

Scottish Parliament Social Justice and Social Security Committee

Job Start Payment

Written submission by King's Trust, February 2026

Overview Context of King's Trust Work Supporting Young People Into Employment

The King's Trust would like to thank the Social Justice and Social Security Committee for seeking our views on the Job Start Payment.

It is helpful to outline the work of The King's Trust in Scotland to set our response in context. The King's Trust is marking its 50th anniversary in 2026 and we're proud to be celebrating five decades of working for young people, supporting over 1.3m young people across the UK to succeed. The King's Trust has helped young people from disadvantaged communities and those facing adversity by supporting them to develop essential life skills, get ready for work and access job opportunities. Three in four of the young people supported over the last five years have moved into work, education or training.

At The King's Trust, alongside other local and national third sector organisations across Scotland, we work every day to help young people overcome barriers to work. Therefore, we welcome the Committee's focus on the barriers young people may face in accessing the Job Start Payment.

Now is the moment for businesses, policymakers and communities to step up and ensure young people get the support they need to access work and transform their lives, families, and communities. In Scotland, The King's Trust have been breaking down barriers and opening doors through a range of interventions to support young people to build the confidence and skills they need to find work and lead fulfilling lives. By doing so, we know the benefits will be felt for years to come - not just by those we support, but by their communities and the wider economy. For example, an impact report published in February 2026, 50 Years of Working for Young People., revealed The Trust's programmes have contributed at least £560m of value to society in Scotland in the last ten years alone.

However, we know young people are facing unprecedented challenges: rising youth unemployment, a changing job market and growing anxiety about their futures.

In this context, while financial assistance is essential in many scenarios to give young people the start they need - they tell us they want confidence, skills, work experience and someone in their corner.

This is backed by published findings in the King's Trust's Youth Index report which measures the happiness and confidence of young people across various aspects of their lives.

The latest report, published in February 2026, found that in Scotland, 70 per cent of 16- to 25-year-olds wish they were not starting their careers in the current economic climate. The majority said they would like more opportunities to access training opportunities (79 per cent) and (56 per cent) said they would benefit from having a mentor or coach to help guide their career.

This submission integrates the views of young people, our experience in supporting young people for the past 50 years and insights gathered from our frontline King's Trust Service Delivery colleagues. It addresses the Committee's questions on effectiveness, barriers to take-up, and other measures to support young people into employment.

Job Start Payment – feedback from staff and young people

Our frontline feedback from those working with young people indicates that Job Start Payment can materially ease the financial pressures during the first weeks in work - particularly travel, clothing and childcare when delivered and accessed in time. Young people, when made aware of this payment, find it helpful to kick start their first month of employment. Often, young people experience anxiety when coming off benefits and transitioning to receiving a wage, this incentive supports young people to ensure they are not out of pocket when trying to gain employment.

Where accessed, colleagues reported the most common uses were transport, clothes and advance payment on childcare fees.

When asked about barriers to take-up, a lack of awareness amongst young people about the Job Start Payment and difficulty understanding eligibility and/or the application process was highlighted by those working with young people.

King's Trust Development Award Offer

At The King's Trust, amongst our support offers and interventions, we offer Development Awards to help young people tackle financial barriers that may be preventing them from accessing education, training or employment. King's Trust Development

Awards provide financial support to young people aged 16 to 30 to help them access education, training, or employment opportunities. Awards can be made of up to £500 to each young person.

In terms of eligibility, young people need to be aged between 16 to 30 years old and be unemployed or not in employment for more than 16 hours per week and/or not in education for more than 14 hours per week. The process from referral to payment is on average two weeks.

Over the past 12 months, The King's Trust has distributed a total of 617 Development Awards to young people across Scotland. Our analysis of how these awards are used

show it is mostly for young people accessing employment, with assistance for clothing, travel or tools.

Similarly, Job Start Payment plays an important role in helping young people manage the initial costs of moving into work.

Across Scotland, our frontline staff work every day with young people who want to enter work but who face persistent nonfinancial barriers.

These include:

- Mental health challenges
- Limited or no work experience
- Low confidence and low self-esteem
- Disability or neurodiversity-related barriers
- Transport and location issues
- Caring responsibilities

Our experience demonstrates that tackling youth unemployment requires more than financial support alone. It requires sustained investment in young people, tailored wraparound support, and a joined-up system built around the needs of those facing the biggest barriers.

Young people facing the most significant barriers to employment are best placed to provide insight into what works, what doesn't, and what changes could make a real difference. Their views should shape further consideration of additional practical supports, integrated pathways between employability programmes and Job Start Payment, and any opportunities to reduce complexity and increase accessibility.

The young people who have been supported into work, education or training through The King's Trust programmes are powerful reminders that with the right support, even the biggest barriers can be overcome.

Ending youth unemployment will take all of us: young people, employers, governments, youth organisations and communities working together to remove barriers and unlock young people's potential.