Disabled Parents Employability Support Fund evaluation

Final Report

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Introduction

This report provides a detailed account of the work conducted by Joanna Butler and Jen Remnant to evaluate the impact of the Disabled Parents Employment Support Fund (DPESF), distributed and facilitated by Capital City Partnership (CCP) in Edinburgh. CCP is a third sector funder in Edinburgh and the surrounding area. CCP serves as the delivery organisation for Edinburgh's employability strategy and programme[1]. As an Arm's Length External Organisation (ALEO) of The City of Edinburgh Council, CCP operates as a not-for-profit registered charity. Its primary responsibilities include advising, supporting, and developing the city's Jobs Strategy, as well as overseeing the contracting, performance management, and enhancement of outcomes for funded employability services. The organisation is governed by a voluntary Board of Directors. The geographical area CCP covers is home to 24% of the population of Scotland (Capital City Partnership, 2023).

Under the Integrated Regional Employability and Skills (IRES) programme of the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal, the CCP is responsible for commissioning and hosting of projects which aim to tackle inequalities. A central aim of their funding is to support people into employment through funding front line services, with a focus on expanding the networks and resources of people experiencing poverty.

The DPESF in Scotland was a new funding initiative developed specifically to support disabled parents with employability. Unusually, the funding was not prescriptive. CCP did not use a specific definition of disability which allowed services and clients to self-define as felt appropriate to them. The funding was accessed by a variety of different organisations most of which are not disability-led or targeted specifically at disabled people. Most organisations that received DPESF funding were also not employability focused.

The provision of the DPESF was time limited. CCP note that the decision regarding the short-term nature of the funding was not within their control. The funding provided by the Scottish Government (SG) follows an annual cycle, and the confirmation of this specific funding to CCP was confirmed only in the autumn of 2022. Funded organisations applied to the fund in Autumn 2022. Successful applicants were due to start their funded projects in November 2023 and have completed their spend by the end of the financial year in April 2023.

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[1] https://www.joinedupforjobs.org/about/capital-city-partnership

Context / Programme Partners[2]

The Disabled Parental Employment Support Fund (DPESF) for the year 2022/3 allocated funding to various projects aimed at providing support for disabled parents in their journey towards employment. Organisations independently formulated their own proposals outlining the specific actions they aimed to undertake within the allocated timeframe, while considering the feasibility of their activities. These proposals encompassed defined objectives, established targets, and included thorough cost assessments for each organisation's individual propositions.

One of the funded projects is the All in Edinburgh Consortium, which offers personalised employability support to disabled people. Through one-to-one sessions, the organisation creates action plans based on the individual's current situation and supports them in progressing towards work or sustaining their existing employment. This approach allows parents to set their own pace and work towards their employment goals effectively. Alongside this, Into Work, as part of the consortium, provides income maximization workshops and tailored one-to-one support to parents, catering to the specific needs of each organisation within the DPESF program.

Another initiative supported by the fund is the Childcare Advice Service by One Parent Families Scotland. This service plays a crucial role in assisting parents in navigating the childcare landscape. It provides comprehensive information about the availability and funding options for various types of pre-school and wraparound childcare. Moreover, the project offers one-to-one support, enabling parents to make well-informed decisions regarding their childcare choices and ensuring a smooth transition for them and their children.

Home Start, another beneficiary of the DPESF, utilises the funding to enhance family support services. Families receive one-to-one assistance, which includes signposting to local resources, connecting them with relevant services, and access to Home Start's group activities. Additionally, Home Start implements nine additional group initiatives, each spanning six weeks, targeting parents in specific areas of Edinburgh. These group sessions are designed to address the unique needs of families, covering topics such as early education parenting initiatives, baby massage, parent-baby bonding, and peer support. Home Start actively encourages parents to utilise other services funded by DPESF to support their employment goals, ensuring comprehensive assistance.

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[2] https://joinedupforfamilies.org/pesf-disabled-parents

Circle, in collaboration with SHE Scotland and Edinburgh College, runs two Ambassador programs for parents and carers. These programs are conducted in two different locations within Edinburgh, accommodating up to ten parents in each course. The aim of these courses is to equip parents with essential life skills, enabling them to make informed choices and become confident to enter the workforce or engage in volunteering opportunities. Participants receive support in identifying high-quality employment, training, and further education options, empowering them to pursue their desired paths.

LIFT, another project supported by DPESF, expands its family support services to assist individuals in their first steps toward overcoming employment barriers. The organisation focuses on areas such as budgeting, benefit calculations, housing and benefit advice, as well as confidence and self-esteem building. Additionally, LIFT conducts a First Steps to Employment workshop, providing parents with practical guidance. To facilitate parents' participation, a creche is made available for their children. Furthermore, the funds provided allow for a discretionary fund, assisting parents who are commencing employment with travel expenses and covering the initial month of childcare.

Stepping Stones offers a 16-week course for parents impacted by disability, including those facing mental health challenges. This course provides weekly two-hour sessions, complemented by two full-day sessions, aimed at supporting parents in achieving an SQA Employability award. Additionally, parents are encouraged to complete ten hours of volunteering within the community, further enhancing their skills and prospects.

Passion4Fusion focuses on increasing support for disabled parents from ethnically diverse backgrounds. The project offers personalised one-to-one support, addressing various aspects of early-stage progression, such as routine management, motivation, confidence, language skills, and communication. Depending on the needs of the individual, more specific employability support is also provided. Passion4Fusion adopts a peer-mentoring approach to assist clients in connecting with mainstream services, ensuring culturally appropriate support and addressing issues related to self-esteem and self-belief. Clients are encouraged to explore voluntary roles or paid employment where suitable.

Project Esperanza provides enhanced support through both one-to-one assistance and group work for women with physical and mental health conditions. This initiative focuses on increasing motivation, building confidence, and taking initial steps towards employment. The project creates a supportive

environment, especially for women seeking to improve their English language skills and gain confidence in pursuing work or education. Tailored sessions, led by a paid facilitator, offer practical guidance on various topics such as creating CVs, writing cover letters, applying for college courses, developing job search strategies, acquiring interview and workplace skills, and exploring business opportunities. Individualised support is also provided to women to help them navigate education, training, or work while managing chronic health problems or disabilities and caring commitments.

Saheliya, in its support for ethnically diverse women, offers a training course called "First Aid in Mental Health." This course targets 35 women and aims to bridge the gap in employability pathways for marginalised women who experience racial inequality and have been traumatised by gendered abuse. By utilising culturally informed and trauma-aware learning and training approaches, the course demonstrates the effectiveness of such programs for individuals who are farthest from the job market. Saheliya also provides a second training course called "Access2safety" for 20 women. This programme serves as a foundation for women within the existing service user group to progress into language support or case worker roles at Saheliya or beyond, or to secure part-time employment within Saheliya's Access2safety language support social enterprise. The completion of these training programs is a requirement for both paid and volunteer staff at Saheliya.

Overall, the DPESF funding supports a range of projects that provide essential support, guidance, and resources to disabled parents, enabling them to progress towards employment, develop necessary skills, and overcome barriers on their journey to economic independence and improved well-being.

The purpose of this evaluation is to identify the positive impact of the funding as experienced by the service providers and identify the limitations of the funding. To do this, the research team accessed the data collected by all the funded services uploaded into Helix and generated additional empirical data through qualitative interviews.

The evaluation aims were:

1. To assess the **overall impact of the approach**, particularly the decision to fund family support organisations as well as an employability provider.

2. To **assess the effectiveness of the programme** in reaching parents with disabilities and supporting them to progress towards employment or to sustain employment.

3. To assess the impact on the organisations involved in terms of whether involvement with the programme changes their approach to working with parents, aids new learning and development, or generates new ideas or ways of working for the future.

4. To make recommendations around whether this way of working should continue or how it could be adapted to be more effective, in the event of further funding being available.

Key findings

The key findings of the evaluation were that:

1. In most cases, the funded services developed a new practice or service or extended their existing provision rather than a continuation of their typical services.
2. The limited time frame of the funding did not allow services to meet their full potential, both in terms of service provision and data they were able to capture. Some service providers were not aware of the timeline for receiving payments.
3. Quantitative data collected through Helix do not align with the individual testimony of service provider representatives. This is largely due to the tight timeframes for data collection, this means that Helix data do not accurately capture the contractual outcomes, nor accurate information for each of the funded services.
4. The non-prescriptive definition of disability was helpful for the organisations as they did not think that their services users would initially identify with the term. In most instances the clients were identified to be managing mental health conditions.
5. Organisations benefited from the networking events facilitated by CCP for funded services. DPESF provisions were bolstered by service provider goodwill and existing working relationships.
6. The funding reached a wider racial demographic that previously due to partnership working between several black and white-led organisations. Authors note that wider issues relating to racial inequity in third sector funding and partnership working were reported by black-led organisations.

Policy context

Scotland aspires to create a society characterised by improved well-being, happiness, and respect, where opportunities, wealth, and power are distributed fairly. In pursuit of this vision, numerous actions have been undertaken, including addressing child poverty, establishing a dignified social security system, providing funding to organisations promoting social justice, helping with funeral costs, combating food poverty, and establishing a Poverty and Inequality Commission. Furthermore, Scotland has embraced the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and implemented the Fairer Scotland Duty, which involves active collaboration with communities and learning from those who have experienced inequality and poverty. The ultimate objective is to break intergenerational cycles of poverty, inequality, and deprivation and foster a more just and equitable society.[3]

The **No One Left Behind (NOLB) policy** in Scotland represents a transformative and comprehensive approach to employment support, with the overarching objective of addressing inequalities and providing tailored assistance to individuals facing barriers in the labour market[4]. Aligned with the National Strategy for Economic Transformation, NOLB streamlines the employability system, offers person-centred support, and fosters partnerships among various stakeholders, including the Scottish and Local Government, as well as public, third sector, and private sector partners[5]. This policy places great emphasis on core principles such as dignity, respect, fairness, equality, and continuous improvement. Its implementation is characterised by flexible, joined-up and iterative development, involving phased service delivery changes[6]. While Phase 1, which incorporates previous services, is already operational, Phase 2, integrating Community Jobs Scotland and the Employability Fund, was launched in April 2022. Central to the NOLB policy is its focus on facilitating pathways to sustainable and fair work, streamlining access to services, and integrating employability support with other forms of assistance[7].

To gauge the impact of employability services, the policy utilises the Shared Measurement Framework[8]. Furthermore, the Partnership Agreement for Employability and the Employability Action Plan serve to promote collaboration among key stakeholders such as the Scottish Government,

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[3] https://www.gov.scot/policies/poverty-and-social-justice/

[4] https://www.employabilityinscotland.com/policy/no-one-left-behind/

[5] ibid

[6] https://www.gov.scot/publications/no-one-left-behind-delivery-plan/documents/

[7] https://www.employabilityinscotland.com/policy/no-one-left-behind/

[8] https://www.employabilityinscotland.com/media/pgujxbke/for-publication-shared-measurement-framework-updated-december-2022.pdf

COSLA, and others. Ongoing communication and cooperation are ensured through regular updates and the Employability Partnership Framework. Importantly, the NOLB policy aligns with the Scotland Act (2016) provisions for employment support delivered to disabled people and other individuals at risk of long-term unemployment.[9]

The need for a comprehensive and cohesive vision for employability support in Scotland was underscored by the Scottish Employability Forum's review in 2014, which identified fragmentation and a lack of overarching direction in the employability landscape. Consequently, following the devolution of employability services under the Scotland Act 2016, the Scottish Government embarked on a public consultation process, resulting in the development of the values and principles guiding the new Scottish approach. Flexibility, tailoring services to individual needs, holistic perspectives, partnership-based design and delivery, and tangible employment outcomes emerged as key tenets of this approach.

In response to the findings and recommendations, the Scottish Government initiated transitional employment support services in April 2017 and subsequently launched the Fair Start Scotland (FSS) programme in 2018. Subsequently, recognising the necessity of a more integrated and comprehensive approach, the government released the document "No One Left Behind: Next Steps for Employability Support" in March 2018[10], which outlined the principles and mechanisms of an integrated approach to employability service delivery. The signing of a partnership agreement between Scottish Ministers and COSLA further facilitated collaborative delivery of these services.

Furthermore, "Every child, every chance: tackling child poverty delivery plan 2018-2022"[11] is a comprehensive plan aimed at addressing child poverty in Scotland, with five key areas for development: work and earnings; cost of living; social security; helping families; and partnership working. For example, the Introduction of a new income supplement in the future to provide financial support for parents with low incomes (social security) and investment of £2 million to pilot the Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland programme to improve outcomes for children (helping families in other ways) and the creation of a £7.5 million Innovation Fund to support innovative approaches in reducing child poverty (partnership working). These actions and investments aim to comprehensively

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[9] https://www.employabilityinscotland.com/policy/no-one-left-behind/

[10] https://www.gov.scot/publications/one-left-behind-next-steps-integration-alignment-employability-support-scotland/

[11] https://www.gov.scot/publications/child-chance-tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-2018-22/

address child poverty and improve the well-being and opportunities for children and families in Scotland.

Against the backdrop of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, including rising unemployment, underemployment, and child poverty, the No One Left Behind strategy assumes even greater significance.

Over the past few decades, poverty dynamics in the UK, specifically in Scotland, have undergone significant changes. Initially, there was a decline in poverty rates among children and pensioners, leading to an overall reduction in poverty (Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), 2023)[12]. However, following the financial crash[13], poverty rates started to rise steadily, including child poverty, worsened by the current inflation[14]. Nevertheless, child poverty rates in Scotland remain lower compared to England and Wales due to affordable housing and the introduction of the Scottish Child Payment.

However, beneath these surface figures, a concerning reality has emerged. Over the past 25 years, the number of individuals living in deep poverty and the severity of their poverty have surged. Statistics from 1994 to the pre-pandemic period highlights this pattern. Shockingly, the number of people in deep poverty has significantly increased, and the depth of poverty has worsened. In just over two decades, the equivalent of the population of Dundee has been added to the group of individuals living on extremely low incomes in Scotland[15].

Moreover, the income of those in deep poverty has also declined during this period. The average income of those in deep poverty used to be 71% of the income required to meet the very deep poverty line, but it has now dropped to 64%. Consequently, individuals and families in deep poverty face significant financial shortfalls, making it challenging to escape poverty or achieve a comfortable standard of living. Nearly half a million people in Scotland are "being left behind" (JRF, 2023, p.2), leading to increased reliance on food banks. Income distribution complexities contribute to widening income inequality, with higher-income individuals experiencing substantial income growth while those with very low incomes see limited increases. Factors like a higher proportion of income from work and a decline in income from benefits contribute to this disparity.

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[12] https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/deepening-poverty-scotland-no-one-left-behind

[13] https://www.ippr.org/files/publications/pdf/Scotland-skills-2030_May-2017.pdf

[14] https://www.gov.scot/publications/cost-living-crisis-scotland-analytical-report/pages/1/

[15] https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/deepening-poverty-scotland-no-one-left-behind

JRF (2023) identifies specific household types more vulnerable to deep or very deep poverty, including single-person households, households with disabilities, and minority ethnic households. They suggest urgent action is needed from both the Scottish and UK governments to address this issue, recommending utilising the Universal Credit system and supports the Essentials Guarantee campaign to ensure individuals have sufficient resources for necessities. These measures would particularly benefit those at the highest risk of deep poverty. Additionally, they highlight the impact of the cost-of-living crisis in Scotland, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. A large-scale poll reveals the struggles faced by a significant portion of the population, including a lack of savings, substantial debts, and the need to cut back on essentials. The risk being that financial insecurity has had a detrimental effect on mental health and social well-being. JRF emphasises the need for immediate actions, such as increasing means-tested benefits, providing targeted financial support, enhancing welfare funds, promoting available support, and prioritising mental health services and childcare accessibility. In the long term, a robust social security system, flexible public services, affordable housing, and increased funding for energy efficiency and employment programs are essential. Moreover, JRF proposes to address poverty in Scotland through five action points, with child payments, social housing, debt management solutions; Social Security Scotland (SSS) initiatives and actualising the vision of a Fair Work Nation to eradicate in-work poverty.

The Scottish Government has prioritised addressing child poverty and recognises the crucial role that sustainable and fair employment plays in improving lives. As such, the strategy places individuals at the forefront of the design and delivery of employability services, adopting a flexible approach that is responsive to individual needs and **local labour market conditions**.

Although Scotland's labour market is performing fairly well (see final section on labour market and skills), challenges persist for certain groups like people with disabilities and those experiencing homelessness (Scottish Training Foundation (STF), 2018)[16]. The changing labour market, increased devolution of employability powers, and the success of Fair Start Scotland present an opportunity to improve the employability system. Insights from research, engagement sessions, and stakeholder discussions have highlighted the need for flexibility, integration, trusted professionals, collaboration with the third sector, improved measurement and outcomes, alignment with employers, and sustainable funding.

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[16] https://www.stf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/No-One-Left-Behind-Review-December-2018.pdf

Based on these insights, Scotland aims to collaborate with partners to develop an integrated and well-aligned employability system that empowers individuals. This involves integrating investments, establishing clear governance and accountability structures, creating a national outcomes framework, exploring all-age employment support, strengthening integration with other provisions, fostering user-led design, and measuring success beyond job outcomes. User needs will be prioritised, performance data will be transparent, service users will be involved in decision-making, and a national gateway and digital platform will provide multiple entry points. (STF, 2018)[17].

Scotland's vision for an inclusive society, as outlined in the National Performance Framework, emphasises sustainable and inclusive economic growth, promoting kindness, dignity, compassion, and respect for all (STF, 2018)[18]. To achieve inclusive growth, fair employment opportunities must be accessible to everyone, particularly those facing complex circumstances. A flexible and interconnected employability system is being developed to support individuals, with goals including personalised support, simplified navigation, integration with other services, pathways to sustainable employment, evidence-based approaches, and assistance for individuals facing barriers.

Between April 2019 and September 2021, 14,238 individuals received support through the No One Left Behind program[19]. The number of participants increased over time, with more in the third year compared to previous years. Around 44% were women, and 56% were men, with the majority (76%) being under 25 years old. The duration of support varies, and individuals can self-refer or be referred through different channels. These statistics only represent Scottish Government-funded activity and not all employability-related initiatives in each local authority.

From April 2020 to September 2021, there was an overall increase in the number of individuals accessing support across all age groups. The gender distribution remained relatively equal, with slightly more women in the mid-age groups. Over time, there was a slight increase in the proportion of participants from minority ethnic groups, particularly among those aged 25 and above. Approximately 14% of all participants reported having a disability.

Among the participants, 21% were parents, with the number of parents steadily increasing. About 63% of supported parents were single parents, and 14% were mothers under 25. The majority of parents were between 35 and 49 years old. The gender distribution among parents was more imbalanced, with

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[17] ibid

[18] Ibid

[19] https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-devolved-employment-services-statistical-summary-13/pages/3/

80% being female. Around 10% of parents were from minority ethnic groups, and 13% reported having a disability.

These statistics aim to provide insights into the impact of the No One Left Behind approach and will be further developed to include additional data and participants' achieved outcomes. The Employability Shared Measurement Framework will streamline data collection and enhance understanding and transparency across services.

The evaluation of the NOLB Fife programme in Scotland indicates alignment with programme principles, emphasising partnership working and expanding eligibility criteria[20]. The evaluation involved input from stakeholders, the public, and service users, informing the commissioning framework and evaluation design. NOLB Fife supports individuals facing various employment barriers, prioritising person-centred and flexible approaches. While the services help participants build self-confidence and overcome obstacles, addressing significant challenges like financial constraints is crucial for effective work preparation.

BARRIERS TO LABOUR MARKET ENTRY

Lone parents with direct caring responsibilities encounter labour market disadvantage (Berthoud, 2003[21]; Gingerbread, 2022[22]). They are more likely to secure unsustainable, poorly paid jobs that offer limited prospects for career advancement and financial gains (McQuaid, Fuertes & Richard, 2013[23]; Johnsen, 2016[24]). The cost of childcare is consistently identified as a significant barrier to employment for lone parents (Brewer, Cattan, Crawford & Rabe, 2016[25], 2022[26]; Kimmel, 1998[27]). However, the primary hindrance to employment is the *need* for childcare, which restricts job seekers with sole caregiving responsibilities from accessing work opportunities and participating in development programs that would prepare them for employment (Crisp, Batty, Cole & Robinson, 2009[28]; Johnsen,

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[20] https://phirst.nihr.ac.uk/evaluations/evaluating-no-one-left-behind-fife-tackling-employment-issues-in-scotland/

[21] https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/multiple-disadvantage-employment

[22] https://www.gingerbread.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/The-Single-Parent-Employment-Challenge-interim-report-final-design-2-1.pdf

[23] https://www.jrf.org.uk/file/40134/download?token=olq0WLW2&filetype=findings

[24] https://researchportal.hw.ac.uk/en/publications/first-wave-findings-lone-parents

[25] https://ifs.org.uk/sites/default/files/output_url_files/WP201622.pdf

[26] https://repository.essex.ac.uk/31954/1/1-s2.0-S0927537121001354-main.pdf

[27] https://econpapers.repec.org/article/tprrestat/v_3a80_3ay_3a1998_3ai_3a2_3ap_3a287-299.htm

[28] https://www.basw.co.uk/system/files/resources/basw_10124-1_0.pdf

2016[29]; Millar & Crosse, 2016[30]). This obstacle is particularly prominent for parents who lack an available social network to provide informal support (Bashir, Crisp, Gore, Reeve & Robinson, 2011[31]; Lakey et al., 2001[32]) or face geographical constraints in terms of job availability and transportation options (Bashir et al., 2011[33]). Although not exclusive to lone parents, these challenges are compounded by concerns about financial responsibilities and the ability to secure viable employment (Graham & McQuaid, 2014[34]; Johnsen, 2016[35]).

Despite the record-high female employment rate, the employment rate of women remains lower than that of men, persisting consistently over the years (Albanesi & Sahin, 2018[36]; House of Commons, 2023[37]; Taylor, 2017[38]). This disparity can be attributed to women's responsibilities for children and dependents (Green et al., 2013[39]), with parental status being a risk factor for unemployment (Berthoud, 2003) and a lack of flexibility and fair work opportunities in the labour market (Tinson, Aldridge & Whitham, 2016[40]). A study of participants in the Work Programme by Meager et al. (2014[41]) found that women were relatively more successful in entering employment than men, although the majority (62%) of female clients in their sample did not secure employment through the program. On the other hand, Work Programme statistics indicate that 31% of women compared to 56% of men achieved a Job Outcome (DWP, 2017[42]). However, the gender gap has been significant in the UK, with men more likely to remain unemployed (Baussola & Mussida, 2017[43]). A national comparative study suggested that inactivity is a more precise explanation for the gender unemployment gap, as women face greater difficulty leaving a state of inactivity (Baussola, Mussida, Jenkins & Penfold, 2015[44]). Nevertheless,

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[29] https://researchportal.hw.ac.uk/en/publications/first-wave-findings-lone-parents

[30] https://www.universityofgalway.ie/media/unescochildandfamilyresearchcentre/documentspdf/2016_Millar-and-Crosse_lone-Parents-and-Activation-Report_digital.pdf

[31] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/families-and-work-revisiting-barriers-to-employment-rr729

[32] https://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/jrf/migrated/files/1859352537.pdf

[33] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/families-and-work-revisiting-barriers-to-employment-rr729

[34] https://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/4284/Lone_parents_Literature_Review_web.pdf

[35] https://researchportal.hw.ac.uk/en/publications/first-wave-findings-lone-parents

[36] https://econpapers.repec.org/article/redissued/14-209.htm

[37] https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06838/SN06838.pdf

[38] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/good-work-the-taylor-review-of-modern-working-practices

[39] https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC75518/jrc75518.pdf

[40] https://www.npi.org.uk/files/2214/7766/7305/Women_Work_and_Wages_in_the_UK_NPI_report.pdf

[41] https://www.york.ac.uk/inst/spru/pubs/pdf/rrep892sum.pdf

[42] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/work-programme-statistical-summary-data-to-december-2016

[43] https://ideas.repec.org/p/ctc/serie2/dises1510.html

[44] https://ideas.repec.org/a/bla/intlab/v154y2015i4p537-562.html.

findings regarding age and gender effects on (re)employment are inconclusive and must be considered in conjunction with psychological variables, education, and social support to understand outcomes (Creed & Watson, 2003[45]; McArdle, Waters, Briscoe & Tim, 2007[46]; Paul et al., 2023[47]).

According to Berthoud's (2003, 2009[48], 2011[49]) quantitative empirical research, various characteristics can hinder individuals from entering the labour market. Although Berthoud did not propose a formal framework, his comprehensive empirical evidence identified several factors that predict employment outcomes. Berthoud examined the additive and cumulative effects of specific disadvantageous characteristics on the likelihood of unemployment. He found that the risk of unemployment increases as the number of disadvantages increases. The categories with the highest risk factors for unemployment include: (1) individuals over 50 years old (See Appendix 1), (2) lone parents or those living alone, (3) individuals with low skills or educational qualifications, (4) those with mental or physical impairments, (5) individuals residing in areas with unemployment rates over 9.5%, and (6) individuals belonging to ethnic or minority groups. Among those with all six disadvantages, over 90% were unemployed, compared to only 4% who did not fall into any of these categories. Berthoud's research indicated that the risk of unemployment has more of an additive than a cumulative effect, meaning that employability variables are interconnected. For instance, age alone is not a disadvantage; it only becomes significant when combined with other factors such as low skills, poor health, or residing in high-unemployment areas. One notable finding was the substantial difference in risk sizes: for non-disadvantaged individuals, the risk of unemployment was 3%, compared to 17% for the general population. However, for those facing disadvantages, the risk ranged from 50% to 90%. These risk factors align with previous findings that suggest they can act as barriers to employment independently, without needing to be combined with other factors. Berthoud's work highlights the influence of demographic characteristics, personal circumstances, and external factors on employment outcomes. It emphasises that individuals' employability is contingent on the opportunities provided by their local labour market. In a sluggish labour market, disadvantaged jobseekers often find themselves at a disadvantage, while in a competitive labour market, highly skilled individuals have more choices,

[45] https://research-repository.griffith.edu.au/bitstream/handle/10072/6500/22037.pdf

[46] https://www.academia.edu/4401198/Employability_during_unemployment_Adaptability_career_identity_and_human_and_social_capital

[47] https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1017358/full

[48] https://repository.essex.ac.uk/8011/

[49] https://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/research/publications/working-papers/iser/2011-03

creating opportunities for disadvantaged jobseekers to enter employment as employers face limited access to labour supply.

However, ONS (2021)[50] statistics which highlights the labour market outcomes of parents, reporting the increasing employment rates for parents in the UK, with more mothers entering the workforce and changes in working arrangements within families.

1. **In April to June 2021, 75.6% of mothers with dependent children were employed, the highest level in the past 20 years**. 92.1% of fathers with dependent children were employed, showing a slight increase from 2002.
2. **The employment rate for mothers was higher than for women or men without dependent children.** In 2021, 69.1% of women without dependent children were employed, while 71.9% of men without dependent children were employed.
3. In families where both parents are employed, it has become more common for both parents to work full-time rather than one working full-time and the other part-time.
4. 12.1% of parents reported mainly working from home in their main job in April to June 2021. Mothers were more likely to report homeworking (13.4%) than fathers (10.7%).
5. More than half (57.7%) of families with one child had both parents working full-time, compared to 39.5% of families with three or more children.
6. 33.3% of mothers reported having a special working arrangement, such as flexible or term-time hours, compared to 23.6% of fathers
7. In March 2022, employed women with dependent children spent more time on unpaid childcare and household work than employed men with dependent children.
8. Employment rates for mothers and fathers vary by age. Mothers aged 25 to 49 years are less likely to be employed than women without dependent children of the same age.
9. The proportion of mothers working full-time generally increases as the age of the youngest child increases.
10. Lone mothers have an employment rate of 67.1%, while lone fathers have an employment rate of 80.1%.
11. In couple families, almost three-quarters (73.9%) had both parents employed. The most common working arrangement shifted to both parents working full-time since 2020.

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[50]https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/familiesandthelabourmarketengland/2021

12. The employment structure of couple families varied depending on the age of the youngest child. Families with a youngest child aged between 16 and 18 years were most likely to have both parents in full-time employment.

Yet, given the current, and slowly progressing, gender pay gap, expectations of women as mother and caregiver are still impacting underlying pay and conditions inequalities (PWC, 2023)[51].

LABOUR MARKET CONTEXT: SCOTLAND

In spite of post-recession challenges, improvements in Scottish labour market in recent years have included pay and productivity, as well as qualification levels, which are at higher levels than the UK [52] [53]. However, issues remain:

1. Scotland's recovery from the financial crisis and growth rate increased at a slower pace than the UK economy[54]. The result was Scotland losing its historically higher employment rate relative to that of the UK[55] [56] [57].

2. Despite improvements in recent years, Scotland continuously has lower productivity rates than the UK average[58].

3. Inactivity has declined overall in the UK but has risen in Scotland since 2008, remaining higher than the UK average[59] [60].

4. Lower rates of in-work progression exist in Scotland compared to the rest of the UK[61]. **An 'hourglass' labour market structure presents challenges for progression, underemployment and underutilisation of skills.** The proportion of working people

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[51] https://www.pwc.co.uk/economic-services/WIWI/pwc-women-in-work-index-2023.pdf

[52] https://www.ippr.org/publications/scotland-skills-2030

[53] https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-future-skills-action-plan/

[54] https://www.ippr.org/files/publications/pdf/Scotland-skills-2030_May-2017.pdf

[55] https://www.ippr.org/publications/jobs-and-skills-in-scotland-addressing-productivity-progression-and-in-work-poverty

[56]https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/regionallabourmarket/july2023

[57] https://www.gov.scot/publications/labour-market-trends-march-2023/

[58] https://www.pwc.co.uk/services/economics/insights/uk-economic-outlook.html

[59]https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/regionallabourmarket/july2023

[60] https://fraserofallander.org/economic-inactivity-and-ill-health-in-scotland/

[61] https://www.ippr.org/files/publications/pdf/Scotland-skills-2030_May-2017.pdf

progressing from low-skilled jobs to mid- or high-skill jobs is lower in Scotland than the UK (excluding NI[62]).

5. **'Non-standard' jobs - part time employment, self-employment and non-permanent employment have increased.** A flexible labour market has met the needs of jobseekers unable to find suitable work in the absence of secure, full-time positions, but flexibility has led to inequalities[63] [64].

6. **Low pay and in-work poverty are a continuing concern.** Pay rates are increasing (and closing the pay gap with the rest of the UK) but have reduced in real terms and are still behind UK overall rates[65] [66] [67].

7. Disparities exist between skills demanded by employers, and skills produced by the skills system. Future changes to the labour market and economy, without a strong skills system, could widen that gap further. Without a skills system focused on the improvement of pay, progression and productivity, sustainable inclusive economic growth may not be achieved.[68] [69]

SKILLS POLICY

Measuring skills mismatches is challenging, and there is limited evidence of skill gaps currently. Skill shortages as a percentage of employment remain relatively low, indicating a balance between skill supply and demand. Increased educational attainment and the arrival of highly skilled migrants have improved the supply of skills in recent years, preventing skill shortages from negatively impacting economic performance.

However, certain groups, such as those living in rural areas, deprived areas, and lower socio-economic groups, have less access to training and development opportunities within the existing system. If the demand for skills from employers were to increase, such as by targeting higher value-added markets, skill shortages may emerge. In a demand-driven skills system, the supply side is likely to adjust to

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[62] https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/43841/3333-sds-jobs-and-skills-in-scotland-overview-2017-v7.pdf

[63] https://www.gov.scot/publications/know-work-poverty-summary-evidence/documents/e

[64] https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-future-skills-action-plan/

[65] https://www.gov.scot/publications/know-work-poverty-summary-evidence/documents/

[66] https://www.ippr.org/publications/jobs-and-skills-in-scotland-addressing-productivity-progression-and-in-work-poverty

[67] https://learningandwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Poverty-Inequality-Commission-Good-jobs-in-Scotland-report.pdf

[68] https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-future-skills-action-plan/f

[69] https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/43852/jobs-and-skills-in-scotland-2017-main-report.pdf

meet the increasing demand, with educational institutions adapting their provision and migration serving as a source of skilled individuals, subject to migration policy.

It is crucial to ensure equitable sharing of the benefits resulting from increased skills demand across different areas and population sub-groups. Restructured careers advice and guidance can support individuals in acquiring economically valuable skills, enhancing the alignment between skills supply and demand. One goal of economic policy is to stimulate skills demand while preventing skill shortages. This requires viewing education as an investment and aligning the output of the education system with demand. Attractiveness to highly skilled individuals is also vital. Driving up skills demand presents an opportunity to promote inclusivity and facilitate skills development for those on the fringes of the labour market, considering geographic and socio-economic factors.

Skills policy is high on **Scottish Government's** agenda, with multiple reforms introduced to the skills system since 2007, including structural change; funding pledges; attempts to increase financial efficiency; and attempts to address inequalities in terms of access.

1. Skills policy has been guided by **Scotland's Economic Strategy** (2015[70]) which sets out an approach to increasing sustainable economic growth through increasing competitiveness and tackling inequality – primarily through investment and innovation, inclusive growth and internationalisation. In making headway to achieve these goals, Scotland's population needs to be given the opportunity to maximize their potential and participate in the labour market.

2. At the heart of the economic strategy is the **Fair Work Agenda[71]**, committing to tackling income inequality and address wider economic issues by creating a fair and inclusive labour market that provides sustainable and well-paid jobs (Scottish Government 2015). The Fair Work Convention[72] focuses on five key dimensions, including, for example, ensuring opportunity to access and progress in work; and recognising the importance of workplace.

3. The **Scottish Business Pledge[73]** was launched in 2016 to encourage collaboration between business and government around key values and commitments aiming to encourage employers to adopt fair and progressive practices, to ultimately achieve the goals of the economic strategy. The Scottish Business Pledge has nine elements, of which three elements are

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[70] https://archive2021.parliament.scot/ResearchBriefingsAndFactsheets/S4/SB_15-52_Scotlands_Economic_Strategy.pdf

[71] https://www.gov.scot/publications/fair-work-action-plan-becoming-leading-fair-work-nation-2025/

[72] https://www.fairworkconvention.scot/

[73] https://scottishbusinesspledge.scot/

required (paying the living wage and two others), with a commitment to achieving all nine over time, for example, committing to an innovation programme; Supporting progressive workplace policies; Investing in opportunities for young people; and playing an active role in the community. At present, 845 businesses have made the pledge so far.[74]

4. The **Labour Market Strategy[75]** focused on creating a successful and fair Scotland through a strong economy, achieved through an inclusive and sustainable labour market. The government highlighted the need for high employment, a skilled population capable of meeting the needs of employers' and able to meet labour market demand. The Labour Market Strategy clearly sets out the need for a skilled workforce, which requires a strong skills system which can support the (potential) workforce to participate in the labour market.

5. 2012 *Opportunities for All[76]* guaranteed to provide a training or learning places for all 16–19-year-olds NEET. The independent Commission for **Developing Scotland's Young Workforce (DSYW)[77]** published recommendations for producing skilled and qualified, work-ready and motivated young people to address youth employment. The commission's *Education Working for All!* report informed the Scottish government's youth employment strategy, with a of reducing 2014 levels of youth unemployment by 40% by 2021 and increasing the number of Modern Apprenticeships. There are 21 industry-led 'Developing the Young Workforce' (DYW) Regional Groups which:
   a. encourage and support employers to engage directly with schools and colleges;
   b. challenge and support employers to recruit more young people into their workforce
   c. Support includes, e.g., mentoring, work placements or developing application and interview skills.

ROLE OF EMPLOYABILTY PROGRAMMES

Parental Employability Support Fund (PESF[78]) is a collaborative effort between the Scottish and Local Government to provide support to low-income families. PESF offers assistance to various groups,

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[74] https://scottishbusinesspledge.scot/pledge-partners/

[75] https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-labour-market-strategy/f

[76] https://www.gov.scot/publications/opportunities-supporting-young-people-participate-post-16-learning-training-work/

[77] https://www.gov.scot/publications/education-working-commission-developing-scotlands-young-workforce-final-report/

[78] https://www.employabilityinscotland.com/employability-services/parental-employability-support-fund/

including lone parents, parents with disabilities, young parents under 25, minority ethnic families, families with a disabled child, families with 3 or more children, and families with a youngest child under 1 year. The fund takes a holistic Key Worker approach to support parents in upskilling, retraining, and increasing family income to lift them out of poverty. Support provided includes help in gaining qualifications, improving skills or work experience, money advice, and motivational support. The Scottish Government has a plan to eradicate child poverty. Building upon the foundation established by 'Every Child, Every Chance[79]' and the initial Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, "Best Start, Bright Futures"[80] addresses Scottish Government's commitment to addressing child poverty in Scotland. From 2022-2026, they will invest a minimum of £500 million from the Whole Family Wellbeing Funding. This 'transformative' funding aims to reshape family support services, ensuring that all families can access comprehensive, tailored and preventive assistance, available when needed and for as long as required. This approach aims to prioritise support for the most disadvantaged communities and establish a seamless support system that eliminates barriers to accessing assistance. Furthermore, Scottish Government are investing £36 million in the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund to enhance families' access to necessary support. Scottish Government will also leverage the Resource Spending Review to allocate multi-year funding to the third sector whenever feasible. This approach will facilitate the sector in engaging in sustainable, coordinated, and strategic planning, promoting long-term effectiveness and efficiency. Local employment services can also assist individuals in finding work or changing jobs.

Lindsay et al. (2018[81]) explore the effectiveness of traditional "work-first" employability programs in the UK, focusing on lone parents. It argues that these programs have often failed to alleviate poverty or improve job prospects, suggesting that alternative approaches based on co-production and social innovation may yield better results. The study examines the Making It Work (MIW) programme in Scotland, which aimed to support lone parents facing employment barriers. The MIW Edinburgh model operated through a dispersed delivery team consisting of four development workers located in disadvantaged areas of the city. These workers collaborated with trusted local community organisations, such as nurseries, an employability service hub, and a community centre, to establish a strong outreach and engagement presence. The partnership involved Capital City Partnership (CCP) as the project lead, responsible for key worker support and employing the development workers.

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[79] https://www.gov.scot/publications/child-chance-tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-2018-22/

[80] https://www.gov.scot/publications/best-start-bright-futures-tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-2022-26/pages/3/

[81] https://shura.shu.ac.uk/23234/1/Pearson-Co-productionAndSocial%28AM%29.pdf

Partner agencies like the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) and One Parent Families Scotland (OPFS) contributed their expertise in areas like childminding training, benefits advice, and childcare support for lone parents. Other key partners included EVOC for governance facilitation and engagement with smaller third sector organisations supporting vulnerable lone parents. This collaborative approach enhanced the overall effectiveness of the MIW programme by complementing existing employability services, filling service gaps, and establishing referral routes with mainstream providers like local colleges, Jobcentre Plus, and employability providers. Through interviews with stakeholders and participants, the research identifies the importance of co-governance and collaborative partnerships in delivering co-produced services that promote social innovation and employability. The findings highlight the positive outcomes associated with personalised support, transitional funding, and connections to other services. The article concludes by emphasising the significance of flexible and inclusive approaches involving diverse stakeholders in providing effective services for lone parents.

Lindsay et al., (2014) examine the role of third sector organisations (TSOs) in delivering employability services in Scotland, highlighting the recognition by UK governments and devolved administrations of the potential contribution of TSOs in helping unemployed individuals improve their employability and find work. The concept of "New Public Governance" (NPG) offers opportunities for TSOs to expand their role in service delivery through plural forms of public provision. While TSOs may benefit from these opportunities, there are also risks associated with delivering public services, including compromising collaborative values and facing challenges in partnership structures and performance management. The research explores the experiences of TSO managers in delivering employability services, navigating the changing governance environment, and maintaining independence while responding to public funders' priorities, focusing on whether TSOs' relationships with public funders align with their collaborative values or if they are affected by competition, contracting, and top-down management.

Sutherland et al., (2015[82]) discuss the concept of employability pipelines and their role in increasing the effectiveness of employability services, emphasising the need for a more strategic approach to employability at the local level and highlights the importance of data sharing and management information systems (MIS) to support this approach. The report identifies key characteristics of

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[82] https://eprints.gla.ac.uk/113172/1/113172.pdf

effective MIS systems, such as robust caseload management, tracking of clients along the pipeline, and basic reporting capabilities. Partnership working is identified as another driver for the development of employability pipelines, with benefits including better resource utilization, knowledge sharing, and improved services. They also explore the importance of evidence-based practices and highlights the different stages of the employability pipeline, including referral and engagement, needs assessment, vocational activity, employer engagement and job matching, and in-work support. It concludes by emphasising the client-centred approach and the potential of pipelines to deliver tailored support to clients based on their individual needs.

Methods

We conducted an academically rigorous evaluation of the Disabled Parental Employment Support Fund Programme, Edinburgh. Over the course of 6 months, we adopted a mixed method evaluation analysing data collated within the Helix database and generated and analysed qualitative empirical interviews with programme stakeholders including service providers and contract managers at CCP. Using mixed data allowed the evaluating team to assess the impact and value of funding family support organisations as well as an employability provider.

The quantitative data provide statistics relating to objective outcomes of the programme, and the individual testimony of varied stakeholders will enable the understanding and evaluation of the routes by which those outcomes were reached. Importantly, it will identify where there are communication/information gaps in these routes and how to address them. Alongside evaluating the outcomes in the programme in relation its original aims, we evaluated the communication of those aims to relevant stakeholders, subsequent understandings of those aims and how the aims translated to individual experience and work-related outcomes.

Qualitative interviews

We conducted 10 interviews as part of this evaluation with a total of 13 clients. Within this group all but two of the funded organisations are represented in the data: Saheliya and Circle. Interviews lasted between 12 and 48 minutes. All interviews were conducted synchronously and online, 9 were recorded and transcribed using the built-in service in Zoom software. 1 interview was not recorded but the interviewer took detailed notes throughout. The interviews included 2 group interviews with 3 service provider representatives, 1 of whom participated in a one-to-one interview as well. Participation was voluntary. Interviewees were asked to extend an invite to interview to people who accessed their services, but there were no volunteers.

Table one summarises the organisations interviewees represented.

Organisation	Number of clients
Into Work/All in Edinburgh/Enable	7 (mixed representation group interviews and individual interviews)
One parent families Scotland	1
Home Start	1
Circle	0
Lift	1
Stepping stones	1
Passion for Fusion	1
Project Esperanza	1
Saheliya	0
Total	*13*

All interviews were semi-structured, which means that the interviewees were invited to speak about their experiences of using DPESF funding from the start, and then prompted for further information. Clients were asked to be as candid as possible and reminded that the research team were not evaluating their service. All project interviews were conducted in line with ethics and data management codes of good practice, e.g., transcribed using Zoom, anonymised as much as possible and saved onto secure university servers. This research was overseen and ethically approved by the Work, Employment and Organisation Head of Department, Prof. Ian Cunningham, Strathclyde Business School, University of Strathclyde. The below findings are categorized as presented so as to represent the central themes of the interviews.

Defining disability

Most of the funded services did not have a disability focus. In the interviews when we discussed the disability focus of the funding participants were able to provide further detail about how their organisation interpreted this focus. Some acknowledged that their service did not alter in focus and that for some of the organisations *'the disability link was a little bit tenuous'* (Service provider 1). This was reported by several interviewees who explained how they recognised the impairment effects experienced by their extant clients, rather than any drives for further recruitment. Most participants discussed how they interpreted disability in a non-prescriptive way to include their existing clients, recognising that across their organisations and within their client groups disability held different meanings to different people.

Participants made it clear that having the freedom to move away from stereotypes of disability was helpful for them and meant that they didn't limit provision of support to clients in receipt of disability-related state welfare, or only those with visible, physical impairments. The below quote is indicative of the response of the majority participants:

> *'When I met with* [CCP staff], *it was really kind of great to hear that they were. What they considered to be a disabled Parent was much broader than* [being in receipt of welfare]*...'* (Service provider 6)

Due to the range of services funded though, similar comparable comments were made by participants worked in organisations that focused on disability but did not work with parents:

> *'parents in general have been a bit of an issue for our project… because maybe we hadn't reached out to any of these kind of organisations in the past....'* (Service provider 5)

Though the specific focus on DPESF did represent a challenge in the first instance to various providers, it was also the strength of the funding stream, as it enhanced and encouraged service interaction and cooperation, as outlined in the above quote, and detailed further in following sections.

Extending services

A clear benefit outlined by service providers was the extension and development of their existing services enabled by the DPESF. One of the most illustrative examples was in the introduction of income maximisation resources to their services, as some services did not have the capacity or resources to offer financial advice to their clients. This represented an important addition to their provision and was available due to the diversity of services funded. Interviewees were enthusiastic and

positive about this shared service, describing it as '*the most engaging part of the whole project'* (Service provider 1)

Some of the smaller organisations used the fund for additional hours for staff members. Participants explained that this offered clarity regarding the outputs and purpose of the funding as well as clear boundaries for the resources they were able to provide. The subsequent negative impact of this, was that at the conclusion of funding not all the services were able to continue funding this additional staff time, resulting in insecure work for some service staff, and inconsistent services for clients. Some interviewees expressed concern that potential clients sometimes found out about the specialist service too late to access it, meaning that they could not continue to engage with the community at the same level (service provider 2)

Authors note here that this is a widely recognised sectoral issue, rather than specific to this particular funding stream.

Collaboration and networking

As mentioned previously, an obvious strength of the funding outlined in all of the interviews was the facilitation of networking between the service providers. This meant that organisations were able to share expertise and resources. Some resources were specific to the funding – for example, most of the smaller services were able to access an income maximisation workshop delivered by staff from another service, this resulted in smaller organisations that focused on families experiencing poverty were able to access '*information that we didn't know that our clients needed'* (Service provider 2). Similarly, workshop providers were able to deliver their sessions at services with on site resources such as childcare.

An important benefit of this was that specialist services were able to avoid risk. Many of the family focused services did not have the capacity to provide information on welfare benefits and did not want to provide inaccurate advice. Accessing specialist financial/ welfare information for free removed that risk and improved access to this information for their clients. However, participants reflected extensively on their fears and concerns about inviting in an external service to work with clients that they had built secure and trusting relationships with. This was recognised by larger services, with one participant describing how the organisation identified that they needed further development:

> '*there's a little bit of hesitation to work with us, and which is understandable… so we are gonna be receiving some cultural awareness training from* [black-led service provider]' (Service provider 3)

The key facilitator the inter-service cooperation described above was the event hosted by CCP for funded organisations. Though individuals from smaller services described having reservations before attending, all participants reflected on the benefit of being able to find out what other services were available locally. In some instances, this meant service providers learning that their service might have to adapt their provision to avoid replication. The larger employability providers explained how they had anticipated providing some specialist employment services to smaller organisations, but found that they had corresponding in-house services and were '*doing pretty good work already'* (service provider 3)

Beyond avoiding duplicating work, service providers also found they had to adapt having been introduced to the differing needs of client groups supported by particular services:

> '*…they* [other organisation] *deal with people from of an African origin. A lot of them wouldn't have access to public funds, so I, to totally change the content of it, was to do with benefit entitlements. These people can't claim any benefits.*' (Service provider 1)

Though this learning is a clear benefit of the funding, it also explains the reticence of some organisations to attend networking events and implies a lack of shared understanding about the specialist work of smaller organisations. This lack of understanding was recognised and discussed by participants specifically in relation to funding more generally. A sentiment shared by the interviewees from black-led organisations is illustrated by the below quote regarding partnership working:

> '*white led organisations will go and get funding. They get a big pot of funding, and they'll come and give you a small portion because they can't reach our communities"* (Service provider 2)

This reflection is indicative of the sector more broadly; however, we note that CCP is well positioned to address this issue in their further funding provision and facilitation of networking events. Further to facilitating the networking event, CCP was praised by participants for providing a favourable level of support, which was neither too managerial and prescriptive, or too arm's-length both in regard to the service provided, and the management of the contracts more broadly.

Logistics and target outcomes

As previously mentioned, the provision of the DPESF was subject to pressures and issues common within the third sector. This included a tight turnaround for the involved organisation, with delays in starting sometimes affecting their ability to implement their proposed work effectively. The larger organisation representatives suggested that their funding was provided due to their known ability to meet difficult financial deadlines around the end of the financial year.

Participants acknowledged that funding in the third sector was commonly short-term, subject to delays and provided on a limited timeline, so there were few active complaints. Two organisations at the time of interview stated that they had not received their second instalment of funding, due on the submission of a satisfactory report to the funder. A last potential logistics issue mentioned by two participants was that they were sure whether some elements of service provision had been funded twice – i.e. a service used their DPESF to provide a resource/space where another DPESF funded workshop took place. Authors confirmed with CCP staff that no events had been funded twice. This could be addressed in communications around funding.

The last significant topic discussed by participants related to project targets. In several instances the flexibility of the funding targets as well as their feasibility was a strength of the funding. For services providing support to clients with young children this was particularly helpful. Interviewees outlined how it meant they could mention future employability options to clients within pressure or timelines, therefore not risking the relationships they had built.

It also meant that organisations were not required to commit to job start related outputs when that did not suit their service provision. Despite this flexibility, a small number of participants described changes to their contract award and targets as part of their experience. Though most participants explained that their targets were often reduced because of discussions with CCP, two participants reported the provision of new targets and could not recall them being discussed. One participant explained that there was 'a bit of frantic back and forth' (service provider 3) between themselves and CCP to revise.

In terms of funded project outcomes, all the participants described being satisfied with their outcomes. There was a consensus that clients had benefited from the funding and evidence that inter-organisational working had had a positive impact on service provision within the region. Outcome concerns related to their measurement. Participants not used to using Helix expressed concern that it did not collect the information they considered as salient or important, and had concerns about the

implications of this for future funding. This was particularly an issue for the services with low numbers of staff and represented a cause of stress and concern.

Participants from smaller organisations described at length the long-term engagement they had with their clients, that could not be adequately expressed through Helix data, and to which the DPESF was only a recent contributor, rather than essential enabler of.

Overall, feedback from participants suggests that **overall impact of the DPESF approach** was beneficial to individual services and their clients, and that there were specific benefits particular to the decision to fund family support organisations as well as an employability provider. The data also suggests improved reach to parents and supporting them to progress towards employment or to sustain employment, though the limited definition of disability has made it difficult to assess whether this extends specifically to disabled parents. Lastly the data evidences that involvement with the programme has changed the approach of a significant majority of the services to working with parents and marginalised communities in the region and has encouraged service learning and development.

Helix: Quantitative Analysis

Helix (Hanlon Software Solutions), the MIS/CRM system for Employability and Skills, is an integral component of the Edinburgh and South-East Scotland City Deal's Integrated Knowledge System (IKS) project. This system unifies the six Local Authorities within the City Deal (City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian, Fife, and Scottish Borders) by employing a shared data language.

The evaluation conducted is based on the available data within the Helix dataset; however, it is important to note that not all outcomes specified in the provider contracts were recorded or included in the dataset. In addition, some of the organisations were responsible for their own data entry, while others, due to the short-term nature of the funding and constrained resources, had support from CCP. Therefore, the reliability of this evaluation is contingent upon the data provided. Despite this limitation, the analysis was conducted to explore significant relationships between the services offered and the outcomes achieved. Additionally, it aimed to identify client demographics and barriers associated with these outcomes.

While the evaluation provides valuable insights based on the available data, it is important to acknowledge the potential gaps and limitations in the dataset. Future evaluations and data collection efforts should strive to capture a more comprehensive range of outcomes specified in provider contracts to enhance the reliability and completeness of the analysis.

This evaluation will present data predominantly based on its statistical significance. Statistically significant findings and p-values help us determine the strength and reliability of the relationships we observe in our data. When we say that a finding is statistically significant, it means that the results we obtained are unlikely to have occurred by chance alone.

The p-value is a number that helps us quantify the level of evidence against the null hypothesis. If the p-value is below a certain threshold, typically 0.05 or 0.01, we consider the finding statistically significant. This means that there is evidence to suggest that the relationship we observed is real and not just due to random chance. Conversely, if the p-value is above the threshold, we do not have enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis, and the finding is considered not statistically significant.

In summary, when we discuss statistically significant findings and p-values, we are referring to the level of evidence supporting the relationships we observe in the data, helping us determine whether these relationships are likely to be real or just due to chance.

Characteristics of DPESF Clients

To evaluate the effectiveness of the programme, it is valuable to gain insights into the characteristics of DPESF clients. Understanding these characteristics helps in assessing the market demand for such programmes and allows for further analysis of the impact that client attributes have on outcomes. The sample description is presented in Table 1 (Appendix 1), with a summary below.

Overall, useable quantitative data were provided for 142 clients across nine programmes. One Parent Family Scotland supported the largest proportion of clients (27%) followed by Saheliya (17%), Lift (13%) and All in Edinburgh (13%). No data are available for Into Work as they offered additional services to those existing and engaged DPES clients.

The average client duration on programme was 56 days (sd = 50.58) ranging from 0 to 164 days. The majority of clients were women (93%) aged between 25-49 (82%) with a mean age of 37 years (SD = 8.60, range 16-70[83] years). Just under two-thirds of clients declared a disability (62%), while less than one per cent (0.7%) identified as a lone parent. Over half of all clients fall into three ethnic groups: White-Scottish (32%), White – Other (16%) and African, African Scottish, African British (11%).

Geographically, approximately half of all clients lived in the most deprived deciles in Scotland, with the majority concentrated in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 1 (28%) and 2 (19%). Forth Ward served the highest proportion of clients (36%), followed by Leith Walk (13%) and Criagentinny /Duddingson (12%). On the other hand, Almond, Liberton / Gilmerton, Musselburgh West and Pentland Hills collectively accounted for less than 5% of the population.

Of the 142 clients, many reported facing multiple barriers, with an average of 2.93 (sd = 2.34) barriers per client, ranging from 0-11 (Table 2). The most commonly cited barriers were mental health issues (n = 72) and being the primary carer of a child/children (under 18) or adult (n = 42).

Project Outcome 1: Impact of funder services to funder outcomes

Overall, the frequency of client outcomes ranged from 0 to 4 (M = .55, sd = .86). Notably, 88 clients (63%) did not achieve any outcomes during their time in the programme. However, there was a positive correlation between programme duration and outcomes. This implies that as clients remained

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[83] clients 71-years-old and above were categorised as "71+" rather than numerical age.

engaged in the programme for a longer period, they experienced a greater number of outcomes, suggesting a beneficial effect of extended programme participation.

Among the client sample, there were 11 job outcomes, with eight clients securing part-time employment, two obtaining full-time employment, and one with an 'unknown hours' contract. The analysis considers all 11 outcomes collectively, rather than separately for each contract type. It is unsurprising that clients who entered employment were more likely to have engaged in typical job search behaviours, such as completing job applications, creating CVs, or receiving job offers. Job search and matching activities, however, did not bear a significant outcome.

On the other hand, employability development activities, including financial support, follow-up contact, and specialist advice for Employment Rights and Advocacy, as well as Better off In Work Calculations, demonstrated a significant positive relationship with job outcomes. However, due to the unclear sequence of events, as the Better off In Work Calculations may have been carried out at the time of client programme exit, it is difficult to determine which activity occurred first.

Furthermore, a positive association was observed between programme duration and job outcomes. Clients who stayed in the programme for a longer duration were more likely to obtain a job outcome. Similar positive associations were also found between job outcomes and other outcomes, particularly employability training, as well as the act of exiting the program, which logically coincides with a client entering employment. Surprisingly, none of the barriers listed in Table 2 showed any association with job outcomes.

Among the 10 clients who engaged in volunteering, it was found that they were more likely to achieve additional outcomes, including Progression through Vocational Training, Part-Time Education, and In-Work Progression. Similar to job outcomes, there is evidence of a positive relationship between volunteering and receiving support for Employment Rights Advice and Advocacy.

Although volunteering outcomes were not specified as contractual targets for any of the organisations, they varied across programs. Stepping Stones and Project Esperanza stood out as programs where clients were more likely to enter voluntary opportunities, although the number of clients involved was low (n = 3 each organisation). As anticipated, clients who volunteered were less likely to have received a job offer. Additionally, clients who started volunteering tended to fall within the 16-24 and 50-70 age groups and reported barriers such as limited work experience, being a care-experienced individual, or looked-after young person.

Furthermore, there is a positive relationship between programme duration and the likelihood of clients engaging in volunteering. The longer clients remained in the program, the greater their chances of participating in volunteer activities.

Nine clients achieve the progression outcome of vocational training, demonstrating a significant relationship with having a job offer presented to them, receiving specialist advise relating to Welfare Rights, or External Referrals (unspecified). Clients who engaged in vocational training were more likely to also be those individuals who reported the following barriers: live in a single adult household with dependent children; primary carer of a child/children (under 18) or adult; looked after young person; underemployed; and care experienced. A greater proportion of younger clients (i.e., 16-24 years old) undertook vocational training in comparison to their older counterparts.

Nine clients attended employability training. Many of these individuals had an Action Plan and CV created, indicating a comprehensive approach to their employability development. They also received ongoing support through activities such as follow-up contact and specialist advice, particularly Better Off In Work Calculations. Notably, there was a strong relationship between attending employability training and receiving job offers. However, it remains unclear whether the job offers were received before or after the completion of the training course. It is also uncertain whether the training course itself was specifically designed as an intervention connected to job offers.

Interestingly, clients who faced barriers related to mental health issues comprised a significant proportion of those who undertook employability training. Conversely, there were fewer clients who identified "low skills" as a barrier among the clients engaged in employability training. This suggests that the training programme may have attracted individuals with varying barriers, with mental health issues being more prevalent among the clients who sought out employability training.

An interesting finding emerged regarding In Work Progression (IWP), which displayed a strong relationship with employability development activities focused on motivation and confidence courses. This suggests that individuals who were already employed sought or required additional support to advance their careers by addressing workplace attitudes and behaviours. Furthermore, the outcomes related to part-time education also showed a positive relationship with IWP, suggesting that clients engaged in further education while working. Additionally, receiving specialist advice on welfare rights exhibited a positive association with IWP outcomes.

However, the data does not indicate a significant relationship between obtaining a job outcome and IWP. This suggests that clients who received IWP outcomes may have joined the programme while already being employed, indicating a focus on career advancement rather than simply obtaining initial employment. Interestingly, none of the identified barriers (Table 2) showed a clear association with IWP outcomes. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that older clients were more likely to obtain IWP outcomes, indicating their interest in progressing within their current employment situations.

Neither Retained Employment nor Education (part-time) showed a significant relationship with any of the services provided. However, retention of employment was found to have a negative association with clients from employment-deprived areas, indicating that individuals from these areas were less likely to retain their employment. Similarly, education outcomes were negatively associated with the barrier of being a looked-after young person, suggesting that individuals in this category faced challenges in achieving positive education outcomes.

Out of the 21 clients who exited the programme at the time of analysis, the reasons were predictable and aligned with expected outcomes, such as obtaining a part-time job start or programme completion. However, clients who had engaged in volunteering, training, or full-time employment did not appear to have 'exited' the program. It can be assumed that some of these individuals were still receiving 'in work support' as part of their continued involvement. Barriers associated with exiting the programme included living in a jobless household with dependent children and being at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). Additionally, male clients were proportionately more likely to exit the programme compared to women.

Overall, it is worth noting that certain barriers showed no association with the outcomes achieved. These barriers include migrants or refugees, homelessness, long-term physical illness, low-income household, and long-term unemployment. However, when examining the relationships between outcomes and self-reported barriers, several notable associations emerge. These self-reported barriers include being a looked after young person, having a care-experienced background, residing in a jobless household with dependent children, limited work experience, being the primary carer of a child/children (under 18) or an adult, being underemployed, having low skills, experiencing mental health issues, living in employment deprived areas, and being at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). These barriers demonstrate connections with the outcomes achieved by the clients in the program.

However, upon examining the comparison between services and outcomes, it becomes evident that each outcome has its own set of contributing factors. When considering the overall picture, certain services exhibit a stronger association with outcomes compared to others. Notably, employability development activities and specialist support emerge as key contributors to positive outcomes. These services play a crucial role in assisting clients in their journey towards favourable results. Yet, overall, the combination of different services and support initiatives plays a vital role in facilitating positive outcomes for clients. By addressing various aspects of employability and providing targeted assistance, these services empower individuals to improve their prospects and achieve their desired employment outcomes.

Outcomes Per Provider[84]

Each organisation is contracted to deliver outcomes specific to their service offer. From the Helix data, it appears that most organisations did not achieve their targets (Table 5 - redacted). This finding contradicts the qualitative data, and the accuracy and completeness of the Helix data must be taken into consideration. Furthermore, not all outcome data reflects contractual requirements.

The measurement of new engagement in the programs is assumed to be based on the date clients started their respective programmes. However, statistics indicate that most organisations fell short of realising their contracted engagement figures.

The Helix data does not include a single variable that specifically represents "progression towards work (education/training)." Instead, there are four variables: vocational training, employability training, started training course, and education (part-time). For the purpose of outcome analysis, these variables have been calculated as a sum score

It must be noted that analysis of "progression" was specific to education and training. However, five organisations demonstrated In Work Progression. In addition, activities leading to 'outcomes' can be indicators of softer outcomes, however, for the required reporting these were not factored into 'progression' measures.

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[84] Note: Helix data are not necessarily an accurate measure of final outcome data, as there were examples of underreporting against individual provider final reports. It is reported that there are circumstances where not all mandatory reporting was completed, specifically, required boxes were not ticked.

Project Outcome 2: To assess the effectiveness of the programme in reaching parents with disabilities and supporting them to progress towards employment or to sustain employment.

Out of the total clients, 62% (n = 82) declared having a disability. However, the available evidence does not strongly indicate that services and outcomes for disabled individuals differed significantly from those for non-disabled individuals. The data suggest that disabled clients were more likely to have attended employability training (outcome) (Table 4). However, aside from this outcome, there are no statistically significant relationships between disability status and the services provided (services listed in Table 3).

However, the data also captures whether clients self-report mental health or long-term physical conditions. When analysing the relationship between outcomes and reported health conditions, the only significant finding is that of the 9 clients who obtained employability training, 8 of them had mental health conditions (p = .017).

It is worth noting that while the statistical analysis did not reveal strong associations between disability status and the services and outcomes, this does not diminish the importance of addressing the unique needs and challenges faced by disabled individuals. The findings suggest that additional research and examination may be required to better understand the specific factors and support mechanisms that contribute to the success of disabled clients in the program

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that this targeted provision is continued, subject to funding. It is clear that projects were starting to have impact at the point of evaluation and providers were keen to continue working in this way.
2. Develop the Helix system to enable data capture of soft outcome of family progression toward work. Ensure effective training on the system and make data capture user-led by providers.
3. CCP should undertake to get a full picture of staffing involved in the delivery of DPESF and subsequent programmes.
4. Continue to engage with black-led organisations and those that support ethnic minorities as part of the design of funding to maintain improved reach and support for funded programmes.
5. Continue to deliver networking events to support service delivery, particularly for organisations who are new to offering employability services.

Appendices

Appendix 1

When examining age as a factor in employment, two distinct groups of jobseekers emerge: young people and older workers. Research spanning two decades (1993-2013) from the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) indicates that both older workers (aged 56-75) and young people (aged 25 and under) face higher labour market disadvantages (George, Metcalf, Tufekci & Wilkinson, 2015[85]). Older jobseekers have diverse support needs that hinder their ability to find work, such as health issues, skills gaps, caring responsibilities (especially for women), limited flexibility in working arrangements, and discrimination (Foster, Colechin, Bivand & Foster, 2014[86]; George et al., 2015[87]). Similarly, young people face increasing disadvantages in the labour market due to low or insufficient qualifications (Berthoud, 2003; George et al., 2015; Green et al., 2013). They find themselves in a "catch 22" situation where they lack the experience needed for employment but are unable to gain that experience without a job (Gregg & Tominey, 2005[88]). On the other hand, older individuals with work experience are less vulnerable to job losses (Green et al., 2013), and young individuals claiming benefits are more likely to enter employment compared to their older counterparts (Meager et al., 2014), although this can vary based on current welfare-to-work policies. For instance, the Youth Contract, which provided financial incentives for employers to recruit young people, affected the employability of both young and older cohorts, but unfavourably for the latter (Jordan & Thomas, 2016[89]).

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[85] https://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/jrf/files-research/age-labour-market-full.pdf

[86] https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/consultation-responses-and-submissions/active-communities/crs_june14_employment_support_for_unemployed_older_people.pdf

[87] https://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/jrf/files-research/age-labour-market-full.pdf

[88] https://econpapers.repec.org/article/eeelabeco/v_3a12_3ay_3a2005_3ai_3a4_3ap_3a487-509.htm

[89] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/207489/833summ.pdf

Table 1: Client Description (N = 142)

	Characteristics	Percentage (%)
Age (M = 37.36, SD = 8.60)	16-24	6.0
	25-49	82.1
	50-79	9.0
	71+	3.0
Gender	Male	7.0
	Female	93.0
Nationality	White - Scottish	31.9
	White - Other	15.6
	African, African Scottish, African British	10.6
	African - Other	7.1
	Asian - Pakistani, Pakistani Scottish, Pakistani British	7.1
	Arab, Arab Scottish, Arab British	6.4
	White - Polish	5.7
	White - Other British	5.0
	Asian - Other	2.8
	Caribbean or Black - Other	1.4
	Other ethnic group	1.4
	Asian - Bangladeshi, Bangladeshi Scottish, Bangladeshi British	0.7
	Black, Black Scottish, Black British	0.7
	Not Known	0.7
	White - Irish	0.7
	Prefer not to say	2.1
Personal Circumstances	Lone parents	0.7
	Disability	62.0
SIMD Banding	0-10	27.7
	10-20	19.2
	20-30	5.4
	30-40	9.2
	40-50	10.8
	50-60	10.8
	60-70	4.6
	70-80	3.1
	80-90	4.6
	90-100	4.6
Ward	Almond	0.8
	Colinton/Fairmilehead	2.4
	Corstophine/Murrayfield	1.6
	Craigentinny/Duddingston	12.2
	Drum Brae/Gyle	4.9
	Forth	35.8
	Inverleith	3.3
	Leith Walk	13.0
	Leith	5.7
	Portobello/Craigmillar	5.7
	Sighthill/Gorgie	8.9

	Southside/Newington	3.3
	Liberton / Gilmerton	0.8
	Musselburgh West	0.8
	Pentland Hills	0.8
Programme Name	One Parent Family Scotland	26.8
	Saheliya	16.9
	Lift	13.4
	All in Edinburgh	10.6
	Circle	9.9
	Home Start	7.7
	Project Esperanza	5.6
	Passion4Fusion	4.9
	Stepping Stones	4.2

Table 2: Self-Reported Barriers

Barrier	Frequency
Mental health issues	72
Primary carer of a child/children (under 18) or adult	42
Migrants people with a foreign background, minorities (including marginalised communities such as the Roma)	40
Low Income Household	40
No or Limited work experience	37
Living in a single adult household with dependent children	35
Living in a jobless household with dependent children	27
Long term physical illness	21
Living in a jobless household	19
Long Term Unemployed	17
Homeless or affected by housing exclusion	11
From employment deprived areas	10
Low income employed	9
Low skilled	8
Refugee	6
Looked after young person	6
Underemployed	5
Care Experienced	5
Criminal Convictions	2
Substance related conditions	1
Armed Forces Veteran	1
At risk of becoming NEET	1
Benefits issues	0
Debt Problems	0

Table 3: Services by Disability Status

	All Clients (N=142)	Disabled (n = 86)	Non-Disabled (n=52)	Significance
	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency	*p* value*
Employability Development: motivation / confidence support	2	2	0	.268
Employability Development: financial support	7	4	3	.772
Employability Development: Follow-up Contact	22	17	5	.114
Employability Development: Follow-up assessment	3	1	2	.295
Employability Development: Profiling Review, e.g., Rickter/Vocational	3	2	1	.875
Financial/Debt: Income Maximisation	1	1	0	.435
IAG: Action Plan Created	57	37	20	.598
IAG: Created CV	9	8	1	.089
Support: CV Advice	2	2	0	.268
Support: Interview Advice	2	1	1	.717
Training: Completed Training Course	22	11	11	.193
Training: Offered Training Course	1	1	0	.435
Job Related: Job offer presented	2	2	0	.268
Job Related: Job Application	3	3	0	.173
Job search and matching: job search and matching	7	6	1	.190
Specialist Advice: Childcare Advice and Support	31	17	14	.329
Specialist Advice: Debt and Money Advice	8	3	5	.136
Specialist Advice: Employment Rights Advice and Advocacy	7	4	3	.772
Specialist Advice: English as a Second Language	1	0	1	.197
Specialist Advice: Welfare Rights	4	3	1	.595
Specialist Advice: Specialist Support	3	1	2	.295
Specialist Advice: Better Off in Work Calculation	7	5	2	.610
Referrals: External Referral	13	7	6	.508

Note: * significant finding when p-value is <.05,

Table 4: Outcomes by Disability Status

	All Clients (N=142)	Disabled (n = 86)	Non-Disabled (n=52)	Significance
	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency	*p* value
Started Volunteering	10	4	6	.130
Exited Programme	21	14	7	.655
Job Starts (overall)	11	7	4	.875
Job Start - PT	8	5	3	.991
Job Start - FT	2	2	0	.268
Job Start Unknown Hours	1	0	1	.197
Progression: Vocational Training	9	4	5	.252
Employability Training	9	9	0	.016
In work progression	5	3	2	.913
Started Training Course	10	4	6	.130
Retained Employment	1	1	0	.435
Education Part Time	1	0	1	.197

Note: * significant finding when p-value is <.05