

Response to The Scottish Government Consultation

Proposals for a Job Grant

April 2019

Premise:

The Scottish Government is consulting on its key eligibility criteria and format of the Job Grant, a new benefit which will be delivered by Social Security Scotland to support young people moving back into employment. The grant will be paid to 16-24 year olds (up to 26 years old for care leavers) who have been out of paid employment and who have been in receipt of a qualifying benefit specified by the Scottish Government. The purpose of this consultation is to seek views on the key eligibility criteria and our proposal for the format of the payment for the Job Grant.

The Scottish Women's Convention:

The Scottish Women's Convention (SWC) is funded to engage with women throughout Scotland in order that their views might influence public policy. The SWC uses the views of women to respond to a variety of Parliamentary, Governmental and organisational consultation papers at both a Scottish and UK level.

The Scottish Women's Convention engages with women using numerous communication channels including Roadshow events, Thematic Conferences and regional contact groups. This submission provides the views of women and reflects their opinions and experiences in a number of key areas relevant to the issues set out within this proposal relating to female employment and social security.

Are the eligibility criteria for the Job Grant clear? Yes/No Question

Yes

We have proposed applications for Job Grant can be made 14 days in advance of the employment start date and up to 14 days after employment has commenced. Do you think that the proposed application period for Job Grant is suitable? Yes/No Question

Yes

If no, please provide comments

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the job grant consultation. Young people under the age of 25 face a number of barriers in direct consequence of their age, this includes:

- Age band discrimination in terms of the National Minimum Wage
- Pervasive sexual harassment, particularly in industries where young women dominate
- Precarious working conditions including zero hours and temporary contracts
- Little trade union recognition

Whilst extending the period up to 28 days including 14 before and 14 days after employment has commenced does broaden the application criteria there are still a number of points related to precarious work contracts that have been raised. It should also be noted the over saturation of young people in particular sectors such as hospitality and retail as well as the increase in hazards this type of work often brings.

Concerns have been raised around eligibility criteria in terms of time limits on applications, namely the requirement of employment being expected to last at least 3 months and the tie in with zero hours or small time contracts. These are usually induced on an “as required” basis with the company being under no requirement to confer more hours onto the person. Whilst the proposed criteria sets out a basis for an average allowance over 4 weeks it does not set out how evidence is to be produced, particularly if someone is just starting a job with no wage slip to prove this evidence.

We have proposed that Job Grant consists of one payment of £250, or £400 for young people with children. Do you agree with the proposed format of the payment?

YES

Do you agree that the proposals for Job Grant set out in this consultation paper meet the policy intent to support a smooth transition into employment for young people on low incomes by helping to meet the initial costs of starting work? Yes/No Question

YES

If no, please provide details

Women are on the whole supportive of the introduction of a young person's job grant scheme. It is hoped that this scheme can be used to direct and make even more of a contribution than just economical, for instance, heightening self-esteem and ensuring young people feel they are "worth it" when it comes to gainful employment. Furthermore, from a female perspective, any incentive for work is seen as a valuable contribution in terms of going some way towards alleviating the gender pay gap. Any form of assistance given to women in such a formative stage of life should be looked upon as an investment in terms of their future.

The benefits of this may include not only an incentive to gain employment but also as an inducement to remain in wilful employment. The likes of working out routines for the first few weeks with a new job may be aided by an extra injection of personal cash flow.

Can you identify any potential unintended consequences which we have not considered in these proposals? Yes/No Question

YES

If yes, please provide details

Whilst not directly apportioned or in line with the criteria outlined within this consultation document, there are further points that require consideration. For instance, many women noted that this scheme should not be looked upon as a sole solution to youth unemployment. It is of the utmost importance that consideration is given to how young people's employment is portrayed as well as the unique mental and physical struggles this generation experiences. It should thus be seen as a targeted incentive as part of a much larger scheme that aims to invest in a young person's whole future and career. Other points around this could include: targeted one on one "guidance" interviews and reviews concerning personal development.

The SWC is funded to guide public policy by garnering the views of grassroots women with lived experiences. Whilst not underlined here, women, particularly young women, take up the majority responsibility of the likes of childcare. Whilst youth unemployment is lower amongst females, this does not take into account the type of jobs being done by young women and the exploitation that routinely arises from the likes of precarious contracts and discrimination in terms of national minimum age bands. Lack of analysis relating to the potentially gendered impact that employment, and concurrently, unemployment, has on young women does not take into account the uniquely gender defined barriers that women face in their day to day lives. All policy should adhere to a framework that includes systematic analysis of the clearly defined gender stereotypes and job segregation for young women as part of further analysis of the administering of this Scheme.

CHILDS RIGHTS AND WELLBEING IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Are you aware of any impacts on children's rights and wellbeing which are not identified here? Y/N

If yes, please provide details

The only potential that can be identified as a missed opportunity would be in extension of the job grant to young carers as defined by the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016. Given the strict protocols in place for receipt of Carer's Allowance – i.e. caring for 35 hours a week and earning no more than £120 a week post-tax and expenses, it is thought that extension of the criteria for young carers to 26 could be beneficial and conducive with the Carer's Charter.

Are you aware of any impacts on businesses which are not identified here? Y/N

NO

ISLANDS IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Are you aware of any impacts on island communities which are not identified here?

YES

If yes, please provide details

As part of their work remit, the SWC undertakes a large proportion of qualitative work in island and rural communities out with “urbanised” central Scotland. In relation to evidence gathered in these areas, a number of potential issues arise in terms of the nature of work which young women undertake, including a reliance on more seasonal forms of work attracted by tourism. This is often taken on under temporary contracts and it would perhaps be beneficial to further analyse young women and work in these areas to understand the contrast between more urbanised and industrial areas of Scotland.

Conclusion:

The SWC welcomes the opportunity to respond to the proposals contained within this consultation relating to the establishment of a job grant as a beneficial supplement for a route into work. Creating a fixed strategy which ensures that young women are bolstered into work and given means is one method of ensuring they are seen as valued members of society whose contribution is of the utmost advantage to Scotland.

For further information, please contact

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The Scottish Women's Convention engages with women using numerous communication channels including Roadshow events, Thematic Conferences and regional contact groups. This submission paper provides the views of women and reflects their opinions and experiences in a number of key areas relevant to women's equality.

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