

Activating the Economically Inactive: *Get Britain Working* as extended governmentality

Tom Boland

UCC

NERI

2026

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CEST

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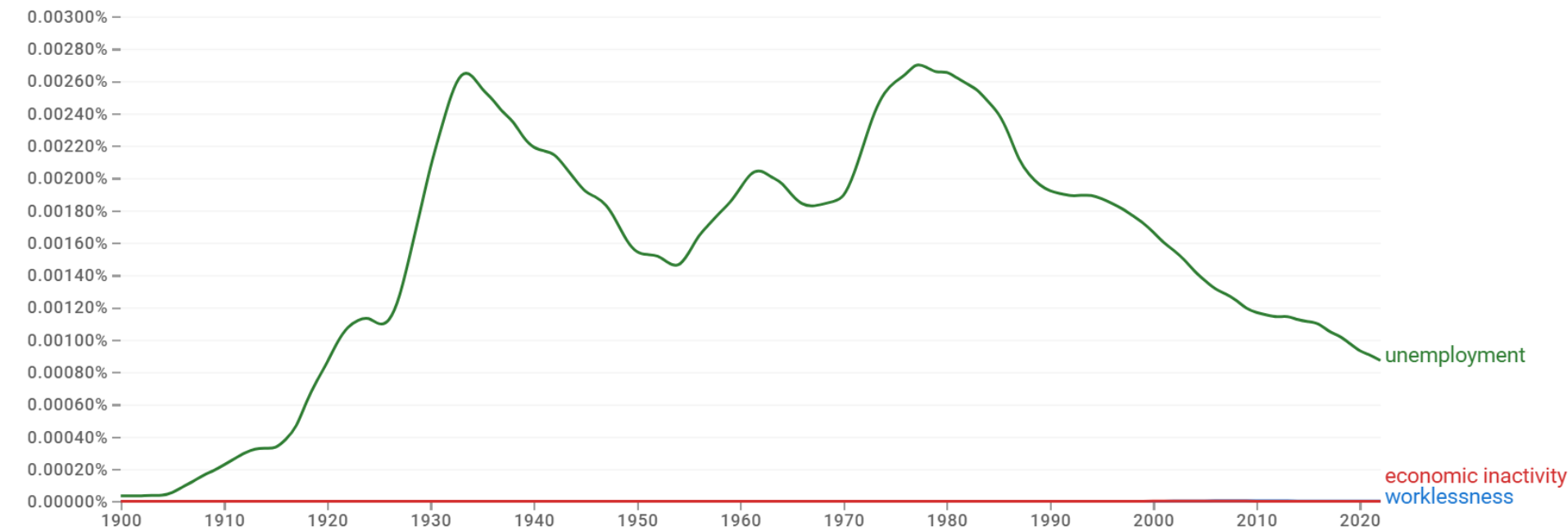
 Prefer the Guardian
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Jobcentres will no longer force people into 'any job' available, minister says

Alison McGovern promises long-term career support in wake of Labour's significant cuts to disability benefits



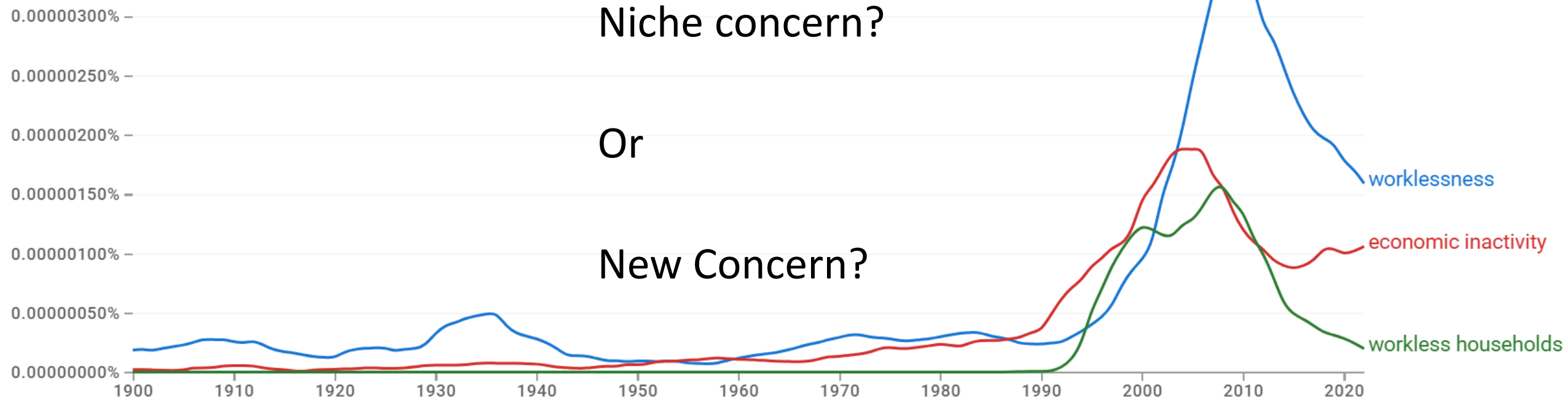
Policy Categories



Niche concern?

Or

New Concern?



Politics of policy priorities

- EU Porto Summit: May 7th, 2021...
- (1) At least 78% of people aged 20 to 64 should be in employment,
- (2) At least 60% of all adults should participate in training every year,
- (3) The number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion should be reduced by at least 15 million, including at least 5 million children.

Tracking the Category:

Economic Quarterly—Volume 100, Number 1—First Quarter 2014—Pages 1–21

Measuring Resource Utilization in the Labor Market

Andreas Hornstein, Marianna Kudlyak, and Fabian Lange

The U.S. unemployment rate increased substantially following the Great Recession, reaching close to 10 percent in the fourth quarter of 2009. As of December 2014, the unemployment rate has declined by more than 4 percentage points, faster than many policy-makers forecasted at the time. As unemployment rates declined, labor

A Non-Employment Index for Ireland

Stephen Byrne & Thomas Conefrey ¹

Vol 2017, No. 9

Abstract

As well as a sharp rise in unemployment, the economic and financial crisis saw a significant increase in the number of people outside the labour force, i.e. individuals who are currently not classified as unemployed but are not in employment and are available for work. In this Letter we construct a new measure of labour utilisation - the Non-Employment Index (NEI) - that takes into account this potential additional labour supply. The index distinguishes between groups like short-term and long-term unemployed, each group is to transition persistent differences in each comprehensive measure of estimates show that, as of t underemployed workers) ha crisis peak but slightly high there may be some scope for emerge, but labour supply c

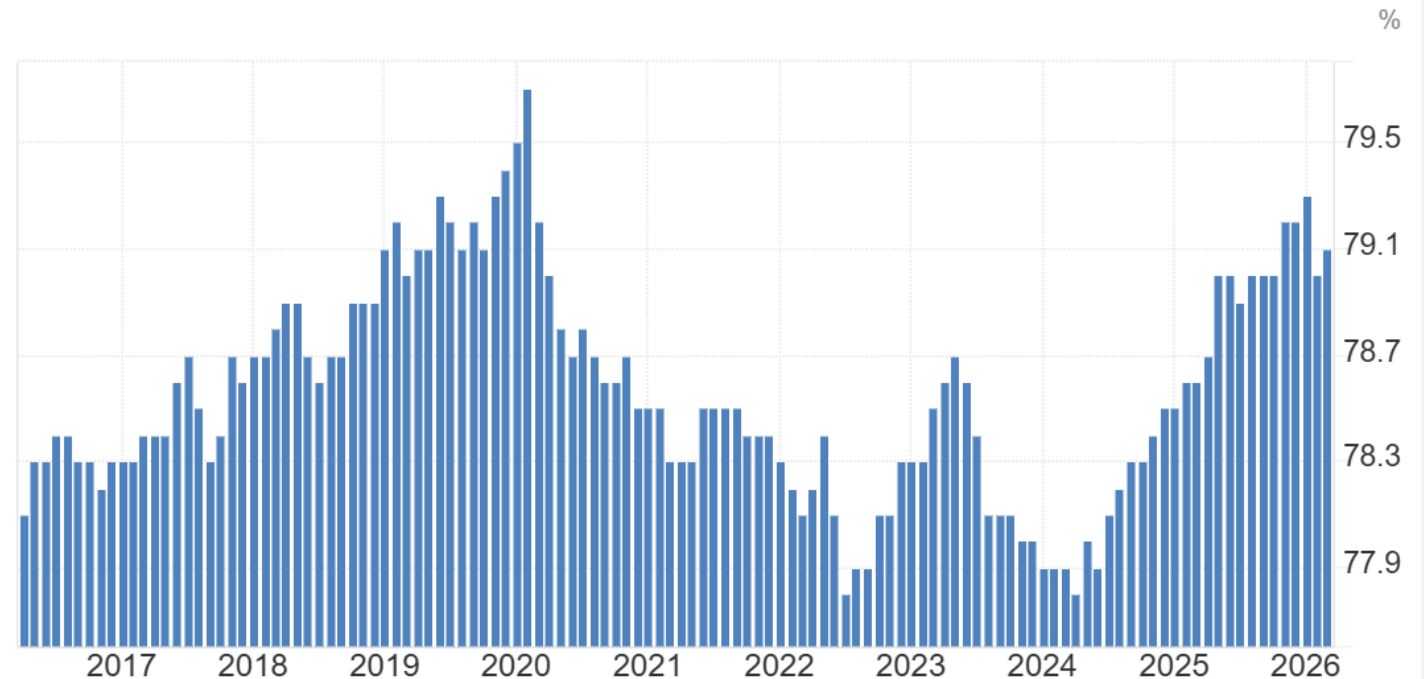
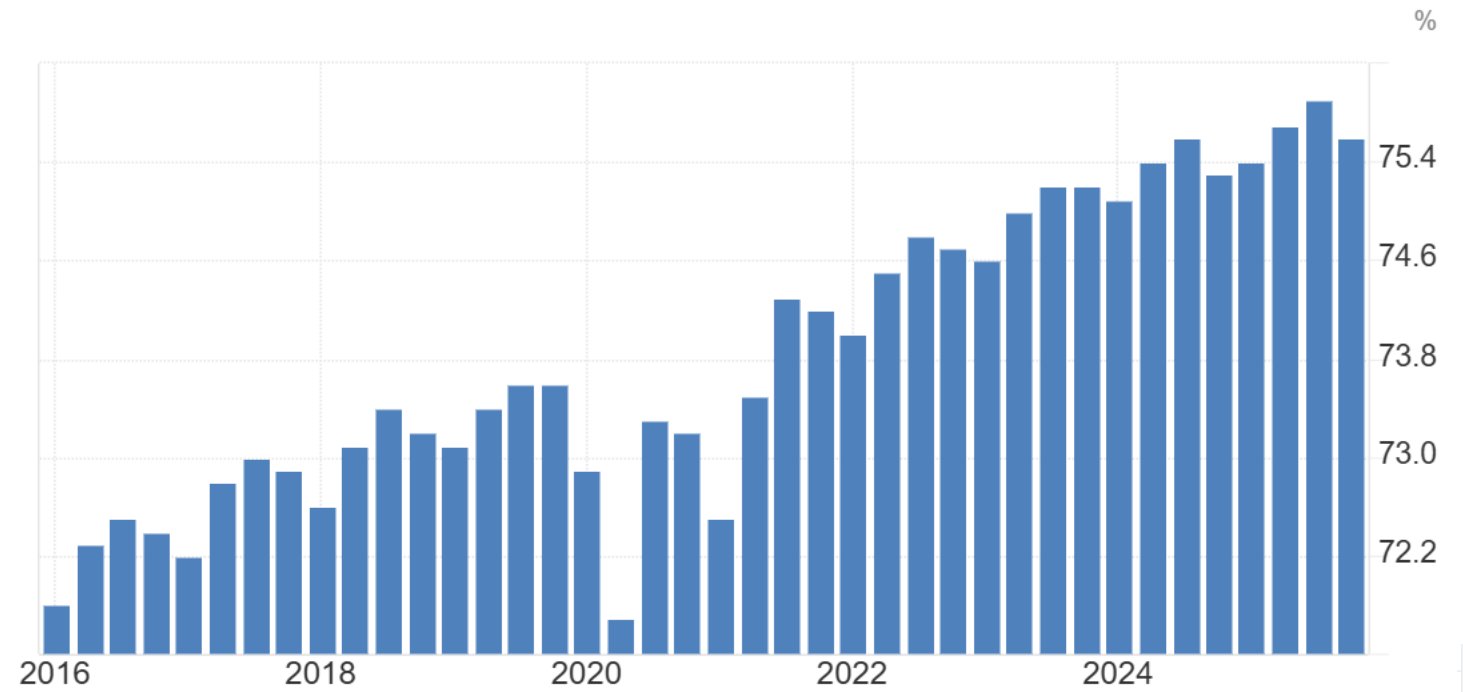
The Incidence of Male Non-Employment in Ireland*

ANTHONY MURPHY
and
BRENDAN WALSH
University College Dublin

Economically inactive:

1. Retirees
2. Students
3. Carers
4. Discouraged workers
5. Illness/disability benefit

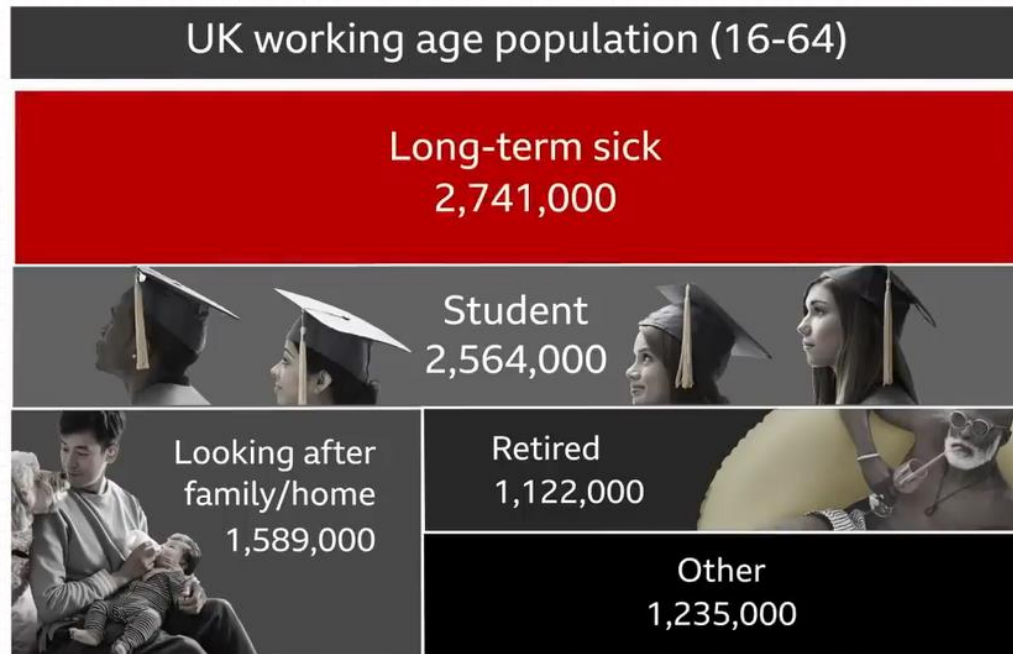
Economically inactive people are those without a job who have not sought work in the last four weeks and/or are not available to start work in the next two weeks.
(GBW)



Britain | Welfare

Why Britain has a unique problem with economic inactivity

A series of policy blunders is to blame



Source: ONS

- Moral Panic? P?

It's 'national sickie day' - is ill-health holding back the UK economy?

Larry Elliott

ONS figures suggest long-term sickness is preventing more people from looking for work

● [Business live - latest updates](#)



SPOTLIGHT

Resolution
Foundation

A U-shaped legacy

Taking stock of trends in economic inactivity in 2024

23 March 2024

Louise Murphy

In an election year, jobs and benefits are often centre stage. Alongside the UK's stagnant wage growth, there is one big issue that will face the next government: the rises in economic inactivity and health-related benefit claims. Real pay growth, unemployment and vacancies have all returned roughly to 2019 rates. But there is one aspect of the labour market that remains far from normal: the UK employment rate is still lower than pre-pandemic, with economic inactivity up from 20.5 per cent to 21.8 per cent, equivalent to 700,000 people. And the continued rise shows little sign of slowing as the pandemic



- Election: 2024:
- Get Britain Working White Paper:
- November 2024.
- Keep Britain Working Review
- 2025...

Our young people aren't shirkers or snowflakes - they were failed by government policy. That changes now
Pat McFadden



The number of 'neets' is skyrocketing in Britain, another Tory failure. Labour's plans for apprenticeships and training funds will turn this around

● Pat McFadden is secretary of state for work and pensions



Get Britain Working: Foci

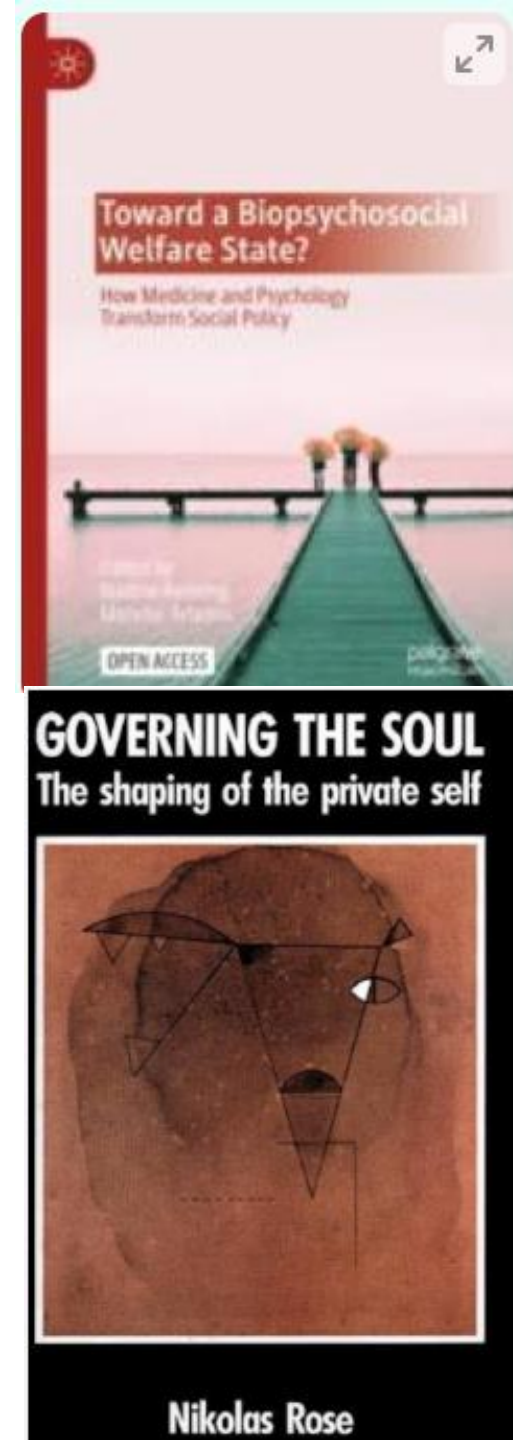
1. Activating the Economically Inactive esp. illness/disability
2. Youth Guarantee – ‘the problem of NEETs’
3. Re-vamp JobCentres – Incorporating National Career Service
4. Regional blackspots & Healthy workplaces

‘ProblematISATION’: Framing the problem

- Under the Health Mission, we will move from a model of sickness to one of prevention – keeping people well and in work for longer, addressing health inequalities and closing the gap in healthy life expectancy. (pg. 24)
- It cannot be right that so many on health-related benefits are effectively written off and offered little support. (pg 29)
- The evidence is clear, once someone loses touch with the labour market, their chances of getting back into employment are diminished (pg. 31)

Medicalisation / Pathologisation?

- Monitor & address population level health issues (growing)
- Emergent problems mental health (esp. youth) & long COVID
- Ratcheting levels of disability, (diagnosis drift?)
- Increase in sick-days – workplace stress.
- Moralised problems: Obesity, Drinking, Smoking



What's the problem? What's the solution?

- Prolonged unemployment leads to 'scarring': (LTU-> illness trend)

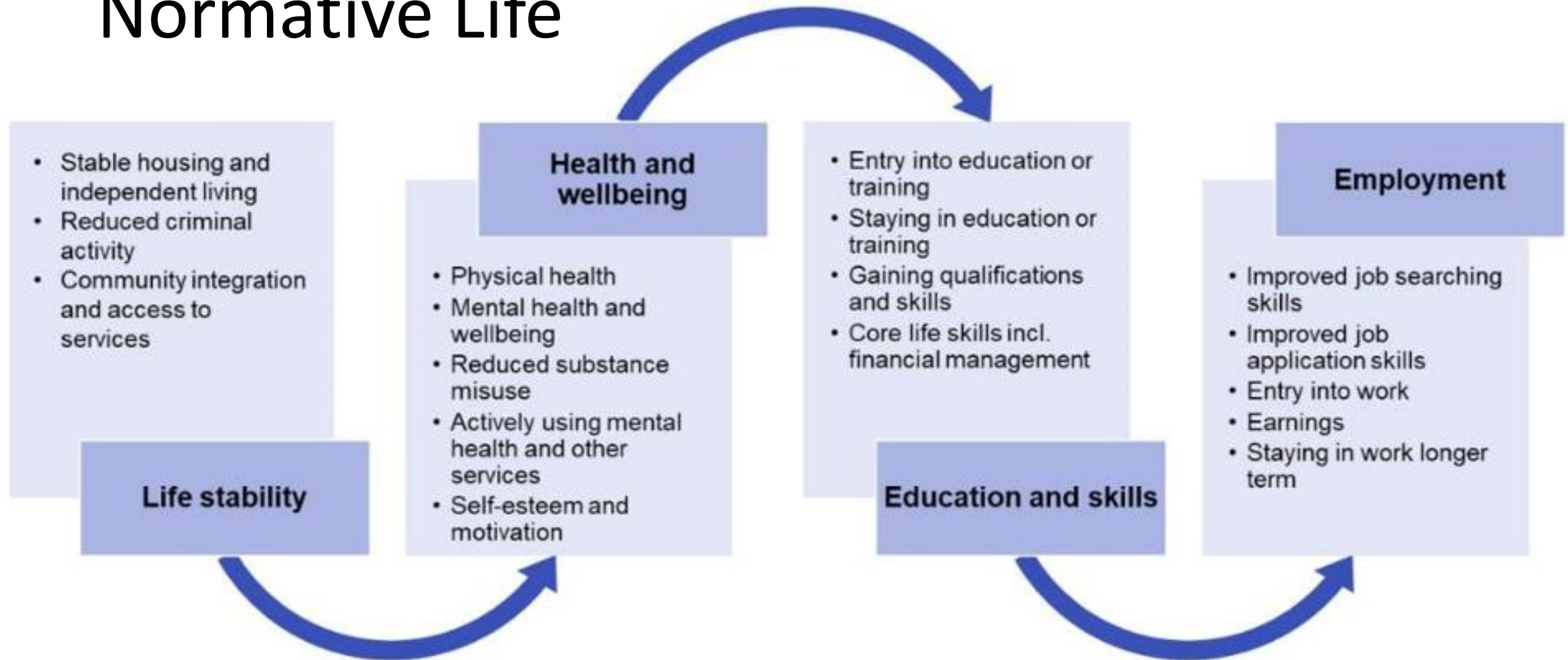
Increased chances of future unemployment, lower wages, worse health

Focus NHS on those on illness/disability benefits.

Create 'trailblazer' activation for the economically inactive.

If (bad) work creates health problems, (good) work is the solution.

Normative Life



Governmentality

- Cultivate good health for work and by work.
- Remedial work on LTU, scarred, etc.
- Extended Activation: ‘Connect to Work’
- Marginal work – any hours, any tasks:
- ‘Swarming Governmentality’

CONNECT TO WORK
Funded by UK Government

Connect to Work



**Free local support to help you find
and keep the right job**

Connect to Work is a free and voluntary programme supporting local people who face challenges getting into or staying in work. This includes individuals with health conditions, disabilities, or other barriers.

Whether you're looking for a job or worried about staying in your current one, we're here to help you **build confidence**, **discover the right opportunities**, and **stay in work** for the long term.



- Philip Absolon (b. 1960) *Job Club*, c.1999: Acrylic on board