

<b>Institution:</b> University of Stirling		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 17. Business and Management Studies		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Improving understanding of employability and the effectiveness of employment support		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2004-2019		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Ronald McQuaid	Professor	Sept 2013-current
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2014-2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>		
<p>An on-going public policy problem is to improve the effectiveness of employment support for unemployed job seekers. This is recognised internationally and in numerous government and third sector documents in the UK, including those related to the Work Programme and its post-2018 successors. Stirling research has changed the mind-sets of policy gatekeepers, shifting the policy agenda, and led to the adoption of new policies and practices related to employability and unemployment in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Germany, and across the EU. By broadening the concept of employability, the research has improved the approach to supporting unemployed job seekers in these policies, especially by moving beyond some 'work first' to more holistic 'career first' policies (including for lone parents in Scotland, unemployed in Hesse and incorporation into policy documents by the European Union).</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>		
<p>The research analysed related employment policy over recent years including expert and participant views from support agency practitioner, policy maker and job seeker perspectives. This included identifying and critically evaluating existing and emerging policies, and identifying lessons relevant to improving policies and people's experiences: including creating and extending an analytical framework for a 'broad' concept of employability and its relation to inter-agency work in employment policy. The research found that existing approaches were narrowly defined, and dependent on a supply-side orthodoxy that focused primarily on individuals' characteristics, with limited regard to wider personal circumstances and demand-side factors. Analysing policies through this revised framework led to informing and influencing policy particularly for disadvantaged job seekers, such as long-term, lone parents and young unemployed people, as well as graduates and employed job seekers.</p>		
<p>McQuaid has led much of the research and policy activities mentioned in this impact case study, working with a variety of international colleagues. Each of the research pieces has been developed with policy maker and jobseekers, often through commissioned research. The main underpinning research started in the 2000s (for instance the highly cited paper by McQuaid and Lindsay on 'The Concept of Employability', 2005) with critical assessments of contemporary policies and directions in employment support. It was extended during the current assessment period to new client groups and the inclusion of factors such as capabilities (<b>R4</b>). It was further extended by developing a new concept of a 'careers first' approach, which involves longer time horizons and the need for qualitatively better long-term employability support and outcome measures to enhance the sustainability of employment after job entry, when compared to recent and current 'work first' approaches, such as the main UK employment policy 'Work Programme' (<b>R3</b>). The employability framework was also applied in various research reports (<b>R5, R6</b>).</p>		
<p>Using large-scale social survey datasets coupled with focus groups and interviews, <b>R2</b> explored the challenges facing lone parents seeking employment. This identified multiple barriers to accessing support systems and enabled a clearer definition of lone parenthood that would inform the work of the Glasgow Lone Parent Project. Similarly, the Medical Research Council funded study (SOPIE - with Glasgow and Edinburgh Universities and a major UK employability support company, Ingeus) (<b>R1</b>) included utilisation of the employability framework; further extending and</p>		

developing it in relation to (14,000+) participants on the Work Programme. Key insights related to identifying and analysing the importance of individual characteristics (e.g. age and health), personal circumstances (e.g. housing status) and external circumstances (e.g. location) for returning to and, crucially, sustaining employment. The research underpins other projects, including 3-year projects for the Scottish Government and policy reports to others (e.g. **R6**).

### 3. References to the research

**R1.** Brown, J., Katikireddi, S.V., Leyland, A.H., McQuaid, R., Frank, J. and Macdonald, E.B. (2018) 'Age, health and other factors associated with return to work for those engaging with a welfare-to-work initiative: A cohort study of administrative data from the UK's Work Programme', *British Medical Journal Open, BMJ Open*, 8, 10, 786-792 : 024938 doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2018-024938

**R2.** Graham, H., and McQuaid, R., (2014) *Exploring the impacts of the UK government's welfare reforms on lone parents moving into work*. Published by Glasgow Centre for Population Health: [https://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/4283/Lone\\_parents\\_Full\\_Report\\_amended\\_Sept\\_2014.pdf](https://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/4283/Lone_parents_Full_Report_amended_Sept_2014.pdf) along with accompanying literature review: [https://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/4284/Lone\\_parents\\_Literature\\_Review\\_web.pdf](https://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/4284/Lone_parents_Literature_Review_web.pdf)

**R3.** McQuaid, R. and V. Fuertes (2014) 'Sustainable integration of the long term unemployed: From Work First to Career First' in: Larsen C., Rand, S., Schmid, J. and R. Keil (eds), *Sustainable Economy and Sustainable Employment* (Rainer Hampp Verlag, Muenchen) pp. 359-373. (ISBN 978-3-95710-016-0). <http://dspace.stir.ac.uk/handle/1893/21164#.VhOB0E-FPcs>

**R4.** Egdell, V. and McQuaid, R.W. (2016) 'Supporting disadvantaged young people into work: Insights from the Capability Approach', *Social Policy & Administration*, 50, 1, 1-18 doi:10.1111/spol.12108

**R5.** McQuaid, R., (2014) Economic Inactivity Literature Review (Presentation) "Enabling Success" Consultation on a New Strategic Framework to Tackle Economic Inactivity in Northern Ireland – Driving Social Change Through Economic Participation, Derry, Northern Ireland. <https://www.stir.ac.uk/research/hub/publication/581436>

**R6.** Graham, H., Lister, B., Egdell, V., McQuaid, R. and Raeside, R. (2016) *The Impact of Welfare Reform in Scotland - Tracking Study -Sweep 4 and Final report, Report to Scottish Government* ISBN: 978-1-78652-287-0, ISSN 2045 6964 <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00501110.pdf> DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.1.3510.9360  
*Funding:* Impact of Welfare Reform in Scotland, Scottish Government, Communities Analytical Services Division, 2013-16, University of Stirling and Edin. Napier University, GBP120,800. Led by McQuaid until his move to Stirling University.

### 4. Details of the impact

The main direct beneficiaries of the impact are specifically those developing and implementing public policies related to the employability of disadvantaged and unemployed job seekers, including the young and long-term unemployed. These include policy makers and policy practitioners (in UK, Scottish, Northern Irish, German national and local governments, EU). The benefits arise through the agencies taking a broader and more comprehensive view of employability than the standard supply-side policy perspective. The ultimate beneficiaries are those who receive support from these policies, particularly unemployed people on employment related welfare benefits (**S5a**), lone parents (**S3**, **S5b**), and people with disabilities (**S5c**).

#### Impact 1: EU policy on job-integration of the long-term unemployed

Long-term unemployment is a major problem across the EU, which was severely exacerbated after the Great Recession began in 2007. By 2014 approximately 6,000,000 people across the EU

had been out of work for more than two years (see <http://stir.ac.uk/53x>). In response to this the European Commission sought a Council of the European Union recommendation that would guide member states on how to effectively deal with this situation. This resulted in *The Council of the European Union 2016 Recommendation on the Job-integration of the Long-term Unemployed* (2016/C 67/01, available at <http://stir.ac.uk/540>): this was informed by two Stirling papers (R3, R4) that were cited in the 2015 legal Analytical Supporting Document Accompanying the Proposal for the European Council Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market {COM(2015) 462 final} (**S1**). Reflecting the underpinning research, this recommendation to EU members states encourages those states to invest in and develop employment skills, training and job-seeking support for the long-term unemployed rather than merely creating policies that get such individuals into low-paid work as quickly as possible. A 2019 EU evaluation of the 2016 Recommendation concluded that it has been successful in driving measures for tackling long-term unemployment up the policy agenda in member states, helping to prioritise and guide support. It found this was particularly the case in EU states with higher proportions of long-term unemployed, such as Bulgaria, Greece, Croatia, and Slovakia, which had largely lacked policy initiatives targeting the long-term unemployed before the Recommendation was passed (**S2**). The Recommendation is therefore contributing to reducing the problem of long-term unemployment across the EU.

### Impact 2: the Glasgow Lone Parent Project

The research has also been applied to initiatives that have helped lone parents seeking employment in Scotland. The Glasgow Lone Parent Project (hereafter GLPP, running from April 2015 to March 2017) was an innovative, practical initiative that provided “a strategic focus to issues facing lone parents by influencing existing systems and improving services, rather than applying a more traditional service delivery project” (**S3c**, p.1). The project was targeted at Glasgow as it has the highest rate of lone parents in Scotland (40% of families versus 30% on average across Scotland), who are more likely to suffer from poverty; the changes to UK Income Support eligibility further meant these families were, on average, losing approximately GBP1,800 in UK Government support per annum at the time of the project. The GLPP was founded on the ethos of collaboration between lone parents and agencies, and therefore involved One Parent Families Scotland, Glasgow City Council, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, NHS Health Scotland, the Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCPH) and the Wheatley Group.

Stirling research (**R2**), commissioned by GCPH (a Scottish-Government funded body that supports new approaches to tackling health problems and inequality) and summarised in a briefing paper they produced (**S3b**), identified the challenges and opportunities facing lone parents in the UK and specifically Glasgow. This research was crucial in the decision to set up the GLPP and shaped the overall form and objectives of the project, as confirmed by the Senior Public Health Manager (GCPH): “There is a tangible thread linking your research and local outputs, including the setting up of the GLPP, all of which contributed to demonstrable policy and strategic outcomes at local and national levels” (**S4a**).

An independent evaluation of the GLPP found that it had several direct benefits for the approximate 26,000 households impacted (**S3c**, pp.12-15):

1. Streamlining of processes meant that an additional 5,407 children received Glasgow City Council’s (GCC) School Clothing Grant (uptake of 22,000 before GLPP), representing an additional GBP354,608 investment by GCC.
2. Barriers to access were identified and removed for those applying to the Scottish Welfare Fund (see: <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=17160>), which offers support to low-income families in crisis. The benefits of this continue today.
3. Lone parents who directly engaged in the GLPP’s advisory group felt empowered and had increased self-confidence. This directly led to them inputting to and influencing decisions such as that by the Scottish Government to offer split payments to couples living in the same household applying for Universal Credit, thus enabling their own financial control (**S3c**).

The GLPP also had national impacts as its success provided direct impetus for the creation of the Lone Parents and Welfare Reform Sub-Group of the Scottish Government’s Welfare Reform and

Health Impact Delivery Group in 2016/17. This sub-group continues the work of the GLPP by bringing together the public and third sectors to support lone parents, and is thus evidence of the GLPP representing a best practice model for Scotland (**S3c**, p.14). The independent evaluation of the GLPP supported this assessment, stating “It is recommended that the model is shared widely beyond Glasgow to help raise the profile of groups known to experience poorer outcomes....” (**S3c**, p.4).

### Impact 3: Northern Ireland and Scotland unemployment policy

In 2014 the Northern Irish Executive invited McQuaid to act as principal external expert on labour market issues during the public consultation phase of a planned strategy for addressing economically inactive groups in Northern Ireland. As part of this, McQuaid presented a literature review on economic inactivity to numerous stakeholders (**R5**) which highlighted the need to focus on lone parents and those with work-limiting health conditions or disabilities. The then Head of Economic Inactivity Strategy stated McQuaid played a “key role during the public consultation phase of the Strategy by briefing a wide range of stakeholders on the findings from your research which proved helpful in terms of raising the profile and awareness levels on this macro socio-economic issue” (**S4b**). Based on this engagement and previous collaboration with the Northern Ireland Executive, McQuaid joined the strategy Design Team in February 2015 whose principal task was to create an outcomes-based framework and associated metrics to implement the strategy *‘Enabling Success’ Supporting the transition from economic inactivity to employment: a strategy to tackle economic inactivity in Northern Ireland* (launched April 2015). This was targeted at key economically inactive groups, including the two identified during the public consultation: individuals with work-limiting health conditions/disabilities, lone parents, and carers (**S5**).

Testimony by the Head of Economic Inactivity Strategy (**S5c**) highlights the importance of McQuaid’s input to shaping both the *‘Enabling Success’* strategy and its implementation mechanism:

“The Department [for the Economy] was highly satisfied with this work and adopted a number of the recommendations for the strategy, particularly in terms of targeting specific economically inactive sub-groups. You also played a key role during the public consultation phase of the Strategy by briefing a wide range of stakeholders on the findings from your research which proved helpful in terms of raising the profile and awareness levels on this macro socio-economic issue. The Department was also appreciative for the key role you played on the Expert Design Team which was tasked with considering the implementation of the strategy. (**S4b**)

While the full implementation of the *‘Enabling Success’* strategy was affected by the suspension of the Northern Ireland Assembly between Jan 2017 and Jan 2020, and by COVID-19 priorities after that, its ethos was carried forward by the Northern Ireland Civil Service in its 2018-19 Outcomes Delivery Plan. For example, initiatives were taken to support councils and community partners to tackle economic inactivity, and improve the Work and Wellbeing Service for people with disabilities (**S6**)

Unemployment policy has also been influenced in Scotland via Stirling’s Welfare Reform Tracking Study (**R6**), funded by the Scottish Government. This study led on investigating the effects of the UK Welfare Reform Act 2012 (which introduced, among other reforms, Universal Credit) on the people of Scotland. As a 2016 Scottish Government Annual Report on its mitigation of the Act’s reforms stated, this study was being used “to inform the development and implementation of the Scottish Government’s welfare reform mitigation strategy” (**S4**, p.19).

### Impact 4: German (State of Hesse) Unemployment Policy

Further international impact on reforming unemployment policies toward a ‘career first’ approach is evidenced in the German State of Hesse. With a population of 6,200,000 (as of Jan 2021), and incorporating major urban areas such as Frankfurt am Main, Hesse achieved a 4.4% reduction in long-term unemployment (as a share of its total unemployment rate) between 2017 and 2019. In comparison, the EU average for this period was a 3.1% drop (see Eurostat reports: <http://stir.ac.uk/549> & <http://stir.ac.uk/54c>). In part this reduction, showing benefit to many thousands of people, was made possible by Hesse’s shift to ‘career first’ unemployment policies



that were underpinned by **R3**. This is evidenced by Hesse's Head of Labour Market Policies (**S4c**) stating:

"I am glad to confirm that the work of Prof. Ronald McQuaid has a lasting impact on our understanding of the obstacles, when working with the long-term unemployed. While the state of Hesse pursued a strict "Work First" approach in its labour market policies ... over a long period of time, his work on employability including 'Work First' to 'Career First' promoted a discussion within the Ministry which resulted in a changed attitude towards the complex of long-term unemployment. Based on the findings of Prof. McQuaid, approaches are now also being promoted that give priority to the development of competences rather than the fastest possible placement in work." (**S4c**)

This is related to the period from 2014-20, and was reinforced currently through being the main invited keynote speaker to an audience of policy makers and academics at a Ministry event in Hesse in 2019.

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

**S1.** Commission Staff Working Document, 'Analytical Supporting Document Accompanying the document Proposal for a Council Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market' (COM(2015) 462 final) [Brussels, 17.9.2015 SWD(2015) 176 final]. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52015SC0176> and explicitly referred to in the legal Council Recommendations, Article R4 McQuaid and Fuertes (2014) cited page 14; Article R3 (Fuertes et al.) cited (p.39).

**S2.** European Commission, 'Evaluation of the Council Recommendation on the integration of the long - term unemployed into the labour market' (COM/2019/169 final), available from: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52019DC0169>

### **S3:**

**a.** Submission from the Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCHP) to the Scottish Parliament's Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee enquiry into Work, wages and wellbeing in the Scottish labour market: (9 September 2015)

[http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4\\_EconomyEnergyandTourismCommittee/Meeting%20Papers/20th Meeting 9 September 2015 Public Papers.pdf](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_EconomyEnergyandTourismCommittee/Meeting%20Papers/20th_Meeting_9_September_2015_Public_Papers.pdf)

**b.** The GCHP submission (oral and written) cited extensively Graham & McQuaid (2014) [http://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/4843/12859\\_GCPh\\_Briefing\\_Paper\\_Document\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/4843/12859_GCPh_Briefing_Paper_Document_WEB.pdf)

**c.** Evaluation of Glasgow Lone Parent Project (for GCHP), (referred to on p. 5)

[https://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/6455/Lone\\_Parent\\_Project\\_evaluation\\_-\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/6455/Lone_Parent_Project_evaluation_-_final_report.pdf)

### **S4:** Testimonials:

**a.** James Egan, Public Health Programme Manager, Glasgow Centre for Population Health.

**b.** Head of PEACE IV – Peace4Youth Programme, Dept. for the Economy, Northern Ireland Government.

**c.** Rolf Keil, Head of Labour Market Policies, Hesse State, Germany.

**S5.** Letter from Director of Youth Policy & Strategy, Department for Employment and Learning (Northern Ireland) to R. McQuaid (Feb 2015).

**S6.** Executive Office (Northern Ireland), 'Outcomes Delivery Plan 2018-19' (June 2018).

<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/outcomes-delivery-plan-201819>

**S7.** Scottish Government (2016) Welfare Reform (Further Provision) (Scotland) Act 2012 Annual Report–2016 (SG/2016/99) <https://www.gov.scot/publications/welfare-reform-further-provision-scotland-act-2012-annual-report-2016/>

**S8.** McQuaid, R. (2015) *Multiple scarring effects of youth unemployment*, Skills in Focus report for Skills Development Scotland. DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.1.1300.4964