



WHAT WORKS? – Transition to employment for young people with learning disabilities

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The study

There have been a number of studies and reports that suggest the system of transition from school does not provide adequate support for young people with learning disabilities, particularly in relation to employment. Young people with learning disabilities are at high risk of never having a job. It is important to understand 'what works' in terms of employment support for young people with learning disabilities and their families.

Key findings: what works

- Promotion and support of employment as an option early in transition planning.
- Involvement of skilled employment organisations in transition planning.
- Access to individually tailored and flexible work experience, with on-the-job personal support when needed.
- Provision of transition workers as a single point of information and support for young people and their families.
- Consistent and high quality vocational training in schools and colleges.
- Challenge the idea that young people with learning disabilities are 'incapable' of employment.

The Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities and Shaw Trust, with Big Lottery funding, set out to look at six areas providing different approaches to supporting these young people to explore, and make decisions about, employment through external employment organisations (EOs).

We interviewed 145 young people and their carers about their experiences of transition and employment. We collected information on the vocational input the young people had in their last year from their special school, college or employment organisation. We followed-up the young people 6 months after they had left to see how many had gone into employment. We asked them what had influenced their decisions.

Results

Young people received vocational input from many types from school, college and their EO. The main

differences were that employment organisations mostly provided work experience, schools provided more qualifications based courses (e.g. ASDAN Workright) and colleges more practical skills courses. There was wide variation across schools and colleges in what was provided. EOs mainly provided longer, community based work experience, where schools and colleges did more in-house placement. EOs offered a significantly different style of vocational experience to schools and colleges.

Over 60% of carers reported that employment was not mentioned as an option at their last year transition review. However, a minority did receive employment advice from school or the careers service. There was a lot of input by schools and colleges, and careers services, about transition next steps. However, college remained the more common option discussed and promoted by schools and careers services. If there was contact with an EO, employment was more likely to be raised as an option, and any advice given appeared to be more detailed, and more likely to lead to a work experience placement.

In their final year, 59% of young people said they wanted a place at college as their next step after school or college, and 32% a paid job. Carers had different ideas, 51% wanting a paid job, and 21% a college place for their relative. Six months after leaving 60% of young people had gone onto college and only 17% to a job. A young person with a learning disability wishing to go to college is 2.7 times more likely to get their wish than a young person wishing to get a paid job. For those young people we followed up at 18 months, employment had risen to 25% and 60% of those previously working were still employed, suggesting their jobs were relatively stable.

Those who gained a job tended to have had more hours of vocational input overall in their last year at school or college and more work experience from an

EO. Their carers also more often had a positive view of the person working, had fewer concerns about their getting a job, and a more positive view of the impact of the young person working on their own lives. Statistically, young people have a higher probability of getting a job if they have:

- More hours delivered in qualification-based courses by their school/college
- More hours delivered in obtaining work experience placements by EOs
- A carer with fewer concerns about the young person getting a job.

Conclusions

For those young people with learning disabilities that want to pursue paid employment on leaving school or college, there continue to be barriers to them achieving this. Employment is not universally considered to be a viable option for these young people by all professionals involved in transition planning. This is in part due to a lack of options for support into employment locally. There are significant implications for local transition policy and practice:

- It is necessary that information on all transition options, including employment, to be offered early in the transition planning timetable.
- Employment organisations need to be involved in the transition planning process if young people with learning disabilities and their carers are to be fully informed of about paid employment as a transition option.
- Work experience appears from our study to be a key input, and this has been an added contribution to the work of schools and careers service efforts in our study areas.
- For work experience to be constructive for the carer and the young person it needs to be individually tailored, flexible in the times and length it is delivered, and have a number of support options up to, and including, on the job support.
- Carers need feedback on the experience if it is to influence their subsequent decisions. For all of this to happen we need better, well funded, supported work experience through experienced EOs who can deliver it.
- Carers want one knowledgeable source of information on future options, a named person who could help them digest information, give advice, and help them to make decisions with their son or



daughter. A dedicated transition worker role can provide this type of service in a local area.

- To reassure people that employment is possible we have to tackle issues such as: the friendship potential of employment; the monetary arguments for working; how potential bullying and exploitation might be guarded against through good job finding, adequate supervision and support in work; and how positive impacts on carers can be assured.
- Agencies need to be able to deliver solutions to these issues through work experiences while people are still in school. They need to demonstrate the positive outcomes that can be achieved and build credibility with carers and young people to better help them find employment when they leave school.
- Greater consensus is needed within schools and colleges on what are the best vocational materials and curricula to be used. We need this to be linked more effectively with the efforts of EOs offering supported work experience with good feedback.
- Schools, colleges, careers services, social services and EOs need to develop a consensus on what is possible and desirable for young people with learning disabilities to do at transition, including the appropriateness of employment. Without this families will receive conflicting advice on whether employment is an option for a young person.
- We need to do away with the notion that some people are 'capable' and others 'incapable' of employment. The issue is more one of what support people need to work and whether we can deliver it here, now and with the resources we have.
- The sharing of information on the needs of people with learning disabilities between agencies needs to be more effective post-school. There needs to be 'one transition plan' that carries through into post-school placements. This will involve a greater commitment than is currently possible through the extended responsibilities of careers services.
- We need some rebalancing of resources to support the employment pathway rather than just the college pathway after school. Without this, college students will also fail to enter employment because the systems will not exist to support them when they leave.

INTRODUCTION

Why employment is important

Government policy in the UK has sought greater social inclusion and enhanced life opportunities for people with learning disabilities¹ and has promoted paid employment as one way of achieving this both in welfare reform and learning disability policy (Prime Minister's Strategy Unit 2005, Chief Secretary to the Treasury 2003, DoH 2001). The broad thrust of policy has been to promote community-based employment as a replacement for a life on welfare benefit, or even sheltered employment (Prime Minister's Strategy Unit 2005).

The Government's general strategy for getting young people into employment has been to provide incentives for young people to stay at school longer, to provide a wider range of options for training and qualification. Assistance for seeking employment has also been provided through policies such as the New Deal for Young People, and the Youth Gateway. This strategy has not been universally successful, and there has been much publicity around the growing problem of young people who are not in education, employment or training (the so-called N.E.E.T. group), where numbers rose to nearly 1.24 million in 2006. However, the strategy has led to greater numbers of 16-25 year olds attending further and higher education.

When we look at people with learning disabilities, estimates of the percentage of who are employed vary between 10% (DoH 2001) and 17% (Emerson et al. 2005). This is low compared to a figure of 52% of the general disabled population (Smith & Twomey 2002). Young people with learning disabilities are therefore a group at high risk of separation from the labour market, and a group that overlaps with the wider NEETs group. Clearly, the general policy of pursuing further education and training post-16 has not redressed the problem of unemployment for people with learning disabilities.

The situation was recognised in the Learning and Skills Council's document *Learning for Living and Work* (LSC 2006) which highlights the need for greater action at further education level to strengthen pathways into employment for young people with disabilities, including the need to provide more supportive forms of work experience for young people while at college, and to explore supported employment as an exit strategy.

However, the situation is not just relevant to further education. There remains some demand at age 16, and at 18 in special schools, for employment as a school leaving option. The unemployment figures for people with learning disabilities, and previous research on post-16 transition, suggest that this is largely an unfulfilled aspiration, particularly if young people have a Statement of Special Educational Need as many with a learning disability have (Aston et al. 2006; p 21). In the UK, legislation requires Education Authorities to arrange and attend review meetings of the needs of Statemented students with a learning disability, who must have a Statement of Special Educational Needs/Record of Need² from the age of 14 years onwards which provides the framework for transition planning (DfES 2001). Employment is identified in guidance as a legitimate aim of that transition planning, as much as a college or a day centre place.

Every Child Matters (DfES, 2004) sets out the Government's aspirations for children, one of the 5 key aims being 'achieving economic well-being,' including engaging in further education, employment or training on leaving school and being ready for employment. Schools, colleges, and practitioners will be assessed against the five aims and employment performance will become an increasingly important outcome.

In making the next steps after school, the choices the young person makes are important, but so too are the availability of options, support and the more soft resources that come from family. People with learning disabilities are at a disadvantage in decision-making because of their cognitive impairments, and are a prime group for additional support if they are to compete in the

labour market. Transition decisions are not without risk (Lehmann 2004); the decision is seen as particularly risky by families of people with learning disabilities.

Previous research key messages

Shortcomings in the English and Welsh transition process have been identified by previous research (King's Fund 1998; Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2002). The preferred route emerging from transition planning is often a five-day college placement, which contrasts with post-school transition outcomes in the US where sheltered and supported employment are predominant avenues for people with learning disabilities (Katsiyannis and Zhang 2005). Employment is not frequently pursued as an area in its own right for transition planning, with very few young people with learning disabilities entering supported employment programs between the ages of 16 and 19 years (Beyer, Goodere and Kilsby 1996). When young people with LD do pursue employment, many still find that a lack of available personal support, limited transportation options, and welfare benefit regulations hinder the transition into the workforce (Heslop et al. 2002; Morris 1999a,b; SSI 1997; Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2002).

Much of the UK research has concentrated on the problems related to the transition of young people with LD into employment. The pursuit of employment does not feature prominently in transition planning, although it contributes to the chances of the young people with LD to become more confident and increase their level of independence (Kilsby and Beyer 2002). There is some evidence that employment increases social inclusion in comparison to conventional day centre provision (Kilsby and Beyer 1996), although predictors of employment retention are still under-researched (Beyer, 2001; Rose et al., 2005). Work from the US has identified factors that increase the likelihood of employment upon completion of school in this population (Peraino 1992). For people with mild LD, successful completion of high school can lead to higher employment rates than not graduating (Warner et al. 2006; Scuccimarra & Speece 1990). Factors related to increased likelihood of employment after school among persons with mild LD include: being male (Peraino, 1992); having had a summer job or

part-time supported job experience while at school (Hasazi et al. 1985; Scuccimarra & Speece 1990; Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell 1997); receiving vocational-technical training (Humes & Brammer 1985); duration of community based training and age appropriate integration with non-disabled peers (White and Weiner 2004); and use of a job coach (Howarth et al. 2006). On the other hand, Gray, McDermott and Butkus (2000) found that job coaching was only effective in urban areas and regions with low or intermediate unemployment rates.

Carers obviously play a crucial role in transition decision-making. They are the main providers of support, often have a particular view of the aspirations and preferences of the young person, and may often influence their choices (Smart, 2004). Carers can sometimes be over-protective, and act as an obstacle to increasing the independence of the young person by limiting exposure to new experiences (Bowey et al. 2005). Studies have shown that carers tend to express general dissatisfaction with professionals (King, 1997), but that more positive relationships are possible when professionals provide clear and appropriate information and interventions, and acknowledge the parents' needs, expertise and involvement (Case 2001). The success of transition will, therefore, be influenced by how informed carers are about the opportunities available, and the extent of their involvement in the process.

Too often transition processes are implemented without effectively eliciting the views of young people themselves as these tend to be dismissed as unworkable or uninformed (Carnaby et al. 2003; DfES 2004). Further, cultural differences and dissimilarity in preferred transition outcomes between carers and professionals can further complicate transition planning (Dowdy, 1996).



¹ Learning disability was defined as: 'having a significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information, to learn new skills (impaired intelligence), with a reduced ability to cope independently (impaired social functioning), which started before adulthood, with a lasting effect on development' (Department of Health, 2001).

² Term used in Scotland during the survey period, but recently changed to Co-ordinated Support Plan.

Ineffective or late planning for post-school transition can significantly increase stress for carers as well as for the young people with LD who go through a multitude of changes at that time, while effective collaboration can reduce stress for carers (Schneider et al. 2002).

Policymakers have envisaged transition as one of collaboration between services, involving carers and young people to identify valuable post-school goals and to ascertain ideal life paths after school. This co-operative spirit is reflected in relevant government policies and Acts such as the Connexions strategy (Learning and Skills Act 2000), Valuing People (Department of Health 2001) and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 which provide the general framework for support agencies in wider society. However, the National Service Framework states clearly that 'there is still a lack of co-ordination between the relevant agencies and little involvement from the young person' in transition (DfES 2004, p37), and a more recent report highlighted the lack of multi-agency work in providing meaningful post-transition opportunities for young people with complex needs (CSCI 2007).

"Despite these initiatives, in general, national policymakers have not placed sufficient weight on young people's thinking and behaviour when they have designed policies aimed at them. This oversight means that policy interventions aimed at young people risk failing".

Social Exclusion Unit 2005, p5

The government's own analysis of the problems of transition looks for changes to services that are not based on age, but follow the young person for as long as required; for services based on strong relationships between young people and their advisors; and helpful policies that match realities:

Why the research was needed

There have been a number of studies and reports that suggest that the transition system does not provide adequate support for people with special needs (Cooney 2002; Eisenmann 2003; Johnson and Stodden 2002). In particular, there has been concern over the support that is offered to young people with learning disabilities

to enter employment. As we have seen, they are highly at a disadvantage in the labour market, and it was important to understand 'what works' in terms of employment support for 16-24 year olds with learning disabilities and their families in particular.

We set out to look at areas in which different approaches were being used to provide help that allows young people with learning disabilities explore, and make decisions about, employment.

The partnership – WCLD, Shaw Trust and the Big Lottery

Shaw Trust is a national charity and the largest voluntary sector provider of employment services to disabled and disadvantaged people. Shaw Trust operates a number of services that provide support to young people with and without disabilities to help them explore and improve their chances of getting employment. Together with the Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities, Shaw Trust approached the Big Lottery in 2004 with a proposal for this research. This was accepted, and the research work began in July 2004 and ended in October 2007.

What we set out to achieve

The research set out to explore six questions:

- 1** What are the key components of a variety of models of transition planning currently operating in relation to employment?
- 2** What processes of transition planning lead to young people with learning disabilities gaining and keeping paid employment?
- 3** What processes secure the effective involvement of young people, their families, agencies and communities during the transition planning process?
- 4** What benefits, in terms of social inclusion and economic self-sufficiency, accrue to young people with learning disabilities from the different approaches to transition identified?
- 5** What agency partnerships are key to successful transition of young people with learning disabilities?



- 6 What changes are needed in the supportive framework of central and local government policy to help young people with learning disabilities transition to paid work?

The models we looked at

The study was carried out in a purposive sample of six different local authority areas in the UK; each area offered employment-related transition planning services to young persons with LD in their last year of school. In all, sixteen special schools, one mainstream school and five colleges were included in the study.

- **Area A** focused on three special schools out of a total of 11 and one Further Education (FE) college out of three operating in the county. In this area a small team of transition workers offered Person Centred Planning to young people and families to design their next steps, over all life areas, including employment. Referral to a Supported Employment Agency for supported work experience was possible. The Supported Employment team worked with young people in transition from a FE college.
- **Area B** involved one mainstream secondary school with a specialist arts college and sixth form centre in the study out of eight specialist schools in the area (13%). In this area a young person's employment service based in the school offered work awareness training, interest building experiences, and supported work experience in community jobs.

- **Area C** comprised seven Special Schools out of a total of 24 in the area (30%). Here an employment focussed Transition Support Team provided supported work experience in community jobs.
- **Area D** involved two special schools in one county from a total of eight, one special school in a second county with no other special schools, and one special school for autism, again the only one of its kind. In this location a social firm offering training and work experience in a Social Enterprise offered placements over a few weeks, or sessions over a semester or a year.
- **Area E** recruited two FE colleges in one county and, in two other counties, one FE college each. All of those colleges represented the total of FE colleges located in the county. Youth Supported Employment Team found, and supported young people in, part-time evening and weekend jobs with provision of 'buddy' support from non-disabled peers.
- **Area F** included one special school each in two counties, in both cases representing a third of all local special schools. Here a team of Personal Advisors from a careers service with a particular interest in employment provided support for further education and employment decisions through the Connexions' careers guidance model. The team specialised in students with special needs.

Throughout the report we refer to schools (and either special schools or our one mainstream school), colleges (of Further Education), and Employment Organisations (EOs) (the intervention services mentioned in Areas A-F above).



WHAT WE DID

Our sample

The main impetus of the project was to look at 'what works'; hence the team identified five local authorities that provided a dedicated employment or transition service for young people in schools or colleges, and a sixth offering a Connexions service with a track record in pursuing employment with young people. The rationale was to examine the effects of this additional input for gaining and keeping employment as well as outcomes in terms of social inclusion for the young people. Three local authorities were located in England, one in Scotland and two in Wales.

Local authorities were approached and managerial consent was obtained to contact a select number of schools in the authority. With the help of the local authorities, schools were selected in the areas if they were receiving an additional transition/employment service through one of the six EOs described earlier. Colleges of Further Education involved in the study were approached independently through the selected EOs that worked with them.

Recruitment

Staff at the selected schools and colleges were then approached and consent was sought to interview and brief them on the project's aim and purpose. Staff agreement was secured for their collaboration in the project. SEN co-ordinators (SENCOs) in the schools and colleges acted as a focal point for data collation, securing parental and young person's consent for interviews as well as identifying the sample for the first and second cohort.

Briefing materials were supplied to SENCOs covering all aspects of the project, and appropriate versions of these, including easy read versions, were provided for young people and carers. Written consent forms were required from both parties.

SENCOs were asked to identify those young people who met our definition of learning disability, who were in their last year before leaving school or college respectively and received an input from our EOs. The research team asked for up to 20 young people in each of our six areas.

SENCOs wrote to the carers of the young people and informed the young people in class about the project and sought their consent. Briefing materials were supplied to SENCOs covering all aspects of the project, and appropriate versions of these, including easy read versions, were provided for young people and carers. Written consent forms were required from both parties.

Where a young person did not have the capacity to sign a consent form, the team relied on a statement that it would be in their best interest to take part from their form teacher, along with written carer consent, to include them. Where consent was not forthcoming from the carers but secured from the young person, only the young person was interviewed. Young people also had an option to ask that their carers not to be interviewed and four took that option. In these cases, parents were not interviewed.

Interviews

Once written consents were obtained, basic descriptive data on the young person was collected by the school (age, disability, SEN status, ethnicity etc.) and carers and young people were contacted by the research team for interview. Interviews were conducted with the carer and the young person separately and usually took place in the carer's home or, on occasions, in school or college with the agreement of the SENCO. Interviews were taped, with agreement, for analysis purposes, and notes were taken by interviewers.

The interview schedules covered information on the transition process young people and carers experienced, their views on the help they had received, and their views on what they wanted to do after school or college.



Also included were questions on the young person's involvement in other extra-curricula activity, and socio-economic and household composition data for the family. In addition, carers completed the Adaptive Behaviour Scale for the young person (Nihira et al. 1993) to give us a broad understanding of the problems they faced in everyday activities.

Once the first round of interviews with carers and young people were completed, 59 case studies were undertaken. Carers and young people were asked more detailed questions and perspectives were gained from a teacher and a staff member of the EO working with the young person.

For each person the total number of hours spent in each type of activity with each provider was recorded, and coded by two people.

Two cohorts of leavers (2005 and 2006) were included in the study. Carers from each cohort were followed-up with a telephone interview approximately six months after leaving school or college to see where the young person had been placed, whether their choice had been met, and carers' retrospective views on the process they had been through. The 2005 leaver cohort was followed-up a second time, 18 months after they had left to establish longer-term trends.

Analysis

Much of the data took the form of open questions completed in note form and taped at face-to-face interview. This was analysed using the five-step 'Framework' method proposed by Ritchie and Spencer (1994), and quotes were organised into themes and interpreted. Data on types of vocational activity offered through school and external transition services were themed and coded into categories.

For each person the total number of hours spent in each type of activity with each provider was recorded, and coded by two people. Overall agreement on coding was 87%. The activity data, descriptive data on the young person, household employment and qualifications data, were fed into a logistic regression analysis. Logistic regression allows continuous and categorical variables to be combined and used to estimate what effects the probability that an outcome will occur – here, that a young person with learning disabilities will get a paid job (part-time or full-time) after transition.

WHAT WE FOUND

Young People

Overall, 149 young people met the project criteria and were approached, and 145 young people, and 145 carers, agreed to take part. We had data for young people and their carers in 137 cases. Of the 145 young people interviewed, 70 were in special schools, 38 in the mainstream school, and 37 in FE colleges. Table 1 presents information on the characteristics of the young people concerned.

Table 1: Characteristics of young people with LD

	Study sample n=145 people
% Male	63.4%
Mean age (SD)	17.9 years (SD=1.8)
Mean percentile rank of the ABS(SD)	77.1 (SD=16.5)
Additional diagnoses/problems	
Autistic spectrum disorder	8.2%
Asperger's syndrome	1.4%
Emotional or behavioural difficulties	16.4%
Ethnicity	
White British	142
White and Black Caribbean	1
White-Other	1
Black British – Caribbean	1
Person had a Statement of Special Educational Need	57.7%
Person receiving School Action or School Action Plus	4.0%

SD= Standard Deviation

In addition to meeting our definition of learning disability, 8.2% were reported as also having Autism, 1.4% Asperger's Syndrome, and 16.4% as having emotional/behavioural difficulties (EBD). When we look at these additional problems across different settings, 16.7% of young people in special schools had Autism and 11.1% EBD; 5.3% of young people in college had Asperger's Syndrome and 5.3% EBD; 35.9% in our mainstream school had an EBD label. Overall, 60% had a Statement of Special Educational Need, School Action or School Action Plus status.

Carers

Carers were primarily parents (96.6%). In addition we had three grandmothers (2.1%), one sister (0.7%), and one care manager of the young person. Just under half of the young people in the study lived in households where no carers had a formal qualification (47.9%). The most common qualifications were one or more GCSEs or equivalent (21.2%). Thirteen percent of households had at least one carer with a degree or higher degree.

Overall the majority of our carers lived in their own home (53.6%) or in rented accommodation (40.1%). The majority of our young people lived in a household where one of their carers was employed or self-employed (41.8%), but significant levels of unemployment or no-economic activity were present (37.3%). The highest levels of carer employment were for young people in areas C (84.2%) and F (79.2%) and the lowest were in areas A (50.0%) and D (40.0%).

The home situations of the young people we interviewed were, therefore, diverse and represented different potential relationships between household composition, the experience of employment, the education and qualification backgrounds of families and other factors that may influence the transition decisions of the family. In addition, the backgrounds of families meant that they brought very different resources, perspectives, stresses and abilities to the transition process.

Involvement in transition planning

As we saw in Table 1, a little over half of our sample of young people had a Statement of Special Educational Need or, in Scotland at the time, a Record of Need. The formal element of transition planning is targeted at these young people. We asked carers of young people at school if they and the young person had attended a review of the Statement during their last year: a key moment in developing the transition plan.

Figure 1: Attendance of young people with statements and their carers at review meetings

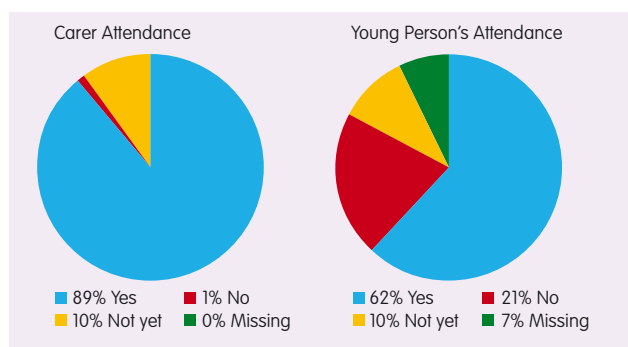
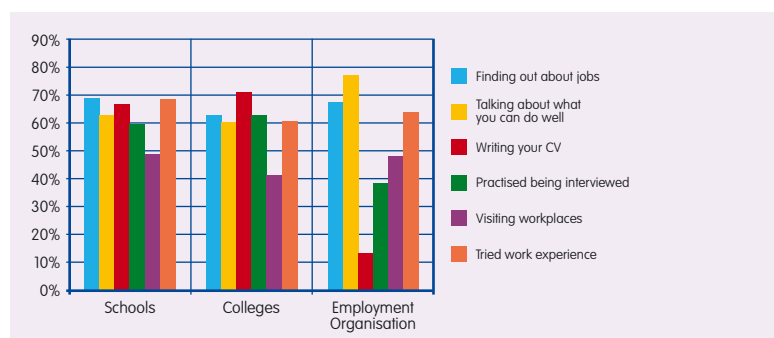


Figure 1 shows that attendance at transition review meetings was high among carers, but that 21.4% of young people had not attended their transition meeting. Ten percent of young people and carers had not yet had the opportunity of a meeting at the point we interviewed them. Although emphasis is placed in government guidance on transition on including young people and taking into account the views of carers, there was a significant shortfall in the numbers who might attend, actually attending. There may of course be reasons for this, including the inability or unwillingness of young people to take part, and communication difficulties leading to people feeling it is not appropriate for a young person to be present. However, this still represents a missed opportunity for some young people and carers to input into the decision making process. For young people attending college, 84.0% of carers reported attending a meeting of some sort to discuss their son or daughters options for transition from college. Again, they reported that 24.0% of young people had not attended these meetings, with the associated potential loss of opportunity.

Help from schools and colleges

We asked young people what help they had received in a number of aspects of thinking about a job from their school or college (Figure 2). All young people at school or college reported receiving some form of vocational input, over and above mainstream curriculum subjects. This employment related input fell into two types. First, classroom or resource based activities (finding out about jobs; talking about what young people are good at and how that might link to a job; CV development; interview practice); second, workplace-based activities (visiting workplace, job shadowing and work experience).

Figure 2: Help and advice received by young people in relation to employment from school, college and EOs



The majority of young people reported that their school (68.2%) or college (62.2%) had helped them in identifying jobs that they might wish to do. The most common method was use of the internet to look at advertised jobs and to analyse the requirements of those jobs. The use of videos of different jobs and workplaces was also common. This at times extended into interviewing people about their jobs and going down to the job centre to look at available jobs.

Watched films, different jobs in factories and supermarkets. Yes, used the internet. Enjoyed it. (Person 21, 215 Young Person)

We asked teachers and other people what types of jobs they do. We also had books and the computer to look at B & B's, cafés, hotels, pubs. (31, 74 YP)

The Job Centre, with college, looking for jobs. I want to work with animals, or with the elderly or in a shop. I'd rather work with the elderly. I worked in [named Elderly Person's Home] before. Looked on the computer. (21, 46 YP)

We found that the majority of those who had some input on what they were good at did this as part of organised class-based activities, along with individual interviews with class teachers and careers staff. Young people also recognised that they were at times using formal systems, with ASDAN being the most common framework reported.

Insight into vocational strengths and weaknesses also came from other exercises, such as creating CVs, often using computer templates or sometimes careers service online systems, and preparation for interviews, including mock interviews, and class based presentations.

Yes, on the computer. Did CV on Career Wales' site on the computer and in class. (23, 218 YP)

Fewer people in schools (48.2%) and colleges (40.5%) had visited jobs or been involved in job shadowing. However, more reported that they had been involved in some form of work experience organised through school (68.2%) or college (59.5%). There were some interesting trends in these experiences:

- More visits to workplaces, and to see jobs, organised by schools took place in the community (87.5%) than organised by colleges (69.3%). This meant that colleges provided more visits 'in-house', involving young people visiting places of work on-site, and shadowing jobs within the institution.
- 40.0% of outside school-organised, and 11.1% of outside college-organised work experience took place in voluntary organisations, rather than commercial companies, notably spending some time working in charity shops.

They arranged work experience, sorting out clothes in a charity shop. (22, 45 YP)

Someone took me to visit the Oxfam shop where I work now – can't remember who it was. (21, 46 YP)

Help from EOs

Vocational input from our six Employment Organisations (EOs) was reported by fewer young people (82.3%) than was input from schools and colleges. Even though receiving a service from these agencies was a criterion for entry to this study, over the course of their last year some of the young people reported having no direct work done with them (although parents may well have been aware of work going on on their behalf).

Generally, many fewer young people received assistance with CVs (12.4%) and practice interviews (37.3%) from EOs than from schools and colleges. They engaged significantly more young people in talking about what they can do well (76.9%). Workplace visits (47.1%) and work experience (63.6%) were mentioned by roughly the same percentage of young people receiving input from the EOs as in schools or colleges. There were again trends in how workplace visits and work experience were organised:

- Workplace visits were almost exclusively organised in ordinary community-based workplaces (95.8%), more often than was the case for schools and colleges.
- Work experiences were also more often provided in ordinary workplaces (rather than agency's own facilities) than for schools and colleges (93.6%).
- Fewer of these external workplace visits (2.2%) and external work experience placements (18.0%) took place in voluntary organisations and charity shops than was the case for comparable placements organised by colleges.

It did appear, therefore, that EOs were offering a significantly different style of vocational experience compared to schools and colleges.

What did young people prefer and what did they want to change

Most young people we interviewed were positive about the input they had had on jobs from whatever source, with between 8% and 25% of young people wanting change, depending on the type of input.

It's made me realise that I can't sit on my bum. (53, 71 YP)

Overall, young people felt that differences in the way that employment related experiences were delivered did matter to them. Where there were criticisms young people tended to want information delivered in a more hands on, practical style. On finding out about different jobs, the internet was not universally popular. There weren't always things on the internet that young people were interested in and sometimes they thought it was hard to use. Some people would have liked more outside experiences, either going to Jobcentres or seeing jobs directly. Others would have liked to have had more people come in to talk, or more detailed information on what jobs involved. In terms of CV development, the main criticisms were that it was done once, sometimes too long before it might be needed, and wasn't reviewed and updated enough.

People wanted to talk about what they were good at, and the largest criticism was that schools and colleges did not spend enough face-to-face time doing this.

The teacher could have spent more time with us. It's more helpful to have individual meeting and not class group meetings. (10, 17 YP)

In terms of job visits and work experience organised by schools, 25% of young people would have liked change, dissatisfaction being mainly with the number and variety of companies covered in visits and work experience:

I would have liked them to give us more time to do more placements. (24, 217 YP)

I would have liked to have till experience so I could put it on my CV. Then I might have had a better chance at getting a job later. (51, 53 YP)

Offer me more choice. Would have liked building, construction option, but I'm too young. (re: Health and Safety issues with under 16's) (10, 226 YP)

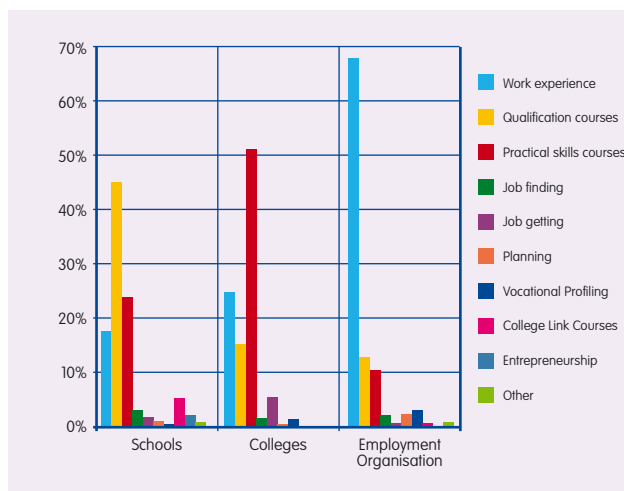
For EOs, 13% of young people wanted change, this being roughly equally split between young people wanting more choice in placements, and others wanting to spend more time in favoured placements when found.



Balance of activities provided by schools, colleges and external transition providers

Schools, colleges and Employment Organisations provided detailed information on what vocational input they provided, over what periods, and for how long in their leaving year, for each young person in the study. These were subsequently categorised by the researchers for comparison (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Employment related activity provided by schools, colleges and EOs



When we take the number of hours of different activity offered into account, the difference between provision by schools, colleges and EOs becomes more pronounced. We found great variation in what was provided to young people both between the school, college and EO sectors, and also within each sector, as evidenced by the range of percentage input we found. We also found that young women experienced higher levels of work experience (35.3 hours per person) and practical skills courses (64.1 hours), and lower levels of qualification courses (17.9 hours) than young men delivered by schools and colleges (21.8, 31.0 and 63.9 respectively). Young women had lower levels of work experience (16.5 hours) than men from EOs (47.4 hours), but were similar in most other activities.

WHAT WE FOUND

Variation between sectors

We can see from Figure 3 that EOs had work experience as the largest element of their provision (68.3%). Their mean input in work experience was 48.7 hours per young person although this varied considerably from person to person. The work placements varied widely:

Garage	Assisting staff with MOTs, general tidying duties
Construction Company	Construction, health and safety, painting, decorating
Post Office	Assisting in a sorting office
Café	Assisting chefs with food preparation, food hygiene, tidying duties
National Tyres	Assist with supervised tyre changes, exhausts and general tidying
Sainsbury	Shelf packing, general tidying, internet shopping
Hotel	Housekeeping duties in bedroom
Garden Centre	Preparation of rabbit cages, cleaning, feeding. Feeding and cleaning birds
Benefits Agency	Receiving and recording mail, binding programmes, using photocopier, using shredder
Charity Shop	Putting clothes in correct place in shop, removing older items, bagging unwanted items

The EO in Area B helped the young people to access qualification training (12.1% of hours) and practical skill courses without qualifications (9.4% of hours). The main qualifications used were Open College Network courses in Telematics, Foundation Craft Awards in plumbing, carpentry and brickwork, and National Vocational Qualifications.

Input from colleges had work awareness courses as a major part of their provision (51.2% of hours). These involved courses with a number of modules providing students with knowledge and understanding of work ethics, work rules and health and safety within the workplace largely through classroom studies. Included within this were discussions of the benefits of paid/unpaid work; identifying where to look for jobs; job centre visit, utilising job points; choosing the right sort of work, applying for jobs; and interview technique.

The schools in the study had qualification courses (45.4%) and practical skills courses (23.8%) as their main vocational inputs to young people. Qualifications included:

- OCR Level 1 (CLAIT) courses
- BTEC Introductory Certificate in Health and Social Care Level 1
- ASDAN Workright, Life Skills Qualification, and World of Work modules.

Work awareness training again covered a wide range of course content, including: catering; office skills; motor vehicle maintenance; painting and decorating; practical work tasks on a farm; hairdressing; coppicing and burning wood; baking; horticulture training and more. A small, but significant, group of young people took part in Young Enterprise, whose aim was learning through creation of a virtual business.



Work experience represented 18.0% of the hours that schools, and 24.2% of the hours that colleges, provided for young people. As with EOs, a wide range of jobs and workplaces were represented, the main difference being the use of in-house opportunities to deliver work experiences:

Kitchen assistants working in school cafés	Make tea/coffee to order, cleaning up, wash up, pour cold drinks to order, serving cakes and washing and drying up
Running a Webb Ivory Catalogue	Delivering catalogues, collecting returns, processing orders online, collecting deliveries, making and delivering orders, collecting the payments/receipting
Janitorial duties	Security checking, moping up
Classroom general assistant	Escorting pupils to the gym or supermarket and helping to get changed or helping other students to shop
Running school tuck shop	Use of tills, serving customers, packaging goods, shelf stacking

The mean input of work experience was 14.8 and 38.3 hours per person for schools and colleges respectively, compared to 48.7 hours per young person for EOs.

Variation within sectors

Schools differed significantly in what they offered in terms of vocational activity. The mainstream school provided virtually all of its vocational input in terms of CV development, citizenship (seen as strongly related to the development of relevant social skills), and preparing for interviews. In special schools there were relatively large variations in hours of activity offered in work experience, vocational qualification courses, practical skills and work awareness courses. A few schools had much higher input, representing a greater emphasis in vocational activity than the majority. This variation can also be seen among colleges.

EOs differed in what service they provided and to an extent we chose them for these differences:

- **Area A's** supported employment agency provided a well defined package: getting to know young people spending time with them in different formal and informal settings; vocational profiling to identify what young people want to do for work and what talents they have to offer; finding individual placement; transport and on the job training and support. The transition team spent most of its time in planning with families, attending review meetings, liaising with social workers over providing support for activity outside school; connecting people to neighbourhood networks for support; facilitating meetings on developing a plan for the future; referring people to jobcentres, supported employment and a range of other health and social care services.
- **Area B** offered a very wide range of individual work experience placements as its primary input (we counted 48 different employers who offered work experiences). It arranged courses with training providers offering qualifications, and practical skill development (e.g. plumbing, carpentry, brickwork). It also arranged a number of experiences designed to build confidence and maturity (e.g. visit to a fire station for re-enactment of collision following car crime and joyriding; linking into army who run team building days); and taster sessions in local colleges.
- **Area C's** supported employment agency also provided a well defined package: Getting to know the person; observation in a variety of settings; home visits to carers; vocational profiling; introducing people to work experience placements; supporting work experience placement and travel, including travel training. The agency also offered some modules of ASDAN 'World of Work'. Placements were again wide and included cafés, garages, charity shops, catering, hotel work, shops, garden centres, country park work and leisure centres.

- **Area D** provided a range of project based work experience offering experiences in all aspects of catering; pottery including hand building with clay, use of cutter using template, constructing pots, vases, painting with oxides, straws and slips, packing and pricing, texturing and decorating; making and restoring woodwork products in a well equipped workshop environment; working on a farm. They also provided training in word processing and internet use.
- **Area E** provided support for part-time paid work and work experience, linking people with learning disabilities from college and non-disabled peers. They spent time carrying out vocational profiling to identify potential jobs; introducing young people to 'buddies' who would support them in jobs; finding placements; helping with interview preparation; introducing people to work experience placements and jobs; monitoring placements. The agency also provided work awareness training for some young people to provide students with knowledge and understanding of work ethics, work rules and health and safety within the workplace. Placements were less varied than elsewhere, but included electrical shops, McDonald's, hairdressing, and restaurants.

Over 60% of carers reported that the annual review had not mentioned employment as an option.

- **Area F** offered a Connexions model of input. Personal Advisors carried out a wide range of activities in support of their transition role. They provided career planning talks to groups; provided information on people's individual next step interests; attended annual reviews; individual interviews with young people on their future; helped people to apply and escorted people to interviews with colleges and other training and employment providers; keeping people informed on progress of applications; organising college tasters and completing Section 140 documentation for college funding; organised work experience placements and visited to monitor.

The help and advice carers received around employment

We also asked carers what help they had received in relation to employment through the school or college, from their Connexions or careers service, and from the EO. The meeting to review their son or daughter's Statement (transition planning) was one source of information and advice. Over 60% of carers reported that the annual review had not mentioned employment as an option. For those at school who had discussed employment (a minority), options had been discussed in only general terms.

Not in any great detail. I think this is going to be a difficult one, because at the moment we all feel that he probably couldn't do a shift that was longer than two hours. (40, 49 Fam)

A number of those at school had discussed employment in the context of going to college first:

What we were talking about was X's move from school to college and what I felt about that and what options we thought would be available to X after college. I think we all agreed that X was a little bit immature to go into the work place at the moment, but after two years at college I don't see any reason she can't go out to the work place. (50, 63 Fam)

Others did find that the school had provided specific help on employment:

It was, yes. Started with it may be possible working with children with special needs, because she's quite good at looking after children with worse disabilities than herself. She works a lot at school feeding children who can't feed themselves, so they thought that might be a good line to go down. Also she likes cookery so they thought maybe possibly a restaurant or something like that. (46, 11 Fam)

Around half of carers mentioned that they had received employment related advice from their careers service. The advice mentioned was of four main types. Carers reported careers service representatives attending transitions review meetings (23.4% of carers) where employment was discussed.

Around 25% of carers had received booklets, leaflets and prospectus for colleges and other options. Carers had also attended interviews with a Careers personal advisor at school or college (22.1%), again where employment was discussed as an option.

Connexions mentioned the part-time job. They did at the last review mention his going one or two days a week to [name] veterinary college down the road, but because he's doing exams at the moment, Mr X, his teacher didn't think it would be appropriate because he needed the time at school to do his exams. (31, 77 Fam)

They gave my son an idea of what he may want to do as paid employment as an option: Factory work, repair work. (61, 32 Fam)

Around 21% of carers reported that a personal advisor had helped to organise a work experience placement for their son or daughter.

They gave them some job experience. They took them out. She was in an office photocopying and worked in a factory. (53, 56 Fam)

For the other half of carers who met with the careers service, the great majority told us that college as a next placement was the only option discussed.

Mostly just college. We expressed, didn't we, we would rather be practising work side of things more. Knowing him, how he is, not a very academic kid, if he's given a task he gets on with it. (31, 73 Fam)

They've given him leaflets and catalogues to look about for courses. It's all college based stuff. I think they try to get them into college. A lot of the kids do achieve GCSEs and things like that who do have a statement so it's a good pathway there. But not everyone gets what they want so they direct them to the colleges so that they've got a couple more years to get what they want. (31, 73 Fam)

We also asked carers about their interaction with EOs. Seventy-six percent had reported having contact with the EO. We found that people generally received more detailed and concrete advice on employment through these organisations than from other sources:

They helped her by getting her this job in McDonalds. She's putting the toys in the Happy Meal boxes. They have arranged all that, they arranged the interview and the induction course. She is coming up to her 5th week. She likes it up there, she's happy at the moment. (22, 38 Fam)

With [EO jobcoach]... he did a brief work experience placement at leisure centre... He did brief work placement at (named) leisure centre... Introduced him to a job which may interest him. (46, 12 Fam)

Around 25% of carers had received booklets, leaflets and prospectus for colleges and other options. Carers had also attended interviews with a careers personal advisor at school or college (22.1%), again where employment was discussed as an option.

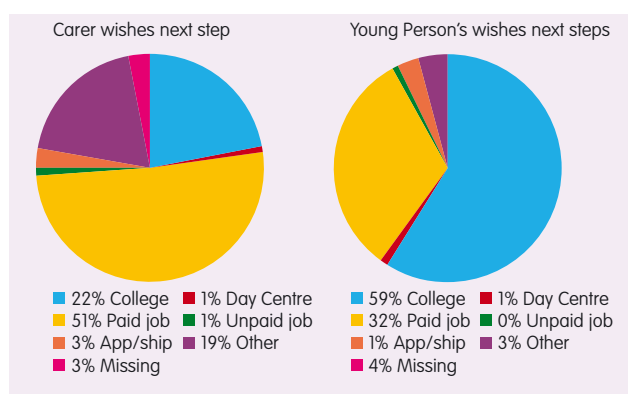
There was a lot of input by schools and colleges, and careers services, about transition next steps. College remained the more common option discussed and promoted by schools and careers services. If there was contact with an EO, employment was more likely to be raised as an option, and any advice given appeared to be more detailed, and more likely to lead to a work experience placement.



What did young people and their carers want as the next step?

We asked young people and carers what they wanted to do when they left school or college. Figure 4 shows that 59.1% of young people wanted a place at college as their next step after school or college, followed by 32.3% who wanted a paid job. Very few wanted to go to a day centre, and none wanted to stay at home. Figure 4 also shows that, when asked “what are your hopes for your son/daughter when they leave school”, 49.7% said a paid job, 21.2% a college place, and 18.8% wanted something else. This mainly meant people wanted the young person to do what they wanted, to be happy, or to grow in confidence and independence. Only 7% wanted a day centre place, and none wanted the young person to stay at home.

Figure 4: Preferred placement after leaving school or college, reported by young people and carers



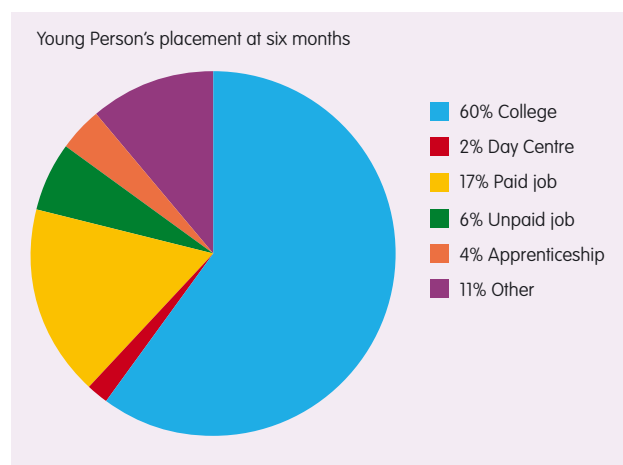
However, when we asked carers what they felt their son/daughter/person they care for will do upon leaving school, their opinions changed. Here, 51.7% said the young person would go to college, and only 26.8% felt they would go into a paid job. Further, 8% now felt that the young person would end up at home, and 2% felt that they would go to a day centre.

When we looked only at what young people and carers wanted to do next, there was an agreement among 52.3% of pairs. The largest agreement was among those who wanted a college place as the next step (34.1%), while 23.9% of those who wanted a paid job agreed.

What happened next – who went into employment?

When we followed-up young people six months after they had left school or college we asked their carers what their young person had done after leaving (Figure 5). We can see that the majority had gone into a college of further education (60.0%), and only a minority had gone into a paid job of any type (17.2%) and 5.5% unpaid or voluntary positions. We found that, despite the original expressed preferences of the young people and carers, 11.1% were at home with no place, and 2.1% were attending day centre.

Figure 5: Placement six months after leaving school or college



We found a significant difference in employment outcomes across our two cohorts, where the 2004/05 cohort experienced an employment rate of 21.2%, compared with 11.7% for our 2005/06 cohort. The overall figure of 17.2% is at the higher end of estimates of current employment rates of young people with learning disabilities (Emerson et al. 1993). The figure for the first cohort is clearly higher than national rates. The difference between the two cohort employment rates show how dramatically these rates can vary over time, and we return to some of the reasons why this may be in a later section.

We also looked at where people were placed in comparison with what people had said that they wanted as a next step. We found that, of those young people who said they wanted college, 79.2% had successfully obtained that placement. Only 29.2% of those who wanted a paid job successfully obtained one.

This was the same for carers, with 80.7% of those wanting a college place receiving it compared to only 17.4% of those who wanted a job. A young person with a learning disability wishing to go to college is 2.7 times more likely to get a college place than a young person wishing to get a paid job. This suggests that significant barriers still exist for young people wanting to follow the employment route.

Employment rates in our sample also varied across areas at six months: Area A (11.8%); B (30.8%); C (0.0%); D (0.0%); E (24.0%); F (15.8%). The highest rates were for Area B, the most able group of school leavers in terms of adaptive behaviour. Area E's young people were college leavers, and Area F's were from schools supported by Connexions only. Neither Area C, the transition employment support team nor Area D, the project-based work experience and training provider saw any young people go through into paid jobs.

We were able to follow up the 2004/05 cohort after a further year. We concentrated on employment, and found that 11 out of the 18 people who had a job after six months still had a job at 18 months, representing a job retention rate of 61.1%. An additional 10 young people from the cohort had found jobs between the first and second follow-up surveys, representing an employment rate of 25.3% during the year.

Table 2: Number of young people entering jobs after transition

	At 6 months		At 18 months		% Retention
	Number of Jobs	% Employment	Number of Jobs	% Employment	
First Cohort	18	21.2%	11 +10	25.3%	61.1%
Second Cohort	7	11.7%			
Total Jobs	25	17.2%			

In summary, the overall employment rates for our sample were at the upper end of estimates for the UK as a whole, but varied significantly, providing an interesting platform for the discussion of what inputs help to provide effective routes into employment.

Employment rates for the most able group and college leavers were the highest. Retention over the 18 month period was moderate, suggesting that the jobs found were reasonably stable, and additional jobs found suggest that some people were able to find jobs after college placements or periods of not working.

The nature of jobs found and the support provided to do so

Job type and employer

Looking at the jobs that were found up until six months after the young people left school, 25 were found from cohorts 1 and 2. Table 3 shows the types of jobs and employers represented.

Table 3: Jobs and employers for young people employed six months after transition

Job type (number of people)	Employer
Exhibition Centre, Scene shifter	Employment Agency
Kitchen worker (2)	Restaurant Catering company
Shop worker (3) Cashier (1)	Department store Retail store at football ground Retail store
Delicatessen assistant (1) Delivery assistant (2) Shop assistant – tills (1)	Furniture store Supermarket
General Assistant	Builders Warehouse
Trainee Mechanic	Auto Centre
Cleaner (2)	Private cleaning company
General assistant (3) Customer service assistant (1)	Fastfood outlets
Bricklayer	Tradesman
Trainee soldier (2)	Army
Hairdresser	Hairdressers
Customers assistant (2)	Garden Centres

Hours

The mean hours worked per week by young people was 16.8 hours. Of the 25 people employed, 10 worked full-time (30 hours or more), 3 worked between 16 and 30 hours, and 12 less than 16 hours per week.

WHAT WE FOUND

Pay

The mean hourly rate was £3.90 per hour (between the National Minimum Wage for those who are 18-21, and those who are 16-17 years of age). Seventy-two percent earned the minimum wage, and 28% earned more. The mean weekly wage was £94.30, with the largest wage being £280 per week. Six people (24%) retained their welfare benefit while working.

Inclusion

We asked carers what the inclusion status of the young person was at work. Sixty percent of carers described their relative's relationship with their work colleagues as 'good' or 'very good'. We also asked how well people mixed with work colleagues. The majority (52%) reported that their relatives 'engaged in frequent and ongoing interactions with others at work'. Only 4% reported that relatives engaged in 'greetings and has/had very brief social interactions with others at the job but little interaction beyond this'. Thirty-two percent were unable to provide an assessment. This represents a positive account of the social inclusion of young people in their workplaces.

We asked carers what the inclusion status of the young person was at work. Sixty percent of carers described their relative's relationship with their work colleagues as 'good' or 'very good'.

Support

Again, we asked carers what support they had had to find this job, what help they had provided, and which agency they worked for. Six young people had found their job through family, or through their family with an agency's help:

Cousin works at Tesco... Someone from [EO Area E] did go down to Tesco to see her on her first day and see how things were going for her and help her settle in. (20, 37 Fam)

I got her the job, I mentioned it, I phoned for her to my hairdresser. (21, 215 Fam)

A further five young people found their job as an extension of a work experience they started at school or college, all with the help of the EO that originally placed them.

He was working for the [EO], working for [company name] as a work placement before he left school. He started off on one day a week, then they put him on two, and then he started there part-time and just after he left school they offered him a full time position. He's been in full time work ever since. (10, 28 Fam)

An additional five young people found their job through the additional actions of the agency they had worked with, but not the same job as they had while at school or college.

They helped with interviews and attended the interview with her. There was also follow-up contact; they phone her regularly to see how she's doing. [EO worker Area A] goes to see her employer if there are difficulties. (53, 58 Fam)

What influenced the transition decisions made?

Young people

Many of those young people who identified college as their first choice expressed a keenness to learn and the hope that courses at FE would offer similar experiences to school activities. This was in part due to prior experience of college through link courses while the young people are still at school. Other school leavers hoped that college would offer them new experiences that may be a radical departure from, what they regarded, as the over-protective environment at school. Many young people commented positively on the fact that college would be a more adult environment that would offer more opportunities for independence and choice to them.

Equally, it was striking how many young people were aware of the role college might play in enhancing their chances for future employment. Many expressed an expectation that college courses would either lead to a job, would give them additional ideas for possible employment, or give them the opportunity to obtain qualifications which were seen as a first step towards employment.

Most young people were also acutely aware of the social dimension of moving from school to college. Often, friends made at school had already moved on to a particular college and the young people looked forward to being re-united with them. Others pointed out the increased opportunities to make new friends and gain some additional independence from carers. Where many more people already go to college than employment, there may be pressure for even more people to take that pathway. These all represent potentially powerful drivers for the college route that did emerge as the most common pathway for leavers.

Young people also mentioned potentially negative aspects of going to college. Some were anxious not to lose friends in moving on. Perceived difficulties in making new friends and the chance of not fitting into the new place produced some misgivings amongst some. The potential of bullying was a common fear, and anxieties about finding their way around in unknown buildings and the college campus.

Travel was another concern, with travel arrangements either not being in place yet causing uncertainty, or young people being worried that they would not cope with commuting to the college by bus.

Others mentioned the physical strain of college attendance as an important concern. They worried that they would be very tired after a long day in college and that work itself would prove too hard for them in the long run.

More than half of all young people who wanted to have a job as a next step mentioned that money played a significant role in their decision. Increased income, independence from parental finances, and also the possibility of moving out of the parental home were important positives of getting a job.

Young people did identify some potentially negative aspects of having a job, such as the need to get up early and that there might be less time for socialising with their friends. Another significant concern for young people was again, that they may encounter some sort of rejection at work or bullying. Travel to work, and how this might affect their ability to maintain employment, was also a worry.



Carers

We asked carers what had influenced their, or their relative's decision on the next step after school or college. Carers fell into two groups on advice from school or college. First, a simple majority of parents said that they had not received any substantial assistance from the school or college during transition for planning the next step of their young person (45%), and had not been influenced by them as a result. This group were more likely to express dissatisfaction with the overall role that the school or college played in the transition planning process, citing poor communication about the planning process and provision of information on future options. The second group of carers identified work experience organised by the school as having had an impact on their decisions (15%).

When asked about the influence that EOs had made on their transition decision, the views were similar. First, a significant number reported that they had no contact with transition agencies or that the activities organised by them had not helped them in their decision (24%). A second group of carers cited work experience and work tasters as the most important influences on their decisions. Carers reported that these experiences gave them a good impression of their son or daughter's abilities and their preferences.

Attending transition review meetings was seen as a positive contribution towards making an informed transition decision by some parents. However, some reported that external agencies seemed to be suffering from shortage of funding and resources which meant that, at times, initial contacts promised to parents during the first meeting were not followed up and work experiences or tasters could not be organised.

WHAT WE FOUND

Parents were also asked what other options they would have liked to see as part of the transition process. While a majority still expressed their overall satisfaction with the existing arrangements, 40% of carers wanted to be kept better informed about transition activities and arrangements. Also, a significant minority thought that their son or daughter would benefit from more work experiences or tasters during the transition period and would also like to see these begin earlier than in the last year.

Perhaps they could, bearing in mind with the difficulties some of these kids have got, they could look at employment, not so much in college, but employment and looking at what areas these kids could work in. Their capabilities, they must have had some ideas from when they did their work experience, maybe they could catch up on that and say to them maybe you could go down this route and then perhaps follow it up from there. He enjoyed the plumbing he did perhaps they could have followed this a bit more. It just seems to be extension studies, extension studies or this B-Tech, it's all a bit something and nothing, nothing relevant to him getting a job. (Carer Case Studies; 73, 31)

Influence

Can we identify any relationships between the concerns mentioned above that young people and carers have over particular types of next step, and their preferences and subsequent outcome? Table 4 shows differences in a number of key inputs and indicators across the aspirations that young people and their carers had about work or college, and where young people were eventually placed.

Those who wanted a job had received over twice the hours of all vocational input from school sources during the year than young people who told us they wanted to go to college. Similarly, those who wanted a job received double the amount of vocational input from the EOs in our study. The same difference in hours of input is found for those who had a job six months later and those who did not. When we consider only work experience input from EOs was double for those who wanted a job and those who found a job, compared to those who wanted college or did not get a job. The trend was reversed for work experienced from schools. This may be due to high levels of work experience from external organisations negating the need for high levels in-house.

Table 4: Differences between key inputs and indicators for transition choices and outcomes

	Wants a job	Wants college	Found job	No job
Mean total vocational input (hrs) from:				
– school	257.1	109.8	228.7	105.3
– EO ¹	116.0	49.6	100.1	45.5
Mean work experience (hrs) from:				
– school	9.7	25.8	17.7	28.8
– EO	81.4	33.8	71.8	31.2
Items of help YP will need in a job ²	3.7	4.3	3.8	4.4
Carer view of job prospects for YP:				
– positive	81.4%	50.6%	75.0%	49.0%
– negative	18.6%	49.4%	25.0%	51.0%
Carer has concern about YP getting a job (%):				
– Yes	36.8%	50.6%	44.0%	78.0%
– No	63.2%	49.4%	56.0%	22.0%
Carer view of impact of YP job on them (%):				
– positive	72.7%	40.0%	50.5%	49.4%
– negative/no change	27.3%	60.0%	49.5%	50.6%

¹ Employment Organisations ² Scored out of eight areas of help that may be needed

We also asked young people what help they would need if they were to get a job, using an eight item list. Those young people who told us that they wanted a job, and that group of young persons who got a job, mentioned fewer items of help they felt they needed than those who wanted to go to college and did not get a job. They either felt more confident, or more skilled, about work.

More carers who said they wanted a job for their young person, and also those whose young person found a job later, reported:

- A positive view of whether the young person had good employment prospects
- Less often having concerns about the young person going into a job
- More often having positive views on what impact the young person getting a job would have on them.

Those young people who told us that they wanted a job, and that group of young persons who got a job, mentioned fewer items of help they felt they needed than those who wanted to go to college and did not get a job.

While causation may be in a reverse direction, with people who want jobs seeking out more vocational input and having more positive attitudes, we feel our interviews suggest that the experiences and feedback young people and carers receive can have an impact on their view of all aspects of employment.

Logistic analysis of relationship between activity and outcome

We carried out a logistic regression analysis to establish what influence personal characteristics, aspirations, and vocational activities from school or college, or the activity of our EOs, had on the probability of a young person getting a paid job. We entered model (area), gender, age, ABS, hours of vocational activity by category delivered by schools/colleges and EOs, data on expressed preference for employment and on carer views of prospects for employment, their concerns about the young person getting a job, and its possible impact on them.

The overall model operated in the area was not a significant factor. Instead, elements of what was offered in each area seemed to influence outcome. Three variables were significantly related to the paid employment outcome at six months:

- Hours delivered in qualification courses by schools
- Hours delivered in obtaining jobs by EOs
- Indicator of whether carer has concerns about young person getting a job.



This tends to confirm the earlier analysis that some of the things that carers worried about, along with vocational experience, did have some effect on employment outcome. Young people whose families had fewer concerns about them entering work were 3.2 times more likely to be employed. Those that had had work qualification based courses (provided by the schools/colleges) were 1.01 times more likely to be employed. Those having EOs work with them on job getting were 1.8 times more likely to be employed.

Around a third of the variation in our sample was described by this model. Prediction within this of who would get a job was about 50% accurate, suggesting that the factors identified here are useful in identifying the building blocks that have to be in place to achieve an employment outcome, but not yet adequate to accurately predict individual success in employment.

Improvements needed in the process of advice and preparation

Satisfaction and suggestions for change

Parental aspirations for their young person are a significant motivation for choosing the further education route as a next step during transition. Interviewers asked respondents to rate their level of satisfaction with the options that were available to their young people. Almost half of all carers were in fact satisfied or very satisfied with the options that were offered to their young people (46.5%). On the other hand more than a third of all respondents were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the options available to young people when leaving school or college (35.4%), representing a significant pool of discontent.

Table 5: Carer satisfaction with post-transition options available

Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
10.4%	36.1%	16.7%	24.3%	11.1%

When pressed about what they would like to change about post-transition options, responses varied considerably. The most frequent response was that they would have liked to be kept more informed about the options in the first place underlining that serious shortcomings still exist in terms of parental involvement in the transition planning process. While young people may be approached effectively by external support agencies in school or college, information about arrangements for work placements or other activities does not always feed through to the carers. This can create friction and dissatisfaction between those agencies and carers when there should be mutual support.

Parents were hesitant to identify additional options that should have been arranged for their son or daughter in the transition period, many pointing out that this was simply because they either didn't know what was out there in the first place, or thought that there is little chance of influencing any placement decision.

Well again more information being readily available, not having to chase it; Really other options being available; I may not have decided for X to go to college if someone could have given me an option of a suitable work placement in which I felt she could cope. Although she's matured during the last few years and she has enjoyed the catering side, if there was an option now for her to transfer straight into a catering sheltered work placement I'd consider it. That may exist but I haven't been made aware of it if it does. (Carer Follow up; 84, 62)

Carers wanted a better source of information to improve this situation:

One person or one body functioning solely to help with that transition period; to give information to the parents, a total package that's available. That would have been good. (Carer Case Studies; 84, 62)

It would have been nice to have somebody. If you haven't got the input it's difficult; there's lots of information. I've always felt I know what I want but I did feel a bit restricted because of how things were. (Carer Case Studies; 44, 41)

Satisfaction with placement six months after leaving

Parental satisfaction is shaped by various factors. Their levels of satisfaction with the outcome of the transition process is strongly related to whether or not these expectations were met in the first months of attending the new placement at college, employment or day centre. The obstacles or problems in arranging the new placement may equally colour their level of satisfaction with the new environment.

Additionally, changes in location and routine may impact negatively or positively on the family life. Not only do new placements often pose serious challenges to their existing work and social routines, they can also alter the financial context to which the family has become accustomed while the young person has been in school or college. Family income can drop or increase and benefits may cease to be an option. Also, carers are very sensitive to changes in the young person's behaviour that may be influenced by the challenges of a new environment and the uncertainties of the transition period.

This will influence their impression of any new placement. Frustration with having few or no options when considering the next step, and lack of help in the decision-making process may also play a part in any dissatisfaction. Where young people had a job, satisfaction was generally high among carers. There was a feeling amongst carers that the job would offer their young people the chance to mix with others in the workforce and especially they expressed the hope that employment would enhance the opportunity for their son or daughter to mix with non-disabled people. More than 70% of those whose young son or daughter had gone on to employment were citing the increase in social inclusion as a reason why they were happy with the choice.

He's very happy with himself, he's met more new friends since he left school. He gets on with everyone well. He doesn't drink, he doesn't smoke, which is good for the youngsters today, with the kind of money he earns. (Carer; 28, 10)

Employment had also impacted positively on family life or fitted in well with existing circumstances, such as receipt of benefits, transport arrangements or work patterns. A quarter of all respondents whose son or daughter had been employed pointed to the young person enjoying their job as one of the main reasons for their satisfaction with the choice. Several carers expressed their relief that, given the high unemployment rate in the area and the lack of work patterns in the family, their young son or daughter had actually found a job and continued to be employed for the time being. To be 'off benefit' was frequently quoted as a reason to be satisfied with the outcome of transition by carers given that expectations of further educational advances were low for them or that further education could be taken up at a later time in life.

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Carers also noted positively the impact of employment on social behaviour within and without the family. The fact that young people were now occupied and had something to do often contrasted with the long period of low occupation during school times that had induced boredom and problematic behaviour. Carers were encouraged by the opportunity for social inclusion employment offered.



CONCLUSIONS

For those young people with learning disabilities that want to pursue paid employment on leaving school or college, there continue to be barriers to them achieving this. Employment is not universally considered to be a viable option for these young people by all professionals involved in transition planning. This is in part due to a lack of options for support into employment locally.

There appears to be a lack of personal support to help people try out jobs while at school/college, and too few organisations that can help find people jobs when they leave. While the UK's Special Educational Needs Code of Practice identifies employment as a legitimate outcome of transition planning, there does appear to be a bias in outcome towards moving on to college for further education. Our data suggests that the involvement of external employment agencies (EOs) in transition plays a crucial role in promoting employment as a viable option to young persons with learning disabilities post school or college.

There appears to be a lack of personal support to help people try out jobs while at school/college, and too few organisations that can help find people jobs when they leave.

Carers

Most carers had clear aspirations for the future of the young people they care for. We were surprised at how many wished for the young person to go into employment at the point before they left school or college. In this they echoed the view of many young people that they do want to become employed. Many carers were clearly frustrated when employment was seemingly rejected as a legitimate next step. The nature of the up-hill battle was confirmed by how few of those who wanted employment as the next step actually achieved it, while so many who wanted a college place did get their wish. Carers were 2.7 times more likely to get a college place for their son or daughter if they wanted it than if they wanted a paid job. Clearly going for employment is still not the easiest option.

It is also clear that, to pursue and get employment, one needs to have employment as an aspiration for the young person in the first place.

Carers give different weight to different factors when deciding on these next steps. Some are heavily influenced by the wishes of the young person with learning disabilities. Some are influenced by a wish to follow a developmental model and provide as much education as possible for the young person to develop their skills and their independence. Still others are influenced by concerns for safety and fears of exploitation and bullying. Many feel under informed and that there is a lack of post school or college placement options to meet what they regard as the very individual needs of the young person. **For this reason, it is necessary that information on all transition options be offered early on in the transition planning timetable. Some suggested that this information should be discussed as early in the first transition review meeting to ensure that all possible options are considered and explored.**

We found that external transition EOs acted as effective promoters of the employment route by offering more concrete advice regarding next steps and practical support options than school or careers service counterparts. It also appeared that EOs were offering a significantly different style of vocational experience compared to schools and colleges. Our data suggests that, where EOs are not involved, advice on paid employment is less frequently given, and where it is, it is less concrete and less likely to lead to work experience or a job.

As a result, fewer carers are likely to pursue paid employment as a next step for the person that they are caring for. **Consequently, employment organisations need to be involved, and involved earlier, in the transition planning process if young people with learning disabilities and their carers are to be fully informed of their options and work toward fulfilling any aspirations for paid employment.**

Our study included a Connexions service as an EO. Their delivery of options in relation to employment was reported to be more effective than the input on employment of careers services in our other areas. Young people in this area went on to find jobs. This suggests that careers services can highlight employment more successfully as an option than they commonly do. What they cannot do is provide more intense job placement finding around individual needs, support young people in work experience placements where they need it, and provide continuing support at this level to help young people into paid jobs later on. **Work experience appears from our study to be a key input, and this has been an added contribution to school and careers service efforts in most of our study areas.**

Carers reported that young people going on work experience did influence their thinking. For some this strengthened their resolve that the young person could work, for some it reduced fears that a job would be an unsupportive environment for the young person, and for others it confirmed that a job was the right next step. However, a significant number of parents still have no contact with EOs or report that promised activities do not materialise due to lack of resources. **To be constructive for the carer and the young person work experience needs to be individually tailored, flexible in the times and length it is delivered, and have a number of support options up to and including on the job support. Carers need feedback on the experience if it is to influence their subsequent decisions. For all of this to happen we need better, well funded, support through experienced EOs who can deliver it.**

There appears to be a lack of personal support to help people try out jobs while at school/college, and too few organisations that can help find people jobs when they leave.

If we are to meet the aspirations of young people who want to be employed after school, then we need to engage more proactively with carers to support them. A consistent theme in the carer interviews was that communication between parents, school and external agencies was still in need of improvement and that parents sometimes felt left out of the transition planning altogether. **Carers pointed to the need for a guaranteed source of information on future options, and a named person who could help them digest information, give advice, and help them to make decisions about transition with their son or daughter. A dedicated transition worker role can provide a focus for this type of service in a local area.**

However, in relation to employment, this is not just a matter of informing families about options. We have seen that carer concerns over job placement plays a significant role in whether people go on to get a job. People who know about employment are needed to discuss with carers any questions and real concerns they have, and to provide evidenced based reassurance where it is possible about the positive outcomes that can be delivered for the young person. Where concerns persist services need to plan credible solutions for the particular needs of that young person. **To be effective, vocational activities, particularly work experiences, have to tackle issues such as: the friendship potential of employment; the monetary arguments for working; how potential bullying and exploitation might be guarded against through good job finding, adequate supervision and the positive advocacy of employment support organisations; how positive impacts on carers can be assured. Agencies need to have the resources and the skills to deliver these solutions through work experiences while people are still in school. They need to demonstrate the positive outcomes that can be achieved and build credibility with carers and young people to better help them find employment when they leave school.**

Work Preparation Activity

Work experience is one important source of preparation for the young person and of information for all to make decisions. We also found that preparation young people have at school and college is also important. We found significant variability in what is offered in terms of vocational preparation for young people with learning disabilities while at school. While some schools used well-structured modules from ASDAN and OCR modules (some with adaptation for ability) to develop work awareness and key skills, others relied on their own work awareness curricula, and some provided no input. While small, the data from the colleges suggests that variability exists here as well. There also seems to be significant overlap in what is offered by schools, colleges and EOs with employment expertise. Some EOs offered work awareness courses and linked young people into external sources of qualification training.

By strengthening our ability to help some young people to enter employment straight from school, we also strengthen our ability to support young people with learning disabilities leaving college to get into employment.

However, not all vocational activities offered by schools/colleges or external organisations, appear to increase the probability of young people with LD being employed post graduation. We found that the use of qualification based courses provided through schools/colleges and efforts to get work experience



placements provided through EOs in the last year of school does seem to have some impact on the likelihood of employment. Provision of this type of partnership was inconsistent across our areas. **Greater consensus is needed within schools and colleges on what are the best materials and curricula to be used in-house. We need this to be linked more effectively with the efforts of EOs so that there is less duplication of effort. This also needs to link more effectively to the work of experienced EOs offering supported work experience with good feedback.**

Underpinning these variations is a lack of agreement on what is possible and desirable for young people with learning disabilities at transition among SENCOs, teachers, careers advisors, social workers and staff from EOs. Without this carers and young people will still receive conflicting advice and they will still be steered away from certain options. We need, through these joint initiatives, to do away with the notion that some people are 'capable' and others 'incapable' of employment. The lack of options for support into employment can often be fed back to young people and their families as 'work is not an option for you', which is then understood as 'incapable.' The issue is one of what support people need to work and whether we can deliver it here, now and with the resources we have. **The development of a more consistent view is required among key school, college, careers, social services and EOs, on what is possible and desirable for young people with learning disabilities to do at transition, including the appropriateness of employment.**

We must challenge the assumption that college is the only training route for all people with learning disabilities. We need to develop instead the idea that learning a job while in that job is education and training by another means, a means that suits many people with learning disabilities better than longer periods of less experientially based learning. By strengthening our ability to help some young people to enter employment straight from school, we also strengthen our ability to support young people with learning disabilities leaving college to get into employment. This study has shown that many college leavers also need additional assistance to enter work, because they cannot learn all they need to know about a job in college.

Currently the college route is heavily emphasised through systems of assessment, availability of funding, and early experiences, such as college 'link' courses, that make the move into college more likely. The more people go, the more there is a social draw for young people to follow their friends into college. These are very useful for those who want to go to college and can benefit fully from it. Without a similar density of resources, procedures, staffing and opportunities, the employment route will never be able to deliver in the same way for those who want a job. As we heard from some of our respondents, carers need to see work experience going somewhere, in the same way as college link courses are seen as an essential preparation for college as a next step. Without this status, work experiences can be seen as irrelevant by families. **We need some rebalancing of resources between colleges and employment support, to provide a strong set of steps into employment. Without this, college students will also fail to enter work because the systems do not exist after college to get them there.**

Some of our respondents pointed to breakdown in communication and information provision between agencies at the transition boundaries. Given that many young people with learning disabilities will still need support to enter employment after college, there is a need to provide continuity of transition planning and co-ordination of effort both within college and in the link to the world of work. Without increased planning and co-ordination through this second transition, including the provision of support for work experiences and paid work by experienced EOs, we will continue to waste the investment we make in young people's training at college, and they will continue to fail to obtain work on leaving. **The sharing of information on the needs of people with learning disabilities between agencies needs to be more effective post-school. There needs to be 'one transition plan' that carries through into post-school placements. This will involve a greater commitment than is currently possible through the extended responsibilities of careers services up to 25 for people with special needs.**



The findings from this study support recent efforts from government and organisations sponsored by it, attempting to forge stronger links between colleges and supported employment services (Learning and Skills Council 2006). In Wales a report has called for government funding specifically to assist adult focussed supported employment services to work with special schools to provide supported work experience and exit routes to jobs (National Assembly for Wales, 2007). **With greater consistency in schools and colleges in vocational course content, and with more resources dedicated to building links to EOs offering employment support, a higher rate of employment among recent graduates with learning disabilities may be within reach and the aim of Every Child Matters to achieve economic well-being may be achieved.**

Given that many young people with learning disabilities will still need support to enter employment after college, there is a need to provide continuity of transition planning and co-ordination of effort both within college and in the link to the world of work.

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