

Researched and
written by Fiona Allan

Transitions Workstream Research

For Public Social Partnership
for the Disability Employment Gap



introduction & background

There are a number of Scottish Government policies and initiatives aimed at improving the outcomes and increasing the positive destinations of young people leaving school, college or university.

No One Left Behind, is the overarching policy encompassing Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) and the Young Person's Guarantee. Within these policies it is stated that there should be a focus on equality groups and in this context, particularly; gender, disability, sexual orientation, race and religion.

In December 2018 the Scottish Government published the Fairer Scotland Employment Action Plan which recognised the need for a particular focus on supporting disabled people to gain and sustain employment with the ultimate aim of halving the disability employment gap. This included the commitment to establish the PSP as it was recognised that changing employers was key to achieving success. The overall purpose of the PSP is to actively contribute to reducing the Disability Employment Gap in Scotland.

It is believed that employers are missing out on talented, driven employees, as they are unable to overcome the barriers to employing them. Barriers include, but aren't limited to:

- Concerns around legal responsibilities.
- Workplace culture (fitting in with other members of staff).
- Concerns over 'reasonable adjustments'.
- The complicated support landscape (both UK and Scottish Government).
- Recruitment Processes
- In Work Support
- Mistaken beliefs about some disabled people (e.g. under-represented groups).

The vision of the PSP aligns to the national ambition that by 2038 there will be a fundamental shift in how employers recruit, retain and nurture talent. The workforce will look different and there will be more disabled people employed, across categories of disability / protected characteristics.

The current position is that only 1 in 5 working-age people are disabled, with the employment rate of disabled people in Scotland standing at 45.4%, compared to 81.2% for non-disabled people. The overall national ambition in Scotland is to at least halve the Disability Employment Gap by 2038.

When agreeing the PSP priorities, which is focusing on the employer, the partners recognised that employers were reluctant to offer opportunities for young people transitioning from education and therefore decided to establish a dedicated workstream to improve this situation, The Transitions Workstream. There are 4 other workstreams, focusing on; Public Sector; Attract and Recruit; Retention; and Underrepresented Groups.

This research was commissioned by the Transitions Workstream.

outline of research

The PSP Disability Employability Gap, Transitions Workstream, wished to:

- Ascertain whether employers are confident and proactive in recruiting disabled young people, and if not, identify the issues that prevent them from doing so
- Understand what would support those employers, already committed to supporting young people transition into the workplace to employ disabled young people
- Identify employers who are or who are willing to support disabled young people into the work place from school, college, university or community learning

methodology

The Research took on the following methodology, through focusing on those employers who are members of the regional Developing the Young Workforce groups and Chambers of Commerce and that the research takes the following format:

- a. Identified the national leads for Developing the Young Workforce (DYW)
- b. Identified the chambers of commerce across Scotland
- c. Designed a survey and put it onto Survey Monkey
- d. Distributed the Survey link to all DYW leads and Chambers of Commerce
- e. Identified and interviewed those employers wishing to do so from the survey responses

Findings and data were then analysed and form the basis of this report.

Findings

Desk Research

Desk Research was carried out to:

- Become familiar with the overarching policy drivers supporting the employment of young disabled people
- Identify contacts for the 21 Chambers of Commerce
- Make contact with the Scottish Government leads for Developing the Young Workforce to elicit their support for the project

Policy Drivers and National Statistics

The Scottish Government's "A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Employment Action Plan" has the objectives of reducing the disability employment gap by at least half by 2038.

The plan identified three themes: supporting employers to recruit and retain disabled people; supporting disabled people to enter work, and young people and transitions.

Disabled young people (16-24 years) have the second lowest employment rate of any age group, and are more than twice as likely to be unemployed as non-disabled 16-24 year olds. Key actions within the plan to support young disabled people moving from school to further or higher education include:

- Building on the Seven Principles of Good Transitions, and broader recommendations from sector experts, disabled young people and their families and carers, and work across Government to improve transitions. This includes considering how we can extend the current public sector internship scheme to see greater use by the private sector;
- Providing young disabled people with the highest level of Modern Apprenticeship funding, and removing the barriers that have previously prevented young disabled people entering Modern Apprenticeships (MA), through the implementation of 'The Equalities Action Plan for Modern Apprenticeships in Scotland';
- Supporting DYW Regional Groups to develop actions to support the recruitment of disabled people; and
- Initiating a practice and improvement evaluation of the equality outcomes in Developing the Young Workforce to support policy and delivery improvement."

Disability Employment Action Plan

The DYW programme is committed to enhancing the experience of all learners within the education system, with a particular focus in supporting more disabled young people into employment."

The DYW "Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 2020/21" document states:

"KPI 4 - By working collaboratively with specialist partners, local authority leads and all schools in your region, ensure there are increased opportunities for disabled and care experienced young people to participate in suitable and meaningful work readiness activities."

The measurements of this KPI are:

- a. Two case studies to evidence working with specialist partners to support disabled or care experienced young people in any work readiness activity.
- b. Number of employers supported by the Regional Group to offer a work readiness activity to disabled young people.
- c. Number of employers supported by the Regional Group to offer a work readiness activity to care experienced young people.
- d. Evidence of any specific activities undertaken by the Regional Group to support employers to provide work readiness activities for disabled and care experienced young people.
- e. Total number of young people who have undertaken a work readiness activity who are:
 - i. Disabled; and
 - ii. Care experienced

The data source for this KPI will be primary data recorded by the Regional Groups"

Survey

A survey was designed and the link disseminated to the 26 Chambers of Commerce and the Regional leads for the 21 DYW regional groups across Scotland in early December 2020.

There was a very poor response to the survey on Survey Monkey. It is understood that it could have had a potential to reach of over 4000 employers and yet the response total was only 18 by end of December 2020. This was despite repeated requests to the DYW leads to encourage the employers engaged in their Regional Groups to participate.

A decision was therefore taken to find email address for as many of the companies as possible who are signed up to the Disability Confident Scheme (The email went out to 1007 companies in total. Over 100 were returned as not deliverable). The email was sent out on Monday 4 January 2021 with a return date of Friday 8 January 2021. This elicited a further 17 responses, totalling 35 responses in all.

Geographical location breakdown of respondents:

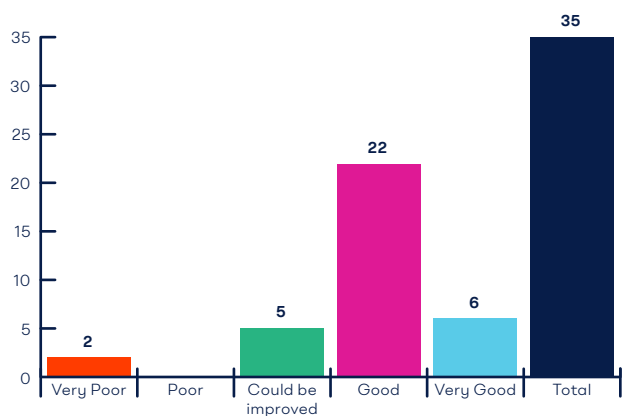
Aberdeen City	2
Aberdeenshire	2
Argyll & Bute	1
Clackmannanshire	1
Dundee	1
Dumfries & Galloway	2
East Renfrewshire	1
Edinburgh	2
Fife	3
Glasgow	6
Highland	1
North Lanarkshire	1
Northumberland	1
Orkney Islands	1
Scottish Borders	3
South Lanarkshire	1
Stirling	1
West Lothian	1
North & South Lanarkshire	2
Lothians	1
Lothians, Edinburgh & Falkirk	1

Sector breakdown of respondents:

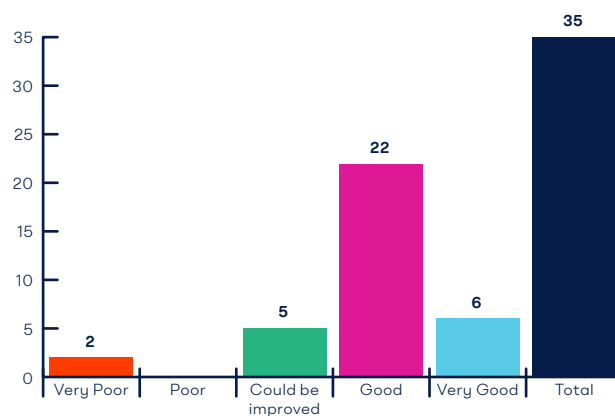
Private	13
Public	5
Third	17

Number of Employees	Third Sector % of those Disabled	Public Sector % of those Disabled	Private Sector % of those Disabled
0 - 9	43%	12.5%	N/A
10 - 49	10.7%	N/A	1.6%
50 - 249	9.0%	N/A	1.6%
250 or more	N/A	6.6%	0.28%
Sector Average	20.9%	4%	6.1%
Overall Average	10.3%		

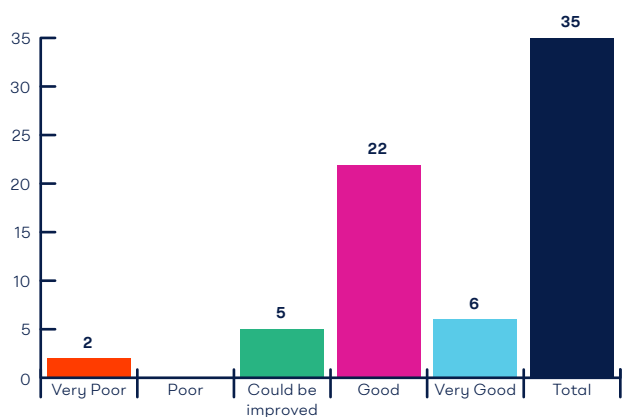
How would you rate your company's current policy in the recruitment of young disabled people?



How would you rate your company's current practice in the recruitment of young disabled people?



If you recruit young disabled people, how would you rate your company's ability to help them succeed in the workplace?



Does your Company consider recruiting and supporting young disabled people?

Yes = 32 No = 3

Does your company have any on-going programmes of work to try to increase the proportion of young disabled people engaging with you?

Yes = 10 No = 25

Number of Respondents with on-going programmes of work to increase the proportion of young disabled people

Of the respondents with on-going programmes of work to increase the proportion of disabled young people engaging with them, the following were the descriptions given:

"We have an internal working group called "Disability Confident" and we actively review our practices and policies and employee feedback to assess where we can do better.

BSL plan, Disability Confident employer, Equality and Diversity Annual Action Plan, this year plans for internal audit of candidates who declare a disability through recruitment process, EIA of all stages of process. Developing a leadership programme for people with learning disabilities.

We are planning to recruit at least 1/3 of our new staff from young disabled people

Our positions are open to anyone to apply. If suitable they will be offered a position and then fill in a fitness to carry out the duties form and if that passes they will be employed and if they are not physically able to carry out the duties they would not be able to pick up the post. We would however explore all things such as special equipment etc to make it possible to employ the person.

Through Fife Council we are in the processing of supporting the Developing Young Workforce Program The Usual Place exists to enable young people with Additional support needs to gain meaningful work/self-employment and achieve economic and civic equality We are a training café for young people with Additional Support Needs which enables them to gain citizen and employability skills to enable them to become active participants of their community

We engage with the Disability Advisor of our local DWP for all vacancies and are a Disability Confident Employer

We work closely with various ASN schools in Scotland

DYW regional team supporting employers to recruit young people and support in the workplace"

Respondents were asked if they had heard of the Disability Confident Scheme

	Interested in joining or moving up a level	Not interested in joining or moving up a level
Not heard of DC Scheme	3 Maybe 3 Yes	2 No
Heard of scheme but not at a level	2 Maybe 1 Yes	2 No
At Level 1	4 Yes	6 No
At Level 2	2 Yes	8 No
At Level 3	0	8 No

It is of note that all companies that have not heard of the Disability Confident Scheme are private companies.

Of those interested in either joining the scheme or moving up a level, respondents were asked to identify what support and / or encouragement they would need to do so. Their responses are detailed below:

"Some external support to help us with the requirements to progress.

More time - we have looked at the next level but due to the pandemic we've had to cut back on some of our "would like to do" initiatives. We are still meeting as a group and attempting to do what we can to ensure we keep supporting disabled employees we have and also to keep actively encouraging applicants too through our recruitment activities as a minimum.

More guidance and engagement from the scheme of what we need to do to progress.

Time

Better Access to Work processes. The current process is intimidating and has almost prevented our employees taking up the offer of funding. It's not accessible and it's intimidating for them

Firstly, we are currently closed due to covid-19 and have no recruitment needs, and secondly, support in connecting with organisations which can connect us with disabled candidates and which can support us to support disabled employees in employment.

We will need to commit time and staff resource to review our current position and what steps need to be taken to allow us to progress. This is not meant to be an excuse but we're experiencing bandwidth issues - too much to do with too few people. We wish to do better and mean to do well.

Time to complete the required information to ensure we are meeting the requirements.

Understanding the needs of young people who have certain disabilities.

Something to support in educating other members of the team in understanding why this is important and needed in the workplace.

More information

Time

More time available to engage with other employers in the area

Engaging in conversation

Will consider after Covid pandemic - too many restrictions in workplace at present

Some form of support

We have stringent recruitment and disability support policies in place and these are at least of a level of the Disability Confident Scheme"

Respondents were asked if they had heard of the Inclusive Workplace Award?

Yes = 6 No = 30

Respondents were then asked if being a member of either the Disability Confident Scheme or Inclusive Workplace Award had led to company-wide changes in culture, attitude or practice towards recruiting young disabled people.

Their responses were as follows:

"We have always employed disabled people in our organization

We have been a member of the disability confident scheme for a long time, and we have embedded the guaranteed interview scheme into our recruitment process. However other than this it has not led to much wider change

Helped us with inclusive recruitment process for hiring paid intern through Inclusion Scotland We Can Work programme

We are very early days in being a member of the Disability Confident Scheme and have not had any recruitment needs since signing up

Staff and management are committed to improvement in employment practices, but we remain unclear what we can do to increase the volume of applications for employment from groups which are under-represented in our workplace. Our current recruitment practices (via S1 jobs or EVH) are ineffective in this regard.

We were unconsciously incompetent in terms of disabled workers - the scheme opened our eyes to the potential of the disabled talent available and also our social responsibility. We are aware now and are developing plans...

Nothing so far

We have always been welcoming to people with disabilities, so I don't feel that anything has changed

It has made us re-think our processes in recruiting internally, how we advertise and communicate, that being said it could be better

As above, I think more could be done around this to gain full team support.

Nothing has happened.

We were already well ahead of current practice. Been instrumental in disability awareness and inclusion for 30 years

Recently we employed 7 disabled people and supported up to another 10 disabled volunteers, due to covid and the reduction in business we have had to let our people go. Behind the scenes we are working hard to generate new business with a plan to again recruit employees and volunteers

Staff are proud of their disability confident status

We are using this to help attitudinal change in the non disabled population

We carried out a recruitment practices audit and improved support and processes

We already employed and support disabled people prior to applying for the DCS"

If you are not a member of Disability Confident Scheme or have not achieved the Inclusive Workplace Award, would your company be interested in signing up to either of these or something similar?

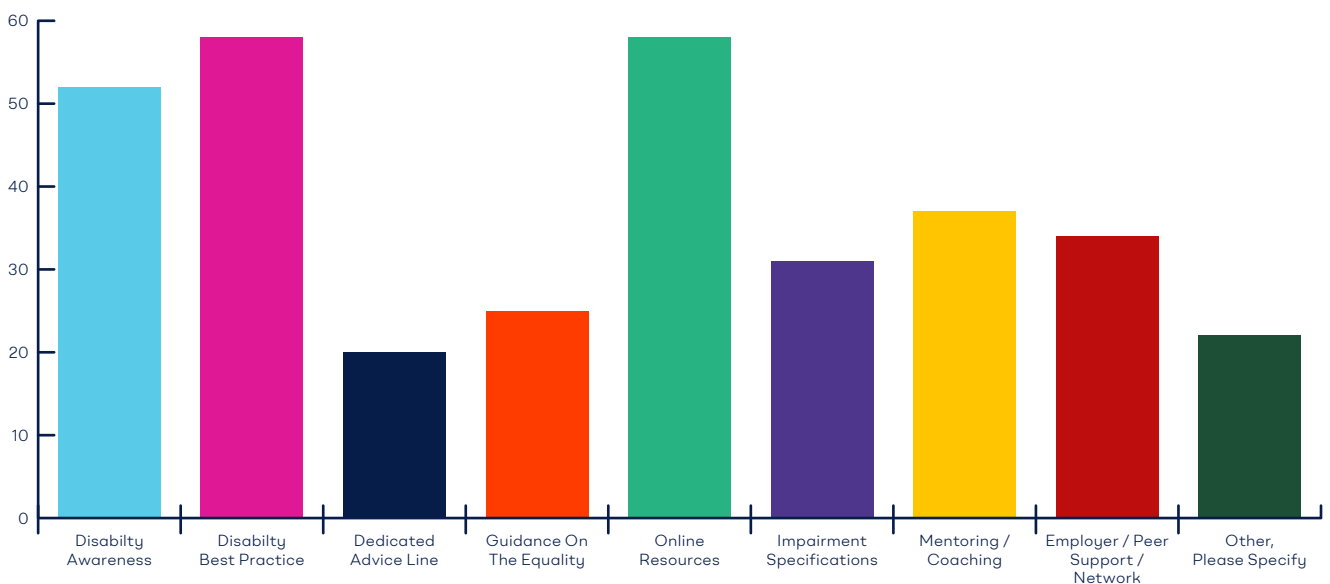
Yes = 20 No = 15

Would your company be interested in a package of tailored support to help improve your confidence and practice in recruiting young disabled people??

Yes = 25 No = 10

Respondents volunteering for interview

18 out of 35 respondents were willing to be contacted for interview.



interviews

Actual number interviewed: **15**

Of those interviewed:

Number wishing to be offered a taster session: **14**

Number interested in being part of a pilot project aimed at recruiting more young disabled people: **13**

15 interviews were conducted. The interviewees' sectors were; 7 Third Sector, 6 Private Sector and 2 Public sector.

The discussion areas covered by the interview were:

- Further information about the company and the scope of posts they might advertise for e.g. IT, finance, food production operative etc
- Their involvement with DYW or any other programme involving young people e.g. work placements, job fairs, apprenticeships
- Where / how they advertised jobs and numbers of disabled people applying
- How well equipped they feel in being able to offer work placements, apprenticeships or jobs to disabled young people
- What supports they feel would improve their position

Findings:

Work ready

Interviewees were not asked about whether they felt young people were work ready but they brought up the following:

- Despite working with schools and offering work placements, still find young people do not understand the industry nor are they ready to do a day's work when they start
- Young people are not understanding what work means
- Had DYW rep round to try to get them to better understand what work we could offer young people
- Young people less ready for work than they used to be"

Of the 15 interviewees:

- 15 have links / work with schools
- 12 offer work placements
- 6 offer work placements to colleges
- 6 work with colleges e.g. to get employees SVQs
- 3 offer Foundation apprenticeships
- 6 offer Modern apprenticeships
- 3 offer graduate apprentices and
- 2 offered intern programmes
- 3 are going to be embarking on Kick Start
- 3 Link with the Job Centre

Working with DYW

Interviewees were asked about their involvement with DYW and the following are some of their responses

- "weird one with them, we're in schools anyway because of outreach programme, not sure that we are working together
- Job for Everyone – silly wee puzzles on film – 5 examples
- nothing specific around disability
- do have regular Zoom meetings
- did workshops focusing on disability
- use DYW to source young people
- link here and with Chamber of Commerce
- not led to anything yet, newly joined
- done a lot with the school anyway, career fairs – young people don't see our industry as a career option
- rotational placements, 6 weeks where YP works across all areas – YP may or may not have a disability and actually because we employ so many disabled, YP without lose fear and worry of disability

Disability confident

Interviewees were also asked about Disability Confident and those that had experience made the following comments:

- too many hoops
- need support to progress
- too tick box
- is it actually helpful
- shouldn't need to be asking questions pre interview whether disabled

Advertising

Interviewees were asked how and where they advertise vacancies. All 15 advertise online on platforms like Indeed, LinkedIn, S1 Jobs etc. A few used social media and 2 used agencies. Some also used industry / profession specific sites or papers for specialist roles. Comments on how successful these means were for attracting young disabled people comments were along the lines of:

- very few applicants applying are disabled
- doesn't attract disabled applicants
- through Creative Scotland and Indeed but also on social media and thinks this is actually where applicants come from
- Job Board, Job centre, online, none really attract disabled candidates

Interviewees were then led into a conversation about what are / might be the positives and negatives for their organisation in recruiting young disabled employees. The conversations were free-flowing and in collating the responses, the findings clearly fell into the following headings. The comments underneath are quotes from the interviewees.

Company value base

- Needs to be relationship based company with right values, culture and attitudes
- need to win hearts and minds
- if employers would take on disabled young people would realise the benefits and gain a lot of satisfaction, whole company policy
- Comes from the top and needs to be through whole company
- about changing people's mindsets
- needs to be whole company buy-in, comes from top with them
- having disabled people deliver training
- disabled people working on staff team - role models
- changing perceptions is key to breaking down barriers in the workplace and reason we are going to take on a young disabled intern
- quite a lot of cultural shift still needs to happen

Time

- Need to invest a lot of time to make it work, both with disabled person and staff team
- Not without its issues, takes a lot of time

Language / communication / processing info type issues

- a real issue for employers if disabled young person has different communication needs

Financial considerations

- a barrier
- Access to Work a real barrier, puts employee and employer off
- Access to Work, not used it as so difficult for both sides
- Access to Work - could give you many stories about just how difficult it is
- Despite Access to Work (if you can get it or can be bothered with the process) there are financial considerations to taking on a disabled employee and they personally need to consider if it is worth working
- Costs can be covered but many employers don't know that
- only found about Access to Work a couple of years ago. Not easy process
- cost is always a consideration

Covid impact

- Blended learning should be an advantage
- Working from home could help?
- Will there be opportunities after all this for disabled people?

Positives of disabled person in workplace

- Not always understood just how much can be gained for disabled person and the rest of the workforce
- it doesn't need to be difficult

Support required

- would need support to come with disabled person
- employers need to know what supports are available, all about raising confidence
- reasonable adjustments – understanding they don't necessarily cost money
- Access to work
- Reemploy
- support line
- pot of funding / incentives for workforce development
- need to understand what they offer and if it would work / fit with needs
- need to know what supports are required and how to put them in place, "don't know what we don't know" so off-putting to some employers
- Employers need educating
- Research into retention would be interesting, many companies have the wrong attitude"
- never had to make reasonable adjustments, would like to be prepared should we need to

From the survey results, supports that employers would be interested in were:

Disability Awareness Training	18
Disability best practice in recruitment training / support	21
Dedicated advice line	8
Guidance on Equality Act and making reasonable adjustments	10
Online resources	21
Impairment specific support	11
Mentoring / coaching	14
Employer peer support / network	12

discussion

The purpose of this research was to:

- Ascertain whether employers are confident and proactive in recruiting disabled young people, and if not, identify the issues that prevent them from doing so
- Understand what would support those employers, already committed to supporting young people transition into the workplace to employ disabled young people
- Identify employers who are or who are willing to support disabled young people into the work place from school, college, university or community learning

This research is based on extremely small numbers and cannot be seen to be statistically significant in any way. The interviews, however, did elicit some interesting information. Despite the small numbers, this research has shown significant differences between the sectors, which is felt could be seen as representative of the picture nationally.

In determining the level of confidence of employers it can be concluded that whilst all employers stated they were interested in employing more disabled young people they were also very clear that would only give a job to the best candidate regardless of whether or not they had a disability. During interview this came over as being implicit that, should there be a choice between a disabled and non-disabled candidate, it is more likely that the non-disabled candidate would get the position.

The majority of companies all felt that there was a correlation between the number of disabled young people employed and the company culture, values and level of "people focus" in the company.

Overall, The Third Sector is by far more confident, proactive and better set-up to offer both work placements and employment to disabled young people. This is evidenced by both the survey returns; employing on average 20% disabled people; and interviews, where they expressed more about difficulties in getting disabled young people to apply for posts oppose to their concern about supporting them in a post.

The Public Sector responses were very small in number in both the survey and in interviews but it would seem that they do employ disabled people and have the policies and processes in place to support this. They do not, however, necessarily seem to work proactively to improve the numbers of disabled people employed.

The Private Sector responses evidence a desire to employ disabled young people. 6 were interviewed from this sector, and all were involved with the DYW. All stated that they did not feel confident that their policies, practice and ability to support the person in the workplace, were necessarily fit for purpose.

Developing the Young Workforce (DYW).

Of the employers interviewed, who are involved with the DYW, only two could confirm that disability was a focus of the work in their region. Of the Private Sector employers interviewed they stated that they were unclear how DYW fitted with other initiatives, if they knew about them. In fact, knowledge, generally, was very varied around Scottish Government policy and initiatives in relation to employability.

Disability Confident

Conversations around Disability Confident were interesting in that there seemed to be an assumption that, by joining the scheme, the number of disabled people applying for jobs would increase automatically.

There were comments that the time required to join and to move up a level was off-putting.

As there is no support behind the scheme, so employees of a company getting the company signed up does not change the attitudes of the staff teams.

Pre-employment

Pre-employment was cited as a barrier to employing any young person by a number of interviewees, including young people not being "work ready" – by this they meant – the young people did not understand what it means to work all day, to turn up on time and to behave in an appropriate manner.

Involvement with schools, colleges, universities and offering work placements

All interviewees are engaged with schools at some level, most worked with their local college and some offered graduate placements / internships or graduate apprenticeships. All offered work placements for school pupils.

What was of interest was that this did not seem to impact on the number of young people gaining employment. In fact, several interviewees pointed out issues of an aging workforce and the inability to recruit young people into vacancies.

Advertising of posts

There was consensus that online advertising does not produce applications from disabled people. None of those interviewed knew how they could reach disabled young people by "usual" advertising means. Those who were successful believed it was more to do with their networks and partnerships with organisations in direct contact with, or who support young disabled people.

Policies and processes

The majority of interviewees felt there was room for improvement in their recruitment policies and practices but felt they would need external support to review and implement any changes in this area.

Kind of supports employers identified as required to support them to employ a disabled young person:

The final part of the interview was to understand where the employers felt they most needed support to increase the numbers of young disabled people employed. These were:

- Review of recruitment practice and processes
- Links to disabled young people as they don't apply for jobs
- Information on supports available to the young person
- A person to come with the disabled young person until both sides confident and on-going if young person's needs required it
- On-going support for the whole workforce
- Shared belief and understanding in the workplace that it is not only the right thing to do but could be beneficial to everyone

From the survey there was as good response to the question on what supports employers were interested in. This, in particular, but generally as well, it could be concluded that this research supports the concept of a Hub that would provide employers with a range of supports to help increase their knowledge and skills and thus their confidence in supporting young disabled people transitioning into the workplace.

conclusions

It can be concluded that there is a difference in the levels of confidence to recruit young disabled people between the Third and Private Sectors.

The Third Sector have more self-awareness on what they need to do to improve and would feel able to increase the proportion of young disabled people if:

- They had more time
- Access to Work was not so difficult to manage as a process for both employer and employee
- They knew how and where to access support if and when required both for employer and the employee

The Private Sector on the other hand are less sure as to their ability to support a young disabled person in the workplace due to being unclear if:

- Recruitment processes are fit for purpose
- They know / understand the needs of the young disabled person sufficiently and therefore what adjustments they may need to make
- There are supports they can access either for the workplace or the young disabled person
- They know how to integrate the young disabled person into the workforce
- If the vacancies they have could be suitable for young disabled person

The Public Sector numbers were too low to draw any meaningful conclusions.

recommendations

1. The PSP should consider how the Private sector, in particular, can be supported to gain confidence, skills and knowledge in how to support young disabled people transitioning into the workplace through partnering with some of the many skilled and knowledgeable organisations in Scotland.
2. The PSP should consider ways of helping employers to review, adapt and implement more inclusive recruitment processes and practice, including advertising of posts so they reach disabled young people.
3. The PSP should consider ways to offer employers opportunities to learn from each other – mix of Third and Private Sector.
4. The PSP should consider recommending to the Scottish Government that the current landscape of policy, initiatives and funding is too disparate, complicated and confusing for employers to engage with.
5. The PSP should consider ways in how (and may wish to recommend to Scottish Government, that there is a need) to better disseminate information to employers relating to funding and supports available to disabled young people entering the workplace.
6. The PSP may wish to consider advising the Scottish Government / DWP that Access to Work is a serious barrier to increasing the % of disabled young people in the workplace as the process is cumbersome and would benefit from being reviewed and simplified.
7. The PSP should engage in conversation with DYW as to whether it matters that there appear to very different approaches to their work across the country and given this, consider how the PSP may help them achieve their KPIs in relation to young disabled people.
8. The PSP may wish to consider ways of eliciting responses from the Public Sector that were not captured in this research.

