

Building

Blocks



CLARION
FUTURES

Learning from the Kickstart Housing Partnership

The **Financial
Inclusion
Centre**

Financial markets that
work for society

Produced by Gareth Evans and Matt Earnshaw,
The Financial Inclusion Centre (FIC)

The FIC is an independent, not-for-profit
think-tank delivering research and innovative
work that advances financial and social inclusion





The Kickstart Housing

Partnership

Foreword



The COVID-19 pandemic undoubtedly had a devastating impact on young people, particularly affecting their mental health, confidence and access to employment. Young people felt isolated and hopeless whilst at the same time, employers were struggling to recruit staff and businesses were increasingly concerned about their talent pipeline. That's why the government launched the Kickstart Scheme in 2020, creating paid six-month work placements for unemployed 16 to 24 year-olds.

At Clarion, we know that employment is key to empowering people to build stable foundations for fulfilling lives, so we are proud to have led the Kickstart Housing Partnership which brought more than 80 housing association and supply chain partners together to enable young people to access opportunities and realise their potential. Together we have helped more than 500 young people take their first step towards a rewarding career through the Kickstart Scheme—a great example of government and the housing sector working together to meet a common goal.

The Scheme provided a bridge between young people and employers, creating a way into work for young people as well as tailored support to develop their skills and consider future career opportunities. It had a huge impact, with 79% of Kickstarters surveyed as part of this evaluation reporting a positive change in their wellbeing because of their employment.

Many Kickstarters supported through the Partnership went on to secure jobs following their placements, and I'm delighted that so many of the 130 who joined Clarion through the scheme are still with us today. It's not just Clarion, however. Nearly 70% of employers surveyed as part of our evaluation identified a greater workforce diversity as the main benefit of the programme, and 74% of employers surveyed said their Kickstarter made positive progress in their placement.



Ultimately, Kickstart demonstrated to me that young people just need an open door and a chance to prove their talents and their skills in a supportive environment.

The enormous amounts of goodwill demonstrated by the Partnership and the talent brought in by the young people put the housing sector in a strong position to lead the conversation around employment support with the transition to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Kickstart offered some solutions to the challenges faced by young people and shows the incredible impact that young people can make, and we're committed to building on its legacy as we consider ways to help the next generation to find their feet in the world of work.

● **Clare Miller, Clarion Group Chief Executive**

I would definitely not be in the same position I am in now without the Kickstart opportunity. It has opened many doors for me and given me the chance to gain the skills that employers are looking for. I will always be very grateful and appreciate the Kickstart programme.

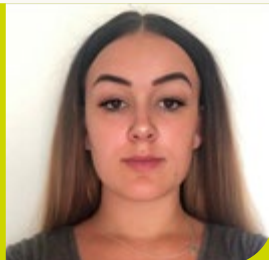
● **KICKSTART PARTICIPANT**

About Kickstart

With concerns about rising unemployment levels amongst young people resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, the Department of Work and Pensions launched the Kickstart Scheme in September 2020.

Young people between 16 and 24 years old could access the six month placement via their DWP work coach and were employed for 25 hours a week and paid National Minimum Wage. Employers received grant funding to cover their Kickstarters' salaries and on-boarding costs.

Clarion Futures was the gateway provider for the Kickstart Housing Partnership that brought together 87 housing associations and supply chain partners. Through the gateway Kickstarters accessed weekly online workshops focused on self-improvement and employability as well as job brokerage support.



MARIA'S STORY



Maria joined BSW Heating Ltd as a Junior HR Administrator having never previously worked in an HR team or in an office environment.

During Maria's six months with the HR team, she developed her IT skills, gaining confidence using Microsoft Outlook, Word, Excel and PowerPoint. A key requirement of working in the HR team is to maintain confidentiality and to act as a trusted advisor to the business and all members of staff. As Maria gained more knowledge of HR, she was able to advise about basic queries whilst ensuring confidentiality.

Maria is now working as an Operations Assistant, analysing vehicle movements and looking for efficiencies to reduce BSW's environmental impact by reducing distance travelling, which in turn will reduce fuel use. Maria's current role has expanded to further support senior managers in dealing with operational issues.



Recruitment

At the start of scheme, recruitment proved a challenge for employers both within Clarion's gateway and more widely across the scheme.¹

Employers had to take a more hands-on approach to recruitment, meeting Kickstarters face to face, simplifying their recruitment processes re-writing job descriptions to make them more accessible. Whilst this had resource implications for the employers, young people benefited for the more personalized approach that focused on attitude rather than technical knowledge or experience.

Ease of recruiting suitable young people to available placements within the housing partnership

26% easy

26% neither easy or difficult

26% difficult

Kickstarters' experience of recruitment

85% of Kickstarters found the application process for their job, easy or very easy,

94% of Kickstarters felt that their job did fit with the job description they were given during recruitment

82% of Kickstarters felt their job fitted well with their future career interests

The Kickstart cohort

Nationally, young men were harder hit by the Covid-19 crisis than young women, with almost one in five (19%) unemployed or inactive, but wanting work. The crisis also exacerbated existing differences in the unemployment rate between the different ethnic groups, for example, the unemployment rate among Black young people rose to 35%, compared to 24% for young Asian people and 13% for young White people².

In comparison, the ethnicity of the Housing Partnership's Kickstarters broadly reflected these national trends, with a greater proportion from a black or ethnic minority group compared to the wider population of those receiving Universal Credit. It is also positive to note in terms of the Housing Partnership's cohort, that just over a third of Kickstarters (34%) lived in a neighbourhood ranked in the most generally deprived 20% of small areas in the country, compared to 9% who lived in a neighbourhood ranked in the least deprived 20%³.

54%

female

46%

male

67%

white

33%

other ethnic groups*

28%

younger than 21

72%

21 or older

34%living in the most deprived
20% of small areas**9%**living in the least deprived
20% of small areas

*This included 12% identifying as Black, Black British, Caribbean or African, 11% as Asian or British Asian, 8% as Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Group and 2% as Other Ethnic Group.



Training and support

Both employers and Kickstarters highlighted the training and support as one of the most important aspects of the scheme.

Only 16% of employers thought that their recruits had no, or minimal support needs when they joined and Kickstarters said they lacked confidence when they first joined the workplace. Employers also reported their recruits presented a wide range of barriers and support needs that needed to be positively addressed.

As well as training for their role, Kickstarters received additional support either through Clarion, or through their employer:

72% of Kickstarters said they received broader training and support designed to improve their future employability, such as sessions on CV writing and interview skills

69% of Kickstarters were supported to build and develop soft work skills, such as presenting and communicating with colleagues

78% of Kickstarters felt that their line manager and colleagues were supportive, helping them to understand their job, recognising their needs and showing appreciation for their work

I received support with anything I asked for and was offered more than I could have imagined. I learnt everything about the organisation, from how it started to what it does now, and completed courses to boost my employability. Even now I receive support from the employment team whenever I need it.

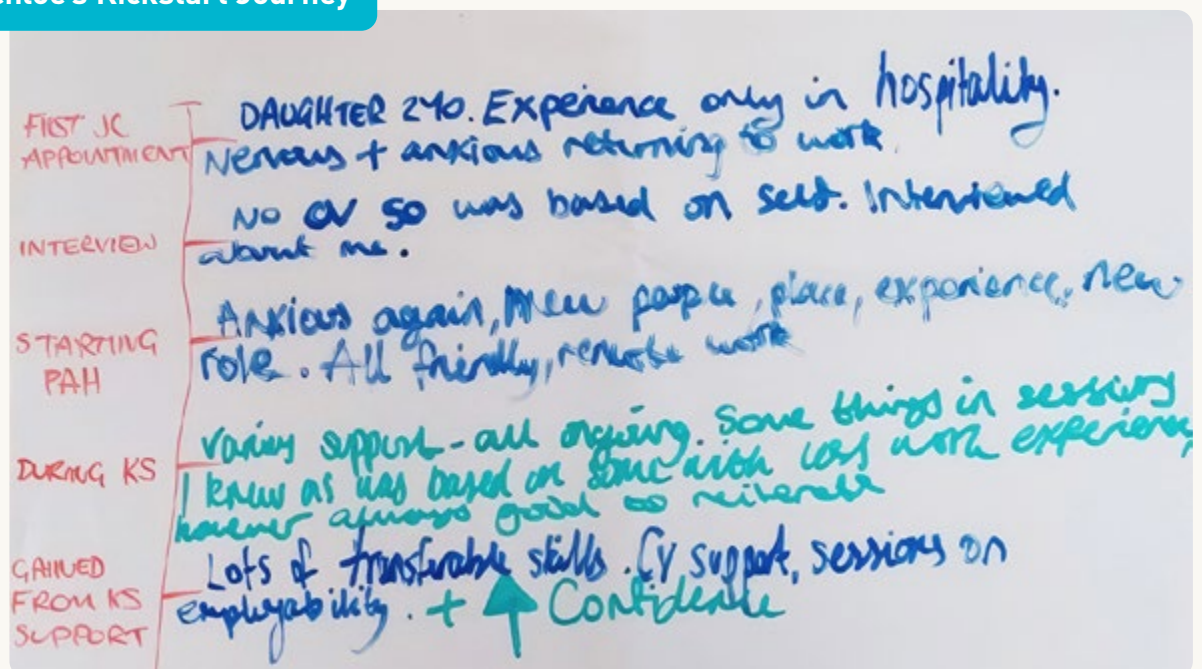
● KICKSTART PARTICIPANT

Timescales and transition

There was almost universal agreement that the six-month Kickstart placement covered a relatively short period and that many Kickstarters would have benefited from a longer period of employment, for example up to 12 months.

This was particularly true for those Kickstarters who presented with additional support needs and who therefore took some time to adjust and feel comfortable and confident in their new work environment. It could take almost the first half of the placement for someone to fully settle in and really begin finding their feet, by which time they already had to start thinking about next steps.

Chloe's Kickstart Journey





JANIS' STORY



During her time at Hyde Housing, Janis demonstrated a level of maturity and commitment that positioned her as a future leader.

Janis was able to affect change within Hyde when it came to the retention of Kickstarters within the business. She did this by talking to the Chief Executive effectively about her own experiences and use her ability to speak out in a way that is both positive and constructive.

Janis took on additional project work as part of the Estate Services procurement

project. This is further evidence that she is not afraid to move outside her comfort zone when necessary and take on work that is more difficult. Janis worked very effectively on her own, but she was also able to encourage her fellow Kickstarter. She evolved into a natural leader of the team, which in turn helped them achieve their goals.



Kickstart Housing Partnership Awards

Shortlisted for the award of
Outstanding Personal Development

Domus Communities, Nottingham City Trust

Working in partnership

70%

of employers felt that the quality of support they received from Clarion Futures to help deliver their scheme was good or excellent

82%

of employers felt that the Clarion Futures team were easy to contact

The partnership approach helped to increase the diversity of participating employers and thus the job opportunities that were available. It allowed small business to access practical support for recruitment and administration, and for best practice and expertise to be shared.

The majority of employers were positive about the partnership approach that underpinned delivery of the programme, and the role of Clarion Futures as the co-ordinating 'gateway' body within this. There was recognition from some of the smaller employers, that without participating in the partnership they would have been unlikely to engage with the Kickstart programme, due to the limited number of job opportunities they could provide and a lack of suitable capacity to manage its internal administration and delivery. Essentially, the partnership approach helped to increase the diversity of participating employers and thus the job opportunities that were available. Many stakeholders also referenced the ability to access relevant expertise from Clarion Futures as the lead body as another main benefit, particularly in terms of the more formal training programme they provided for Kickstarters.

Again, this was particularly true for smaller organisations who lacked their own internal employment and skills function and who would therefore have struggled to meet the support needs of any new recruits without going through a more costly process to secure some external provision.

Building a career

There is clear evidence of the benefits and positive impacts achieved for Kickstarters as a result of their employment through the scheme.

For example, 84% of this cohort of Kickstarters believe that in 12 months' time they will be working or self-employed, whilst only 2% think they will be looking for work. This is perhaps a positive indication that Kickstarters are accessing more sustainable, and potentially career-related, employment than they were able to before Kickstart, when 43% had only experienced limited, short-term paid employment (less than 6 months).

88%

of Kickstarters currently in employment are now confident about their long-term employment plans (23% before Kickstart)

84%

of Kickstarters currently in employment believe that in 12 months' time they will be working or self-employed, whilst only 2% think they will be looking for work

92%

of Kickstarters report that their Kickstart job allowed them to develop the work skills they wanted to have to help build their career

It gave me the experience I needed to jumpstart my working life.

● KICKSTART PARTICIPANT



ANJALI'S STORY



Since joining Clarion Housing, Anjali has been on a steep learning journey, as Health & Safety wasn't something that she had much knowledge of, or experience in.

Anjali has completed IOSH Working Safety and IOSH Managing Safety in her first few months, and went on to achieve her NEBOSH General Certificate in Occupational Health & Safety in April 2022, which is the initial benchmark qualification for a safety professional. She further achieved P901 Management and Control of Building Hot and Cold Water Services in August 2022.

Anjali is coming to the end of her 12-month Level 3 Improvement Technician apprenticeship program and has put one hundred percent effort into each of her assignments, evidenced by the excellent feedback from her tutor and manager.

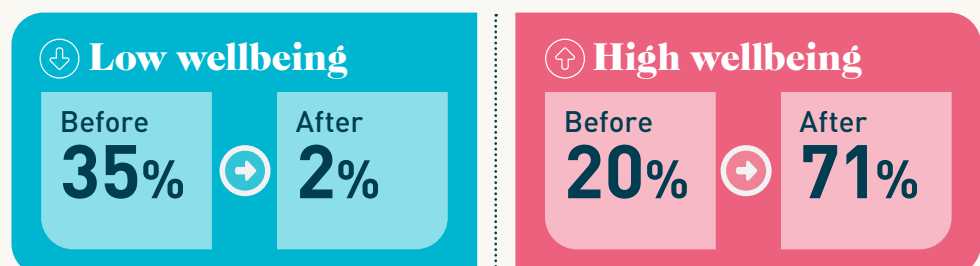
Improving wellbeing

The programme helped with my confidence and feeling like I have purpose. Previously I felt as if I was at a brick wall and did not see how to move forward after having my son, but this experience has made the progression seamless and enjoyable.

● KICKSTART PARTICIPANT

The Covid-19 crisis brought this issue into sharper focus, weakening the economic security of young people to a far greater extent than it did for older age groups and having a disproportionate impact on their mental health — 51% of 18 to 24-year-olds had a common mental disorder⁴, such as anxiety or depression, in April 2020, compared to 30% in the pre-crisis period. However, these issues were already increasing before the pandemic struck — pre-crisis, young people were more likely to have an insecure job and much more likely to have a mental health problem than they did ten years before.

Changes in wellbeing amongst Kickstarters currently in employment:





CONNOR'S STORY

Connor's Kickstart placement with Nottingham City Homes (NCH) was his first experience of a job in a big organisation and his first experience of learning and development opportunities.

Connor embraced this moment to learn, challenge himself and realise his potential.

In February 2022, Connor secured himself a fixed term contract and continued to make headway at his site. He took on the challenge to get the site up to NCH's five-star standard by using the HouseMark App for reporting. Connor continued to seek support through eLearning and 1-2-1s, practicing interview skills in preparation to apply for a permanent Estates Caretaker role. Connor is now a full time permanent estate caretaker, with his sight firmly set on further progression. This process has helped Connor with his confidence and self-esteem; he can now see it is possible for him to forge a future career within the department.

Business benefits

Employers reported a wide range of business benefits from employing their Kickstarters, including:

42%

continued to employ their Kickstarters after their original six month placement had ended

76%

would recommend their Kickstarters to other employers

69%

greater workplace diversity and the provision of different perspectives, skills, insights and values

47%

helping to build our talent pipeline





JOANA'S STORY

Upon joining Sovereign Housing, Joana worked in the Administration Services team after spending time working with the Supported Housing team.

Joana's school experience of spreadsheets and PDFs was immediately put to use, and she assisted the team where needed with training and 1-2-1 sessions with her new cohorts.

Joana's confidence grew in the first few months and she was tasked to take ownership of a mutual exchange process. She quickly found mistakes on the master spreadsheet and was able to correct them straight away.

Joana gained further confidence when she was given an opportunity to show her skills and develop relationships both within and outside the Administration Services team. She has taken on all tasks with pride and has a great way of being able to engage with customers.

Learning points

General

1

Supporting young people to access, and be able to access, good quality jobs should remain an important policy objective, to drive improvements in their mental health and wellbeing and support ongoing economic recovery.

2

It is important that a balance is struck between the quantity and quality of job placements that are offered through similar employment initiatives, to ensure that the quality of jobs, and thus the positive impact they can have, is not unduly weakened by a push to maximise participant numbers.

3

Within the design of any future similar scheme, consideration should be given as to how it will tackle inequalities in the labour market and maximise positive participation amongst diverse groups and those individuals most likely to benefit, including those with protected characteristics.

4

Within any future similar scheme, evaluation should be viewed as 'business as usual', with simple impact assessment to track the participant's 'journey', including their level of wellbeing, embedded in relevant processes.

Recruitment

5

Time and effort are needed to effectively engage with and recruit young people, whilst the amount of support they may need to access and take advantage of job placements or opportunities should not be underestimated. Relying on standard recruitment channels or processes may not be effective without the provision of additional targeted activity undertaken directly with young people. Recognising and robustly accounting for any resource needs that may be needed during early recruitment stages is therefore critically important for any future similar schemes.

6

When targeting placement opportunities at young people within any future similar scheme, standard recruitment processes should be simplified as much as possible and focused on maximising positive engagement. For example: this should include using recruitment language that is simple, jargon-free and accessible, particularly in relation to the job roles available and their associated responsibilities, and the use of more informal interviews focused on character and attitude rather than technical knowledge or relevant experience

Training and support

7

Young people should have access to a wide ranging and holistic package of training and support to make sure that any job placement or employment opportunity is successful, for both the individual and wider organisation. Ensuring the consistency and quality of this training provision is important, particularly when dealing with multiple placements across different departments, offices or organisations.

8

Alongside job and employment related training, support for wider wellbeing should also be an essential part of this provision. Young people may often present at the start of their placement or through the initial recruitment process with varied practical support needs and barriers that need to be positively tackled to maximise their engagement (for example: in relation to family, housing, transport and money). This support should therefore be flexible and tailored to meet very individual needs.

9

Supportive and effective supervision is an essential part of providing a good employment/training opportunity. It is therefore important to make sure that line managers are fully committed and prepared to support the young people entering the workforce through a scheme like Kickstart, particularly given the support needs they may present with. Any resource needs to facilitate this supportive approach should be proactively identified and accounted for during the design and development of any future schemes.

10

In a similar vein, providing access to individual mentors should be an essential part of the support package available to young people undertaking placements. Ensuring that mentors are committed, skilled and appropriately trained is therefore vital, so that they can maximise the benefit and value of the mentor-mentee relationship for the young person they are supporting and in terms of their own development. Any resource needs for this element of training provision should be proactively identified and accounted for during the design and development of any future schemes.

11

Informal and formal networking opportunities are important to the effectiveness and success of youth employment initiatives and should be routinely built into future delivery models for both employers, in terms of sharing knowledge, learning and best practice; and participating employees, in terms of peer engagement, building connections and developing a greater understanding and experience of the housing sector.

Timescales and transition

12

Where financially feasible, future youth employment schemes should consider a longer job placement period, eg 12 months, to maximise the value of the placements to both the organisation and individual participants.

13

All participating employers should ensure that they have robust plans and exit strategies in place for the end of their placements, before any recruitment is undertaken. These plans should aim to support seamless transition and continuity between the placement and the next stage of the young person's employment journey. Alongside employability and job search support, plans could include, for example, identifying potential career progression routes within the organisation, such as apprenticeships, or providing flexible, short-term placement extensions to give young people more time and space to consider, and plan for, their next steps.

References

1. Employment support: The Kickstart Scheme (nao.org.uk)
2. Double trouble (resolutionfoundation.org)
3. English indices of deprivation 2019 (gov.uk)
4. Double trouble (resolutionfoundation.org)



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Launched in 2007, the Financial Inclusion Centre is an independent not-for-profit research and policy innovation think-tank, focused on tackling financial and social exclusion.

**inclusioncentre.co.uk
gareth.evans@inclusioncentre.org.uk**

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