



Report on Measures to Combat Youth Unemployment in Ireland

Overview of the political situation with regards to youth unemployment

The activities of the Government have focused on 3 areas.

In terms of macro-economic policy the Government has sought to make the domestic economy more competitive and attract foreign direct investment to create jobs. Unfortunately this has taken place against a background of significant austerity which has depressed the economy and increased unemployment, particularly among young people. The overall Government plan to address unemployment “The Action Plan for Jobs” <http://www.djei.ie/publications/2012APJ.pdf> was launched in 2012.

The second area relates to the provision of additional education, training, and work experience opportunities for young jobseekers. Additional education and training places have been provided for jobseekers, but not enough to meet demand. Also as a result of cutbacks some supports for education and training have been curtailed making it more difficult for young people to afford education and training. The “JobBridge” internship scheme was launched in 2011, to date over 20,000 have participated in the scheme of which 29% were under 25 years. This programme provides work experience for participants while topping up their existing welfare payment by €50 per week. There has been some criticism of the quality of some vacancies on the JobBridge scheme and concern about issues of job displacement. In response the Government has stepped up monitoring of the scheme. An independent review of the scheme found that 61% of those who participated on the scheme had found employment within 5 months of finishing programme.

In relation to youth unemployment particularly, following campaigning by NYCI and others the Government made political progress on the Youth Guarantee during the Irish Presidency a priority. In February 2013 political agreement was reached and in June a youth employment package of €6bn for 2014-2015 was agreed. An interdepartmental group of Government officials was recently established to develop a plan for submission to the European Commission later this year. The Government also successfully secured funding to undertake a pilot youth guarantee project in Ballymun, Dublin. NYCI was invited to be part of the steering group for the project.

NYCI has been critical of the failure of this and the previous Government over their lack of action on youth unemployment. While some action and initiatives have been taken, they have been insufficient to address the crisis. We welcome the Government's commitment to the implementation of the youth guarantee, but will remain vigilant.

Over view of the welfare system for young people

- What criteria do you have to fulfil to be eligible to unemployment benefits?
- How much, on average, does a single young person receive in unemployment benefit per month?
- Are there any different rules or limitations for young people wishing to access other benefits? (e.g. social housing, healthcare etc.)

There are 2 payments which young jobseekers can access. Jobseekers Benefit and Jobseekers Allowance. To be eligible for this payment recipients have to have been employed and have built up sufficient social insurance (PRSI) entitlements of 104 weeks or more. The payment is €752 per month and usually last between 6 and 9 months. The payment is not means tested. Of the 61,787 young people under 25 in receipt of welfare only 5,020 are in receipt of the this payment as most young jobseekers do not have sufficient insurance payments or have never been employed.

The vast majority of young jobseekers (92%) are in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance. This payment is means tested, so if young people have means/saving or are living at home with their parents and their income exceeds a certain amount, they will either receive a reduced payment or no payment at all. The maximum rate of payment is €400 per month for young people aged 18-21 and €576 for those aged 22-24 years of age.

There are other conditions attaching to these payments and these include;

- Person must be available for work
- Must be actively seeking work and provide proof of same
- Must engage with public employment service

Many young jobseekers cannot afford to rent and are therefore living with their parents, this results in some losing their welfare as the income/means of their parents may exceed the limits for jobseekers allowance. Young jobseekers not in receipt of unemployment payments are not counted in the official figures which leads in NYCI's opinion to a significant underestimation of youth unemployment, although we have no data/evidence to substantiate this.

Young people may be entitled to rent allowance however eligibility is dependent on overall income and in many cases the payment is not sufficient to pay rent. Also many landlords are unwilling to accept these tenants. Young jobseekers may qualify for a medical card again based on overall income which provides access to healthcare services.

Overview of measures have been brought in to address youth unemployment since 2008

- Establishment of the JobBridge Internship Programme
- Establishment of the Springboard and Momentum programmes to provide education and training opportunities for young jobseekers.
- Expansion of existing education and training programmes.

On the negative side

- Unemployment payments to the young jobseekers have been cut
- Supports for individuals to return to education and training have been cut or abolished

Perspective of the National Youth Council of Ireland on what has been done so far

- Overall austerity has particularly affected young jobseekers as entry level jobs in the private and public sector have dried up. Also domestic demand has collapsed which has resulted in job losses in areas such as retail, hospitality and services. There has also been a growth in part time and precarious work.
- We have welcomed initiatives which have assisted young jobseekers, but overall our view is that the response from both the pre 2011 and post 2011 Government has been insufficient.
- We have been actively campaigning on the issue of youth unemployment since 2009.
- We held a seminar on youth unemployment in March 2010.
- We organised a major conference on youth unemployment in October 2010.
- We undertook research with young jobseekers examining their experience of public employment services and published the findings in January 2011 <http://www.youth.ie/forgotten>
- We published our Position Paper on Youth Unemployment in February 2011 <http://www.youth.ie/future> which was launched by the Minister for Social Protection.
- We have participated in the development of the JobBridge Internship Programme
- We have presented our views to Parliamentary Committees
- We have campaigned for the introduction of a Youth Guarantee
- We published a Factsheet on the Youth Guarantee in 2012

http://www.youth.ie/sites/youth.ie/files/NYCI_051_A4_accessible.pdf

- We organised a Roundtable on the Youth Guarantee in partnership with the European Youth Forum http://www.youth.ie/vision_to_reality
- We are involved in the development of the Youth Guarantee Pilot Programme in Ballymun.

Other additional measures

- Our focus at present is the implementation of a comprehensive youth guarantee in Ireland which provides young people with a quality education, training and/or work experience opportunities within 4 months of becoming unemployed.