

Kickstart: what good looks like

September 2020

This paper aims to support local and national discussions on the design, commissioning and delivery of Kickstart. It has been produced by the Labour Market, Employment and Skills Task and Finish Group which is part of the Local Economic Recovery Working Group (ERWG).

1. Kickstart: what good looks like for young people...

Need a clear post 16 local offer. Kickstart is one of several initiatives (youth offer, sector-based work academies, apprenticeships, T levels, traineeships). To mitigate risks of falling through gaps and / or duplicated offers, young people need access to a coordinated picture of what is available locally – what each initiative is, what it leads to, how it aligns with other activity (existing/new, national/local) building on councils' statutory duties and impartial, local careers advice and guidance. The Youth Hubs are a step towards achieving this. Where they are not established, JCP should co-commission its flexible support funds to replicate the intentions of the Youth Hubs.

Need choice in the Kickstart job. Ideally, they should be able to apply for the opportunity that is right for them e.g. via job matching by local intermediaries / brokerage, local jobs fairs, with careers advice to support them through their decision. If relevant jobs are not viable / available, effective local careers support is needed to help find an alternative. If DWP decides young people will be placed into jobs, a clear process is needed to make it feel like a job rather than a short-term scheme.

Outreach and engagement activities. We need to engage young people who can progress onto the programme to ensure they are aware of Kickstart and how to access it. This is important if access is via JCP and participants need to be on UC as many do not claim benefits. More flexibility on eligibility is required, including to reach 'inactive' young people and ensure 16-17 year old NEETS have an effective route in.

A quality customer journey. It should have built into it a clear route into sustainable work and training opportunities to support next steps for those on the scheme.

Wraparound support is essential. Every young person has unique circumstances so their needs will vary, but all of them need to be in a good place to give Kickstart their best shot including those most in need / furthest from the labour market. Some may have personal or financial challenges – physical or mental health issues, care leavers, caring responsibilities, low skills, loss of confidence, debt, housing unhealthy lifestyles problems etc. Wraparound support must be built into the Kickstart funding to give the best chance of sustained success. It should not be the young person's responsibility to join up the dots for support.

Understanding support needs early on. An initial assessment is needed (including to identify wider needs) for instance skills and training, pre-employment support, wraparound. From there an action plan can be developed. Local and combined authorities and their local partners know which services and support should be delivered alongside the placement.

Support before, during and after the placement. A case worker is essential to help young people stay in work by helping them make changes from benefits to wages, deal with issues at work, make changes at home so they turn up on time, help them find work once Kickstart has finished. Ongoing support which is intensified at month four (CV update sessions, interview practice and job search) is vital where the job isn't being made permanent. This role should not be underestimated if young people are to transition into more permanent jobs. This needs to be funded. In previous programmes, these functions were fulfilled by councils, that were funded to do this role.

A record of achievement and a bankable transferable skill. Every Kickstart participant should receive a standardised recognisable record of achievement, and in line with best practice from local intermediate labour market programmes, employers should ensure they come away with a bankable transferable skill (e.g. health and safety qualifications, industry safety cards IT, driving).

2. Kickstart: what good looks like for employers ...

Need clear, concise, jargon-free, guidance. Employers' Kickstart roles and responsibilities before, during and after the placement should be clearly set out. This should cover equality and diversity expectations, pay, reward and recognition, minimum standards for what constitutes a quality job (induction, health and safety, safeguarding, line manager and peer support, minimum levels of training, good pay). There should be no grey areas.

Alignment with other programmes and incentives. This is a challenging time for all employers. Most are concerned about retaining current staffing levels, let alone recruiting. They need support to identify vacancies or opportunities and develop their capacity to support new and existing work placement programmes. Employers are asked to consider a range of Government work placement (traineeships, apprenticeships, T levels etc). These have different functions, eligibility and incentives so it may be confusing for an employer to know which to support. To navigate the system, alongside guidance, the Government should set out what each initiative is, and what the progression routes are from one to another. This should also align with upskilling programmes, particularly for digital skills.

Support must be local. SMEs make up 99 per cent of all businesses and have limited internal HR support to navigate these programmes. Many struggle with national call centres / digital only approaches with no local fall back. They need a straightforward and seamless system with a named local lead / team who can help them work through the detail, and address issues arising with wiring hidden around payment and monitoring. In the same way that in-work support is needed for young people, the employer will need similar.

The right incentives?

- There are no incentives for an employer to take on a young person with an ECHP through Supported Internship programme, or other cohorts including ESOL learners, offenders and care leavers. Could the Government work with us to explore how incentives can be enhanced?
- Some areas predict a near 70 per cent fall in 16-18 year old apprenticeship starts come September 2020. Financial incentives are higher for Kickstart than for apprenticeships. The Government should consider incentivising retention by allowing employers to get the Apprenticeship incentive if the young person transitions from Kickstart.

3. Kickstart: what good looks like for the local economy ...

A strong local economy through local commissioning and delivery. National recovery initiatives will help stimulate the local economy, yet if not coordinated effectively, they risk creating a turbulent jobs market. We need to join up Kickstart and other schemes for individuals and local employers, which Skills Advisory Panel (or equivalent) have been set up to do. This needs strong local leadership with simple, clear, local messaging, delivered by those closest to the real, local economy. If national funding were invested and commissioned locally rather than via national contracting, we could re-build much needed capacity working with our local provider base.

Local links and social value. Through the crisis, local government has been trusted to distribute grants to local businesses, which has been vital to their survival. This has resulted in stronger connections and a real sense of the value of 'place'. These links should be used

going forward, as many businesses are keen to support the local economy. Kickstart is an opportunity to do that and local government is in a good position to start those conversations.

Employer confidence through trusted local networks. There is an abundance of local employers that DWP could tap into – through redundancy / recovery taskforces, local authority business teams, growth and skills hubs, business networks (e.g. CBI, Chambers), community and voluntary sector organisations – that would enable local partners to work with employers to create opportunities and make those opportunities available as Kickstart places in phases. Councils would provide the business wraparound support through Local Growth Hubs. Through networks and intermediaries, employers could support one another, generate confidence and expertise in employing young people (including practical support such as Job description writing, conducting an effective interview etc). Funding is needed to do this.

Local intermediaries are needed to connect local businesses, especially SMEs, to Kickstart. Their role should include: interface with JCP; warm handover for the young person between employers and JCP; practical HR support; in-work support; and linking up training providers to explore learning opportunities. Intermediaries could be councils, LEPs, Growth Hubs etc. Whoever fulfil this function, they must work through local and combined authorities.

Create in-demand jobs delivering social and economic value, and where possible deliver community benefit, add social and environmental value to recovery, and address local priorities. These could include health and care, housing, the low carbon economy, logistics, agritech, AI/Tech and digital, cultural and creative jobs. Local intelligence can spot current and pipeline opportunities (e.g. preparing for retrofitting), working with employers and providers across a functional economic area. The Government should tap into this expertise for Kickstart and further job creation programmes.

Plan for disruption. With the risk of further lockdowns and disruption hindering employer confidence, especially SMEs which make up 99 per cent of all businesses and have the least internal HR support or capacity to navigate government programmes or find out how they can take part., **local ‘training agency’ models** could be established / scaled up to help businesses’ recruitment needs and move more young people into the workplace.

4. Kickstart: what good looks like for Government...

The Government should make clear the benefits to employers and young people of engaging on these schemes. It should not see Kickstart as a one-off initiative to engage local employers for a six-month placement. It should explain how Kickstart fits with other programmes which will in turn help local employers see how they can play a more strategic role in contributions to national and local economic recovery. The Government [launched](#) Kickstart on 2 September. It should now work with representative bodies for local and combined authorities and key partners to consider on the detail. This should include:

- timescales and funding envelope
- eligibility criteria
- referral mechanisms
- employer engagement routes
- minimum standards including provisions for training and entry/exit procedures
- roles of Jobcentre, Youth Hubs, and local and regional partners
- commissioning and delivery routes as well as oversight.

MCA/GLA will act as a co-ordinating body in their local areas. Depending upon local circumstances, they may also offer to act as accountable bodies for local delivery. Similar co-ordinating roles can be undertaken by councils (who are already accountable bodies) and LEPs in non devolved areas, and Government should welcome proposals from such bodies.

Several local areas have told us that capacity is an issue in large rural and coastal areas, where JCP tends to be in the larger towns, so local government and sub-contractors are relied on to carry out activity. JCP should have flexibility on how it commissions and refers locally. A support funding package, mirroring Flexible Support Funding for capacity, but administered by local not national teams would be useful.

5. A local Kickstart offer: what good looks like...

Kickstart will work best for young people, businesses and communities if it is planned and delivered in partnership. It needs to be local to maximise links with local services that young people and businesses rely on. A dedicated team, which would require funding to full these tasks would:

Stage 1: Identify, engage and recruit

- *Young people.* Local employment and skills boards, or similar, include among others the council, JCP, schools, colleges, National Careers Service (NCS) and the voluntary sector – the very organisations that area best placed to refer young people to Kickstart.
- *Business engagement.* Local partners will tap into networks from local authority business teams and recovery taskforces to JCP, Growth Hub, LEP, CBI, Chamber and use local data to understand the jobs needed and help to generate these vacancies.
- *Local co-ordination* of support and the provision of vacancies, to ensure that there is a suitable flow to meet the expected demand from young people.

Stage 2: Assessment and support for

- Each young person is assessed including for wider needs (mental health, transport issues etc) with an action plan to support skills and training via local programmes, pre-employment support, and wraparound support, all of which is vital to sustain placements. This could be drawn from a range of local interventions funded through AEB, traineeships, ESF, NCS
- Employers will also be assessed for their support needs (HR, payroll, staff training/support, reasonable adjustments).

Stage 3: Brokerage (Placement / Support)

- Employer states in EOI how many jobs it can create and will be supported to develop an outline job description for each role.
- The young person could go to an open day to hear employers introduce their organisation / jobs, and indicate which jobs they are interested in. As above, if the Government decides young people will be placed into jobs, there must be a clear process built in which makes it feel like a job rather than a short term scheme.
- An interview process would then be managed.
- Employers sign an agreement and are paid monthly on production of payslips.

Stage 4: Support before, during and after the placement.

- Support for young person and employer including visits, particularly for SMEs
- Kickstart should be dovetailed with local support so if the young person is not offered a permanent job by the host employer, they can be moved onto alternative support. This would only be possible if there is a robust local partnership to anticipate what support offer would be needed among partners.
- Needs quality assurance, to ensure training and or/job search element.
- Progression will be either sustained employment or further learning / support
- Participants need a record of achievement, employer reference and an exit interview.
- Participant and employer should complete a satisfaction questionnaire.

Stage 5: Tracking and Evaluation

Ends.