

The cost of living – jobs, community and economic growth crunch

Seetec's recommendations to help further ease the cost of living for those on low incomes across the UK

Foreword

Across the UK, the rising 'cost of living' has become one of the major problems facing the population, and one of the biggest challenges confronting public policy makers. The rapid price inflation of a range of everyday goods and services has touched everyday essentials such as fuel, heating, and the cost of the weekly grocery shop. This is likely to get significantly worse, with the Bank of England (BoE) estimating that inflation is likely to keep rising to around 10% this year.¹ This has been compounded by recent increases in tax and national insurance for many and, for benefit claimants and pensioners, real terms falls in the amount they receive.

The cost of living crisis could also result in the limiting of life chances of those on low incomes and benefits, whilst swelling the numbers of people on limited means who can no longer make ends meet. This could effectively entrench poverty in communities that are already struggling, stall the Government's Levelling Up Agenda (its main domestic policy priority), and have a knock-on impact on economic growth, with the BoE now warning of a potential recession.²

In an effort to ease these issues, the Government announced a package of measures on 26th May, focused particularly on those in receipt of benefits and pensions, as well additional support across the population with their heating bills. The impact of these measures remains to be seen, but this paper explores some of the ongoing challenges facing low-income households. We set out the results of polling, which we recently commissioned from YouGov, and we also delve into some of the emerging and known challenges for the cohorts of people we support, with a focus on the South West used as an example.

Across the Seetec Group, we deliver a range of public services in the employability, skills and justice fields across the UK, as well as delivering employability services in Ireland. In particular, we work with tens of thousands of people a year to help them get back into work, to improve their skills, or to support people who have encountered the criminal justice system on their rehabilitation journey. The situations facing many of these people mean that they are some of the most vulnerable to rising costs in their everyday lives. For some of our programme participants, such as those we are trying to help back into employment, increases to the basic costs of living, such as travel costs and childcare, are affecting their ability to get back into work. In some cases, this is compounded by other factors such as the need for flexible work to fit around childcare, limited digital access, and the time and money needed to acquire the right certificates and documentation for particular roles.

In this paper, we have included several recommendations for the Government to consider, which could help to further ease the cost of living for those on low incomes across the UK. If further action is taken in the national interest now, the Government may be able to mitigate the impacts of a potential recession on the poorest in society.



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¹ The Bank of England (05/05/22) 'How high will inflation go?'. Available at <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/knowledgebank/will-inflation-in-the-uk-keep-rising>

² Bloomberg (05/05/22) 'BOE Sees Risk of U.K. Recession With Inflation Above 10%'. Available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-05-05/boe-hikes-rates-to-1-as-it-warns-of-growing-recession-risk>

YouGov Polling Results

Seetec commissioned YouGov to poll adults across Great Britain on a series of questions about their experiences of, and views on, the rising cost of living. Between 9th-10th June 1,739 adults were surveyed online, with the figures weighted and representative of all GB adults aged 18+. The results show that:

- 56% of respondents said they have already had to make cuts to their spending as a result of the rising cost of living, and 50% expect to have to do so again.
- A further 28% said they have been able to maintain their usual spending so far, but expect to have to make some cuts as a result of the rising cost of living.
- Of those who have already made cuts to their usual spending as a result of the rising cost of living, and those who expect to have to make cuts, 49% expect this situation to last for 1 and 5 years (35% 1-2 years, 14% 3-5 years).
- Energy and food costs are a problem for all, but particularly for benefit claimants:
 - 32% said they were struggling to afford energy bills, but are getting by, while 34% said they expect to struggle to afford their energy bills soon.
 - 28% said they were struggling to afford food but are getting by, while 30% said they expect to struggle to afford food soon.
- The most popular responses to which policies would be most effective in helping people's households to cope with their cost of living were:
 - Measures to lower fuel costs (67%);
 - An annual grant to help with energy bills (62%); and
 - Lower taxes/National insurance (48%).
- When asked about which of the Government's recent measures would most help them with the rising cost of living, most respondents (35%) opted for the £400 Energy Bills Support Scheme grant.
- However, the next highest response, by a significant margin, was 'none of these measures will help' at 25%.
- It is noteworthy that benefit claimants are significantly more positive about several of the other recent measures than non-claimants:
 - One-off £650 Cost of Living Payment for benefits claimants (18% benefit claimants, 6% for non-claimants);
 - One-off £300 Pensioner Cost of Living Payment for pensioners (14% for benefit claimants, 8% for non-claimants);
 - A commitment to raising benefits next April, in line with September's inflation rate (12% for benefit claimants, 5% for non-claimants); and
 - One-off £150 Disability Cost of Living Payment for those claiming disability benefits (4% for benefit claimants, 1% for non-claimants).
- Most respondents (43%) think a combination of short-term temporary measures and long-term permanent measures would be more effective at tackling the rising cost of living for low-income households.³

The Key Issues

Rising prices are affecting almost every facet of people's lives. In some cases these have been long-term trends, but others have accelerated in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and supply issues. The ongoing invasion of Ukraine has also added to the existing pressures confronting supply chains across Europe, forcing the cost of commodities such as gas, oil and certain foods to increase further. Below we set out some of the key issues which are particularly acute for the people Seetec supports across the UK.

Everyday goods

One of the most tangible aspects of rapidly rising costs is on the price of everyday goods. Higher fuel and food costs have seen the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Consumer Prices Index (CPI) rise by 9% in the 12 months to April 2022, up from 7% in March, while the Consumer Prices Index, including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH), rose by 7.8% in the 12 months to April, up from 6.2% in March.⁴ Recent modelling from the New Economics Foundation (NEF) calculated that the cost of achieving the Minimum Income Standard – the ability to purchase basic necessities like food and fuel as measured by the Centre for Research in Social Policy – is set to rise by £2,300 a year. That represents an additional 18% of disposable income for the poorest families, whilst hitting women and ethnic minorities the hardest. NEF found that the rise in costs is nine times higher for the poorest half of families than for the richest 5% as a proportion of income, whilst even families in the middle of the income distribution face cost rises that are six times greater than for the richest 5% as a proportion of income.⁵

The reasons behind the rising costs of some products are global in scale, with the COVID-19 pandemic causing significant supply disruption. Lately, this has been exacerbated by the invasion of Ukraine, which has forced up wholesale costs for key commodities

such as wheat, oil and gas, causing knock-on effects for a broad range of everyday goods. As a result, food inflation hit 3.5% in April, the highest inflation rate since March 2013.⁶ This is clearly having a tangible effect, particularly for the poorest in society. For example, the Food Foundation's data tracker found that in March 7.3 million adults went without food, and those cutting back over the previous three months had increased by 57%.⁷

The cost of childcare

The UK has the highest childcare costs in the world, presenting serious problems for working families struggling to make ends meet. In February, an annual survey by the Coram family and childcare charity found that the cost of childcare had increased significantly over the past year. It showed that parents were now paying 3.5% more for childcare for 34 year olds, 2.5% more for children under two, and 2% more for children aged two, than they were a year ago.⁸ The same survey also found that childcare availability has fallen sharply, with only 57% of local authorities reporting having enough childcare places available for children under two, down from 72% in 2021. More startlingly, only 59% of local authorities reported having enough childcare available for parents working full-time, down from 68% last year.

These issues have a direct impact on the affordability of other aspects of life. A recent survey of 27,000 families by the 'Pregnant Then Screwed' campaign group found that 62% said the cost of childcare is now the same or more than their rent or mortgage. Furthermore, they found that one in four parents have had to cut down on food, clothing and heating in order to afford childcare.⁹

⁴ Office for National Statistics (18/05/22) 'Consumer price inflation, UK: April 2022'.

Available at <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/consumerpriceinflation/april2022>

⁵ New Economic Foundation (05/05/22) 'Losing the inflation race: Poorly targeted policy is failing to prevent an income crisis'.

Available at <https://neweconomics.org/2022/05/losing-the-inflation-race>

⁶ Huffington Post (17/05/22) 'Cost Of Living: Why Are UK Food Prices Rising?'

Available at https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/cost-of-living-why-are-uk-food-prices-rising_uk_62838063e4b0c2dce654c106

⁷ The Food Foundation (09/05/22) 'Millions of adults missing meals as cost of living crisis bites'.

Available at <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/press-release/millions-adults-missing-meals-cost-living-crisis-bites>

⁸ Coram Family and Childcare (22/03/22) 'Childcare Survey 2022'.

Available at https://www.coram.org.uk/sites/default/files/resource_files/Coram%20Childcare%20Survey%20-%202022.pdf

⁹ Pregnant Then Screwed (25/03/22) 'One in four parents say that they have had to cut down on heat, food & clothing to pay for childcare'. Available at

<https://pregnantthenscrewed.com/one-in-four-parents-say-that-they-have-had-to-cut-down-on-heat-food-clothing-to-pay-for-childcare/>

The Key Issues

More broadly, not only is acting now to improve childcare support important for helping families, but it can also be a key driver of economic growth. The OECD has previously found that increases in women's economic participation, through family-friendly policies, has accounted for around 10-20% of average annual GDP per capita growth over the past 40 to 50 years.¹⁰

Heating and electricity

The cost of heating a home has become one of the highest profile cost of living challenges facing people across the UK, and energy price cap rises this year are set to see costs continue to spike, disproportionately affecting the poorest households in the process. The Resolution Foundation has said that cases of 'fuel stress' – where energy bills in a household exceed 10% of disposable income – doubled in recent months from 2.5 million to 5 million. They also estimate that the poorest fifth of households will spend over twice as much of their family budgets on energy bills as the richest fifth (10% compared to 4%).¹¹

The price cap is set to rise again to £2,500 on 1 October, potentially putting another 2.5 million households at risk of fuel stress. This will affect the poorest and most vulnerable households the most, potentially doubling the heating bill of a typical over 60s couple to £1,315 this winter compared to 2021.¹² The Government has announced measures to help people cope with these challenges, such as the doubling of the Energy Bills Support Scheme to £400, and the conversion of this scheme into a grant. However, with energy prices in danger of rising further throughout the winter into 2023, there may be a case for expanding this scheme further next year.

Data poverty and Digital Exclusion

One aspect of the cost of living that has a major impact on the poorest in society is data poverty (a lack of access to the internet) and digital exclusion (a lack of access to IT devices/skills). This is particularly troubling for young people, and those jobseekers who require IT access to search and apply for work. Importantly, digital exclusion is directly linked to poverty. Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the likelihood of having access to the internet at home increased along with income. For example, in 2019 the ONS found that only 51% of households earning between £6000-£10,000 a year had home internet access, compared with 99% of households with an income of over £40,001.¹³

This has a particularly detrimental effect on the life chances of young people in these households. Nominet's annual Digital Youth Index has found that one million young people are at risk of becoming digitally excluded, 15% who have a smartphone do not have access to a laptop or desktop, and 32% do not have access to home broadband. Furthermore, around 16% of over 18s do not have access to a laptop or desktop computer, and nearly half rely on other ways to connect to the internet instead of home broadband. Almost half of young people (48%) are teaching themselves digital skills, equivalent to 6.9 million young people across the UK.¹⁴

Interestingly, Nominet's subsequent research has also drawn out the link between fuel poverty (covered in the previous section), data poverty and digital exclusion, pointing out that "the electricity to charge your device – something many of us take for granted – is now a very real barrier for some to digital access, skills and opportunities."¹⁵

¹⁰ OECD (2018) 'Is the Last Mile the Longest? Economic Gains from Gender Equality in Nordic Countries'. Available at <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/9789264300040-en/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/9789264300040-en>

¹¹ Resolution Foundation (01/04/22) 'Stressed Out'. Available at <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/stressed-out/>

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Office for National Statistics (04/03/19) 'Exploring the UK's digital divide'. Available at <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/householdcharacteristics/homeinternetandsocialmediausage/articlesexploringtheuksdigitaldivide/2019-03-04>

¹⁴ Nominet (14/12/22) '2.1 million young people are at risk of becoming digitally excluded, new research has found'. Available at <https://www.nominet.uk/2-1-million-young-people-are-at-risk-of-becoming-digitally-excluded-new-research-has-found/>

¹⁵ Catch 22 (11/05/22) 'Catch 22: Poverty is the fundamental barrier to digital skills' Available at <https://www.nominet.uk/catch-22-poverty-is-the-fundamental-barrier-to-digital-skills/>

Spotlight on the South West

Seetec's employability business division, Seetec Pluss, has been delivering a range of programmes in the South West of England over the past few years, largely through supporting the unemployed back into work. We analyse data about our programme participants at regular intervals to garner an understanding of the challenges they face in a fast-changing operating environment and to tailor our support accordingly. This provides us with insights into some of the costs they incur and the barriers that might be preventing them from taking up work.

Between January 2018 and April 2022, for example, 32,830 participants based mainly in England completed our Work and Health Financial Barrier Questionnaire. This revealed that, for the 6,827 participants who answered questions about childcare, 49% said their childcare responsibilities impact on their ability to search for or take up work. Of the 2,402 respondents who answered questions about caring for a friend or family member, other than a dependent, 39% said this impacted their ability to move into work.

Information about our South West programme participants taken from our Work and Health Financial Barrier Questionnaire between April 2021 to April 2022 is even starker. 11,308 participants were asked a series of similar questions. Of the 2,928 participants who had children they cared for, 51% indicated that their childcare responsibilities impacted on their ability to search for or take up work. 18% also stated that they needed 'support to identify childcare options', and 8% (832 people) said they provided care for a friend or family member. Of the 762 carers who responded to the question 'Does this impact on your ability to move into work?', 42% (322 people) said 'YES'. This represents a significant increase from 33% of carers who answered 'YES' between April 2020 to April 2021.

It is also noteworthy that between April 2021 to April 2022, 19% of participants (2,022 people) indicated that debt was a problem for them – this is an increase from 17% between April 2020 and April 2021.

Over the course of the last twelve months, we also invited participants we support throughout the South West to tell us about any digital access challenges they have faced. We asked people about their digital access on a scale of 1 to 4 - with 4 being the most positive – and, amongst a random sample of 14,139 participants who were asked 'Have you got access to a stable internet connection at home?', 6% provided us with an answer between 1-2.

Similarly, when asked: 'Do you have access to digital devices that will allow you to search and apply for your desired job role (e.g. computer, tablet, smartphone, etc.)?', 1,744 people or 5% of participants, provided us with an answer between 1-2. For these participants, digital exclusion represents a significant challenge affecting their ability apply for work and undertake other basic tasks requiring digital access. The digital access insights are perhaps unsurprising given the historical connectivity issues in the South West, but there is a broader issue about preparing long-term jobseekers for the direction of travel of the world of work that is becoming increasingly digitally focused.

Through these Government schemes, we have been able to provide support to address some of the problems these people have faced. This has included, providing help in buying clothes for job interviews, providing funds to travel to an interview, and providing SIM cards for those lacking the digital access to search and apply for work. However, the problems of debt, the cost of childcare and broader care for other relatives, require a much wider range of practical solutions to help jobseekers struggling with the cost of living. Later in this pamphlet we set out a series of recommendations for the Government to consider.

'How the rising cost of living is affecting me'

The Seetec Group has three business divisions in the UK, working across the employability, skills and justice sectors. Below is a sample of some of the feedback we've received from the people we have been supporting back into work, with developing their skills, or in helping people in the justice system on their rehabilitation journey.

Edson Fernandes, 41, a father of three from Chippenham, was a learner studying our Seetec Outsource Level 1 Business Administration course:

"I haven't been able to work for the past two years due to health problems with my back and stomach, I have been on Universal Credit for most of this period.

"With the rising prices I have been struggling more and more to keep up with bills and live day to day, getting paid around £1500 when bills come up to about £1400 makes it difficult to keep up with everything whilst trying to provide a decent life for our kids.

"We had to cut down on trips and days out with kids to lower expenditure, I turned the heating off completely, the car is only used in emergencies due to the price of fuel.

"To make things worse my car needs a complete change of brakes and will cost over £1000 and there is no way I can even consider getting it done at this stage. Everything keeps going up in value but wages, or in my case benefits, remain the same!

"The worst part is even if I get a job, I will get paid roughly the same or even less, and have to spend more on travelling. That is the biggest issue at the moment."

V, a 36 year old mother from Farnham, who completed a Seetec Outsource Customer Service course:

"I mainly travel by bus or train, and I feel the cost when buying a weekly travel card. Food is definitely an issue too! Like buying just a simple few things and looking at the bill showing £15, and knowing that is not enough for living, compared to last year when I could afford slightly more for this price."

"I have a young child and going out with him on a simple day trip is getting increasingly expensive. His nursery place is only funded by government for 15 hours, so if I want a full week I would need to pay around £58 per day and some nurseries are asking for contributions to a pack lunch, which is another cost."

J, from Chatham, is a recent prison leaver who we are supporting to reintegrate back into society. Seetec's justice division, Interventions Alliance, has been helping them with activities such as budget management, cooking healthy meals on a budget, and support with their basic travel costs:

"It is noticeable how things have gotten more expensive just in the 6 to 8 months I've been out of prison. Little things like milk have gone up. I was used to living on £9 a day when I was in prison, but out here it makes you feel like you're not really able to do the things you thought you would do when you're out, walking past a Starbucks and knowing you can't get that because you don't have enough money."

'How the rising cost of living is affecting me'

Hannah, 30, is a single mother from Tewkesbury. She was supported by Seetec Pluss, to get back into work in a new industry. Amongst the support we facilitated, we helped her secure a working laptop to help her find and apply for work:

"Petrol is a nightmare, it's gone up so much that I am struggling to do my job. I'm a delivery driver and it affects how much I can work because I have to get my own petrol. I have had to cut back on work hours during the week, I'm paying more in petrol than I get in my work bonus. It's costing me £150 in petrol but I'm only getting between £40 or £80 fuel allowance, due to the fewer days I am able to deliver, so I am left out of pocket.

"I'm talking to my boss about a pay rise to cover the deficit which will help, but I have to pay for parking as well. That gets reimbursed, but when it doesn't go through on expenses that same week I'm stuck without any money. I am also struggling with the electric, I'm on a meter and getting through £10 in 2 days. I am going around constantly switching everything off to try and save where I can.

"When I was searching for work, my 16 year old laptop barely worked, it was a nightmare. I couldn't have afforded a new one and without a reliable laptop I couldn't job search or I would miss opportunities and not see job roles. Without the help of an up-to-date laptop I wouldn't have the job I do now and would be even worse off. I do really enjoy my job!"

Recommendations

The UK is faced with high inflation and rising costs affecting almost every aspect of life, and its effects are being felt most keenly by the poorest in society. Some of the factors contributing to these increases, such as the invasion of Ukraine and global supply issues, are not wholly within the UK Government's control. Nonetheless, there are a number of levers the Government could pull to help alleviate some of the effects of the cost of living crisis on those who are being hit hardest. It is in the national interest to do so, given the potential of a recession looming over the UK.

1. The Government should consider further reducing the Universal Credit taper rate below 55p, and further increasing the Work Allowance.

Around 40% of people on Universal Credit are in work, using the benefit to top up their low wages to make ends meet. The Government's previous reduction from 63p to 55p in the last Budget Statement was rightly hailed as a £2bn tax cut for the lowest earners, but nonetheless the effective tax rate for people on Universal Credit remains essentially higher than that paid by the very wealthy. This is because someone earning £150,000 a year will keep 51.75p of every extra pound they earn (45p goes to income tax, 3.25p to National Insurance), whilst a low earner on Universal Credit keeps just 45p of every extra pound they earn (55p taken away in benefit).

Recommendations

2. Restore the £20 uplift to Universal Credit permanently into the standard rate of Universal Credit. The previous temporary £20 uplift for Universal Credit made a big difference to millions of benefit claimants during the pandemic. It is arguably now more needed than ever, given the increased financial hardship now facing some of the poorest families due to the escalating cost of living. It should now be restored permanently for all current and future claimants of Universal Credit, and combining this policy with the changes to the taper rate and Work Allowance, will also mean that more claimants can receive the full amount of this uplift.

3. Reduce the fuel duty and VAT on fuel. The Government has already made efforts to support people with heating their homes, but the cost of filling up a car with petrol remains high. The Government should consider reducing fuel duty further and cutting VAT on fuel as a matter of urgency, whilst also taking steps to ensure that these savings are directly passed onto consumers by fuel companies.

4. Extend the 30 hours free childcare for 9 month olds. The UK has the second most expensive childcare system in the world for parents. As it stands, the current 30 hours of free childcare is only available once a child is aged three years old, making childcare prior to this incredibly expensive. Making this change will help the budgets of families, and importantly will help more mothers to return to the workforce more easily.

5. Increase funding for breakfast club provision to £500m for all primary and secondary school children. In 2021 the Government gave £24 million for breakfast clubs over the next two academic years, but this falls far short of what is needed. Significantly increasing the funding available to provide all primary and secondary school children with the option of breakfast club places will help support parents who are struggling to balance childcare and work, whilst also ensuring the poorest children receive a morning meal.

6. Resurrect the Employment Bill. The long-awaited Employment Bill was not included in the Queen's Speech at this year's State Opening of Parliament. The Government should consider bringing forward this legislation over the course of this Parliament as a matter of urgency, including measures which could help support working families. For example, a focus on measures to boost flexible/hybrid working option protections could help to encourage a better work-life balance and reduce the need to spend on childcare for many families.

7. Appoint a dedicated Minister to develop policy in a cross-government role to address Cost of Living pressures. The cost of living crisis touches upon a multitude of policy issues which cut across departmental responsibilities. Yet, over recent months there has been criticism over an apparent lack of cohesion in the Government's strategy towards tackling these issues. This role should sit jointly within 10 Downing Street and the Treasury, backed up by a Cabinet Committee on this issue, to navigate across Departmental boundaries to deliver cost of living friendly policies. The creation of this post has also received 83% of public support in a recent Techne poll.¹⁶ A Ministerial post already exists for 'Brexit Opportunities and Government Efficiency', so it would seem sensible to create a post with a similar laser-like focus on what is indisputably the biggest public policy issue facing people up and down the country.

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¹⁶ The Express (15/05/22) 'Boris Johnson overwhelmingly backed to have Cost of Living Minister amid crisis – poll'. Available at <https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1610361/cost-of-living-minister-boris-johnson-inflation-energy-bills-crisis>

About Seetec

Seetec is an employee-owned business group committed to supporting an economic and social recovery post-pandemic that is built around the principles of inclusion and opportunity. Our vision is to create an inclusive society where individuals, employers and communities across all the regions of the UK and Ireland can thrive and fulfil their potential.

Originally founded in 1984, we are a leading provider of employment, skills, justice and social care services. In 2021, we supported 65,320 people through our Employability and Health, Irish, Justice and Skills business divisions:

- Interventions Alliance, which works within the criminal justice system and social care sector, delivers evidence-led solutions that aim to help people build better futures and wellbeing. The business division recently opened five new Co-financing Organisation (CFO) Activity Hubs across three English regions to support individuals to continue on their rehabilitation journeys as they build a better future, turning a corner away from their criminal past. Part-funded by the European Social Fund, the CFO Activity Hubs in Manchester, Warrington, Liverpool, Bristol, and Chatham, with satellite provision at St Leonards-on-Sea, offer additional support to individuals transitioning from a formal criminal justice setting.
- Our Employability and Health division is, through Seetec Pluss, a prime provider of the Government's Work and Health Programme and the JETS (Job Entry Targeted Support) scheme which is targeted at helping those who have lost their jobs during the pandemic. Pluss, an award-winning independent Community Interest Company that provides specialist support to inspire people of all abilities to achieve work and a career, forms a key part of this division too. It is a social enterprise working to ensuring nobody is left behind in our society. In April, the Government announced that Seetec Pluss had been awarded a prime contract (4a South West) and now also has four subcontracts to deliver the Restart Scheme, which helps Universal Credit claimants who have been out of work for at least 12 months to find sustainable employment.
- The Skills division offers adult education budget (AEB) opportunities, apprenticeships and traineeships. Through its new strategy, the division aims to provide a wrap-around service in regions to support individuals, communities, sectors and businesses to succeed. In 2020, the division launched Innovion, backed by leading engineering, manufacturing and technology businesses, to deliver high quality technical training and apprenticeships.
- Seetec Ireland delivers Job Path, the Irish Government's main job activation programme which supports the long-term unemployed to achieve their work ambitions across Dublin, West, North and North West, Midlands and North East regions. The business division was also recently certified as a Great Place To Work, receiving a 77% satisfaction score in a Trust Index Survey of 183 employees.

Our business group currently holds an Ofsted inspection rating of 'Good', it is B Corp certified and has achieved the Gold Investors in People Award, which only the top seven per cent of accredited organisations across the UK receive. With a workforce of 2,000, we have an Employee Council and an Employee Trustee Director within our employee ownership structure, who support and work with the senior leadership to influence the direction of the business group, which is committed to delivering first-class public and related commercial services.

For more information, visit www.seetec.co.uk or follow Seetec on Twitter: [@SeetecInspire](https://twitter.com/SeetecInspire)