

Kickstart - an introduction for union activists In Wales

**Use this guide to help negotiate with
your employer to create good jobs
through the Kickstart scheme**

What is Kickstart?

Introduction

This briefing on Kickstart is designed for union activists. We look at what it does and why it is important, and how unions can best engage in the programme.

The new jobs programme announced by the chancellor could help tackle youth unemployment. But we need to make sure it delivers real jobs with training.

What is the Kickstart scheme?

The government introduced a new national £2 billion Kickstart scheme in July 2020. The intention is to support around 250,000 jobs of six months for 16-24-year-olds.

Any young person taking part in the scheme claiming Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment is eligible for these opportunities. Only the work coach at the job centre can refer the young participant.

The scheme is due to end in December 2021 and as placements will last for six months the scheme should close in May/June 2021. The scheme is open to the public, private and voluntary sector.

The funding available for the employer for each placement will cover 100 per cent of the relevant National Minimum Wage for 25 hours a week, plus the associated employer

National Insurance contributions and employer minimum automatic enrolment contributions.

The government will also pay employers £1,500 to set up support and training known as 'wrap around support' for young people on a Kickstart placement.

As part of the application process the employer must demonstrate what employability support they will give to the participant whilst on the scheme, which will give them the skills to enter in to work, apprenticeships or education. They must show how the jobs being offered through the scheme are quality placements.

The job placements created with Kickstart funding must be new, additional jobs. They must not:

- replace existing or planned vacancies
- cause existing employees or contractors to lose or reduce their employment

Initially there UK Government set a minimum of 30 jobs per organisation, this is now no longer the case and so an employer can look to take on just one if they wish by applying online directly or by using an intermediary

Employers can get in touch with their local jobcentre for more information on intermediaries or use the [DWP Spotlight tool](#).

Training element of Kickstart

When employing a young person on a Kickstart scheme the employer will receive £1,500 per participant to set up training and support or paying for uniforms or other similar cost to get the person going on the scheme.

The training can be delivered by the employer or by an external provider such as a local college or a charity.

The government has not given a clear guidance on what the training must include or how it is evidenced that training took place. They have made suggestions that the training could include employability skills such as teamwork or timekeeping. CV writing, interview skills and searching for longer-term employment can also be covered.

If the employer is using a gateway organisation to access the scheme, they can use part of the £1,500 training grant to pay the gateway for training services. The DWP expects that the gateway organisations will be delivering the employability skills and work search support.

Unions can help signpost employers to other wrap around support. For example the [Wales Union Learn Fund](#) can be used to help learners brush up on their essential skills, such as digital skills as well as maths and English. This type of support would be really valuable when the young person is looking for sustainable employment and a career or moving into an apprenticeship after the Kickstart period.

What employers are involved?

Already, 19,000 job placements have been created and [employers have begun to speak publicly about why they're involved.](#)

Employers already involved include:

- Tesco
- Network Rail
- Whistl

Many more are advertising and will be doing so in the coming months.

Where we have trade union recognition, we have an opportunity to engage with employers on the opportunities they create.

Where else can I read more about the scheme?

The Learning and Work Institute have produced a report on 'Making sure Kickstart works' that can be read [here](#).

Business Wales has produce the following [webpage](#)

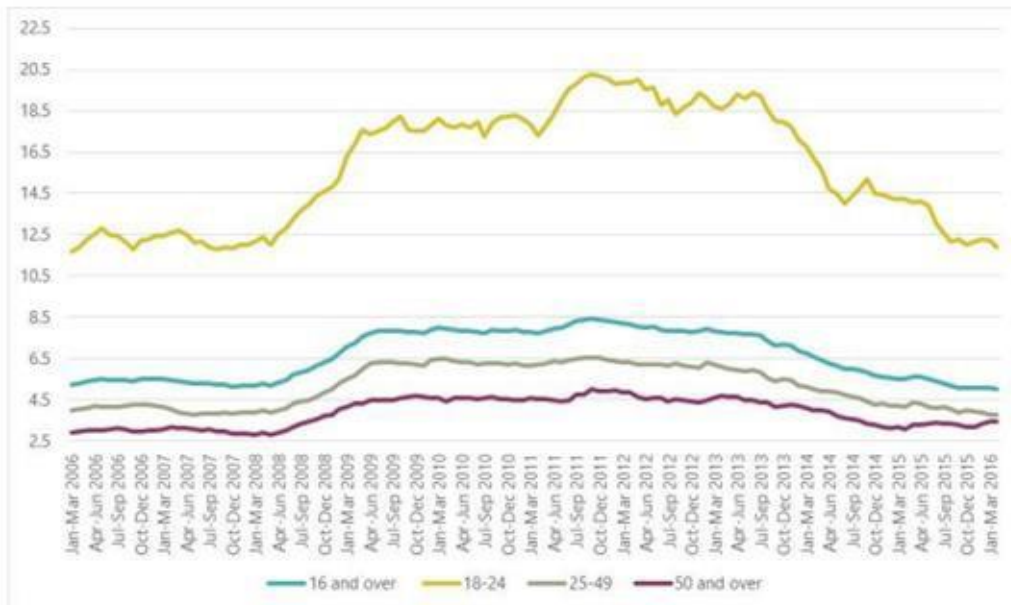
Why is this important

YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE BEEN HIT HARD BEFORE

Unemployment has huge social and economic consequences for individuals, families and the communities they are in. And when this turns in to long term unemployment the results can be devastating for the individual's prospects.

While unemployment has a negative impact on individuals and the economy at any age, it has particularly negative effects on young people. The 2008 financial crisis and subsequent recession significantly affected young workers' employment prospects, with the unemployment rate for 18-24-year-olds reaching a much higher peak than for other age groups. Young people's unemployment (including all 16-24-year-olds) rose to over 1 million at several points during the early 2010s, including as late as 2013, when those who are 25 now would have entered the labour market at 18.

Unemployment rates 2006-2016



Source: ONS

YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY ARE YET AGAIN FACING AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE.

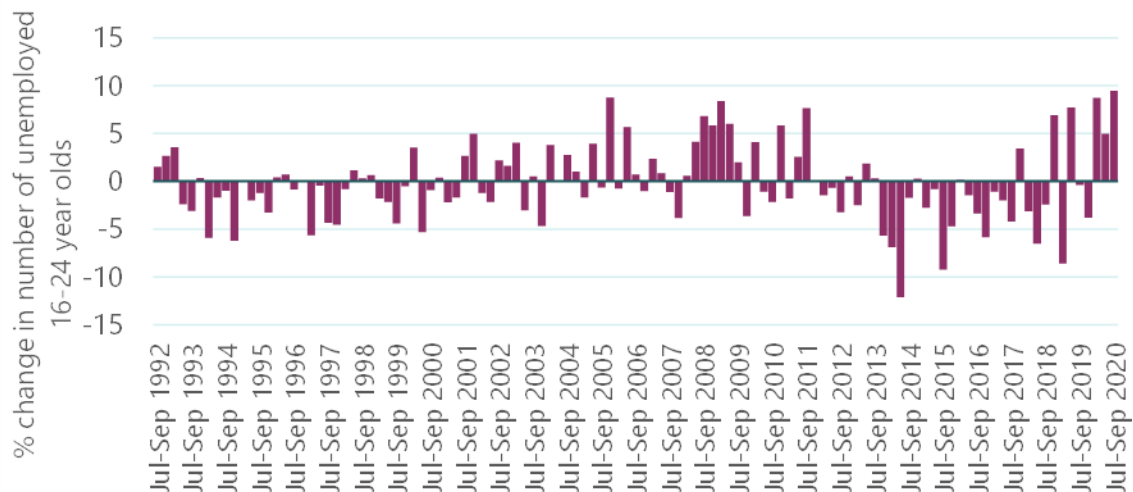
Analysis earlier in the summer by the TUC shows young workers are three times more likely to be employed in sectors where jobs are most at risk. Young women are six times more likely than male workers to be in the most at risk sectors.

TUC analysis of furlough stats produced by the HMRC up to the end of June, show 45 per cent of eligible employees 25 and under have been on furlough at some point (29% for 25 and over)

Already, unemployment is rising at record speed for young workers. Unemployment grew faster for 16-24 year olds in Jul-Sep 2020 than at any other point on record. There are now more than 600,000 workers aged 16-24 facing unemployment; an unemployment rate of 14.6 per cent.

You can read more about our analysis of the labour market for young workers at <https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/jobs-and-recession-monitor-young-workers>

Young workers face biggest quarterly increase in unemployment on record



Source: TUC analysis, ONS LFS

Making these good job opportunities for young people

The trade union response

Trade unions have been calling for job guarantees to protect young people from mass unemployment. We want to make sure the Kickstart scheme, and the jobs created, are as effective as possible at doing that – creating long term jobs and giving young workers the experience of good quality work.

We have called for Kickstart to deliver:

- Good quality jobs with training built in
- Additional jobs of real value to the community
- The programme must be based on equality from the start
- Employers should top up wages

Now that the scheme is up and running, workplace reps and activists have an opportunity to talk to their employer about this and engage new young workers using the scheme.

Employers should expect this – DWP guidance says that they will be asked "[if they've engaged with any relevant trade unions and any advice the unions have given.](#)"

Your employer might also be an intermediary – [you can check if they are here](#). If they are a gateway organisation, encourage them to help ensure jobs created with their employers are good quality using the information in this guide.

What do we want to see from the scheme?

To help you negotiate with employers, we want to set out what we know about the scheme, what employers have to do and what we want from the scheme.

The scheme is still in its early days, [but already employers have begun recruiting](#). As the scheme grows and develops, so will our experiences and best practice and we will update the support to reps.

Five key principles for union reps are:

- | Kickstart participants must have access to a trade union
- | Union reps should negotiate for kickstart participants to be paid a living wage or be part of trade union negotiated pay rates
- | Kickstart participants must have access to good quality training tailored to young person's needs, not just employability or CV support

Jobs should be futureproofed, and in industries where young people will have future job prospects

Jobs must have a clear plan for how the young person can progress – not just a revolving door of six month placements.

Using these, here are some questions to ask your employer and things to think about if your employer is using Kickstart.

Pay, hours and other benefits

The government pays national minimum wage and basic pension contributions for 25 hours per week for those in the scheme for six months. This is paid at the rate according to age.

MINIMUM WAGERATES

Aged 21 to 24 – £8.30 per hour

Aged 18 to 20 – £6.45 per hour

Under 18 – £4.55 per hour

If someone turns 25 whilst on the scheme they should be paid the national living wage of £8.72 per hour.

From April 2021, rates will increase and the age qualification for the national living wage will be lowered to 23 and over. You can check what rates apply at www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates

However, employers can top this up to full working week and pay the difference, if they and the young person in the job wanted to.

So it is worth asking your employer:

- Will they add more hours where appropriate?
- Will they pay in line with collectively bargained and agreed pay rates you might have in the workplace?
- If this isn't in place, will they pay more than the minimum wage, and pay the real living wage, to those on the scheme?
- If a bonus or commission is paid, are they being treated the same as other staff?

If they don't do these, we will still need to check that any workers get any increases to the minimum wage that are agreed, or if they move onto a different rate after a birthday.

There may be other terms and conditions or benefits in your workplace that are available to staff. These might be access to gyms, discounts or pension schemes. Ask if they will support equal access to these.

Creating good quality, lasting opportunities

Any jobs being created are meant to be additional. They aren't meant to replace existing roles or be in place of already planned recruitment. So asking the employer how they can demonstrate this is important.

You might want to think about:

- Have there been redundancies or are redundancies planned?
- Was the employer already recruiting for roles like these? We don't want to see recruitment for permanent roles replaced by Kickstart – to avoid mass unemployment we need employers to do both.

We should also be thinking about how we future-proof these jobs giving young people the skills and experience they need.

And we don't want one Kickstart opportunity to be replaced by another on a revolving door basis. So talking to your employer about how they might grow in the future, so that these young people will be ideally placed to move into a permanent job with them is important. They might want to look at apprenticeships for example.

There are currently financial incentives of up to [4K per apprentice](#) your employer takes on.

[Personal Learning accounts](#) can also help support a kickstarter to study flexibly around their work commitments. PLA's offer free qualifications in catering and hospitality, construction, business, engineering and a whole lot more and are a great way to get the skills individuals need to progress in their career.

Not all employers will be able to provide someone with a permanent job. But it is worth talking to employers about making sure they can get skills and experience to move into other opportunities.

So it is worth thinking about what skills and experience can the employer give that might help young people get jobs in the local labour market? Or how they can help young people prepare for the jobs of the future as the economy transitions into creating jobs new technology, zero-carbon and new ways of working.

Good quality support for workers

Giving young people this experience through Kickstart is important. But so too is giving them a [good experience of what work should be like so that they can get on in their careers.](#)

Employers are given £1500 to support each opportunity with 'employability and wrap around support'. Some of this can be used for help with uniforms and equipment and some of it to help for job search and future employability skills.

This is a good opportunity to deliver tailored training that will really help young people now and in the future. And this training should take place during paid working hours.

We would also want to ensure they're receiving the usual training and support that other employees receive such as inductions and role-specific training.

And thinking about what other support young people might need is helpful.

What impact might the pandemic have on young workers and how you work? Home-working and social distancing may reduce the usual opportunities to talk about how a new starter is getting on.

[Avoiding isolation and making sure young people feel part of the team will also be important.](#)

We all know how daunting it can be to start a new job. So suggesting to your employer that a mentor is available for those taking part in the scheme would be an important way to support them. The TUC has useful support for union reps, including [this guide on mentoring apprentices.](#)

Talking to your employer about how they might deal with sickness, pregnancy, parental leave, holidays for those on the scheme is worthwhile.

Ensuring it is fair and equal

Trade union reps work hard to make workplaces better for all. As trade unionists we need to challenge discrimination and support diversity at all levels.

It's important employers and gateway organisations make sure that access to Kickstart placements is genuinely open to all young people. Some young people may face barriers accessing and participating in the scheme, in particular young women, BME and disabled young people and those who identify as LGBT+.

Trade unions can drive positive action from employers towards who they recruit as Kickstarters and ensure they - and the gateway organisations they work with - are attracting the widest talent pool possible.

Trade unions reps can:

- explain the business benefits of improved workforce diversity and recruiting from the widest talent pool possible to employers
- ensure the language used in vacancy notices and employment documentation does not perpetuate gendered or racialised stereotypes
- establish objective, non-discriminatory criteria for Kickstart participant selection and ensure staff involved in recruitment have had training on eliminating bias in selection decisions

- negotiate for Kickstart jobs to be offered flexible working roles to ensure those with caring responsibilities can apply
- establish a safe, inclusive working environment with zero tolerance for sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination

It is vital that employers and gateway organisations monitor the effectiveness of any initiatives to address equality in Kickstart placements. This will help identify any barriers and underrepresentation to be addressed.

Points to consider when discussing monitoring with employers:

- How will information be collated and stored? Will all of the protected characteristics be collected?
- Are all aspects of the Kickstart process included? For example, data desegregated by gender, class, race, disability and LGBT+ status on applications, completion rates, grievance and disciplinary actions, and whether placements result in permanent jobs are all relevant
- How will monitoring data be acted on? Where monitoring suggests potential adverse impacts on women, BME and disabled young people, what steps will the employer take?

Make sure any actions are realistic and measurable.

If there is an equal opportunities policy in your workplace, you could use this as part of your negotiations, and consider it updating it to include the Kickstart scheme.

Those on the scheme are employees like everyone else. So they have the same rights

and should expect the same treatment. But most workplace policies won't mention schemes like Kickstart, or how they're dealing with Covid-19.

Talking to your employer about how they might deal with sickness, pregnancy, parental leave, holidays for those on the scheme is worthwhile as many young people may be unaware of their rights at work and how to assert them.

Trade union access and support

Kickstart is an opportunity for us to introduce trade unions, and the positive role we play in workplaces, to young workers.

Asking your employer for access to new starters on the scheme, at inductions for example, is an important first step. We should also be asking for them to be told they can join a trade union. And asking them to join too.

You might want to think about what you can do to help given the potential low pay or short term nature of the scheme, demonstrating the importance of trade unions in the workplace.

Some unions offer discounted membership or periods of free membership so check if yours does.

Making sure young workers know their rights is important. On the TUC Worksmart website, there is information available to help - <https://worksmart.org.uk/work-rights>

And there is support available that delivers on good quality training like we have called for through our network of union learning

Reps. These include guides that can support union reps including:

- [LGBT Inclusive Apprenticeships](#)
- [Tackling apprenticeship gender inequality](#)
- [Supporting black and minority ethnic apprentices](#)
- [Accessible apprenticeships](#)

TUC Education has a range of eNotes available, delivering short bite-sized training on a range of topics including health and safety, sexual harassment and domestic abuse -

<https://www.tuceducation.org.uk/local/enotes/index.php>

You can access, or signpost employers and young workers on the scheme to these.

Kickstart is an opportunity for us to introduce trade unions, and the positive role we play in workplaces, to young workers.

This guide will be regularly updated as the scheme continues with examples on how our trade unions are engaging with employers and tools to support you in your work.

If you have want to give us feedback and share your experiences of the scheme, you can do that here – kickstartwales@tuc.org.uk

