Lifelong Learning and Post-School Transitions for Young People with Disabilities

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Overview

Aim – to highlight some issues in the post-school transitions of young disabled people in Scotland.

- Post-school destinations
- Barriers
- Support
- Progress towards independent adulthood

A note on terminology: The term ASN includes (school-age) children & young people who have difficulty in learning for any reason. Disability is a sub-set of broad ASN category. A person is disabled if they fulfil the criteria set out in the Equality Act 2010.
Presentation draws on research conducted by CREID over past 20 years

- The Meaning of the Learning Society for Adults with Learning Difficulties funded by the ESRC in 2001

- Post-school Transitions of Young People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing funded by the National Deaf Children’s Society in 2012

- Autonomy, Rights and Children with ASN: A New Paradigm? funded by the ESRC (ongoing)
What can we learn from Scottish Government statistics?

- Scottish Government has strong rhetorical commitment to equality for disabled people & the wider human rights agenda.

- But headline ‘positive destination’ data show that those with ASN have worse outcomes than others.

- ‘Positive destination’ is broad brush measure – drilling down by destination and type of difficulty shows wide variation between groups.
'Positive Destinations' worse for those with learning disability; social, emotional & behavioural difficulty; interrupted learning. (Scottish Government 2018)
Destinations of school leavers with and without ASN
(Scottish Government 2018)

- Unknown: 0.5% (Any Additional Support need), 0.3% (No Additional Support need)
- Unemployed Seeking Work: 3.5% (Any Additional Support need), 7.3% (No Additional Support need)
- Activity Agreement: 3.0% (Any Additional Support need), 0.6% (No Additional Support need)
- Employment: 19.6% (Any Additional Support need), 22.5% (No Additional Support need)
- Further Education: 39.6% (Any Additional Support need), 22.5% (No Additional Support need)
- Higher Education: 20.5% (Any Additional Support need), 47.3% (No Additional Support need)
Wide variation in post-school destination for those with different types of disability – HE/FE comparison (Scottish Government 2018)

- Learning disability
- Dyslexia
- Visual impairment
- Autistic spectrum disorder

- Higher Education
- Further Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning disability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dyslexia</td>
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Unequal post-school destinations partly a result of unequal school attainment: Comparison of pupils with no ASN and those with hearing impairment.

SOURCE: ATTAINMENT AND LEAVER DESTINATIONS, SUPPLEMENTARY DATA. SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT (2013)

Note. This figure shows a selection of all qualifications; therefore reported percentages do not add up to 100.
Post-school transition planning

• Most leavers with ASN do not have post-school transition plans

• School leavers who go to university are much better informed about their rights than school leavers with lower qualifications heading for training, FE or other destination.

• Young people from socially-advantaged backgrounds benefit from parental support – inherited economic, social & cultural capital increasingly important.

• Difficulties in transition to adult social and health services
Experiences of higher education

- Disabled people who progress to HE have much better experiences and outcomes than others.
- Well-resourced UK universities generally have good levels of equipment and communication support (but some variation between institutions)
- Not perfect – communication & physical barriers persist, particularly in social space.
- Those who succeeded generally had:
  - good self-advocacy skills
  - pastoral support from disability advisors
  - parental involvement in negotiating support
- Disabled students from disadvantaged backgrounds more likely to drop out.
Further education and training

• Patchy support in further education & very poor support on training programmes.

• More reliance on informal support from peers.

• More instances of discriminatory attitudes.

• Fewer instances of self-advocacy and parental involvement.
Different post school destinations lead to different employment rates—marked variation by type of disability

**SOURCE:** THE LABOUR FORCE SURVEY
Disabled graduates do almost as well in labour market as non-disabled peers.

SOURCE: WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? AGCAS DISABILITY TASK GROUP
Labour market experiences of disabled people with different qualification levels

Barriers to finding and staying in employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduates</th>
<th>People with lower qualifications</th>
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<tr>
<td>Difficulties in applying for work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discrimination in recruitment practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of disability awareness</td>
<td>Lack of work experience</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Limited social networks</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lack of support in employment</td>
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Established markers of adulthood

Marked differences between disabled people with HE qualifications and those with lower qualifications in terms of:

– Independent living arrangements
– Geographical mobility
– Financial independence
– Wider social networks
– Career planning
Janet: 23 years old, learning disabilities, lifelong learning centre
Janet’s story 1

• Mr and Mrs C. have devoted their lives to supporting their twin daughters and see parents as the most effective advocates of their children’s rights – worry that the rights agenda may be misused.

• Describe a ‘constant struggle’ over resources with the Local Authority, particularly social work.

• Have used a range of dispute resolution mechanisms, including the threat of legal action.

• Have also fund-raised to get what they believe is the best from the system.
Janet’s story 2

• Mr & Mrs C. are children’s welfare guardians on the grounds that their daughters lack mental capacity to make decisions on their own behalf.

• Jennifer has clear ideas about her future and wants to achieve normative markers of adult status – a house, a job, a permanent relationship, becoming a parent – parents have reservations.

• Parents are sceptical about some of her ambitions

• They are strong supporters of the lifelong learning project– but the future is uncertain.
The Way Forward…challenges for young people & families

- Tensions between young people’s and parents’ rights need further discussion.
- Parents want to protect – but danger of over-regulation.
- Day care services need to be informed by principles of lifelong learning - the belief that all individuals have limitless capacity for development.
- Transitions need to be considered supported throughout people’s lives, not only when leaving school.
• More direct intervention in labour market by government with the aim of cancelling disadvantages experienced by disabled people.
• Free market policies, where disabled people left to compete with others in open labour market, unlikely to lead to greater equality.
• Far higher investment needed in non-HE post-school provision – in UK this is often run by the private sector, of dubious quality with little regulation.
• Endless cycles of training commonplace for disabled people – much greater focus on individual progression needed.
• Social security benefits paid to disabled people need to be sufficient to banish poverty – the underlying reason for lack of social power.
Thank you!

Further information about CREID’s projects can be found at:

https://www.ed.ac.uk/education/rke/centres-groups/creid/projects