how Access to Work could be enhanced to: improve customer experience; and raise awareness of the programme in Scotland.

## No One Left Behind

No One Left Behind sets out the shared Scottish and Local Government vision for transformational change in Employability in Scotland: moving towards a system that provides flexible person-centred support, is straightforward for people to navigate, and is integrated and aligned with other services. We are working in partnership to deliver this vision – with our strategic partners in Local Government, but also more widely across the public, third and private sectors as well as service users themselves.



Current delivery of employability support services has brought together the funding allocated previously to Local Authorities for Activity Agreements (AA) and the Scottish Employer Recruitment Incentive (SERI). Bringing these together in one investment pot has allowed Local Government and their partners to use the investment flexibly to meet the needs of local people.

Through further development of the No One Left Behind approach, we will work to ensure all groups experiencing disadvantage in the labour market, including disabled people, are supported to access the right support at the right time to move towards, into and progress within employment.

To help embed the required culture change as part of this approach, we are working to develop key service elements which will include a Customer Charter. In line with our commitments to deliver a person-centred service, user voice will be an integral aspect of the work to develop this. A co-design and lived experience research method was considered

to best facilitate drawing on service users' perspective, allowing a wider view point to be considered. With this in mind, a **lived experience panel** was created to co-design the charter based on individuals' experiences of Employability support services in Scotland.

In addition, as part of the No One Left Behind approach, the Scottish Government in partnership with Lantra Scotland, launched a Civtech Challenge 5 bid focused on skills development in rural and remote areas. The Civtech process seeks a technology-based solution, to develop a skills sharing system in rural and remote areas, that will encourage more people to engage with skills training and those with expertise to share their skills. The solution being developed will support people of all abilities from across rural Scotland to access skills, rural and land based training from informal through to degree level. Technology will be used to breakdown inequality of opportunity, by addressing the barriers some individuals can face when accessing training, including for example, considerations around disabled access or family and work responsibilities.



### CASE STUDY: No One Left Behind Lived Experience Panel

We have worked closely with several organisations (e.g. Glasgow Disability Alliance, Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities, and Enable) to identify 24 participants for the panel. These members come from a wide range of backgrounds including disabled people, young carers, care-experienced people, those with experience of homelessness, single parents, and refugees. This is an important aspect of the lived experience panel as it ensures a representative perspective of those citizens of Scotland who are furthest from the labour market.

In line with our commitment to treating service users with dignity and respect, members are remunerated in line with the living wage for their time, as we continue to draw on their expertise to support development activity.

We have been working with the panel on a monthly basis via online facilities to produce a Customer Charter for No One Left Behind, with a focus on supporting panel members through this process. Every aspect of the charter will be informed directly by users, with the main component being a collection of commitments that clearly convey what users can expect of services, and what they can do if they feel these commitments are not being met.



## Parental Employment Support Fund

The Parental Employment Support Fund (PESF) is delivered in partnership with local authorities, helping six priority family groups at greatest risk of child poverty – including families with a disabled adult or child – to secure fair work and an increase in their household earnings through the provision of tailored, holistic employability support. The Tackling Child Poverty Fund is investing more than £14 million in PESF in 2019-21.

Under the core PESF budget, 65% of the investment will focus on tackling in-work poverty – which is expected to be exacerbated for many families by the economic impacts of COVID-19 – supporting parents to upskill, retrain and progress in employment. The remaining 35% of funding will focus on supporting parents to access employment and increase their family income.

During summer 2020, officials engaged with DPOs and disabled parents to explore experience of support currently available for this group, and establish future priority needs. This led to the allocation of additional funding (£1 million for the financial year 2020/21) to boost PESF support for unemployed disabled parents living in households impacted by child poverty.

As was recently announced, the Tackling Child Poverty Fund will allocate a further £5 million through PESF to provide support for disabled parents, enabling us to further strengthen the support for this priority group as part of the Scottish Government's efforts to eradicate child poverty.

“The COVID pandemic has brought into sharp focus the need to tackle persistent inequalities that exist across Scotland. That is why we've committed a £5 million boost to support disabled parents through the Parental Employability Support Fund. The holistic and tailored support offered, developed locally with input from disabled people themselves, will help disabled parents to address barriers and progress towards sustainable employment. This is a key step towards halving the disability employment gap and eradicating child poverty.”

**Aileen Campbell MSP,  
Cabinet Secretary for Communities  
and Local Government**

## Early Learning and Childcare (ELC)

We are committed to diversifying the ELC workforce, but the work to progress this during 2020 has been impacted by restrictions on recruitment activity within the childcare sector, meaning we have been limited in the extent to which we could promote childcare careers to those who are underrepresented. However, in the period before the pandemic we shared best practice in recruiting those with protected characteristics – including disabled people – across the sector, and we expect those principles to have been implemented with the limited recruitment that has taken place this year. We are also addressing the issue of underreporting of those with protected characteristics in the ELC sector, and we are considering ways in which more accurate information can be gathered during data collection, so that we are able to better measure progress going forward.



## Social Security Scotland

Social Security Scotland are currently looking at different ways to assist disabled people when claiming disability benefits and passported benefits. Service Design work is starting in early 2021 on the approach for signposting clients of Disability Assistance benefits to wider support where appropriate. This will include work with the Department for Work and Pensions but also employability services, local authorities, health and social care, and the third sector.

## Procurement Tools and Guidance

The sustainable procurement duty requires that, before a contracting authority buys anything, it must think about how it can improve the social, environmental and economic wellbeing of the area in which it operates, with a particular focus on reducing inequality. We continue to believe that the duty could be better utilised to help secure more employment opportunities for those facing barriers to the labour market, including disabled people.

Scottish Government Procurement are working to raise awareness of the duty and how public procurement in Scotland can help deliver wider social and economic benefits, including through community benefit requirements in relevant public contracts and framework agreements.

For example, a new online platform was launched in June 2020, providing easier access to the sustainable procurement tools. The guidance for practical application of sustainable procurement is also on the platform, enabling public sector buyers to more easily access and reference information on how to identify and pursue equality outcomes in procurement. This can include through targeting recruitment and training at priority groups.

## City Regions and Regional Growth Deals

Regional Growth Deals are agreements between the Scottish Government, UK Government and local government designed to bring about long-term strategic approaches to improving regional economies.

Scotland's 12 City Region Deals are all at different stages of delivery, but when fully operational they will deliver 70,000 jobs over the next 20 years. The Scottish Government is working closely with the City Region Deals to ensure that disabled people, women, minority ethnic groups, and people from our most deprived communities benefit from the £5 billion investment.

Every business case is analysed to assess the extent to which it can contribute to reducing the disability employment gap. The aligned skills and apprenticeship programmes are focused on ensuring that disabled people can acquire the training they need to secure employment. No business case can be approved without a full equality impact assessment.

## Improving Accessibility of Transport

Scotland's [\*Accessible Travel Framework: Going Further\*](#) was published in 2016.

Lockdown and physical distancing measures during the pandemic brought acute challenges for disabled travellers across all transport modes, as well as exacerbating existing barriers and hampering progress in several areas. Whilst the Framework's vision (i.e. that "all disabled people can travel with the same freedom, choice, dignity and opportunity as other citizens") has not changed due to the pandemic, what it looks like in practice and the steps we have to take to achieve it in a post-pandemic context has.

New challenges have emerged rapidly, and many of the priorities we identified with disabled people pre-pandemic, whilst still important, are no longer the most pressing issues. Future delivery plans will be driven by the emerging evidence on the impact of COVID-19 for disabled passengers.



Although some work was paused, good progress was still made. A series of co-produced Government Guidance was issued, for example:

- The Scottish Government’s specialist expert disability advisory body, the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS), have produced specific COVID-19 guidance:
  - Guidance for transport operators on **assisting disabled passengers**<sup>6</sup>; and
  - Guidance for Local Authorities to ensure the mobility needs of disabled people are fully considered in **temporary street infrastructure**<sup>7</sup>.
- We also worked with MACS to co-produce the section in the COVID-19 guidance on **safer public spaces** on wider accessibility and inclusion<sup>8</sup>.
- We are also monitoring the range of guidance that is being produced by third sector organisations and working with them where appropriate to promote this material with our stakeholders. This includes, for example, Guide Dogs UK guidance for bus operators to ensure drivers and other staff working to support bus travel can feel confident when helping passengers with sight loss<sup>9</sup>.

The [Accessible Travel Delivery Plan: Progress Report 2019/2020](#) was published in January this year, and includes updates on:

- **Thistle Assistance** – to support disabled people exempt from the mandatory face covering rules on public transport Sustrans produced 30,000 new Thistle Assistance cards with an “exempt” sticker, alongside other information;

6 <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/47623/macsguidance-for-disabled-passengers-transition-plans.pdf>

7 <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/47546/temporary-street-measures-during-the-coronavirus-crisis.pdf>

8 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-public-spaces-scotland-urban-centres-green-spaces/pages/5/>

9 <https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/research/Policy-and-guidance-for-businesses/Guidance-for-bus-staff>

- **Hate Crime Charter** – the Hate Crime Working Group has been reconvened, which includes representation from Disability Equality Scotland (DES) and People First. It is currently working towards a soft online launch in March 2021 which will cover rail, bus and ferries;
- **Rail Passenger Assistance** – ScotRail and the rail industry have continued to ensure that Passenger Assist is available for those who need it. In consultation with DPOs, a range of physical distancing measures were agreed and implemented covering a range of disabilities.

## Review of Social Care

Having the right social care support in place is fundamental to enable some disabled people to participate more fully in society. An Independent Review was established in September 2020 to ensure that we address the challenges and opportunities that face adult social care in Scotland. These challenges are not new but have been thrown into sharp relief by the pandemic. The Review considered what is required to achieve the highest attainable standard of support for the independence and wellbeing of people who use adult social care services. The review [report](#) was published in January 2021.

While some elements of the reform programme for adult social care support, launched in 2019, were paused as a result of the pandemic, work continued with Health and Social Care Partnerships, the People-led Policy Panel and other partners to ensure our social care system delivers the right type and mix of support to help remove barriers to work for disabled people. Work on the programme includes a framework of practice for self-directed support across Scotland.



## 3.3 Young People and Transitions

### Transitions

Supporting young people, and in particular young disabled people, as they make the transition from school to young adult life has never been more critical. We are committed to improving the lived experiences of young people who require additional support, and to ensuring that young people are at the centre of all transition planning for their future.

The Principles into Practice Trial Programme, delivered by ARC Scotland and supported by Scottish Government, will provide a mechanism to create and deliver collective solutions, and to drive good practice, thereby helping to ensure that all young people receive appropriate support and are offered choices at points of transition, in order to reach their full potential.

**Maree Todd MSP,  
Minister for Children and Young People**

[ARC Scotland](#), supported by the Scottish Government Children and Families Directorate, are currently conducting a trial of Principles into Practice in 10 participating local authority areas over a two-year period (2020-2022).

[About Principles into Practice | Scottish Transitions Forum](#) is a draft framework, based on the [Principles of Good Transitions](#), which been developed by ARC Scotland, in consultation with young people, parents and carers, and professionals across many sectors. It aims to improve the planning and delivery of support for young people aged between 14 and 25 who require additional support as they make the transition to young adult life, by embedding the 'Principles of Good Transitions' into policy, planning and practice.

The purpose of the trial is to improve the transitions support available to young people and their parents and carers in the participating trial areas, and to test and bring the draft of Principles into Practice to completion, in order to support its implementation more widely.

### Learner Journey Review

Year two of the implementation of recommendations from the [Learner Journey Review](#) has been delayed as a result of the ongoing public health crisis, but Scottish Government will ensure the Learner Journey recommendations are incorporated as part of the broader response to COVID-19.

Wider work is underway to take forward recommendations from the [Muscatelli Report](#), the [Cumberford-Little report](#) and the [Future Skills action plan](#). We are monitoring the outcomes of these in order to understand the impact on the Learner Journey and to avoid duplication of effort. The ongoing [Scottish Funding Council \(SFC\) Review](#), which aims to review coherent provision and sustainability in the delivery of further and higher education, is currently in its third and final phase, with detailed delivery and implementation plans to be published by May 2021 to calibrate with the Scottish Parliament election. Supporting vulnerable groups, including disabled people, continues to be a key focus throughout all of this work.



## Apprenticeships

Our Apprenticeship programmes are managed by [Skills Development Scotland \(SDS\)](#). Following significant consultation with partners and stakeholders, SDS published their [Equality Impact Assessment \(EQIA\) for Work Based Learning](#) in July 2020. This assessment is inclusive of current policies such as: Foundation Apprenticeships (FAs), Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) and Graduate Apprenticeships (GAs), and outlines what SDS and other key stakeholders need to address in order to tackle the barriers that currently exist in apprenticeship delivery.

SDS also published their [Apprenticeship Equality Action Plan Year 4 Update](#) in November 2020, and will shortly begin work to refresh the action plan for 2021-22 onwards.

As part of the economic response to COVID-19, SDS launched the [Apprenticeship Employer Grant](#), which offers £5000 for employers to recruit a MA or GA aged 16-24 years old. For those young people who are disabled, care leavers or from minority ethnic groups, the age range is extended up to 29 years in recognition that these groups often experience additional barriers on their career journey. A comprehensive evaluation of the impact of the enhanced funding up to age 29 for these groups is being undertaken in 2020/21.

## Young Person's Guarantee

The Scottish Government launched the Young Person's Guarantee in November 2020. Building on our substantial existing investment in education, employability and skills we have committed investment of £60 million with the ambition that, within two years, every person aged between 16 and 24 will have the opportunity to: study; take up an apprenticeship, job or work experience; or participate in formal volunteering. A [web portal](#) providing further information is now live, and a high-level [Activity Plan](#) sets out action to be taken forward to implement the Guarantee.

We are clear that the Guarantee must be employer-led and make a tangible difference to young people, and to those who provide opportunities that allow young people to reach their potential. There will be a 'no wrong door' approach, and delivery partners work collectively to connect young people to positive outcomes. We are starting from strong foundations with proven infrastructure, including the Developing the Young Workforce Programme, partnerships with local government and third sector, services from Skills Development Scotland, and world-class universities and colleges.

Advancing equality of opportunity and inclusion will be central to the Guarantee. All groups of young people must be able to benefit from the Guarantee which, of course, includes young disabled people. Activity being undertaken by delivery partners to ensure the needs of young disabled people are embedded includes:

- Engaging with young disabled people (and the organisations who represent them) when implementing the Guarantee so their interests are integral to this work;
- Ensuring that communication is accessible (e.g. provision in alternative formats such as BSL);
- Identifying how young disabled people can better access support and make use of available pathways;
- Providing employers and volunteer involving organisations with the necessary advice and guidance so that they in turn are able to offer appropriate support to young disabled people; and
- Promoting the Guarantee to those working on other government policy priorities to further support the creation of valuable opportunities for young disabled people.



Of this £60 million we are investing £30 million to support local partnerships, which will help ensure a person-centred and place-based approach to delivering the Guarantee. Partnerships will be working to ensure that additional funding can provide wrap around support to young people participating in the [UK Government's Kickstart Scheme](#). We have also provided an additional £1 million to Our Future Now and Discover Your Potential to support 16-17 years who are ineligible for support through Kickstart.

As a result of COVID-19, ventures who are part of [Our Future Now](#) have moved many services online, encouraging young people to take part in activities virtually and have regular phone and video calls to stay in touch. During this time, ventures have supported a range of young people including those with additional support needs. The additional funding provided by Scottish Government will help to provide more staff training and bespoke support (e.g. running sessions individually rather than in a group where this better meets the young person's needs, and offering training in the new remote support techniques, including safety on the internet).

### Developing the Young Workforce

Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) is the Scottish Government's Youth Employment strategy to better prepare young people for the world of work. DYW Regional Groups are employer-led and are set up across Scotland to connect employers with education. Through the Young Person's Guarantee £10 million, of the £60 million pledged, is supporting the introduction of DYW School Co-ordinators in all secondary schools across all 21 regional groups. The main role of the DYW School Co-ordinators is to create increased opportunities for, and participation in, work-based learning for pupils – particularly those in the senior phase of school. They will also create an employer engagement strategy which will reflect the local labour market and the school's demographic.

Recognising that specialist provision will be needed to support those young people who face additional barriers, DYW have set up an equalities work stream which will focus on ensuring the programme is inclusive to all young people throughout Scotland, particularly those furthest removed from the labour market. One of DYW's national campaigns 'A Job for Everybody' took place digitally in November 2020.

DYW are also working with policy leads in Employability and Fair Work to develop training to support DYW School Coordinators to more effectively address barriers for those with protected characteristics who are furthest from the labour market, including young disabled people, and encourage employers to adopt and embed fair and inclusive workplace practices. This training will be delivered in the coming year, and will also be offered to others who are working on the Young Person's Guarantee.





## CASE STUDY: South Ayrshire Council - Tailored Jobs

In August 2019, South Ayrshire Council initiated a 2-year pilot programme to create tailored part-time jobs for young people with additional support needs who were participating in the Council's Supported Employment programme. To date, the programme has created 5 jobs in Council workplaces, with the jobs being designed to accommodate the young person's skills, interests and capabilities, including the total hours worked.

Each young person is allocated an Employability and Skills (E&S) Officer who works with services to identify and tailor the job, provide ongoing support to the young person and workplace supervisor, and deliver relevant training to staff. The young person is paid the Scottish Local Government Living Wage.

Gavin was known to South Ayrshire Council's Active Schools Team through his love of sport and being a Paralympic Champion. In August 2019 he started engaging in the Supported Employment programme and, due to his interest in sport, his E&S Officer and Active Schools Team Leader created a tailored job for him within the Active Schools Team.

*Gavin says: "In January 2020 I started my job with South Ayrshire Council's Health and Wellbeing team as a part-time project assistant. Gaining employment was a huge milestone for me. Due to my cerebral palsy I always knew securing employment would be more of a challenge for me in comparison to my peers. I first contacted Employability and Skills in summer of 2019, with the hope of doing some work experience in the gap year I was taking. I never expected to come out with a part-time paid job".*

*"My role enables me to combine my love of sport with my passion to help make a difference to people's lives, as well as providing me with the chance to develop valuable employability skills. One of my main tasks has been the Tokyo 2020 Project, with the aim of encouraging more people to participate in Olympic and Paralympic sports. I'm so grateful to be given this opportunity and have people believe in me".*



## Careers Strategy

[The Careers Strategy: Moving Forward](#) was published February (2020), and set out high level ambitions for careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG) in Scotland.

In response to the recommendations for the Young Person’s Guarantee, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) will implement a revised programme of work that takes account of the need to link their careers services more closely to the wider support on offer for young people. This includes work on improving the CIAG offer across Further Education and Higher Education, and linking in with Colleges on the [Learner Journey Review](#).

In December 2020 Education Scotland published a [report](#) on the careers service offer in schools that outlines progress made and opportunities for improvement in the school estate.

Scottish Government will continue to work with SDS and partners to consider how the [CIAG Review](#) can respond fully to the impact of COVID-19 on young people and employment. There will be ongoing work to align equalities work across partners, with particular input from Young Scot and Intercultural Youth Scotland around the CIAG offer and structure.

## Skills Development Scotland

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is Scotland’s national skills body. They have developed [My CMS \(Career Management Skills\)](#) – a suite of Careers, Information and Guidance (CIAG) resources. These have been tailored to a range of needs, to support effective engagement with disabled customers and those with additional support needs. A number of interactive versions were piloted to support remote delivery as a result of COVID-19.

Local CIAG teams work with the SDS National Training Programme equality team, with this work including:

- development of an interim Career Education Programme. This was developed for teachers, but with parents and carers also in mind given they would likely be supporting young people through home-schooling during lockdown. Accessibility was a key consideration, as was content (e.g. including activities to challenge gender stereotypes and preconceptions of “realistic” jobs for disabled people);
- a webinar covering person-centred planning and careers guidance to parents/carers of young people with additional support needs as part of a series organised by ARC Scotland. The webinar was recorded and has been made available to other parents/carers, as well as informing input to a Visibility Scotland webinar, tailored to the needs of those with sight loss.

SDS are currently developing their Parental Engagement Strategy. Equality colleagues are involved in this development to ensure the needs of disabled young people, and disabled parents/carers, are considered. A new app for parents/carers is also being developed.



## Job Start Payment

[Job Start Payment](#) is a new benefit to help young people who meet the criteria with the costs of starting a new job. To develop this, a public consultation took place between January and April 2019 which included a survey and workshops with stakeholder agencies and young people. The Scottish Government's [response to the consultation](#) was published in December 2019.

Whilst overall the Job Start Payment is expected to have a positive impact for young people who find employment, the consultation and an Equality Impact Assessment highlighted the need for some policy changes to better meet the needs of disabled young people. These include:

- extending the scope of qualifying benefits to include Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), thereby enabling more disabled young people and those with long-term health conditions to apply;
- reducing the average weekly working hours requirement from 16 to 12, to help ensure more young people would be able to meet the requirement;
- increasing the application window to allow more time for young people who may require extra support to make an application.

Job Start Payment was due to launch in spring 2020 but this was delayed until August 2020 as a result of the pandemic. In the 6 weeks following launch of the benefit, a total of 1,340 applications were received by [Social Security Scotland](#).

## Independent Living Fund Scotland Transitions Fund

The [Independent Living Fund \(ILF\) Scotland Transitions Fund](#) provides grants, for up to one year, to support young disabled people aged between 16-25 years with the transition to becoming more independent.

The number of applications for the fund has increased exponentially, with a 72% year on year increase in 2019/20, and further growth during 2020/21. In response to this additional funding has been awarded in 20/21, with action that amends, in the short term, the maximum grant available in the remainder of that financial year.

Statutory transition support at a local level has been placed under additional pressure as a result of the pandemic and associated restrictions needed to control the virus. Many young disabled people indicate they are subsequently facing further challenges in accessing support and it is believed that this has contributed to the significant increase in applications received by ILF Scotland for the Transitions Fund. It therefore remains an important source of support at a critical point in young disabled people's lives.



## 4. Measuring Progress

When we published *A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Employment Action Plan*, we had also identified and agreed the key indicators against which we would report on an annual basis. This is to measure and demonstrate progress towards achieving the overall aim of at least halving the disability employment gap in Scotland by 2038.

In this report, we refer to Annual Population Survey (APS) January-December 2019 data. This is the latest data which can be compared with our baseline year. However, we recognise that it precedes COVID-19 and the pandemic's impact on employment. Therefore this year, in addition to providing an update on our key indicators from the 2019 data, we have also included a section on the emerging evidence of the impact of COVID-19 on disabled people in our labour market.

### The impact of COVID-19

It is likely that the COVID-19 crisis could exacerbate existing structural labour market inequalities, and we continue to monitor and report on the latest employment statistics for disabled people<sup>10</sup>. The most recent results, from the Labour Force Survey<sup>11</sup> for October-December 2020 (not directly comparable with the Annual Population Survey but more recent), show the employment rate of disabled people fell by 5.7 percentage points over the year with the disability employment gap widening by the same amount<sup>12</sup>. In addition, recent evidence for the UK as a whole shows that disabled employees were more likely to be made

redundant than non-disabled employees in September – November 2020<sup>13</sup>.

Prior to the crisis, households in which somebody is disabled were more likely to be in poverty<sup>14</sup> and we also know that disabled people earn less on average than non-disabled people<sup>15</sup>. Recent analysis by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation<sup>16</sup> estimated that around 56% of disabled people in the UK who were employed at the start of 2020 had reported a loss of earnings by the middle of the year. This is 2 percentage points higher than the proportion of non-disabled people who reported a loss of earnings. Disabled people were also more likely to report they had zero earnings by mid-year (45% of disabled people compared to 41% of non-disabled people).

Other indicators highlight the wider impacts the crisis is having on workers. Recent survey evidence from the ONS<sup>17</sup> (September 2020) shows that a lower proportion of disabled people in Great Britain reported that COVID-19 was affecting their work than non-disabled people. This may be because disabled people are less likely to be in employment. However, when examining the ways in which people reported that their work was being affected, disabled people were much more likely to be worried about their health and safety at work than non-disabled people (24.3% vs 13.7%), were more likely to have experienced a decrease in hours worked (22.6% vs 18.8%), and were also more likely to report being asked to take leave – which includes unpaid leave (3.6% vs 1.4%).

10 See the Scottish Government's labour market statistics published here: [Labour market statistics - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/publications/labour-market-statistics/pages/index.aspx)

11 To note: although the Labour Force Survey (LFS) is more timely, the Annual Population Survey (APS) is based on a larger sample size and therefore has a higher degree of reliability. The APS is used for monitoring progress towards our ambition to at least halve the disability employment gap.

12 [Labour market monthly briefing: February 2021](https://www.gov.scot/publications/labour-market-monthly-briefing/pages/index.aspx)

13 [Coronavirus and redundancies in the UK labour market - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peopleinwork/employmentandunemployment/bulletins/coronavirusandredundanciesintheuklabourmarket/2020-11-19)

14 [Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland 2016-19 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/poverty-and-income-inequality-in-scotland-2016-19/pages/index.aspx)

15 [Disability pay gaps in the UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peopleinwork/employmentandunemployment/bulletins/disabilitypaygapsintheuk/2019-11-14)

16 [UK Poverty 2020/21 | JRF](https://www.jrf.org.uk/2020/12/16/uk-poverty-2020-21)

17 [Coronavirus and the social impacts on disabled people in Great Britain - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peopleinwork/employmentandunemployment/bulletins/coronavirusandthesocialimpactsongreatbritain/2020-09-16)



The ONS survey results also highlight the broader ways in which disabled people in Great Britain have been affected, which could have implications for individuals’ employability and/or ability to work in both the short and long-term. Disabled people were much more likely than non-disabled people to report that their health was being affected (27.8% of disabled people vs 6.7% of non-disabled people) and 42.7% of disabled people reported that their access to healthcare and treatment for non-

coronavirus related issues had been disrupted. Almost half (45.4%) of disabled people who had experienced reduced access to treatment reported that their health had become worse as a result. COVID-19 has also had a greater negative impact on the wellbeing of disabled people relative to non-disabled people (62.2% vs 42.0%).

The section below reports on progress of our key indicators:

### 4.1 Halving the Disability Employment Gap (DEG)

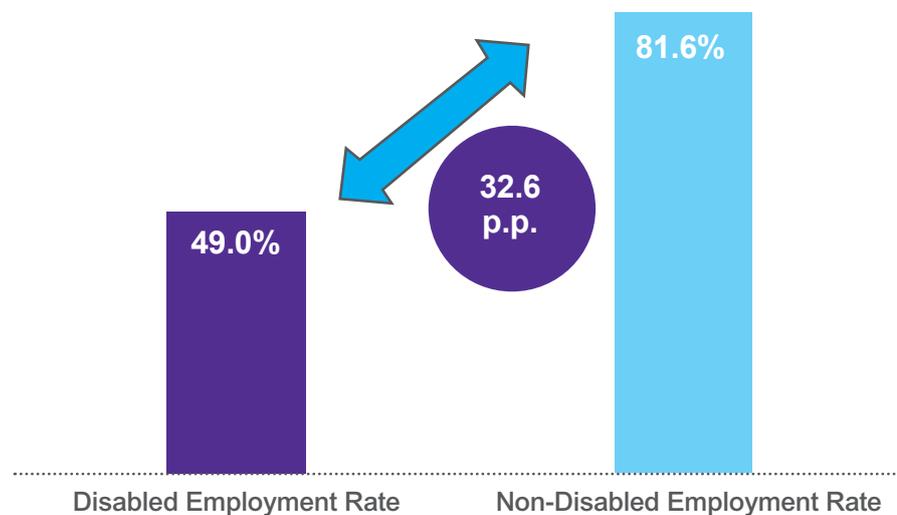
The Disability Employment Gap (DEG) is the difference between the employment rates of disabled people and non-disabled people. In 2016, when we set our aim to at least halve the DEG, this was 37.4 percentage points (p.p.). Since 2016, Scotland’s DEG has fallen: to 35.9 p.p. in 2017; to 35.5 p.p. in 2018; and to 32.6 p.p. in 2019. The narrowing of the gap since 2016 has been driven by a rise in the employment rate of disabled people.

**Figure 2: Change in the disability employment gap (DEG) since baseline in 2016**

	2016 - Baseline	2017	2018	2019	2038 - Aim to ½ the gap	Progress in reducing the DEG
Disability Employment Gap (DEG)	37.4 p.p.	35.9 p.p.	35.5 p.p.	32.6 p.p.	18.7 p.p.	

Source: ONS Annual Population Survey, Jan-Dec 2016-2019

**Figure 3: The Disability Employment Gap in Scotland in 2019**



Source: ONS Annual Population Survey, Jan-Dec 2019



## 4.2 Interim Milestones

We also set out two interim milestones in the Action Plan to help track progress towards halving the DEG:

- A) To increase the employment rate of disabled people to 50% by 2023; and
- B) to 60% by 2030.

To reach these milestones, and ultimately halve the gap, the employment rate of disabled people will need to increase by at least 1 percentage point every year on average. This has been achieved so far. The employment rate of disabled people has increased by 6.2 percentage points over the last three years – from 42.8% in 2016 to 49.0% in 2019.

**Figure 4: Changes in the employment rate of disabled people**

	2016 - Baseline	2017	2018	2019	2023 – 1st interim goal	2030 – 2nd interim goal	Progress towards interim milestones
Employment rate of Disabled People	42.8%	45.3%	45.6%	49.0%	50.0%	60.0%	

*Source: ONS Annual Population Survey, Jan-Dec 2016-2019*

## 4.3 Young People and Transitions

In 2019, the employment rate of disabled 16-24 year olds was 42.0%, 6.2 percentage points higher than 2018 (35.8%) and higher than the baseline rate of 35.6%. However, the employment rate of non-disabled 16-24 year olds still remains much higher (60.8%), although this was unchanged between 2018 and 2019.

**Figure 5: Employment rate of disabled young people (16-24 years)**

	2016 - Baseline	2017	2018	2019	Progress over the latest year
Employment rate of disabled young people (aged 16-24 years)	35.6%	43.0%	35.8%	42.0%	

*Source: ONS Annual Population Survey, Jan-Dec 2016-2019*

The unemployment rate of disabled 16-24 year olds declined by 1.9 percentage points between 2018 and 2019 to 16.0%. Despite this progress, the rate still remains more than double the unemployment rate of non-disabled 16-24 year olds (7.2%).



The definition of labour market inactivity is broad, with people categorised as being inactive in the labour market for many different reasons. These reasons include students, those looking after family/home, those who are long-term or temporarily sick, early retirees, and discouraged workers. The inactivity rate of disabled 16-24 year olds declined (-6.4 percentage points) over the last year to 50.0%. The inactivity rate of non-disabled young people increased (+1.0 percentage points) to 34.5%.

Young people have been one of the most affected groups in our labour market by the COVID-19 crisis. The latest data shows that the employment and unemployment rates of 16-24 year olds have worsened to a greater extent than other age groups<sup>18</sup>. Whilst we don't have data reflecting the impact of the pandemic on the labour market outcomes of disabled 16-24 year olds yet, it seems likely they will have been disproportionately impacted, which we could see reflected in the 2020 data once available.

#### 4.4 Supporting Employers to Recruit and Retain Disabled People

We are not able to report on individual employer's recruitment and retention levels of disabled people in this report. However, the disability pay gap provides a measure of equality for disabled people in employment. It represents the difference between average hourly pay of disabled and non-disabled people, as a percentage of non-disabled people's pay.

**Figure 6: Disability Pay Gap**

	2016 - Baseline	2017	2018	2019	Progress over the latest year
Disability Pay Gap	13.8%	13.3%	8.3%	16.5%	

Source: ONS Annual Population Survey, Jan-Dec 2016-2019

Scotland's disability pay gap worsened between 2018 and 2019. In 2019, average pay for disabled employees in Scotland was 16.5% lower than non-disabled employees. This means for every £1 that a non-disabled employee earned in 2019, a disabled employee earned £0.83 on average.

We don't know the exact reasons for the increase in the pay gap over the latest year. The ONS did previously note that this data for Scotland is volatile which can make it difficult to identify consistent change over time<sup>19</sup>. However, occupational data (discussed in more detail in the following section) shows that the proportion of disabled people employed in some of the highest paid occupational groups in our labour market fell between 2018 and 2019. This may be a factor contributing to the rising gap.

18 ONS, Annual Population Survey, Oct 2019 – Sep 2020.

19 [Disability pay gaps in the UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)



## 4.5 Supporting Disabled People to Enter Employment

### Types of occupations that people move into

Disabled people are employed across all sectors of Scotland's economy and across all occupation types. However, disabled people are generally underrepresented in the better paid occupations in our labour market and overrepresented in lower paid occupations.

This is a particularly important point in the context of the COVID-19 crisis as some of the most impacted sectors are often the lowest paid. Disabled workers may therefore be at greater risk of job losses or work disruption (e.g. being furloughed) due to their overrepresentation in these roles. In 2019, 22.3% of disabled people in employment were employed in the Distribution, Hotels, and Restaurants sector compared to 18.4% of non-disabled workers. Disabled workers were also more likely than non-disabled workers to be employed in Sales and Customer Service occupations (12.0% vs 8.1%).

We know that the hospitality industry and customer facing staff have been some of the most negatively affected by the crisis. Take-up of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme has been consistently high in the Accommodation and Food Services sector, with 56.3% of UK employees in that sector on furlough as at 31st January 2021, compared to an overall take-up rate for all sectors of 16%<sup>20</sup>. HMRC PAYE administrative data<sup>21</sup> for the UK also shows that the Accommodation and Food Services sector saw the joint largest fall (-15.2%) in payrolled employees between March 2020 and January 2021. The Arts, Entertainment and Recreation sector also experienced a 15.2% decrease in payrolled employees and also had relatively high furlough take-up (54.8%).

The 2019 data shows there has been limited progress over the last year in terms of increasing the representation of disabled people in the better paid occupations in our labour market. The proportion of disabled people employed as Managers, Directors and Senior Officials fell by 1.0 percentage point and the proportion employed in Professional Occupations fell by 1.7 percentage points (although the number of disabled people employed in this occupation increased by 2,200). These are, on average, the highest paid occupational groups. More positively, there was a 3.0 percentage point increase in the proportion of disabled people employed in Associate Professional and Technical Occupations (another relatively high pay occupational group).

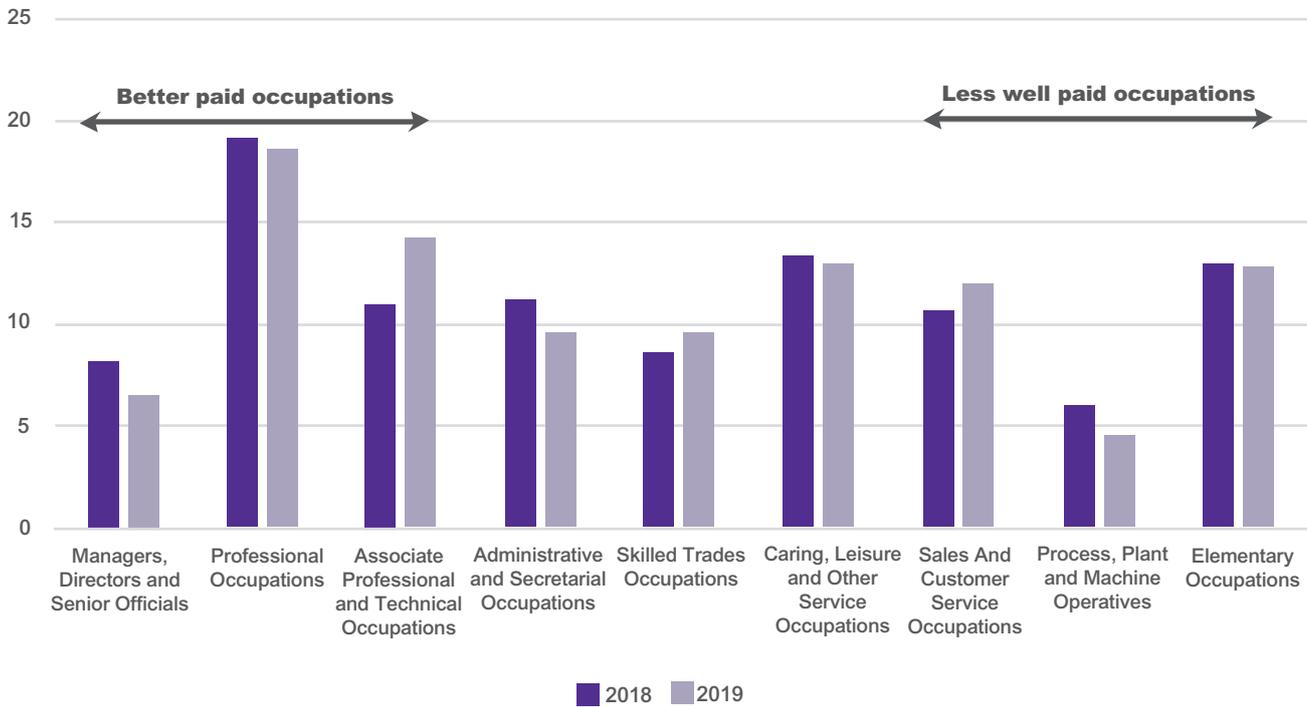
For less well paid occupations, there was a fall in the share of employment of disabled people over the year for all occupational groups with the exception of Sales and Customer Service Occupations, where there was a 1.5 percentage point increase in the proportion of disabled people employed.

<sup>20</sup> [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics: January 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-january-2021)

<sup>21</sup> [Earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, seasonally adjusted - Office for National Statistics](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/earnings-and-employment-from-pay-as-you-earn-real-time-information-seasonally-adjusted)



**Figure 7: Share (%) of total employment of disabled people, by occupation**



Source: ONS Annual Population Survey, Jan-Dec 2018, 2019

### Changes in how disabled people move in and out of employment

In our previous Progress Report<sup>22</sup> for our first year of implementing *A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Employment Action Plan*, we reported on flows into and out of employment. This analysis showed that disabled people were around twice as likely to fall out of work than non-disabled people. It is not possible to provide an update on this analysis as the ONS data used in the previous report remains the most up-to-date.

### Working Patterns and Types of Work

Working patterns data shows that more than one third of disabled employees in 2019 worked part-time (36.4%) compared to less than a quarter of non-disabled employees (23.5%). We don't know the extent to which this reflects personal choice – it could be that disabled people are more likely to want to

work part-time – but we do know that disabled employees were more likely than non-disabled employees (9.1% vs 6.9%) in 2019 to be underemployed. Underemployment reflects people in work who would like to work more hours in their current job, obtain an additional job, or move to a different job with more hours. This suggests some of that higher proportion of disabled people working part-time than non-disabled people is explained by disabled people being less likely to secure full-time work when seeking it. Disabled employees were also less likely than non-disabled employees to be in contractually secure<sup>23</sup> employment (95.2% vs 96.6%) in 2019.

Since 2016, the underemployment rate of disabled people has consistently been higher

<sup>23</sup> Contractually secure employment is defined as employees who are in permanent employment or in temporary employment through choice i.e. did not want a permanent job.

<sup>22</sup> [A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People Employment Action Plan - Progress Report - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)



than the underemployment rate of non-disabled people. Additionally, the proportion of disabled employees in contractually secure employment has mostly been lower than the proportion of non-disabled employees in such employment.

## 4.6 Intersectionality

We are keenly aware that disabled people experience barriers to employment on the basis of multiple characteristics, including gender, ethnicity and sexuality. When someone has multiple protected equality characteristics they are likely to experience greater disadvantage in the labour market, and we are committed to understanding more about these intersectionalities and to take action where possible.

### Gender

Disabled women will face greater labour market barriers than non-disabled women and the experience of women in Scotland's labour market tells us that disabled women will face greater disadvantage than disabled men. However, although for Scotland's labour market as a whole the employment rate of men is consistently higher than women, disabled women have had a higher employment rate than disabled men in recent years, which was again the case in 2019 (50.6% vs 47.0%).

Rates of economic inactivity can help explain this. Whereas for non-disabled people, women are around twice as likely to be inactive than men – driven by women being much more likely to be looking after the family/home than men – for disabled people, rates of inactivity are similar by gender. This is because 'sickness' is overwhelmingly the most common reason given for inactivity by both disabled men (75.1%) and women (60.5%). (ONS, Annual Population Survey, Jan-Dec 2019).

### Race

The employment rate of people from minority ethnic groups in Scotland is consistently lower than the employment rate of white people. And for people from minority ethnic groups who are disabled, multiple disadvantage and labour market barriers are reflected in a lower employment rate (39.8%) than people from minority ethnic groups who are not disabled (62.7%). A non-disabled white person is more than twice as likely to be in employment (82.8% employment rate) than a disabled person from a minority ethnic group (39.8% employment rate).

However, the minority ethnic employment gap – the difference between the employment rates of white people and people from minority ethnic groups – is much smaller for disabled people (9.6 percentage points) than non-disabled people (20.1 percentage points). This is primarily because disability has such a large negative impact on employment rates, that rates for disabled people are low – irrespective of race. (ONS, Annual Population Survey, Jan-Dec 2019)

### Qualifications

The disadvantage faced by disabled people with lower qualifications is evident in the particularly low employment rate (43.4%) for disabled people with below degree level or no qualifications. But even with a degree or higher qualification, disabled people are still less likely to be employed (71.7% employment rate) than non-disabled people without one (78.7% employment rate). Non-disabled people with a degree had an employment rate of 86.3% in 2019, almost 15 percentage points higher than equally qualified disabled people.

However, there are indications that obtaining a degree improves the employment prospects of disabled people more than non-disabled people, and can act to reduce the disability employment gap. Having a degree boosts the employment rate of disabled people by 28.3 percentage points compared with 7.6 percentage points for non-disabled people. (ONS, Annual Population Survey, Jan-Dec 2019).



## Conclusion

The 2019 data shows improvement in some of our key indicators over the year including the employment rate of disabled people, the employment rate of disabled young people, and also the disability employment gap. However, at the same time, the disability pay gap has worsened and there has been limited progress in terms of improving the representation of disabled people in the better paid occupations in our labour market.

Evidence of the impact of COVID-19 on the labour market outcomes of disabled people is still emerging, but we recognise that disabled people could be disproportionately impacted, and we may see that reflected in the 2020 data once available.

## Further information

The Scottish Government publishes a range of labour market data on its website [here](#).



## 5. Looking Forward: Next steps

### 5.1 Next Steps

Despite the last 12 months proving extremely challenging, positive steps forward have still been achieved. Nonetheless, we recognise there is still a long way to go to achieve the ambition of at least halving the disability employment gap, and impacts from COVID-19 will be long felt, so we know we cannot let our focus drift.

We will continue to build on the momentum achieved in the first two years of implementing *A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Employment Action Plan*. We will also – together with partners, including disabled people – start preparing for a refresh of the Action Plan, ensuring that the impacts of the pandemic and the current labour market situation are taken into consideration.

Some of the key actions we will focus on during 2021 include:

**Rights and redress:** At a time of labour market uncertainty, it is more important than ever to ensure that disabled people are aware of their employment rights and know how to seek redress should the need arise. We will undertake a scoping exercise to identify whether there are any significant gaps in existing information and guidance available to disabled people, considering also intersectionality with other protected characteristics (e.g. gender, race and age). The project will consider the ease of access to existing support services, and make recommendations to address any gaps identified. The views of disabled people themselves will be sought, as will those of organisations with expertise in this area, including: STUC; Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS); and Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC).

**Health and work:** Employment and health outcomes are closely linked – it is recognised that someone in fair work tends to have much better health outcomes than someone out of

work, or in poor employment. Whilst attention was understandably focused on dealing with the unfolding public health crisis presented by the pandemic in 2020, we remain committed to strengthening our collaboration with health policy and clinical colleagues. We have initiated discussions to identify shared objectives and associated action on which we can collaborate in relation to mental health and health improvement and, as outlined in the main body of this report, will revisit the recommendations of the review of the Scottish Government's Health and Work Strategy. In addition, we will consider the findings of the final evaluation report from the Health and Work Support pilot, due later this year.

**Child Poverty:** Through the investment of the additional £5 million in the Parental Employment Support Fund, we will work with local government to enhance the focus on support for disabled parents to enter and sustain employment. Critically, the funding allows the flexibility to respond to local needs and shape provision accordingly.

**Fair Work:** We will continue to work closely with officials and Ministers to join up work under the vision of Fair Work, with a particular focus on the vision for more inclusive and diverse workforces - including through collaboration on shared issues of concern with colleagues leading on the Gender Pay Gap and Race Equality and Employment.

**Supported Employment:** We will complete the review of Supported Employment, which was initiated just prior to the publication of this report. The review will enable us to build on critical success factors whilst identifying areas for improvement to ensure the continuation of this vital element of support for individuals as they move through their employment journey into, and within, work.



## Perspective of Disabled People's Organisations

As recognised in *A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Employment Action Plan*, employment is an element of disabled people's human rights. It is important for our individual and community resilience, welfare, health, and wealth.

We were all members of the expert advisory group on development of the Action Plan. We continue to engage with the Scottish Government in our collective work to reduce the disability employment gap in Scotland, and have facilitated opportunities for disabled people with lived experience to engage directly with officials progressing implementation of the Action Plan (e.g. on support for disabled parents through the Parental Employment Support Fund).

Disabled people we spoke to identified actions they wish to see taken to address the impact of the pandemic and the subsequent economic recession on this ambition. These include:

- \* Scottish Government should work with key partners to secure commitment to implement recruitment and retention plans for disabled people;
- \* Scottish employability programmes must meet an individual's needs and expectations. One way of achieving this would be a clear statement of the right to appropriate support, including meeting access and communication support needs and a right to redress if these are not provided;
- \* Disabled people and their organisations are directly involved in producing and implementing a refreshed employment action plan to reduce the disability employment gap that addresses the challenges of a post-COVID labour market.

COVID-19 is having a greater impact on younger people and there is real concern that young disabled people will face even more barriers when accessing employability services and securing employment. DPO members in their 50s and 60s are also concerned about these issues.

We have been working to shift attitudes and assumptions around employment discrimination, including exploring issues of intersectionality and the experience of, for example, disabled minority ethnic people and young disabled people.

As 2020 has clearly shown, disabled people's lived experience must have a pivotal role in shaping and delivering policy and support if the right changes are to be made in the right way.

**- Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living, Glasgow Disability Alliance, and Inclusion Scotland**



## 5.2 Closing Statement

This has been a challenging year for all of Scotland’s communities. When we originally published our action plan in 2018, we knew that it had to be agile and responsive, and – crucially – that it was only the first step of a long-term approach to reduce the disability employment gap by at least half.

We cannot with confidence state what the medium and long-term impacts of the pandemic will be on Scotland’s disabled community. However, we do know that COVID-19 has worsened already existing inequalities not only among disabled people, but those in households on low income or in poverty, children and young people, older people, minority ethnic groups and women. Indeed, overlap between these groups means that the impacts are likely to be magnified for some people.

Over the next year the Scottish Government, working with our partners in all sectors including those that are run by and for disabled people, will continue to bring remaining actions included within our original 2018 publication to completion. In addition, we will respond to the further impacts of the coronavirus as they reveal themselves, and will initiate work to refresh the Action Plan. We aim to do this in a way that acknowledges and takes account of the complex intersections between the barriers that disabled people and other marginalised groups face, and takes account of the views of those with lived experience.





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