



WP7 Regional/local Case Studies 7

Executive Summary Scotland

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YOUNG-ADULLLT is a European funded H2020 research project that focuses on understanding and analysing **Lifelong learning** (LLL) policies addressed to **young adults**, in situations of near social exclusion at the **local and regional level**.



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Executive summary

Objective and structure of the report

- This report focuses on the aims, meaning, implementation and specificities of the national policy *Developing the Young Workforce* (DYW) in two Scottish regions: the Glasgow City Region (GCR) and the Aberdeen City & Aberdeenshire Region (ACAR).
- The intention of the report is to tell the story of this policy in the two regions, analysing the correspondence of meanings attributed to the policy by national policymakers, regional managers, practitioners and young adults' beneficiaries of the DYW policy, as well as identifying governance issues and (un)intended consequences on young peoples' lives.
- The report starts with an introduction to the DYW providing an overview of its aims, objectives and planning, followed by a brief historical overview of policy-making in education and training in Scotland. The governance of the policy and the selection of the regional cases close the introductory section. Afterwards, the analysis for each region constitutes the main body of the report. Finally, the results for both regions are compared, pointing at the principal similarities and differences detected.

Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) policy

- Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) is currently the main education, training and employment national policy in Scotland. As its title indicates, the principal objective is to better prepare young people in Scotland (16-24 years old) for the labour market. It is steered by the Scottish Government (SG) and provides a clear 7-year programme plan (2014 to 2021) with specific objectives for different institutions (schools, colleges, employers) with concrete targets to be achieved.
- DYW aims at ensuring that all young people who leave school continue to be engaged in any kind of learning activity. Its strategy is to be as inclusive as possible, providing flexible educational pathways that facilitate a long-term educational strategy for every young person. The method of making educational pathways more flexible is by strengthening the vocational and training education system and improving the work experience of young people starting from their school years.
- There are two key points in the recent history of policy-making in Scotland that have influenced the priorities and guidelines of DYW: the focus on skills for the labour market and the direct link of youth education and training policies with the labour market ones.
- In the DYW policy document all objectives, milestones and measures are set at the national level. However, the production and setting of strategies translate into a local/regional implementation. Therefore, it is necessary to allow for some degree of flexibility to adapt these targets and processes set by the national policy to varying local/regional needs.
- The fact of having to implement the national strategy at a regional level makes it an interesting framework for comparison across Scottish regions. We have selected two regions with a relevant share of the population of Scotland, but that differ in their main economic activities, socioeconomic structure and composition of young people with regards to their qualifications and socioeconomic background. Moreover, both regions were early starters in the implementation of DYW at the regional level.

DYW in Glasgow City Region

- The implementation of DYW in GCR is steered by the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, as they were invited by the SG to apply for the funding to lead the implementation of DYW in GCR. Having an organisation with established links to regional employers and organised activities facilitated the commencement of DYW in the region with regards to employers' engagement.
- The main way to promote these flexible pathways focuses on providing information to young people in schools and trying to influence their educational decisions. DYW and managers in GCR think that familiarising students with other educational environments is a way to promote and facilitate these transitions, especially among young adults who lack other kinds of support and information from family or friends.
- The intention is not to normalise the educational pathways and ways to get into the labour market, but standardise the outputs of the process: education and employment, which in the Scottish policy sphere are labelled as "positive destinations".

- The architecture of the system is designed to link the different stages, allowing these stages to be completed at different speeds. According to their reasoning, the system encourages students to stay in the education system after compulsory education, providing different options, such as Foundation Apprenticeships that can later link to the Modern Apprenticeship.
- The work of DYW managers and practitioners is to think in a pathway perspective and try to get as many regional employers engaged as possible to increase the opportunities for young adults.
- None of the four young adults interviewed mentioned the school as a place where they were influenced towards an apprenticeship, nor put in contact with an employer. They had all heard of DYW and the possibility of engaging in an apprenticeship scheme later on, when they had already left school.
- Some interviewees think that the current system does not support all young adults throughout their learning journeys. There is a clear educational pathway for those that want to follow the academic path, another one for those that do not fit into the academic route but “behave properly and are proactive”, but there is no clear alternative to support those that identify with neither group. Moreover, some young adults have the feeling that the apprenticeship system is for those that do not want to continue to study.
- Although the “ideal” DYW pathway is that young people will never abandon the learning component on their lives and that they will transition from school to an apprenticeship, to college or university, reality is certainly not like this for a non-negligible share of young adults in GCR.
- The young adults interviewed come from a deprived area in GCR and none of them had a standard educational pathway and insertion into the labour market as expected in the DYW policy document. They have all been alternating between education and work. However, the reasons for having these non-standard trajectories vary.
- According to practitioners in the region, working in a case work basis is more effective for disadvantaged youths. The weekly contact with a person that builds on young adults’ confidence and preferences seems to influence to a larger extent these young adults than the general talks and activities they might have received at school. Support to these young people should come at an earlier stage and with higher intensity than that suggested in the DYW national policy document.
- The implementation of DYW in the GCR is strengthening the coordination and partnership model beyond the pre-existing relationship and partnership working culture. Each institution has a different role and they need each other in order to attain their objectives and DYW goals. One good example of this formal and systematic coordination is the Modern Apprenticeship (MA) scheme.
- One of the main peculiarities of GCR is that most of the people in charge or related to DYW management and implementation already knew each other. The fact that their organisations were previously in touch and collaborating for other reasons has probably helped facilitate parts of the coordination and implementation process.
- Another one of the main specificities of GCR is the above average number of young people coming from socioeconomically disadvantaged families and/or living in deprived areas. This is the main reason why the equality measures in the DYW national policy take special relevance in the region.
- One of the features shared by all institutions taking part in DYW in GCR is that they all have a good knowledge of the socioeconomic characteristics of the region and the problems that families and young adults in deprived areas are facing. This facilitates the adaptation of DYW to local needs to the largest extent possible, even if that might sometimes clash with the expected national targets.

DYW in Aberdeen City & Aberdeenshire Region

- The Scottish Government invited the Grampian Chamber of Commerce to bid for leadership of DYW in the region, creating a regional group to govern the recommendations proposed by DYW policy.
- The underlying assumption of DYW policy is that potential influencers of young people’s educational and career decisions have to have access to all the information available in order to support young adults to make the best decision for them. This perspective is shared by managers and practitioners in ACAR.
- DYW managers in ACAR stressed the relevance of parents as key influencers in the educational and career decisions of their offspring. Since they accept that they do not exactly know at what stage children really make decisions on their educational pathways and future careers (in primary and/or secondary school), ACAR managers have decided that influencing parents is a good strategy to indirectly influence young people.
- The testimonies of the young adults interviewed fit into the overall structure and planning of DYW, as the three young adults interviewed have had linear trajectories. After school they either moved to college and/or engaged in an apprenticeship that eased their transitions into the labour market.

- Although the young adults interviewed mainly argued that they made their own choices on their educational pathways and later careers, once the conversations developed they pointed out some key influencers. Some of them are part of the DYW policy in the region. The discussions with the career advisors at school or college seem to have made young people reason and elaborate on their educational choices.
- The influence of the parents was also mentioned by two of the young adults. However, their influence seemed to have more to do with supporting and encouraging their decisions (get an internship placement or advice on how to prepare an interview) rather than in taking the actual choices. It is also worth pointing out at this stage that young adults interviewed in ACAR did not talk about other life spheres beyond the educational and vocational ones.
- The bridging between schools and employers and the promotion of the vocational pathway described by the national document can be easily identified in the explanations of regional managers.
- DYW managers and practitioners recognise that the balance between promoting careers and educational pathways that have available vacancies in the area is in tension with the type of jobs and careers that might interest young people. However, they still accept that their main role is to promote the different routes for young people to make sure that they continue into some form of learning after leaving school.
- There is some discussion ongoing about the main task of a career advisor, which is to support young people to make decisions, instead of making decisions for them. All young adults interviewed acknowledged the support of the career advisor.
- The different organisation of the schools has challenged the identification of the right contact person and the subsequent systematisation and link-creation with employers in ACAR.
- A lot of initiatives and programmes supporting young people in their educational pathways and transition to the labour market were already in place in ACAR. DYW has served as a way to organise them and try to coordinate efforts in the region. It has also served as a way to recognise already existing practices and to identify duplications.
- One way to recognise these duplications is to coordinate people under the regional DYW umbrella: working on partnerships with educational institutions to make sure that there is a single voice promoting engagement between them and the regional employers. So far, schools, colleges and universities have been contacting employers separately, making it a bit chaotic and difficult for employers.
- While the implementation in the region seems to be following the national directives, there are some tensions in reorganising and making clear each individual role and place in the big picture of supporting young people in their educational and labour market transitions.
- In the past the oil and gas industry and the economic activity related to it used to show a dynamic picture and the market was self-coordinating to some extent. With the introduction of DYW the institutional coordination has been promoted and there has been a period of establishing links and meeting people in the different institutions. This has facilitated the process of systematisation of the existing programs and initiatives to make them more efficient.
- The idiosyncrasies of the area influence the careers that youths have in mind: more related to engineering and technical fields than in other Scottish areas. Even the only female young adult interviewed chose a mechanical engineering career.

Comparison of the two Scottish regions

- In both cases the DYW regional teams have prioritised the task of connecting schools with regional employers. In both regions this has served as a way to systematise and strengthen already existent connections between schools and the world of work while initiating new ones.
- In both regions there is a rational approach to educational and labour market transitions from DYW managers. Even if in the case of GCR it is acknowledged that some disadvantaged young adults might have more difficulties in building their learning journeys, it is assumed that the main education and career routes are not affected by other life domains. The fact of focusing on the 16-19 age group strengthens this assumption further, leaving aside the rest of the targeted group by DYW policy (20-24).
- Policy managers and practitioners have to deal with quite different realities. While in GCR the involvement is mainly with disadvantaged youths with multiple barriers, coming from socioeconomically vulnerable families and deprived areas, in ACAR the youths interviewed come from working class or immigrant backgrounds, but they do not show a number of social and health barriers that impede their educational and labour market transitions.
- Youths in GCR mentioned a number of personal situations (e.g. health problems, pregnancy, childbearing, elder care, financial constrains) that deviated them from the standard and smooth educational and labour market

transitions considered in the DYW policy document. This was not the case in ACAR, where the youths interviewed could easily fit into the definitions considered in the national policy.

- While in GCR the discourses of managers and practitioners are very much focused on equality issues and in working on the barriers that prevent these young adults from getting back into education or into the labour market, in ACAR the focus is on identifying the key influencers of young adults and how to further support them to make their own educational and career decisions. In GCR the key influencers mentioned by youths are all family members or close friends, whereas in ACAR they mainly mentioned careers advisors or activities related to DYW.

- Employer engagement with the school -- and providing information about existent choices -- might work for non-disadvantaged young people, but not for disadvantaged ones. In GCR, DYW managers and practitioners have developed mechanisms to engage with these disadvantaged young adults who left school, if they get in touch with any local authority institution.

- Although DYW allows enough flexibility for regions to identify the local/regional needs and better adapt the policy to them, there is no further support on how to do it and the regional and local actors are left themselves to deal with these needs, regardless of how challenging they are.

- While in GCR the DYW team seem very proactive in looking for employers, regional employers seem to have a more passive role. Conversely, in the case of ACAR a more active role from the side of employers has been noted in engaging with schools and other educational institutions.

- DYW national policy seems to fit to a fuller extent in ACAR. DYW actions and ambitions might work to strengthen vocational education and training in Scotland among young people who are not highly disadvantaged in socioeconomic terms and that do not have difficulties in other life domains beyond education and training. Therefore, more efforts and resources should be directed to rethink the policy for the most disadvantaged young adults, who might need early intervention before they reach the last year of their compulsory secondary education.