Raising the Achievements of Children and Young People with Specific Speech and Language Difficulties and other Special Educational Needs through School to Work and College

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background to the research

The initial phases of this study arose from concerns that the educational and social needs of children with specific speech and language difficulties (SSLD) were not adequately addressed by the education system. Parents, voluntary agencies and professionals voiced concerns that while considerable strides were being made in the identification of linguistic and cognitive markers associated with language difficulties little was known about the ways in which professionals identified and addressed the children's consequent needs.

Our initial work (Dockrell, George, Lindsay & Roux, 1997) suggested that a range of factors resulted in differential identification and miscommunication across professional groups. We began the first phase of the project in 1993 when we asked teachers in Year 3 who had a child with a SSLD in their class to identify the nature of the children's linguistic difficulties and any associated academic and social problems that were evident for the children. Teachers identified a range of language problems but equally importantly they noted a range of other educational and social barriers that were impeding the pupils' progress. In 1993 we argued that "'best practice" for these children must consider the impact of speech and language problems on children's access to the curriculum and their social and behavioural needs. Narrow diagnostic models could not provide the appropriate information to inform educational practice. Subsequently we followed up a cohort of 69 children, initially identified in Year 3, to address these issues.

The current study

This report focuses on the young people as they finished Year 11 of compulsory education and moved into the first year of post-16 education, training and work. But it is informed by previous phases (Years 3,6,7,9, and 10) and provides a longitundinal study which examines developmental trajectories and identifies predictive factors over time.

Given the nature and complexity of the children's needs we collected information from:

- the children, in terms of standardized tests and their opinions;

- their parents, who arguably know them best;, and,

- their teachers who are responsible for providing them with an appropriate curriculum.

Examining these different data sources allowed us to identify both consistencies and mismatches in perceptions and understandings.

Given the range of difficulties reported to be experienced by the young people we sought to identify how their experiences and developmental trajectories differed from other children with special educational needs (SEN). In Year 6 we matched each child with SSLD with a peer who was experiencing a non-language related SEN. These children were matched on the basis of their identification of needs as being at the same level of need as described in the five stages of the 1994 Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs. We also identified a child in the same class who was not experiencing any difficulties, by asking teachers to identify a typically developing child. This meant we could disaggregate contextual factors, such as school and locality, from the problems experienced by the cohorts with SEN. The differing phases of the project allowed us to use these comparison groups, as appropriate, to distinguish factors specific to SSLD, those that are general to children with SEN and those that reflect stages of education and development for all children. The majority of young people involved in the study were educated in mainstream settings.

Key findings

- The primary challenges for the children identified with specific speech, language and communication difficulties in secondary school revolved around their literacy difficulties – reading, spelling and writing. They had associated educational difficulties throughout their school careers but as they moved from Key Stage 2 into Key Stages 3 and 4 the impact of their impaired reading, spelling and writing became a major concern. While for many, oral language difficulties remained a problem, the more subtle aspects of communication such as understanding of pragmatics were highlighted by parents and teachers. These had an impact on ability to hold conversations and on access to increasingly demanding curriculum subjects where language was central.

- Pupils with SSLD were at risk of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD), particularly hyperactivity and problems relating to their peers. While

hyperactivity improved with age, peer problems as assessed by both parents and teachers remained a significant area of concern throughout the period 8 to 16 years.

- There were differences in the perspectives of teachers and parents with respect to different aspects of BESD, for example, teachers did not consider these pupils had symptoms of emotional difficulties while parents consistently reported this to be the case.

- The pupils with SSLD and the matched group of pupils with special educational needs deriving from general learning difficulties rather than language impairment had significantly lower levels of achievement in both the KS2 and KS3 SATs for English, Maths and Science compared with matched typically developing pupils.

- Between KS2 and KS3 SATs both the SSLD and SEN cohorts made equivalent progress (albeit at a lower level) as the typically developing cohort in science, less progress in maths and no significant progress in English.

- At the end of KS4 the SSLD cohort achieved significantly lower levels of success at GCSE than typically developing pupils. Only 13% of pupils with SSLD achieved 5 GCSE grades A* to C, a level comparable to that of pupils with SEN nationally and the matched SEN cohort in the present study, but substantially below the level that national statistics for all pupils of 56.5%.

- Whereas 73% of pupils with SSLD gained GCSE Maths (A* - G), in English there were just 42%, and only 15% gained a pass at level (A* - C) 2 in each subject.

- Despite their difficulties throughout school, there were indications of more positive experiences and of success during the first year post-16 for the SSLD and SEN cohorts. This was indicated by improving self esteem and positive reports from parents, tutors and the young people themselves.

- There were more similarities than differences between the SSLD and SEN cohorts suggesting that, although their fundamental problems were different, they shared similar learning environments and similar difficulties with basic skills.

- There were also more similarities than differences among the pupils with SSLD in mainstream compared with special provision, suggesting it is the quality of provision rather than its location which is, in general, the major factor.

- The educational trajectories for individual pupils suggest three main types of trajectory: linear, extended or fragmented.

- Overall some 77% of the young people continued in full time education and a further 12% in work related training post-16; this compares favourably with the national average of 84% in further education or training.

- Skilled specialist support, which may vary over the young people's school careers, had an impact on their achievement. Speech and language therapists were particularly important in the early years but had little involvement during KS3 and 4. Connexions Personal Advisers played a key role in optimizing transition from school to post-16.

- Young people's personal strengths, as well as family support, in particular from their parents, were important factors in counteracting the adverse impact of developmental difficulties.

Detailed findings

Educational needs and educational support in Key Stages 3 and 4

- Transition from Year 6 to Year 7 was associated with an increase in standardized reading scores but a decrease in spelling and writing.
- Fewer problems were reported by Year 7 staff than predicted by Year 6 teachers
- Support in secondary school was no longer related to measures of language difficulty.
- Children's special educational needs impacted on classroom practice.
- There were few concerns expressed by form teachers about behaviour, self-esteem or social difficulties in Year 7 but parents reported difficulties with transition to secondary school, low levels of self esteem and poorer progress by their children.
- Differentiation was targeted at pupils with lower standardized scores in Year 7 and involved providing easier work, different objectives and occasionally different teaching strategies.

- In Year 10 parents of the SEN cohort were less positive than the parents of either the SSLD or typically developing cohorts with respect to:
  - Their children's progress.
  - Teachers' understanding of their children's needs in order to provide appropriate support.
  - The ability of the school to meet their child's special educational needs.

Views of the parents of the SSLD cohort and the TD cohort did not differ on these dimensions.

- Parents reported more peer relationship problems in Year 10 for both the SSLD and SEN cohorts compared with typically developing pupils at KS4 and greater likelihood of being bullied than typically developing pupils.
- Pupils in the SEN cohort were about three times more likely to have received temporary or permanent exclusions than either the SSLD or typically developing cohorts.
- Individualised support was commonly reported by parents in Year 10.
- In Year 10 parents reported oral language communication difficulties in conversation for half of the SSLD cohort with one in six having significant problems.
- A general lack of awareness and support by mainstream teachers was reported in KS4 for the pupils' specific needs.
- There were substantial changes in the educational provision attended by the SSLD cohort between Years 3 and 11.

Academic achievement through Key Stages 3 and 4 – Profiles and predictors
- In general pupils with SSLD were placed in schools that were equipped to meet a range of special educational needs. The SSLD cohort continued to have a high level of need with a particular focus on literacy – a need which was not being met successfully.
- The SSLD and SEN cohorts achieved at levels significantly lower than the typically developing cohort during KS3, as measured by SATs.
- The SSLD and SEN cohorts showed a rate of improvement in science commensurate with that of the typically developing cohort, but a lower rate of improvement for maths and no improvement in English between KS2 and KS3.
- Pupils with SSLD gained a mean of 5 GCSEs at 16 years, with qualifications typically achieved at level 1 (grades D - G).
- Whereas 73% gained a GCSE in Maths, only 42% gained a GCSE in English, with just 15% at level 2 (grades A* - C) in each subject.

- There were limited opportunities/access to GNVQs and Vocational GCSEs
- GCSE total points score was significantly correlated with all measures of literacy, receptive vocabulary and numeracy; numeracy and the production of written text were the most significant predictors.
- Pupils originally identified as having SSLD in Year 3 but assigned to different PLASC categories of special educational need at Key Stage 4 had different developmental trajectories across measures of language and literacy.
- Pupils with SSLD followed different educational trajectories which could be characterized as linear, extended or fragmented pathways
- Overall some 77% of the young people continued in full time education and a further 12% in work related training post -16; this compares favourably with the national average of 84% in further education or training.

Behavioural, emotional and social development

- At both 16 and 17 years the SSLD and SEN groups had similar levels of self perception on all measures of self esteem, except physical appearance at 16 years.
- Boys had more positive self perceptions than girls at both 16 and 17 years.
- The combined SSLD/SEN cohort generally had less positive self perceptions than the (US) norms would predict at both 16 and 17 years.
- There was a significant level of stability on several scales: for the SSLD cohort (global self worth, appearance and athletic competence) and SEN cohort (athletic competence, close friendships).
- The young people with SSLD developed more positive self perceptions between 16 years (during the last year of school) and 17 years (first year post-16) across five domains including scholastic competence and global self worth.
- Across the period 8 – 17 years, the perceptions of the SSLD cohort were generally less positive than the norm on all three measures assessed at these times: scholastic competence, social acceptance and physical/athletic competence.
- At 16 years half of the SSLD cohort had peer problems according to their teachers and almost a third had significant levels of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- For the SSLD cohort, trends between 8 and 16 years indicated that teachers rated:
  o The proportion of the SSLD cohort with hyperactivity decreasing from about half to almost none of the cohort.
  o Consistently normal levels of emotional symptoms.
  o Consistently normal levels of conduct problems.

- o High levels of peer problems (about a quarter from 8 to 12 years, rising to half at 16 years) and problems with prosocial behaviour (about 40% at 8 years, reducing to around 20% at 10 and 12 years, but increasing to about a third at 16 years).
- Parents' ratings at 8, 10 and 12 years generally indicated more young people with hyperactivity and conduct problems but prosocial behaviour being normal and similar (high) levels of peer problems compared with teachers' ratings.
- Unlike the teachers, parents reported a large percentage (about 30-40%) of the SSLD cohort having emotional symptoms.
- The SSLD cohort did not differ significantly in the use of productive coping compared to the typically developing cohort.
- However, the SSLD group was more likely to use the 'unproductive-helplessness' type of coping and this style of coping was negatively related to several domains of self-esteem.
- There was no relationship between either expressive or receptive language at age 8, 11, 14, or 16 and the use of productive coping at 16 years
- There was no significant relationship between productive coping and either GCSE points score at 16 years or post-16 destinations.
- Productive coping was not related to behavioural difficulties across ages, except that those with high levels of hyperactivity at age 16 were less likely to use it.
- At 17 years the SSLD and SEN groups had similar levels on a measure of emotional intelligence (Trait E1).
- There was no relationship between Trait EI and measures of language, literacy, numeracy, writing or productive coping for the SSLD group
- There was a statistically significant relationship between Trait EI and all domains of self-perception at 17 years.

Planning and supporting transition to post-16 destinations

- A range of support was available through Connexions.
- All those known to have statements of special educational needs were supported by personal advisers (PAs) in accordance with statutory obligations.
- There were also a small number of cases where, despite the availability of Connexions support, the young person became disengaged during KS4 and remained vulnerable post-16. Such cases highlighted the importance of Connexions' remit continuing into the post-16 phase.

Support in post-16 destinations

The views of tutors/trainers

- Overall, the tutors' views created a very positive picture of successful transition to post-16 further education or training for *most* of the young people in both SSLD and SEN cohorts.
- For most students, tutors predicted a positive next step into continued education, employment or training and to a future where most of the young people were predicted to have jobs as adults in their early twenties.

Young people's views

- Most of the young people, particularly the SSLD cohort, were positive about the support received in school to address their learning needs
- Informal support around school work from family members and friends was also valued
- Post-16 courses were viewed positively by most of the young people with sufficient support in place to enable progress to be made
- All the young people had at least one person in their family or friendship circle to whom they could talk about joys and concerns
- Friendships were an important and positive part of life for all but two of the young people
- Almost all the young people hoped to be employed by their early twenties but the SSLD group were more likely to expect to undertake further study/training.

Parents' views

Parental interviews revealed a picture of post-16 education/training as a positive placement for the majority of these young people. Parents:
- were positive about college experience
- reported few problems with peers and teachers
- and considered the educational support was appropriate

Success was attributed to a range of factors including:
- the individual characteristics of the young person
- factors within the college
- strong familial relationships.

Conclusions and recommendations

The triangulation of data from pupils, parents and professionals and the use of both qualitative and quantitative analyses lead to the following broad issues and recommendations being identified, which we see as providing scope for raising the achievements of all pupils with additional learning needs.

1.   Curriculum

Pupils' literacy and language skills are supported within the primary system but on entry to secondary this specific support either declines or is absent. There is an urgent need to design evidence based interventions that can support the development of basic skills within the KS3, KS4 and post-16 curriculum.

The KS4 curriculum currently for these pupils has focused on traditional GCSEs. There is too little variety and insufficient flexibility and use of opportunities. There is a need to take account of alternate curricula between 14 and 19, curricula which interest pupils and allows them to attain qualifications that are recognized nationally.

2.   Staff development

Many staff in KS3 and KS4 were neither aware of the challenges the pupils face nor equipped to meet the pupils' needs. Better use of transition plans and key workers would go some way to support the young people. Children who have not been identified as experiencing a specific problem in KS2 are particularly vulnerable and special attention should be placed on profiling and monitoring progress in Year 7 in collaboration with parents.

3.   Co-ordination of services

In KS3, KS4 and post-16 there is scope to improve co-ordination between professionals with the involvement of personal advisers early and throughout the transition to post-16 to smooth transitions and identify individuals who are at risk. Such professionals should have an expertise in SEN.

4.   Parents

Throughout their children's school careers parents are key players in supporting them and fighting for services. Greater acknowledgement of parents in secondary school has the potential to raise achievement and support student well-being.

5.   *Pupils*

The pupils in this sample had low levels of self-esteem during secondary school and high levels of emotional distress (as reported by parents). Peer groups and collaborative activities have the power to moderate these problems. Greater focus on the establishment of social groups and networks in KS3 and KS4 and a range of different ways of recognizing and valuing achievements can raise achievement and improve coping skills.

6.   *Post-16*

Post-16 offers the potential of success for these young people both academically and socially. However, their low levels of reading and writing skills need to be identified and supported early. Special systems are needed to support pupils who are on Entry 2 Employment schemes.

Action in these six broad areas can help to raise achievements and improve the quality of life for these young people and better support their parents. A number of specific activities could be implemented immediately:

a)   the National Strategies should address the wider needs of pupils in terms of oral language. Specifically, the needs of children with language and communication difficulties and special educational needs more generally should inform guidance at KS3.

b) Local authorities should provide information to support the identification of children with language and communication difficulties in KS3 and KS4. This could be achieved by leaflets for subject specialists highlighting 'warning signs' such as poor peer relations and limited skills with written language.

c) DfES should consider how best to provide specialist guidance to SENCOs with evidence based strategies to support the development of basic skills in KS3 and KS4.

d) Local Learning and Skills Councils should provide parents of children with special educational needs with information, independent of that provided by schools, about the range of curricular choices available at KS4 and in further education.

e) Local Learning and Skills Councils should design a leaflet for young people using the voices of the pupils and parents in the present study to provide information about the range of choices and the opportunities at post-16.

f) <u>Specialist Connexions advisors</u> should work with and inform the information provided to parents and young people.

g) <u>Schools</u> should develop strategies for involving young people with SSLD and SEN in valued activities within the school community.

h) <u>DfES</u> should undertake additional research to establish

   a. Curricula and teaching strategies and approaches that will engage 'at risk' young people in KS3 and KS4

   b. Whether the positive post-16 experiences of these young people lead to wider achievement and opportunities

Methodology

Participants

A cohort of 69 children was identified in Year 3 as having SSLD by speech and language therapists, educational psychologists and Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs). Fifty nine were identified in one of two local authorities (LAs), one urban, the other a mixture of rural and small towns. Ten children attending residential schools for children with language difficulties, also in Year 3, were also identified. The cohort comprised 52 boys and 17 girls. Assessments at mean age 8 years 3 months confirmed that these children met the criteria for SSLD.

In Year 6, two comparison groups were identified for those SSLD children in mainstream. Teachers selected a typically developing (TD match) child with no special educational needs from the same class and, where possible, a child with special educational needs associated with general learning difficulties who was at the same stage of the 1994 Code of Practice (in force at that time) to get an SEN match.

Measures

Over the total period of the longitudinal study a large number of measures were used including individual assessments of language, literacy, numeracy, self esteem, behaviour, emotional intelligence and coping strategies. Interviews were also held with parents, teachers, college tutors and other professionals (speech and language therapists, educational psychologists, and Connexions Personal Advisers). Teachers and parents also completed behavioural rating scales and questionnaires.

Procedure

There were six phases to the total project at Years 3 and 6 (Key Stage 2), Years 7 and 9 (Key Stage 3), Year 11 (Key Stage 4) and the first year of post-16. In addition, parents were also interviewed in Year 10.

Individual interviews and assessments were undertaken in school/college. Interviews with parents were undertaken face-to-face in the early phases and later by telephone. Interviews with professionals were either face-to-face or by telephone where this was more convenient. Parents and teachers also completed rating scales and questionnaires during several phases and returned these in reply paid enveloped.

1.   Introduction

1.1   *The present study*

This report presents the findings from a longitudinal study of children who have a history of specific speech and language difficulties (SSLD). The present study (2004-2006), funded by the DfES, focused on the young people in their transition from school to post-16. This study built upon earlier research of the same cohort of young people who had been studied since they were 8 years old[1], and two comparison cohorts identified in Year 6, one comprising typically developing children (TD), the other a group of children with special educational needs not the result of primary language problems (SEN).

We draw upon the SSLD cohort primarily, but also the TD and SEN cohorts to explore the nature of these young people's language problems and the ways in which they have impacted on their educational and social-behavioural development. The young people's developmental trajectories are considered in the context of significant others in their lives: parents, teachers and special support staff. In so doing we also explore the nature of the support they have received and consider the implications of our research for planning of services.

1.2   *Children with language and communication needs*

Children may have speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) for a number of reasons. In some cases this is due to another significant developmental difficulty such as profound hearing impairment or autism. A study in England and Wales identified many children and young people with SLCN resulting from different causes. Children with other types of need often had specific language and communication needs in addition to other primary areas of difficulty (Law, Lindsay, Peacey, Gascoigne, Soloff, Radford, Band and Fitzgerald, 2000). The present report concerns a subset of children with SLCN, those who have specific or primary language difficulties. They are characterized by developmental difficulties in speech and language which are not the result of neurological impairment, lack of opportunity, or a part of general difficulty in learning and cognitive functioning (Dockrell and Messer, 1999). The essential notion, therefore, is that the child's language must be delayed from the norm or present a different pattern from the norm and that the language

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[1] Earlier studies were funded by the Gatsby Charitable Trust and the Economic and Social Research Council

problems cannot be explained by other causal factors, either physical or experiential (see Bishop, 1997 or Leonard, 1998, for reviews).

The most common terms to describe these difficulties are *specific language impairment* (SLI) and *specific speech and language difficulties* (SSLD). A study of decision-making and provision in England and Wales found that both SLI and SSLD were commonly used by speech and language therapy services (Lindsay, Dockrell, Mackie and Letchford, 2005a); educationists tend to prefer SSLD. However, the operational definitions of SLI and SSLD are not straightforward. One definition focuses on a discrepancy between verbal and nonverbal ability. The *discrepancy model* requires evidence that a child's language abilities are at a lower level than would be expected given their cognitive ability. In practice, non-verbal measures of cognitive ability have been used as verbal cognitive ability, being reliant on language, is judged an invalid measure. Researchers and practitioners have used different tests and different cut-offs on each test to decide whether a *specific* language difficulty can be identified; there is evidence that patterns of relationships between abilities, and hence the categorization of subtypes, differs over time. Also, the nature of tests intended to measure the same domain varies and this may lead to apparent differences in the domain measured (see Weerdenburg, Verhoeven and Balkom, 2006 for a recent review). Furthermore, language interacts with measures of other abilities. Consequently, there is variation in the research literature and in practice, as shown by our study in England and Wales (Lindsay et al, 2005a) in the children designated as having SLI/SSLD.

A further variation is the use of *diagnostic* or *needs-based models* and the procedures implemented by different local authorities (LAs) and health trusts in matching identification/diagnosis to provision (Dockrell, Lindsay, Letchford and Mackie, 2006; Law, et al 2000; Lindsay, et al., 2005a,b) Thus children across different LAs and Health Trusts may be differentially identified and their needs prioritized in different ways resulting in different types and location of provision. Finally, their needs and relative strengths my differ across time such that identification of a primary language need in the early school years may change to a specific literacy difficulty or a more general learning difficulty in secondary school (Botting, 2005).

Partly because of these variations in practice, as well as the very real conceptual difficulties concerning the nature of 'specific' problems, some researchers and practitioners have advocated the use of the term *primary language impairment* (PLI) for this group. This reflects the fact that language difficulties are the primary factor but acknowledges that there

may be other, comorbid developmental difficulties expressed by the child (e.g. Plante, 1998; Law, Garrett and Nye, 2004). In the present report we shall use the term *specific speech and language difficulties* (SSLD) which has been used throughout the study.

The numbers of children with SSLD are substantial. Studies in the UK and US have indicated prevalence rates of about 5-7% (Burden, Stott, Forge, and Goodyer, 1996; Law, Boyle, Harris, Harkness and Nye, 1998; Tomblin, Records, Buckwatter, Zhand, Smith, and O'Brien 1997). Many of these children, who are typically identified pre-5 years at a time when oral language skills are normally developing rapidly, will have their oral language problems ameliorated or even resolved, but there is evidence that for some children there will be other problems as they get older both with educational attainment (e.g. Beitchman, Wilson, Brownlie, Walters, and Lancee, 1996; Botting, Crutchley and Conti-Ramsden, 1991; Dockrell & Lindsay 1998, 2000, 2001; Snowling, Adams, Bishop and Stothard, 2001) and social-behavioural development (e.g. Baker and Cantwell, 1987; Fujiki, Brinton and Summers, 2001; Lindsay & Dockrell, 2000; Lindsay, Dockrell, Letchford & Mackie, 2002, under revision; Lindsay, Dockrell & Strand, under revision).

1.3   *Developmental trajectories*

Children identified as having SSLD when they are young may subsequently follow one of a number of different trajectories with respect to their oral language skills. Leonard (1998) has identified five main trajectories with respect to language.

<u>Delay</u> A child may have language abilities commensurate with those of a younger child. Subsequently, progress may follow a normal pattern, but lag behind such that, for example, language ability at 8 is like that of a typical 5 year old. Alternatively, the rate of development could be slower so that the child slips further behind.

<u>Plateau</u>   A child may develop at a slower rate but then slow down considerably and even fail to progress beyond a certain level. As a consequence, some aspects of language are never mastered.

<u>Profile difference</u>   Language is multi-faceted and so the simple 'delay' model is rarely applicable. Rather, children may develop different abilities at different rates. Research has indicated that some aspects of language development are more likely than others to be evident in children with SSLD, but there tends to be substantial variation across children.

<u>Abnormal frequency of error</u> Some children produce errors that are common in the speech of younger children but at much higher frequencies and persist for much longer.

<u>Qualitative difference</u> Some children may have language patterns that do not reflect delays but are qualitatively different from the norm. Unusual phonological patterns, for example, are found in some children with SSLD. However, some typically developing children also have some specific, unusual patterns.

It is also important to consider children's trajectories in terms of their other developmental characteristics. For example, what are the trajectories with respect to literacy or mathematical abilities, or of social development? Is it inevitable that children with significant language difficulties will have problems learning to read and spell?

These different factors have important implications for practice as their consideration requires a focus on individual differences and change over time. Taking these into account is also a feature of the special needs system in England with its requirements for a focus on needs rather than diagnoses, and on monitoring and review to ensure that change in needs, whether level or type, is investigated and acted upon.

1.4   *Implications for research*

This approach, however, poses challenges to certain types of research namely those studies that seek to investigate the nature of particular types of developmental difficulty. In this case the researcher seeks to identify an homogeneous sample of children with in terms of the key characteristics, e.g. SSLD. These children can then be compared with others who do not have SSLD. Such research requires careful specification of criteria for the children's inclusion so that the importance of SSLD can be distinguished.

However, researchers do not always define their samples in the same way. For example, discrepancy criteria for SSLD may vary (Dockrell, 2001). A similar problem exists in other comparable research, e.g. dyslexia. As a consequence it is not straightforward to discern what results are applicable to all children with SSLD, or only to those with the characteristics specified by the individual researcher. This approach may also focus on a subgroup of the target sample in an attempt to ensure it is as homogeneous as possible. The problem here is that results may not then be applicable to the full range of the group, e.g. of children with

SSLD in educational settings. A different approach is to start with the practical reality that exists. For example, as there are varying approaches to identifying/diagnosing SSLD then this is the reality and a research study can take this into account.

The present study followed the second route. As will be seen below, the children were identified by practitioners and, once identified, we assessed the children to check the match with expected patterns of abilities – it was high. This approach therefore allows the results obtained over the years to be applicable to children with SSLD as a group within the current educational context. However, it also allows investigation of different trajectories and combinations of difficulties (and strengths).

A further distinction in research methods is the focus on clinical, within-child characteristics (e.g. language skills) compared with consideration of the interaction of child-based abilities and characteristics with the support systems (particularly school and home) relevant to the child. The present study adopted the latter perspective and throughout the research investigations have included non-child as well as child factors (see Markham and Dean, 2006)

Finally, the present research is longitudinal and benefits from studying the same young people from the age of about 8 to 17 years, after completing compulsory education. This approach allows changes over time to be explored, including changes in interactions of factors.

The present study, therefore, draws upon a range of young people for whom different types of information have been collected over a period of almost a decade. This allows triangulation of information sources concurrently and also the investigation of developmental patterns over time (Wedell 1978; Lindsay, 1995).

1.5   *Methodology*

Children identified by professionals as experiencing a specific speech and language difficulty at age 8 have been involved in a longitudinal study to trace their educational needs and experiences. Data to elucidate these needs and experiences have included standardized measures but are complimented by the views of the young people, parents, professionals and service providers. Both qualitative and quantitative data have been collected across the

study phases thereby allowing a conceptualization of both the difficulties experienced by the young people and wider factors relating to their achievement and development.

1.5.1 Participants

SSLD pupils

A cohort of pupils experiencing a specific speech and language difficulty (SSLD) were identified in Year 3. Two LAs, one urban and one rural, and their corresponding health trusts, were surveyed. In each LA a questionnaire was sent to speech and language therapists, educational psychologists, special educational needs co-coordinators and all head teachers in language units and mainstream schools. The professionals were asked to identify all the Year 3 children who had a specific and language difficulty using the following criteria:

- Whether the child has a discrepancy between the level of functioning in the area of speech and language and that which would be expected given the child's functioning in other areas.

- Whether the child is at stage 3 of the Code of Practice current at that time (DfEE1994), or you feel should be at this stage. [2]

The professionals identified a total of 133 children in Year 3 (T1) as having a specific language difficulty (Dockrell and Lindsay, 2000). A subgroup of 59 children was identified for further investigation by random selection from among those children who had no reported factors which would preclude the diagnosis of specific speech and language difficulty, for example hearing impairment, ASD. A further 10 children from residential special schools catering for children with speech and language difficulties, were also identified at this time.

At time of testing, the children had a mean age of 8:3 (range 7:6 - 8:10). All children were on the special educational needs register, with 88% of the participants at Stage 3 or above and, 54% had statements of special educational needs under the Education Act 1996. The children had substantially delayed development on a number of language and educational measures which ranged in mean age scores from 4 years 4 months to 6 years 1 month years at mean chronological age of 8 years 3 months (Dockrell and Lindsay, 1998): Z scores for performance on language measures and non-verbal ability are presented in Table

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[2] *Stage 3: Involvement of appropriate support services and LEA informed*. The SENCO consults appropriate support services, and informs the LEA and the parents. On the basis of this further support and guidance, again jointly with the class teacher, the SENCO formulates an appropriate IEP, and informs the pupil's parents of what it contains. The IEP is implemented by the class teacher, and attainment is reviewed. Following this review, the decision may be taken, either (a) that the pupil has made sufficient progress so as no longer to be in need of an IEP, or (b) that the IEP should continue in its present or modified form, with new targets set, or (c) that the LEA be requested to carry out a Statutory Assessment, with a view to determining whether or not a Statement of SEN should be made, in which case the process moves to Stage 4. (It should be noted that, if at any of the above stages, sufficient educational progress is not made, the head teacher may request that a Statutory Assessment be made.)

1.1 (See Section 1.8 for an explanation of Z scores). Some children opted out of some of the assessments over the period of this study, i.e. up to 17 years..

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Table 1.1 Z Scores on language and non-verbal ability at 8 years.

Assessment	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Outwith the average range
Vocabulary: receptive	68	-1.12	.62	✓
Vocabulary: expressive	68	-1.03	.93	✓
Understanding: grammar	68	-1.45	.94	✓
Narrative production	68	-1.55	1.16	✓
Sentence length	64	-.60	.88	
Phonology	68	-.97	.68	
Non-verbal ability	68	-.77	.87	

To validate the identification of these children as those with SSLD a series of repeated measures *t* tests confirmed that vocabulary scores, grammar scores, narrative production and phonology scores were all significantly below measures of nonverbal ability (BAS naming vocabulary $t = -2.06$, $p = .04$, $d = .29$; BPVS $t = -3.91$, $p < .0005$, $d = .47$; Understanding grammar TROG $t = -6.22$, $p < .0005$, $d = .42$; Narrative Bus Story information $t = -5.74$, $p < .0005$, $d = .75$ and phonological awareness $t = -2.08$, $p = .04$, $d = .27$.

To investigate further the pattern of language performance at this point a factor analysis was computed on the language measures. The analysis generated a single factor solution that accounted for 55% of the variance, with receptive and expressive vocabulary, receptive grammar and narrative loading at or above .75 on the factor. Thus at T1 the children fell within the category of children with specific language and communication needs with difficulties evident in both expressive and receptive language.

Comparison groups

Two comparison groups were identified in Year 6 to allow analysis of a) change in developmental trajectories and b) specific needs of children with language and communication problems. To clarify patterns of developmental trajectory for each child in a

mainstream class two matched peers were identified by their teachers from the same class: a matched typically developing peer at an average level for reading, maths and science (TDmatch N = 42) and a matched child who had special needs who was on the same stage of the Code of Practice as the child with SSLD but whose needs did not includes speech and language needs (SENmatch N = 32). (N.B. not all teachers were able to identify an SEN match from their class).

Informants

At each phase of the project information was sought from parents and teachers. In addition the pupils' views were sought at points of transition – Year 6/7, Year 11 and Year 12.

1.6   Assessments

1.6.1   Standardized tests

A full list of tests used and relevant psychometric properties is reported in Appendix A. Given the size and age span of the population, tests were chosen to be age-appropriate, appropriately standardized and commonly used in the UK and to limit the time the child spend out of the classroom setting. The oral language measures were chosen in order to assess a range of specific oral language skills and thereby provide a broad profile of the child's strengths and weaknesses. Where possible, tests that have been identified as being clinical markers for SSLD were included. In addition to oral language measures, assessments were made of

- Non-verbal ability
- Literacy including reading accuracy, reading comprehension, reading rate, spelling and writing
- Numeracy

1.6.2   Standardized questionnaires

- Self esteem
- Behavioural, emotional and social development
- Coping skills
- Social support

1.6.3   Interviews

All interviews were conducted using schedules devised for the research. All were piloted with young people with language and/or learning difficulties not in the study to ensure that they were appropriate for our participants. In all cases these were a mixture of structured and semi-structured formats to ensure an appropriate balance between consistency of data collection and the opportunity for interviewees to explore issues.

Interviews with professionals were typically conducted face-to-face, but by telephone when it was not possible to make appropriate arrangements or when preferred by the interviewee. Interviews with parents when the children were 8 and 10 years were face-to-face. Subsequent interviews were conducted by telephone.

All interviews were coded individually with inter rater reliability established on a 10 per cent sample. The development of the coding systems was a recursive process where interviews were read and a coding system constructed. Each coding system was tested by two researchers. The process was repeated until a comprehensive coding system to address the issues of each interview schedule was constructed.

1.7   *Project phases*

Informed consent was gained from both the LAs and health trusts when the pupils were in Year 3. In addition informed consent was gained from the head teachers of all the schools that took part in the study, the parents and the young people at each stage of the project. Young people were told that they were free to withdraw from individual tests and some took up this option. Table 1.2 provides details of the six phases of the study and the data collected at each time point.

Table 1.2 Data collected during the six phases of the longitudinal study

Data collection point	Comparison group data	Standardized measures	Parental perspectives	Teacher perspectives	Other professionals	Young people's views
T1 – Year 3		√	√	√	√ EP and SaLT	
T2 – Year 6	√	√	√	√		√
T3 – Year 7	√	√ literacy only	√	√		√
T4- Year 9		√				
T5 – Year 10/11	√	√	√	√	√ Connexions	√
T6- Year 12	√ only SEN match	√ self esteem and coping only		√		√

Complete data sets were available at T1 for the 68 of 69 SSLD[3] cohort for the standardized measures: 1 participant withdrew at T2 and a further three participants withdrew at T5. In addition, teachers and parents were not always able to complete the questionnaires; a minority of parents were unwilling to be interviewed. It was not possible to interview 9 of the 65 in SSLD cohort at post-16, although data were collected on these young people, e.g. from parents and college tutors.

1.8   *Statistical analysis*

The children's scores on all standardized measures were transformed to Z scores to provide a common base of analysis for comparison across tests and time.   These have a mean of 0 and a standard deviation (SD) of 1. Most children in an average sample have Z scores of between -1 SD and +1 SD. The use of Z scores, like standardized scores, allows relative changes over time to be investigated. Between group and time comparisons were analysed either by ANOVAs, t-tests or a non-parametric equivalent. Fixed order regressions were carried out to examine the best explanatory measures for the data patterns. For all significant analyses effect sizes are reported. Effect size is an estimate of the magnitude of

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[3] One child refused to participate in any formal testing

the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable and thereby provides an indication of the importance of the variables examined. Effect sizes are typically reported as small (0.2), medium (0.5) and large (0.8).

1.9   Socio-economic status

Eleven per cent (15) of the total sample were eligible for free school meals in Year 11 (8 SSLD, 3 TD and 4 SEN). This is comparable to the national secondary school average of 14.3%. There was no significant difference between the three cohorts (χ^2 = 0.86, df = 2, ns) and no significant difference between young people in mainstream or special provision (χ^2= 5.30, df = 3, *ns*) although no pupils eligible for FSM were in special schools in Year 11. The only Year 11 attainment that varied between the FSM and the non-FSM group was spelling, with those receiving FSM scoring significantly higher in the combined SEN and SSLD cohorts   (*t* = 2.61, df = 70, *p* = .01) and the SSLD cohort alone (*t* = 2.37, df 50, *p* = .02).

2.   Educational needs and educational support in Key Stages 3 and 4

Conclusions

- Transition from Year 6 to Year 7 was associated with an increase in standardized reading scores but a decrease in spelling and writing.

- Fewer problems were reported by Year 7 staff than predicted by Year 6 teachers.

- Support in secondary was no longer related to measures of language difficulty.

- Children's special educational needs were reported to impact on classroom practice.

- There were few concerns expressed by form teachers about behaviour, self-esteem or social difficulties in Year 7.

- Differentiation was targeted at pupils with lower standardized scores in Year 7.

- Differentiation involved providing easier work, different objectives and occasionally different teaching strategies.

- Parents reported difficulties with transition to secondary school, low levels of self esteem and poorer progress by their children.

- In Year 10 parents of the SEN cohort were less positive than the parents of either the SSLD or typically developing cohorts with respect to:
  - o Their children's progress.
  - o Teachers' understanding of their children's needs in order to provide appropriate support.
  - o The ability of the school to meet their child's special educational needs.

- Views of the parents of the SSLD cohort and the TD cohort did not differ on these dimensions.

- Parents reported more peer relationship problems in Year 10 for both the SSLD and SEN cohorts compared with typically developing pupils at KS4 and greater likelihood of being bullied than typically developing pupils.

- Pupils in the SEN cohort were about three times more likely to have received temporary or permanent exclusions than either the SSLD or typically developing cohorts.

- Individualised support was commonly reported by parents in Year 10.

- In Year 10 parents reported oral language communication difficulties in conversation for half of the SSLD cohort, with one in six reported to have significant problems.

- A general lack of awareness and support by mainstream teachers was reported in KS4 for the pupils' specific needs.

- There were substantial changes in the educational provision attended by the SSLD cohort between Years 3 and 11.

2.1 Background

In this chapter we present data on the transition from primary to secondary school (Year 6 and Year 7) and during Key Stages 3 and 4. All sections contain data on the SSLD cohort; sections with SEN and TD cohort data are indicated.

The majority of the SSLD cohort had completed their KS2 education in mainstream school (71%) with 5 (7%) attending a special unit in the mainstream setting and the remainder of the sample in special schools (18 special language, 2 moderate learning difficulties). Sixty per cent had a statement of special educational needs with a further 16% on stage 3 or 4 of the code of practice. Forty-six per cent were currently receiving speech and language therapy, 24% were under review and 26% had been discharged.

Table 2.1 Means and *SDs* for Year 6 (Time 2) measures for children (*N* = 67)

Time 2 measures	Assessment	Mean Z score	SD
Nonverbal ability	Nonverbal cognitive ability (BAS Matrices)	-.54	.95
Language Measures	BPVS T2	-1.20	.71
	TROG T2	-1.22	1.00
	Listening to paragraphs (CELF)	-1.30	.74
	Recalling sentences (CELF)	-1.76	.74
	Word definitions (BAS)	-1.43	.88
Phonology	PhAB T2	-0.92	.72
	Non-word repetition	-1.97	.97
Literacy	Reading accuracy single word (BAS)	-1.39	.87
Measures	Reading accuracy text (NARA)	-1.46	1.01
	Reading comprehension (NARA)	-1.74	.84
	Spelling (BAS)	-1.25	1.02
Writing measure[4]	WOLD	-1.20	.66
Numeracy	BAS	-1.61	1.00

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[4] Only 64 children completed the writing measure

Table 2.1 provides details of the children's performance on standardized measures of language, literacy and numeracy at age 11. Despite the children's non-verbal performance being within the average range, scores on all other measures in Year 6 were significantly below the average.

These difficulties in language, literacy and numeracy were reflected in the children's achievements in their KS2 SATs as shown in Table 2.2 with each cohort's modal score highlighted..

Table 2.2   Percentage of children in each cohort for Key Stage 2 SATS

Key stage 2	Cohort	Absent	Not entered	Below level	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
English	SSLD	1.7	10	45	1.7	28.3	10	3.3
	Typical	0	0	0	0	7.5	57.5	35
N=131	SEN	0	6.5	38.7	0	41.9	9.7	3.2
Maths	SSLD	1.7	10	30	5	35	17	1.7
	Typical	0	0	2.5	0	15	53	28
N=131	SEN	3.2	9.7	26	0	43	13	3.2
Science	SSLD	3.3	9.8	25	1.6	18	36	6.6
	Typical	0	0	0	0	5	50	45
N=132	SEN	0	6.5	23	0	23	45	3.2

1. Differences within SSLD mainstream and special were only evident with Science SATs where children in special schools were more likely to be dissapplied or fail to achieve a result

2. Typically developing matched peers performed as per national norms with the majority achieving level 4 or above: English 94%, Maths 80% and Science 97%.

3. Differences between SSLD and typical matches were large and statistically significant for measures of reading (t =-9.57, df =107, $p <$ .0005, d =-1.92) and numeracy (t =-7.94 , df = 07, $p <$ .0005, d = -1.93).

4. Differences between SSLD and SEN match on reading and numeracy were not significant (reading t = .14, df = 96, *ns*; numeracy t =-.22, df = 97, *ns*)

2.2　Transitions Profiles and Placements

2.2.1　Placements

As Figure 2.1 shows the children in the SSLD sample experienced significant changes in their educational provision on leaving primary school, with an increase in the numbers of children moving into special provision. The majority remained in this setting for all of their secondary education but as Figure 2.2 illustrates there were still significant movements between educational settings between Year 7 and Year 9 and between Year 9 and Year 11 both from mainstream to specialist settings and from specialist settings to mainstream.
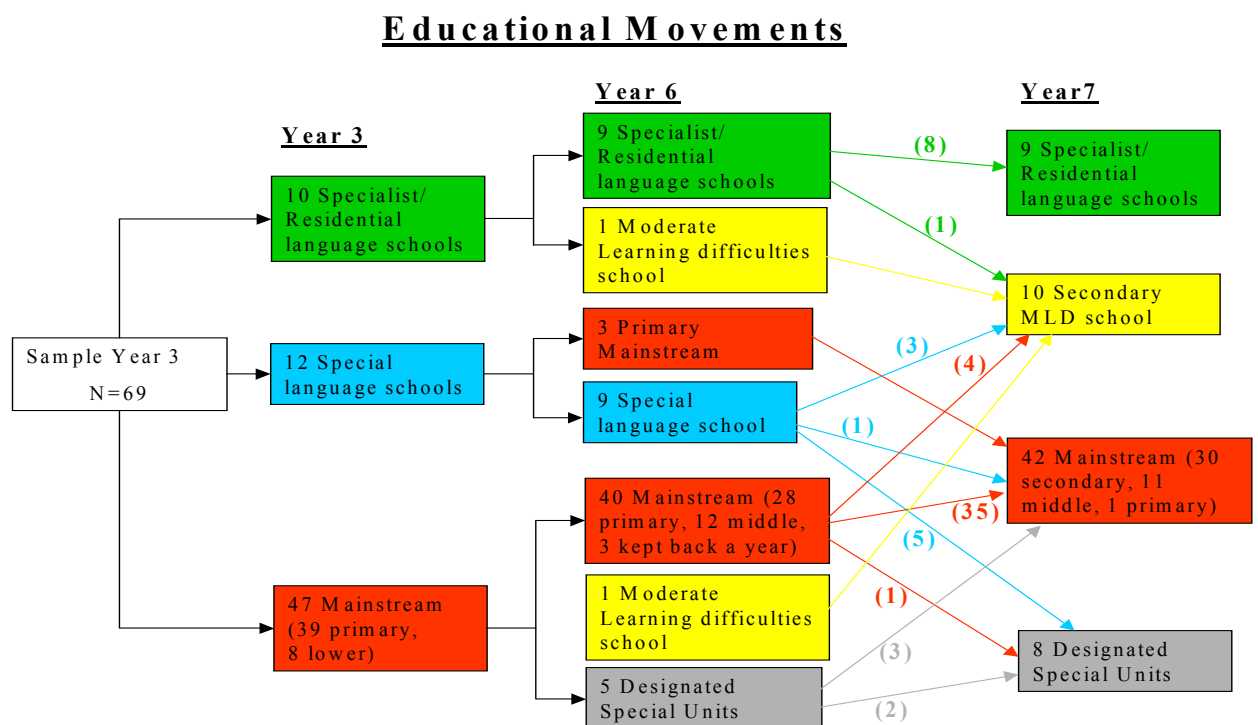

Figure 2.1 Educational Movements of children with Specific Speech and Language Difficulties between ages 8 to 11
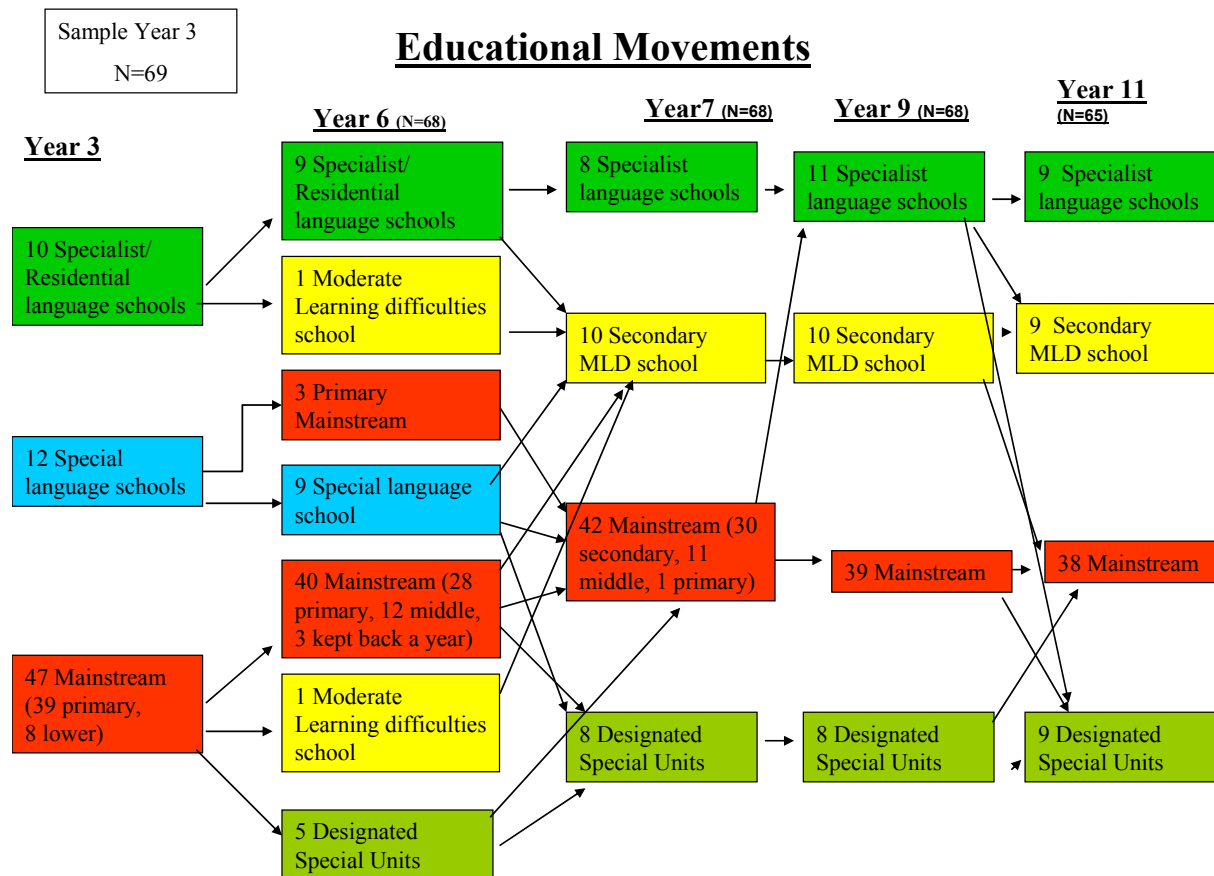
Educational Movements

Sample Year 3
N=69

Year 3

Year 6 (N=68)

Year7 (N=68)

Year 9 (N=68)

Year 11
(N=65)

10 Specialist/ Residential language schools

12 Special language schools

47 Mainstream (39 primary, 8 lower)

9 Specialist/ Residential language schools

1 Moderate Learning difficulties school

3 Primary Mainstream

9 Special language school

40 Mainstream (28 primary, 12 middle, 3 kept back a year)

1 Moderate Learning difficulties school

5 Designated Special Units

8 Specialist language schools

10 Secondary MLD school

42 Mainstream (30 secondary, 11 middle, 1 primary)

8 Designated Special Units

11 Specialist language schools

10 Secondary MLD school

39 Mainstream

8 Designated Special Units

9 Specialist language schools

9 Secondary MLD school

38 Mainstream

9 Designated Special Units

Figure 2.2 Educational Movements of children with Specific Speech and Language Difficulties between ages 8 to 16

2.2.2 Literacy levels in Year 7

We examined the performance of the SSLD cohort on four literacy measures (Neale Accuracy, Neale Comprehension, BAS Spelling and WOLD writing) in the spring/summer term of Year 7. Performance of those children in mainstream provision was contrasted with children in SEN units, special schools and resourced provision henceforth referred to collectively as specialist provision. Performance on all measures was significantly poorer for children in specialist provision as shown in Figure 2.3.

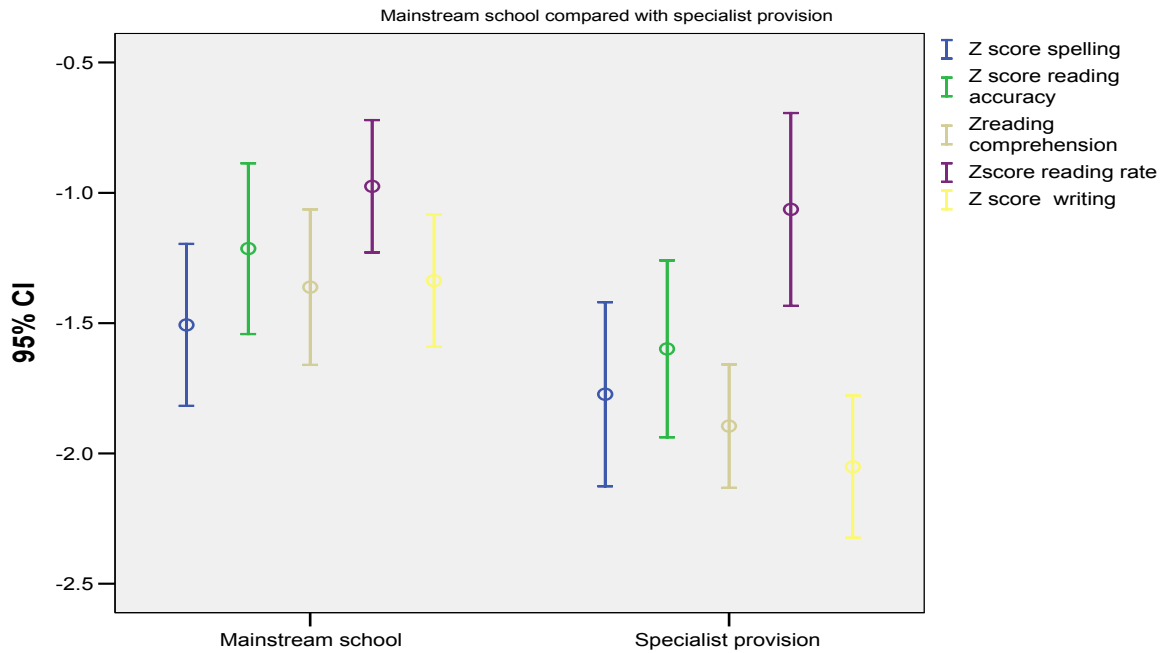**Z scores of literacy attainments in Year 7**

Figure 2.3 Performance of SSLD pupils in mainstream and specialiast provision on standardized tests in Year 7

Change in the children's Z score performance on the literacy measures between Year 6 and Year 7 was examined with a series of repeated measures ANOVAS with year of assessment as the within variable and type of support (Mainstream or Special) as the between group measure.

- Reading improved over time
    - Accuracy (F (1, 65) = 5.75, p =.019, p^2 = .08)
    - Comprehension (F (1, 65) = 6.56, p =.013, p^2 = .09).
    - Pattern of improvement did not differ between mainstream and special settings.
- Spelling decreased over time
    - (F (1, 65) = 30.06, p <.0005, p^2 = .32)
    - Pattern for spelling did not differ between mainstream and special settings.

- Writing decreased over time
  - $(F (1, 61) = 18.87, p < .0005, p^2 = .24)$
  - There was a significant interaction with setting $(F (1, 61) = 4.42, p = .04, p^2 = .07)$ where children in special provision showed a greater drop in writing proficiency than those in mainstream.

2.3   Provision of support in Key Stages 3 and 4

When the SSLD pupils were in Year 7 the secondary schools identified a range of different school funded provision that they had dedicated for children with additional learning needs. As Figure 2.4 shows literacy was targeted directly in 90% of the cases. In addition, there was use of additional teacher and teaching assistant (TA) time[5]. All schools reported meeting additional learning needs for all pupils by at least two forms of school based support.
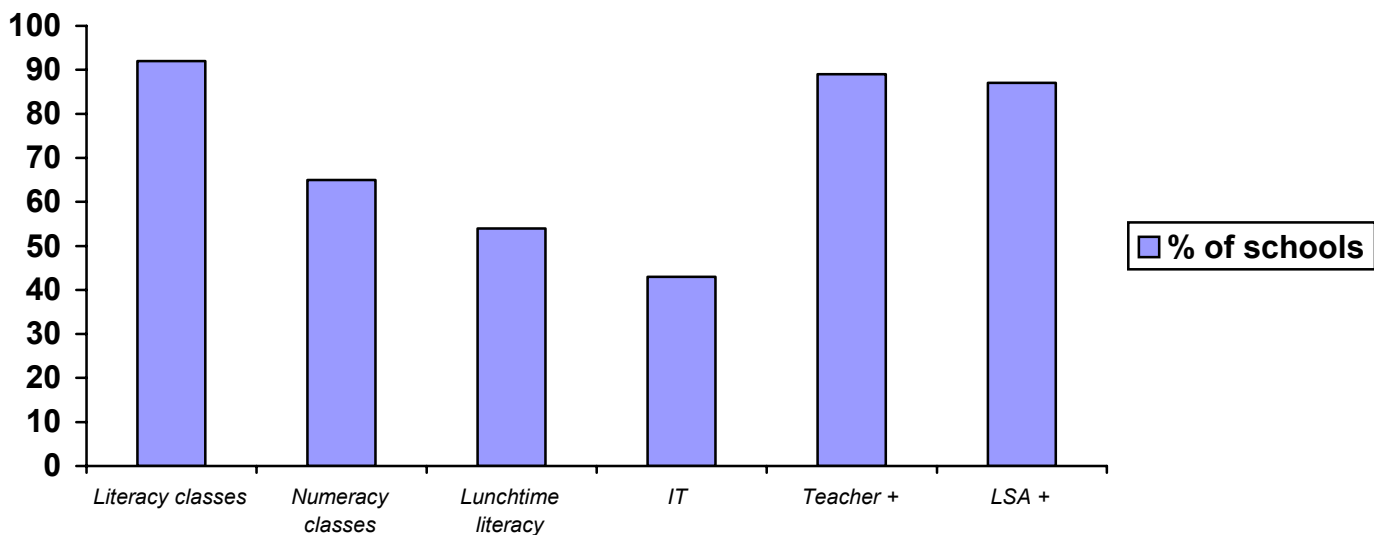

Figure 2.4 Percentage types of resources provided by secondary schools.

These data indicate that, on average, children were located in secondary schools that had support systems in place and that were familiar with the needs of diverse learners.

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[5] At the time of data collection a variety of terms were in use to describe extra support including learning support assistant (LSA). We use TA as the generic term to refer to identified extra teaching assistant support

In Year 7 SENCOs felt it was necessary to differentiate the curriculum to meet the majority of the young people's educational needs (43/50). Typically this was in terms of using different teaching strategies (95%) and the provision of extra support time (96%). There was a general consensus that the children's educational needs were being met – apart from those related to speech and language therapy. By Year 9, 90% of the children who were in mainstream had been discharged from therapy whereas 12 % from specialist provision had been discharged. Form teachers reported that the children experienced significant difficulties with the transition to secondary school (53%). Specific problems were noted with social life (36%), self esteem (35%) and coping with different teachers (25%).

In secondary school, at Year 7, provision of support was statistically related to measures of non-verbal ability while in Year 6 levels of support were significantly related to all standardized language measures and non-verbal ability. While curriculum differentiation in secondary school was related to both non-verbal ability and receptive language, in Year 6 curriculum differentiation was related to the children's expressive language levels.

Neither provision of support nor type of support (in class or withdrawal) varied across the two years suggesting that transition to secondary school, at least in Year 7, did not result in a decrease in support provided. Moreover in secondary school children were significantly more likely to have support for the whole day (54% v. 37%). Similarly across the two years there were no reported differences in the children who had the whole curriculum differentiated (χ^2 = .14, df = 1, ns). Nor did reported differentiation strategies differ: easier work (χ^2 = .005, df = 1, ns), use of specialist materials (χ^2 = .11, df = 1, ns), use of computer time (χ^2 = .17, df = 1, ns) or use of special programmes (χ^2 = .97, df = 1, ns). However SENCOs in secondary schools were statistically significantly more likely to say that they used different teaching strategies (χ^2 = 8.92, df = 1, p < .01) and no Year 6 SENCO reported setting different objectives as a teaching strategy.

The responses of Year 6 class teachers and Year 7 form teachers were compared to examine the congruence between their views of the children's difficulties in Year 7. Teachers in Year 6 were more likely to predict that children would have academic difficulties (χ^2 = 6.23, df = 1, p <.05), social difficulties (χ^2 = 9.0, df = 1, p <.01), self esteem problems (χ^2 = 7.36, df = 1 p <.01) difficulties adapting to a new school χ^2 =10.29, df = 1, p <.01) and difficulties in

changing classrooms ($\chi^2 = 14.0$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$) than was reported by the teachers in Year 7 actually to be the case.

2.3.2   Subject specific teachers

There was a mixed response rate to the questionnaires sent to subject specific teachers and this varied across subject specialists: maximum 35 completions for the children with SSLD, 24 typical comparisons and 23 for the SEN matches.   Sufficient data for analysis were collected from 8 different subjects: Mathematics, English, Science, History, Geography, Modern Foreign Languages, PE and ICT.   Children with SSLD and SEN matches were performing significantly worse than TD matches (Maths, English, Science, Geography and Modern foreign languages). Moreover this profile of differential performance held across both written and project work. A more detailed analysis was possible for the responses in Maths, English and Science, where the largest response rates occurred.

There were high and statistically significant correlations between teachers' ratings of progress and performance compared with the children's scores on the standardized measures of literacy and numeracy in Year 6.   Step-wise linear regressions indicated that scores on the spelling measure accounted for 21% of the variance in the English teachers' progress ratings (F (1, 74) = 20.84, $p < .001$), Numeracy accounted for 30% of the variance in Maths (F (1, 74) = 19.84, $p < .001$) and numeracy accounted for 17% of the variance in science (F (1, 66) = 14.34, $p < .001$). For all three academic subjects the children with SSLD and with other SEN were reported to be experiencing significant difficulties with the curriculum (Maths χ^2 = 19.63, $p < .001$; English χ^2 = 8.04, $p < .01$; Science χ^2 = 16.43, $p < .001$). Moreover the children's needs were having a significant impact on classroom practice (Maths χ^2 = 33.63, $p < .001$; English χ^2 = 18.19 $p < .001$; Science χ^2 = 22.74, $p < .001$).

Teachers felt that there was a greater necessity to differentiate the curriculum for the SSLD and the SEN match cohorts than the TD matches (Maths χ^2 = 15.45, $p < .001$; English χ^2 = 33.67, $p < .001$; Science χ^2 = 14.89, $p < .001$).   When differentiation was reported scores for numeracy, reading, writing and spelling were all significantly lower. Differentiation typically involved providing 'easier work', providing different objectives or use of different strategies. Little use was made of specialist materials, computers or special programmes. The teachers reported that the children's difficulties in class were around communication (Maths 31%; English 31%; Science 28%), literacy (Maths 31%; English 36%; Science 19%) and

concentration (Maths 35%; English 19%; Science 34%). Few concerns about behaviour, self-esteem or social difficulties were reported.

2.4   *Parents and pupils' views about transition*

The children were aware of their difficulties in Year 7. The children with SSLD and the SEN match were significantly more likely to report problems with writing (χ^2= 6.5, *df* = 2, *p* = .04) and reading (χ^2= 12.25, *df* = 2, *p* =.002) than the TD matches but not Maths (χ^2= 3.5, *ns*). Moreover the children with SSLD and their SENmatches were more likely to report getting lost (χ^2 = 9.71, *df* = 2, *p* = .008) forgetting things for lessons (χ^2 = 5.9, *df* = 2, *p* =.05) and not liking having several teachers (χ^2 = 6.9, *df* = 2, *p* =.03) than the TDmatches. Although increased levels of friendships were high for all cohorts both the SSLD and SEN matches reported this less frequently than the TDmatches (χ^2 =11.99 *df* = 2, *p* =.02)

Parents of the TD matches reported that their children had found the transition to secondary school straightforward whereas parents of the SSLD and SENmatches reported that their children had found the move difficult. Similarly parents of the SSLD and SENmatches reported their children as having more difficulty with the curriculum, lower levels of self-esteem, poorer progress and greater difficulties with organisation than the typical group.

2.5   *Educational needs Key Stage 4*

2.5.1   *Statutory information*

As in previous stages of the project, the SSLD sample were found in a range of different school settings (see Figure 2.2). As Figure 2.5 shows, no special provision was provided for any of the TD comparisons, thereby validating the choice of a control group. However for both the SSLD group and the SEN group the majority had some form of recorded need at Year 11 (SSLD 81%; SEN 78.6%).
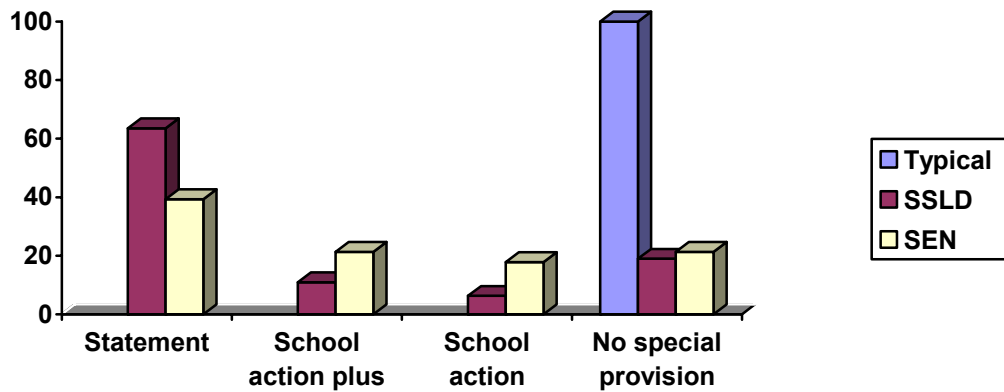
Figure 2.5 Special educational needs status in Year 11 for the three cohorts (%)

For the majority of children identified as having an additional learning need, their needs in Year 11 were classified using the PLASC criteria, which allow both a primary and a secondary need to be recorded. These data are presented in Figure 2.6[6]
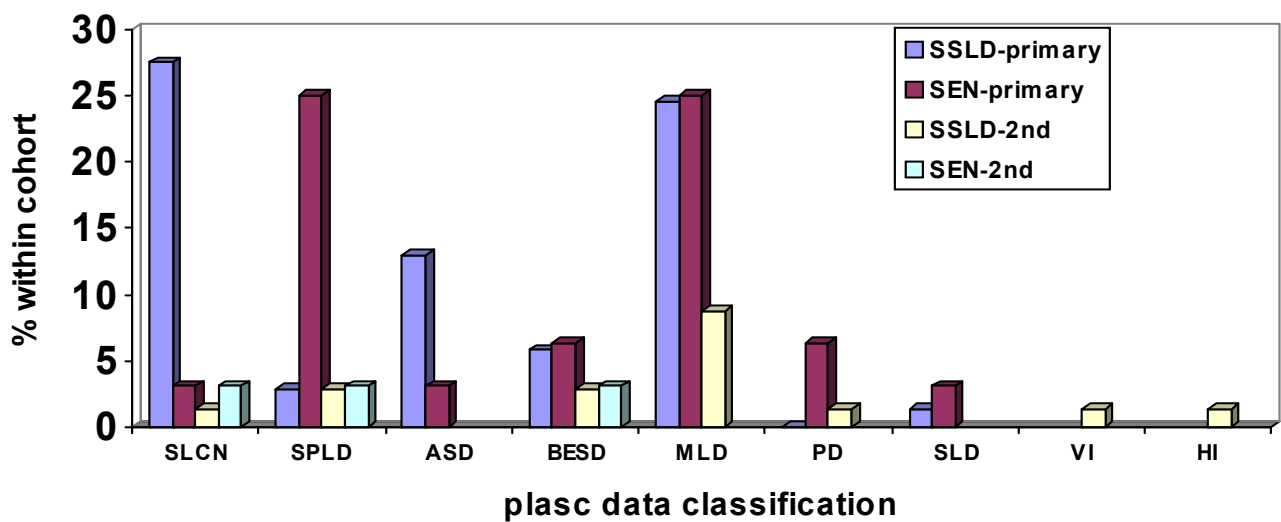

Figure 2.6 PLASC[7] data for the SSLD and SEN cohorts

As Figure 2.6 illustrates a significant proportion (26%) of the young people also had an identified secondary need thus confirming the co-morbidity of difficulties reported in research.

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[6] Primary SEN – NB excludes 4 children at school action with no defining criteria, 14 children with data missing and 49 children where the classification did not apply.

[7] Pupil Level Annual School Census includes information about special educational needs. Data were provided by the DfES. There are 4 main areas of need (Cognition & Learning, Behavioural, emotional and social development, Communication and Interaction and Sensory and/or Physical needs) each is further divided to reflect specific needs

. We reduced the PLASC categories to allow more detailed analysis. Based on frequency within the SSLD cohort we identified four groups: Specific language and communication needs (SLCN), autistic spectrum (ASD), moderate learning difficulty (MLD) and other. There was a highly significant difference between the SSLD and SEN matches in the distribution of primary need identified (χ^2 = 9.31, df = 3, p <.0005). The original SSLD sample were most frequently categorized as experiencing a SLCN (37%) followed by MLD (33%) and ASD (17%)

2.5.2 SENCOs

When the young people were in Y11, a questionnaire was sent to the SENCOs in their schools. Forty-three were completed. This provided information about the school experience of 29 of the 64 young people in the SSLD group (45%) and 14 of the 28 in the SEN group (50%). Only one SENCO respondent was from a residential special schools catering for children with speech and language difficulties.

SENCOs reported that over 70% of young people in both groups required a differentiated curriculum in at least some subjects at Year 10, with 10 of the 29 SSLD and 8 of the 14 SEN young people requiring differentiation across the whole curriculum (further details concerning differentiation are given in Figure 2.7 and Tables 2.1 and 2.2).

Less than half (11 of 29) the SSLD group received support from external professionals, mainly SLTs (7) but also psychologists (3) and a dyslexia centre (1), compared to only 3 of 14 in the SEN group (mental health team, physiotherapist, SLT and psychologist) – further details about the amount of speech and language therapy received is given in Figure 2.8

The majority of SENCOs indicated that the social, speech and language, behavioural and concentration needs of the young people in both groups were being either 'fully' or 'mostly' met; however, in two cases (Young Person 131/SEN and Young Person 132/SSLD), the SENCO view was that their speech and language needs were being met 'not at all'.

Details of the curriculum flexibilities mentioned by SENCOs on the questionnaire are given in Figure 2.7. All but one of these were for young people in the SEN group.

- ASDAN Challenge (Young Person 9/SSLD)

- disapplication from French, replaced by ASDAN Bronze/Silver Challenge (Young Person 78/SEN)

- Study Support sessions attended in place of 1 GCSE subject to reduce workload (Young Person 131/SEN)

- in small group in school 3 days a week receiving support in most subject areas – other 2 days a week off-site doing vocational education (Young Person 89/SEN)

- on a part-time timetable (core curriculum) with the chance to explore vocational opportunities (Young Person 8/SEN)

- full-time alternative curriculum package focused on post-16 preparation (Young Person 75/SEN)

Source: Year 11 SENCO questionnaire

Figure 2.7   Curriculum flexibilities mentioned by SENCOs

Table 2.3 sets out the approaches to differentiation of the curriculum in Year 11.

Table 2.3   Differentiation approaches in Y11 (number)

Differentiation by:	Responses re SSLD group (N=29)		Responses re SEN group (N=14)	
using different teaching strategies	often	11	often	7
	sometimes	7	sometimes	5
	rarely	0	rarely	0
	never	0	never	0
using different materials	often	8	often	5
	sometimes	6	sometimes	5
	rarely	3	rarely	0
	never	0	never	0
using computer/IT	often	4	often	3
	sometimes	12	sometimes	6
	rarely	2	rarely	2
	never	0	never	0
setting easier level work	often	14	often	8
	sometimes	4	sometimes	2
	rarely	1	rarely	0
	never	0	never	1
following a special programme	often	5	often	8
	sometimes	10	sometimes	1
	rarely	4	rarely	0
	never	1	never	0
providing different materials to teachers	often	0	often	1
	sometimes	8	sometimes	5
	rarely	6	rarely	2
	never	6	never	2
providing information on teaching strategies	often	11	often	5
	sometimes	10	sometimes	5
	rarely	1	rarely	0
	never	3		1

Source: Year 11 SENCO questionnaire

Table 2.4 sets out the data from SENCOs as to the delivery settings for differentiated curriculum teaching: in both groups, the most frequent setting was in the ordinary classroom, although small group and individual withdrawal were also used.

Table 2.4   Delivery settings for differentiated curriculum (number)

Delivered:	Responses re SSLD group (N=29)		Responses re SEN group (N=14)	
in classroom	Often	15	Often	6
	sometimes	5	Sometimes	3
	Rarely	2	Rarely	0
	Never	3	Never	2
to small group withdrawn from class	Often	7	Often	4
	sometimes	7	Sometimes	4
	Rarely	1	Rarely	0
	Never	6	Never	2
to individual withdrawn from class	Often	5	Often	3
	sometimes	5	Sometimes	3
	Rarely	8	Rarely	3
	Never	3	Never	2

Source: Year 11 SENCO questionnaire

As the main sample of young people in the study had originally been identified with specific speech and language difficulties, Figure 2.8 sets out the information provided by the SENCO respondents concerning the SLT received by a minority of young people during KS4.

- 8 young people (N=43) received SLT during KS4 - 7 of the 29 in the SSLD group and 1 of the 14 in the SEN group
- of these 8, 4 were in mainstream schools, 3 in integrated language resources and 1 in a residential specialist language school

Amounts of SLT received:

- 4 sessions during Years 9 and 10 (Young Person 4/SSLD - mainstream)
- on a monthly basis (Young Person 33/SSLD - mainstream)
- annual assessment and advice (Young Person 82/SSLD - mainstream)
- on-going monitoring and advice (Young Person 68/SEN – mainstream)
- I CAN SLT session once every half-term (Young Person 62/SSLD – integrated language resource)
- I CAN SLT session once or twice (Young Person 115/SSLD – integrated language resource)
- core staff SLT session twice every half-term (Young Person 92/SSLD – integrated language resource
- once a week for 30 minutes (Young Person 141/SSLD – residential specialist language school)

Source: Year 11 SENCO questionnaire

Figure 2.8   Speech and language therapy received in KS4

2.5.3. Parents

While pupils were in Year 10 their parents were interviewed for a fourth time. Interviews were completed with 50 parents from the SSLD cohort, 20 from the SEN cohort and 31 from the TD cohort. The majority of parents reported that their child continued to experience special educational needs (SSLD 83%; SEN 90%) throughout their secondary school education. As Figure 2.9, shows the main educational need reported varied both across and within the two cohorts.
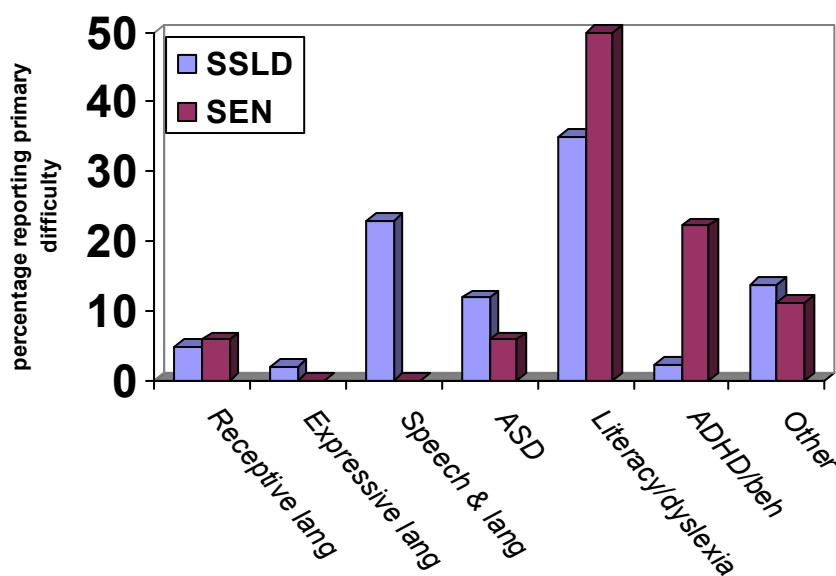
Figure 2.9 Main educational need reported by parents of pupils with SSLD or SEN in Year 10

Language (30%) and literacy (35%) were most frequently reported as the primary need for the children with SSLD. In contrast, for the SEN group few parents reported a language problem with the majority reporting literacy (50%) followed by behaviour (22%). No parent reported a general learning difficulty and only one parent from the SEN group was unsure of their child's main need.

Forty per cent of the SSLD group and 55% of the SEN group reported one or more additional need. These spanned a range of problems: for the SSLD group the most commonly reported additional need was speech and language (14%, N=7) when this had not been reported as a primary need. A further 55% of the parents of the SSLD group reported other communication problems as compared with 22% of the SEN group such as with peers.

We considered the impact of the young people's language performance on their general communication skills. Parents were asked to compare their child's conversational competence with those of young people of an equivalent age. Figure 2.10 indicates that over 50% of the SSLD cohort were still reported to have problems, from the parents' perspective, with about one in five experiencing marked difficulties that were evident in conversation, or exhibiting no conversation.
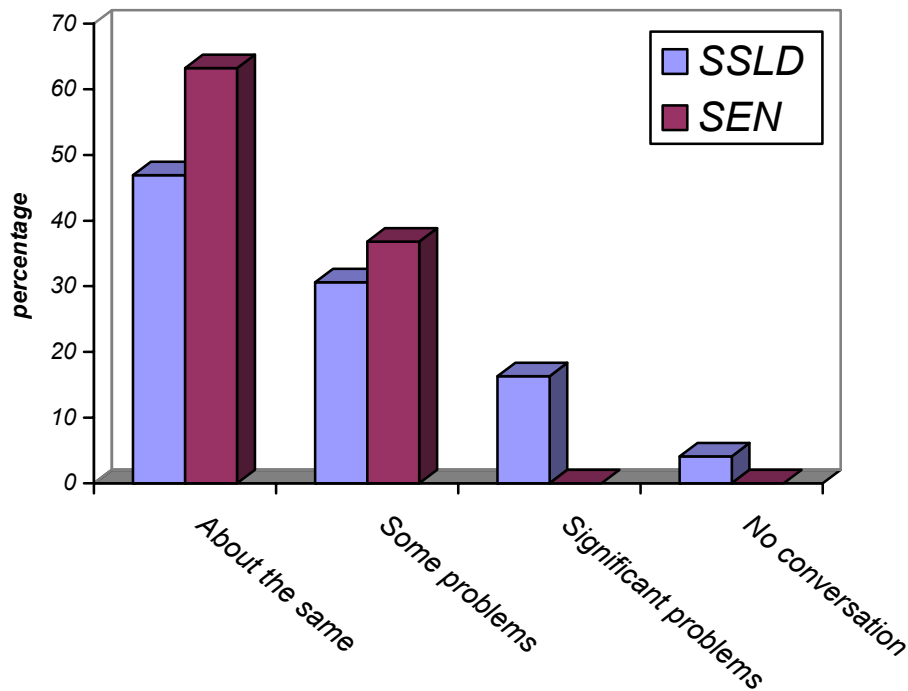
Figure 2.10 Young people's conversation skills in relation to peers

When giving examples of their children's communication difficulties the parents frequently referred to impaired conversation:

> 'Difficulties in stringing a sentence together – a four year old would be better.'

> 'People switch off if they don't understand him, so he doesn't get into conversation.'

> 'Has conversations on his terms about subjects he wants. Sometimes starts a conversation in the middle – others do not know what he's talking about.'

> 'Expressive delay [is] more marked in communication now that he is getting older.'

Parents also frequently distinguished their child's ability with familiar people as opposed to strangers:

> 'Carries on a conversation just as well as others with peers and family, but has trouble with unfamiliar people – loses confidence.'

> 'Could not converse with a stranger.'

'If he doesn't know the person, his conversation is monosyllabic.'

In addition parents referred to the level of conversation:

'OK for ordinary conversation but if conversation was about something deeper or more academic he may have trouble.'

'Difficult to explain things if things go wrong and to get across why it's difficult for him. He ends up getting frustrated, angry and walking out.'

These difficulties were described by some parents:

'Has pragmatic difficulties and difficulties with social skills and organisation.'

'Often says inappropriate things, out of context comments.'

Eighty-five per cent of the SSLD group and 80% of the SEN group were reported to be receiving additional support in school as described in Table 2.5. Differences between these data and those reported by SENCOs in Section 2.5.2 reflect the different respondents.

Table 2.2 Main support reported by parents

	SSLD %	SEN %	COMMENT
Main support			Specific instance reported when for more than 2 children
Speech and language therapist	27	0	
TA	39	31	
Part time unit	7	13	
Special language school	7	0	
Special needs school	12	0	
Other	7	56	SENCO, tutor, mentor, support in class
Additional support	63	45	Noted when reported for more than 2 children
TA	29	0	
OT/life skills	10	0	Reported further 12 SSLD group as a 3rd form of support
Reader	2	15	
SENCO	6	0	

Parents also claimed that the support provided reflected an individualised approach rather than being subject to generic support, with 83% of the SSLD group and 45% of the SEN group receiving highly or quite individualised support. However, the overall organisation of the schools could be important:

'The whole school is set up to make them independent. Support and staff are very good. At home he will not do things but school can make him do them.'

'Whole environment is supportive and nurturing.'

'Special school. Being with children who are like her.'

Individual support could come from teachers, SLTs or other key personnel as these parents of the SSLD cohort indicate:

> 'Support worker at school is very good and special needs teacher at college also.'

> 'Good caring teachers. His support worker is excellent. SEN department are very good and concerned.'

For those children who had individual educational plans (IEPs) the majority of parents felt that the goals were appropriate and challenging (SSLD 91%; SEN 100%). But not all: 'Special needs are not being met; no help in reading, writing or spelling' . Given the needs of the young people it is surprising that a significant minority did not have IEPs (SSLD 15%; SEN 21%) or that the parents did not know whether they had IEPs (SSLD 19%; SEN 5%).

Parents' ratings on school progress, relationships with teachers and the school's ability to meet the children's educational needs were compared across the three cohorts. A Kruskal Wallis analysis revealed no statistically significant differences between the groups for 'getting on with teachers' ($\chi^2 = 3.23$, *ns.*), enjoyment of school ($\chi^2 = 4.22$, *ns.*) and motivation in school ($\chi^2 = 3.23$, *ns.*). However, parents in the three cohorts varied in their views of the children's progress ($\chi^2 = 12.04$, *p* = .002), teachers' understanding of the children's educational needs to provide appropriate support ($\chi^2 = 11.46$, *p* = .003) and the ability of the school to meet the children's educational needs ($\chi^2 = 12.16$, *p* = .002).

Comparisons between the parents of the children SSLD and parents of typically developing children revealed no significant differences on these variables, whereas parents of children with SEN were less positive than the parents of the typically developing children and the parents of children with SSLD in terms of their views of:

a) the children's progress (SEN v Typical *Z* = -3.44, *p* = .001; SEN v SSLD *Z* = -2.34, *p* =.019), e.g.
> 'For the last two or three years I'm not convinced the school is doing the best for him. He could have been stretched more.'

b) teachers' understanding of the children's educational needs in order to provide appropriate support (SEN v Typical *Z* = -3.06, *p* =.002; SEN v SSLD *Z* = -2.62, *p* = .009), e.g.

'Had help – but this was taken away from him. Teachers don't understand his needs at all. Don't recognize ADHD as special needs.'

'Her form teacher didn't even know she had dyslexia. Communication in school is very poor. I don't think they look at each child. [I] don't have any hope in the school at all.'

Teachers do not help her difficulties – their agenda is now getting through the GCSEs.'

'They understand some needs but not his difficulties with spelling, reading and writing.'

c) the ability of the school to meet the children's educational needs (SEN v Typical Z = -2.06, p = .003; SEN v SSLD Z = -3.10, p = .002).

'Don't think they handle G properly. He is difficult but they don't know how to interest him.'

There were no reported differences between the cohorts in the school's ability to meet the young people's social and emotional needs (χ^2= 2.31, *ns*), nor in whether the young people felt part of the school community (χ^2 = .83, *ns*). Indeed there were a number of positive comments here:

'They do much within the school to make them feel included.' (SSLD)

'Full of talk of school. Enjoys going is never left out of anything.' (SEN)

'Always doing something. Never left alone.' (SSLD)

although the difficulties experienced by these young people could impair their engagement:

'Not very included because now he's older he has an awareness of things he can't do – he's given help in school and he feels a bit 'different' – he's aware he's not on the same level as the others.' (SEN)

The benefits of a special school could include a sense of inclusion, as this parent of a young person in the SEN sample noted:

'Feels very much included at (special school). Feels quite included at (mainstream school) but has more in common with the kids at special school.'

However the three groups differed in their reports of whether the children 'got on with their peers at school' (χ^2 = 12.03, p = .002). The two special cohorts did not differ in this dimension (χ^2 = 0.07, *ns*) with both sets of parents reporting more difficulties than parents of the typically developing young people. There were significant differences in the numbers of parents reporting fixed term or permanent exclusions (χ^2 = 7.99, p = .025) with 35% of the SEN sample experiencing exclusion compared with 10% of the SSLD and 13% of the typical sample[8]. Both the SSLD (35%) and the SEN group (55%) were reported to be bullied more often than the typical children (13%) (χ^2 = 10.21, p = .006). The bullying was typically verbal and happened at school.

'Is teased. Two boys were excluding him. He did not understand why.' (SSLD)

'Went to town with another SEN Child – other kids (from the school) threatened to take money from her. She was very upset and frightened. In general L takes kids' banter personally.' (SSLD)

'Many incidents. Was walking along a corridor and pushed into a wall. Was chased coming home from school. Name calling.' (SEN)

This level of bullying differs from reports in Year 7 where no significant differences were evident between the three cohorts (Lindsay, Dockrell & Mackie, under review)

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[8] Three per cent of school pupils experience a fixed term exclusion with 46% of all fixed term and permanent exclusions occurring in year 9 and 10. Analysis of PLASC data 2003 indicate that pupils with SEN but without a statement are 4.3 times more likely to be excluded than those with no SEN. Those with a statement are 3 times more likely to be excluded than those without an SEN.

3.   Academic achievement through Key Stages 3 and 4 - Profiles and predictors

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Conclusions

- In general pupils with SSLD were placed in schools that were equipped to meet a range of special educational needs.

- The SSLD cohort continued to have a high level of need especially with literacy – a need which was not being met successfully.

- The SSLD and SEN cohorts achieved at levels significantly lower than the TD cohort during KS3, as measured by SATs.

- The SSLD and SEN cohorts showed a rate of improvement in science commensurate with that of the TD cohort, but a lower rate of improvement for maths and no improvement in English between KS2 and KS3.

- Pupils with SSLD gained a mean of 5 GCSEs at 16 years, with qualifications typically achieved at level 1 (grades D to G).

- Whereas 73% gained a GCSE in Maths, only 42% gained a GCSE in English, with just 15% at level 2 (grades A* to C) in each subject.

- There were limited opportunities/access to GNVQs and Vocational GCSEs

- GCSE total points score was significantly correlated with all measures of literacy, receptive vocabulary and numeracy; numeracy and the production of written text were the most significant predictors.

- Pupils originally identified as having SSLD in Year 3 but assigned to different PLASC categories of special educational need at Key Stage 4 had different development trajectories across measures of language and literacy.

- Pupils with SSLD followed different educational trajectories which could be characterized as linear, extended or fragmented pathways

- Overall 77% of the young people had continued in full time education with a further 12% in work training contexts. This compares favourably with the national average of 84% in further education or training

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3.1 Background

There is limited information related to the academic achievement of young people with a history of language and communication difficulties and for children with SEN more generally. Moreover, few studies have the benefit of charting pupils' progress through primary and secondary school with both standardized assessment measures and national achievement tests. In this chapter we examine the educational progress of the SSLD cohort throughout secondary school (Key Stages 3 and 4) on both of these measures and consider those standardized assessments which predict points achieved at GCSEs.

3.2 Key stage 3

Changes in the children's Z score performance in the literacy measures between Year 7 and Year 9 were examined with a series of repeated measures ANOVAS with year of assessment as the within variable and type of support (mainstream or specialist) as the between group measure.

- Reading performance remained stable relative to the standardization norms Year 7 – Year 9
    - ○ Accuracy ($F(1, 65) = .64$ *ns*)
    - ○ Comprehension ($F(1, 65) = .06$, *ns*).
    - ○ Pattern of performance did not differ over time between mainstream and special settings.
    - ○ Pupils in mainstream settings scored significantly higher than those in specialist settings for reading comprehension ($F(1, 66) = 5.12$, $p=.03$, $p^2 = .07$).
- Spelling worsened over time relative to the standardization norms Year 7-Year 9
    - ○ ($F(1, 65) =11.90$, $p = .001$, $p^2 = .16$)
    - ○ Pattern for spelling did not differ between mainstream and special settings.
- Writing remained stable over time relative to the standardization norms Year 7 to Year 9
    - ○ ($F(1, 65) = .63$, *ns*)
    - ○ Pupils in the mainstream setting were performing significantly better than those in specialist settings in Year 9 ($F(1, 63)=17.22$, $p <.0005$, $p^2 = .22$).

In line with the children's lower relative levels of literacy skills, pupils' performance on KS3 SATs was significantly below the national targets and those for the TD cohort, as shown in Table 3.1. Modal levels are highlighted for comparative purposes. A significant proportion of

the pupils from both the SSLD cohort and the SEN cohort were either not entered or below level; although this varied across test level: English 53%, Maths 22%, and Science 16%[9].

Table 3.1   Percentage of children in each cohort for Key Stage 3 SATS

Key stage 3	Cohort	Absent	Not entered	Below level	2	3	4	5	6	7+
English	SSLD	6.8	8.5	**46**		3.4	24	10	0	1.7
N=129	Typical	0	0	0		0	7.5	**53**	33	7.5
	SEN	0	17	**33**		3.3	30	10	6.7	0
Maths	SSLD	2	11	11	2	**29**	27	8	6	5
N=133	Typical	0	0	0	0	0	13	23	**35**	30
	SEN	3	17	3	0	30	**33**	10	3	0
Science	SSLD	1.6	7.9	7.9	3.2	**35**	25	11	6.3	1.6
N=133	Typical	0	0	0	0	0	15	30	**45**	10
	SEN	3.3	13	3.3	0	27	**30**	10	13	0

Note: Both Maths and Science provide level 2 grades, English does not.

Across all three assessments during KS3 the gap between the SSLD performance and the expected attainment level widened. To examine relative progress throughout KS3 a scale score ranging from 0-7 was computed for scores across KS2 and KS3 for the SSLD, SEN and TD groups. Absence was recorded as missing data, and the lowest rank given to 'not entered' and the highest rank to SATs level 6/7). These scales allow comparison of a) relative changes of the three cohorts across assessment periods and b) an examination of cognitive and language factors that are associated with the improvement of the young people with SSLD.

English scores showed a significant improvement over time ($F_{(1,118)}$ = 24.07, $p < .0005$) with a significant interaction with cohort ($F_{(2,118)}$ = 5.20, $p = .001$). As Figure 3.1 shows, improvement was largely confined to the typically developing children; the two special cohorts provide little evidence of improving over time.

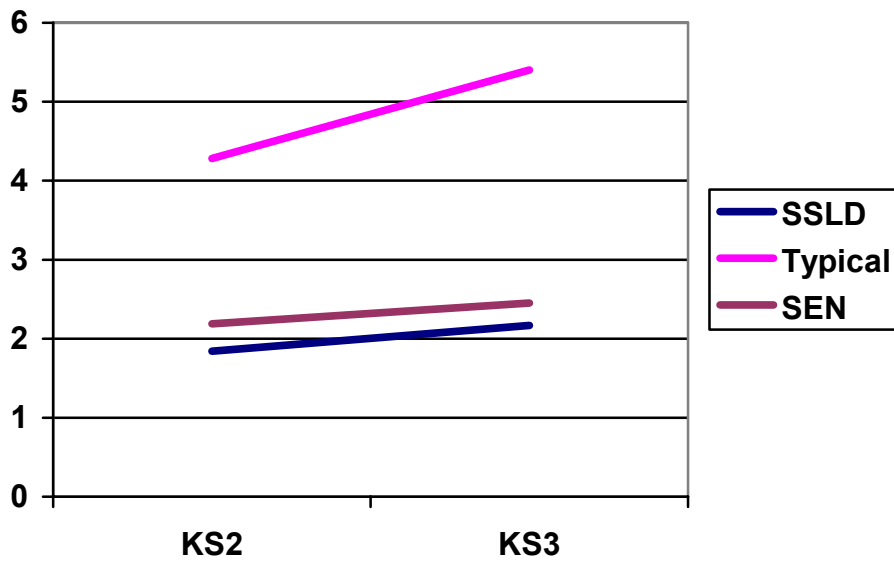[9] Note both Maths and Science provide level 2 grades at KS3. English does not

Figure 3.1 Changes in mean scaled scores for English SATs KS2 to KS3

As Figure 3.2 shows, Maths scores also showed a significant improvement over time ($F_{(1,121)} = 124.426$, $p < .0005$). However, there was a significant interaction with cohort ($F_{(2,121)} = 8.85$, $p < .0005$): the two special cohorts improved but the relative improvement was not as great as that of the typically developing cohort.
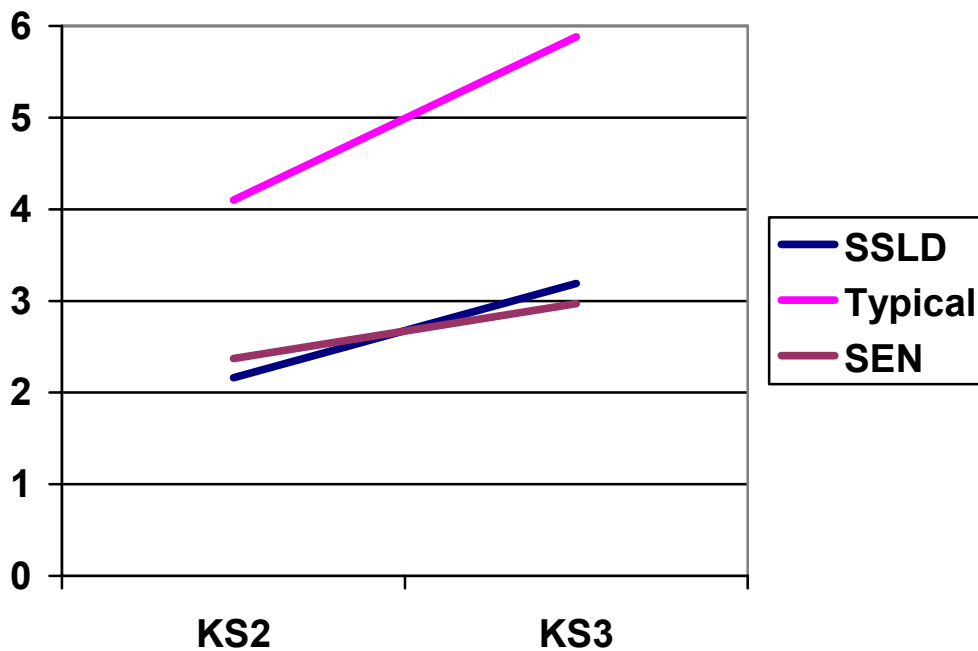
Figure 3.2 Changes in mean scaled scores for Maths SATs KS2 to KS3

In contrast, science scores showed a significant improvement over time (F (1,122) =38.160, p < .0005) but no interaction with cohort (F (2,122) = 2.325, ns), indicating that the improvement trajectories were similar for all three cohorts (see Figure 3.3).
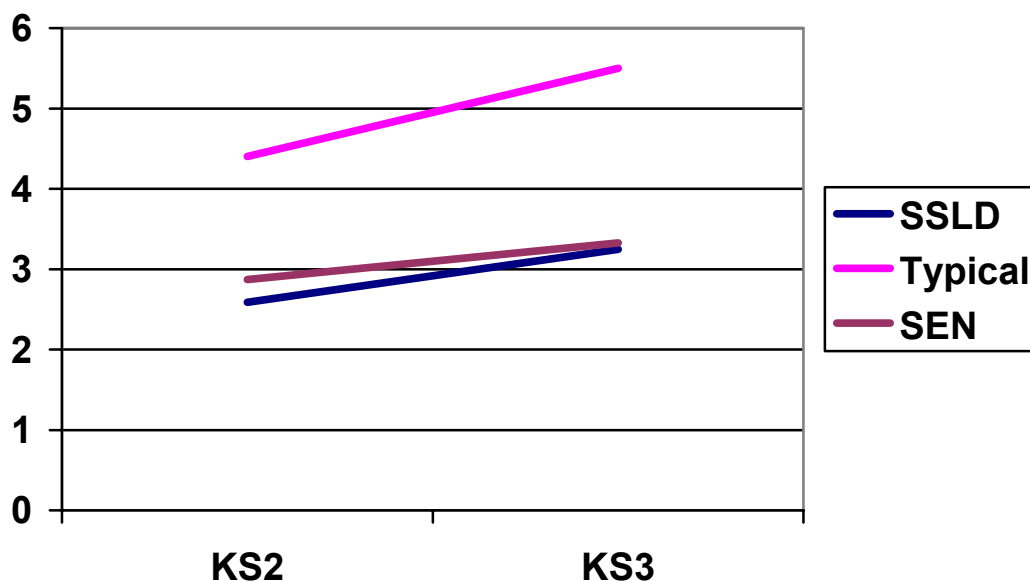

Figure 3.3 Changes in mean scaled scores for Science SATs KS2 to KS3

Analyses indicated that the correlations[10] were highest between KS3 English results and reading and writing scores but not with oral language measures or non-verbal ability. The highest relationship was with the writing measure (r = .67) followed by spelling (r = .62) and reading accuracy (r = .61).

In contrast, achievement in Mathematics correlated highly with reading comprehension (r = .54), verbal definitions (r = .52) and non-verbal reasoning (r = .51), while science scores were highly correlated with two language measures: receptive vocabulary (r = .56) and listening to paragraphs (r = .52)

3.3   Key stage 4 performance in language, literacy and numeracy at the end of compulsory education

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[10] All correlations p < .01

Table 3.2 shows there were significant and large differences between the scores of the SSLD cohort and the published test norms for young people at this age. This was true for all measures except for grammatical comprehension. Indeed, when the literacy measures (reading and writing) were considered alone, the two populations overlap for only 20% of the distributions.

Table 3.2   Differences between children with a history of SSLD and norm at 16 years of age

Competency Assessed	Mean Z	SD	t ($df = 61$)	Effect size d
Language understanding	-1.16	.66	-13.80***	1.75
Language grammatic comprehension	-0.23	1.03	-1.79	0.23
Vocabulary comprehension	-1.28	1.11	-9.01***	1.15
Single word reading	-1.82	.95	-14.97***	1.95
Reading comprehension	-1.60	.71	-17.77***	2.26
Spelling	-1.68	1.01	-13.06***	1.65
Writing	-2.20	1.10	-15.71***	2.14
Numeracy	-1.55	1.12	-10.82***	1.24

*** $p < .001$

Changes in the children's Z score performance on the literacy measures between Year 9 and Year 11 were examined with a series of repeated measures ANOVAS with year of assessment as the within variable and type of support (mainstream or specialist) as the between group measure.   These results present the changes in the mean scores relative to the standardization norms.

- Reading performance varied between Year 9 and Year 11
  - Accuracy did not change (F (1, 56) = 2.50 ns)
  - Comprehension improved (F (1, 58) = 13.52, p = .001, p^2 = .19).
  - Pattern of performance did not differ over time between mainstream and specialist settings.
  - Pupils in mainstream settings scored significantly higher than those in specialist settings for reading comprehension (F (1, 58) = 5.40, p=.02, p^2 = .08).

- Spelling performance did not change between Year 9 and Year 11
  - ((F (1, 54) = .80, ns)
  - Pattern for spelling did not differ between mainstream and specialist settings.
- Writing performance decreased over time Year 9 to Year 11
  - Pupils in the mainstream setting were performing significantly better than those in specialist settings in Year 11 (F (1, 54)=4.92, p =.03, p^2 = .08).

> There were significant differences:
>
> within SSLD cohort mainstream and specialist on language understanding (F (1,61) = 12.17, p = .001).
>
> between SSLD cohort and typical matches on KS4 standardized measures of language, literacy and numeracy
>
> between SSLD cohort and SEN matches: SEN matches were poorer on all measures except language understanding and writing.

3.4 Qualifications at the end of the compulsory school leaving age in relation to the expected norms

Despite these significant limitations in literacy and language the majority of the SSLD group completed one or more formal assessment at the end of their school career. Formal assessments at this point included GCSEs in a range of subjects (including Maths and English). GCSEs are graded A* to G. In addition, bands of pass grades are described as either level 2 (A*- C), the higher level or level 1 (D-G). Typically pupils take an average of 9 different subjects at GCSE, with the target level being level 2. In addition, 'entry level' qualifications, which are the first level in the national qualifications framework, are available to pupils below foundation or level 1 GCSE.
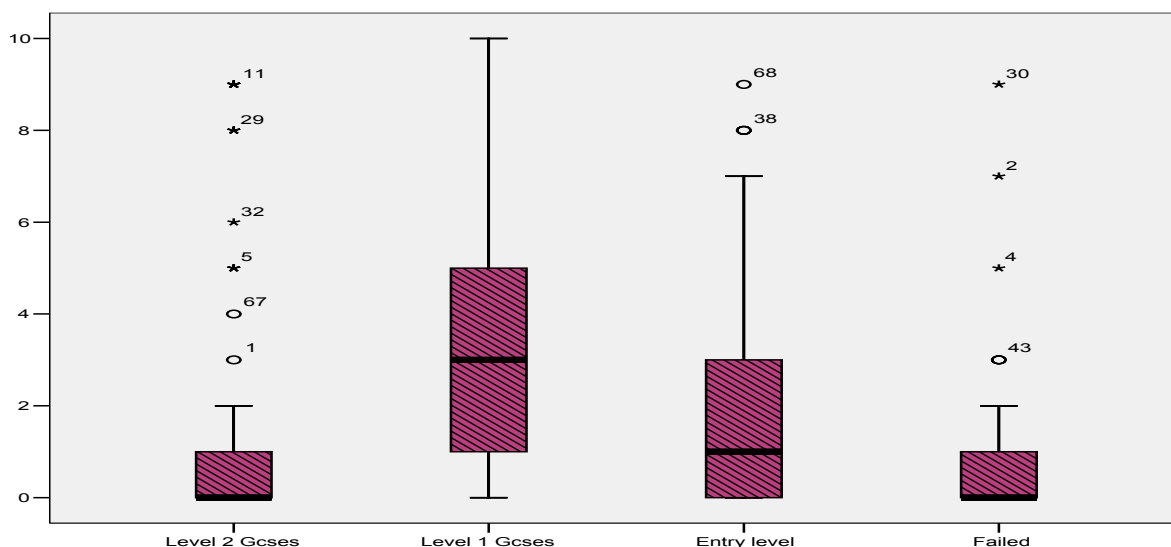
Figure 3.4 Box plots of levels of qualifications achieved by participants at age 16

Pupils in our SSLD sample took an average of seven formal qualifications (range 0-14) with an average of five GCSEs and with a smaller but significant proportion taking entry level qualifications. The box plot in Figure 3.4 provides details of the distribution for levels and numbers of qualifications.   As the figure shows, the majority of pupils achieved their qualifications at level 1. Nonetheless, 12.5% of the pupils achieved 5 GCSEs at level 2.   Seventy-three percent of the young people received a GCSE in Maths ($n = 47$), in contrast to only 42% ($n = 27$) who received a GCSE in English, with 15% at level 2 in each case.

Table 3.3 provides comparative data for the current cohort both nationally and for their respective LAs. At this time two thirds ($n = 41$) had statements of special educational needs. Relatively, they performed well compared with the national statistics for young people with special educational needs in terms of percentages achieving both GCSE 5 A*-C and Any Passes. However in terms of gaining both Maths and English and three other GCSEs their performance was poor.

Table 3.3 Comparison of SSLD cohort's GCSE results with national and home LA averages

	5 A*-C (%)	5 A*-C including English and Maths (%)	Any pass (%)
SSLD total cohort	12.5	2.8	85
Statement			
National	7.1	3.5	80.6
Urban LA	6.2	6.2	70.5
Rural LA	6	4.8	70.5
SEN without a statement			
National	17.1	8.9	91.5
Urban LA	11.4	8	83.1
Rural LA	16.3	8.2	92
No identified SEN			
National	63.4	49.9	98.6
Urban LA	55.7	45.2	97.3
Rural LA	62.5	49.7	98.7

Source: Data from DfES research and statistics gate way

http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000640/index.shtml

In addition to Maths and English, the SSLD cohort took a range of other qualifications including Science ($n = 64$), Information Technology ($n = 33$), Design and Technology ($n = 33$), Religious Studies ($n = 23$), Physical Education ($n = 16$), History ($n = 15$), Art and Design ($n = 14$), Personal and Social Education ($n = 13$), French ($n = 10$), Home Economics ($n = 8$), Geography ($n = 7$), with smaller numbers of students taking other subjects. Surprisingly few students were taking vocational GCSEs or GNVQs (vocational qualifications) at this point.

We considered whether participants' performance differed according to their educational placement (special or mainstream). Young people in special schools were more likely to take entry level qualifications ($F (1,60) = 82.99$ p $< .0005$, $p^2 = .58$) and achieved fewer GCSE passes overall ($F (1,60) = 8.43$ p $= .005$, $p^2 = .13$) . However, the groups did not differ in the average number of points achieved ($F (1,60) = 2.21$, *ns*), which is a grade-related rather than qualification-related criterion. When we considered PLASC categorization it was evident that pupils with SLCN

achieved the lowest overall points (71) contrasted with those categorized as, ASD (120) MLD (108), resolved (129) and other (182).

3.5   *Do language or cognitive factors act as barriers or mediators?*

Further analyses were conducted on the GCSE points scores for the SSLD cohort. This is a measure derived from aggregating points allocated for different grades on the GCSE and other national examinations taken at 16. The correlation between GCSE points score and non-verbal ability assessed at 14 was significant ($r =. 31$, $p = .015$) but substantially smaller than those for language and literacy. Controlling for non-verbal ability at 14 we found large and significant correlations between all language, literacy and numeracy measures except receptive grammar with GCSE points achieved at age 16. Correlations are presented in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 Relationships between standardized measures at age 16 and total points achieved in national tests controlled for non-verbal ability

Competency assessed	Age 16 points
Language understanding	.48**
Language grammatical comprehension	.21
Vocabulary comprehension	.44**
Single word reading	.46**
Reading comprehension	.48**
Spelling	.40**
Writing	.57**
Numeracy	.57**

** $p < .01$

The data were analysed by two hierarchical multiple regressions to test in sequence the role of concurrent measures of language, literacy and numeracy on points achieved and total numbers of GCSEs. Following Cain, Oakhill, and Bryant (2004) we used a minimum of 10 data points per predictor. In the first analysis the initial predictions were tested by entering as regressors nonverbal ability followed by writing, then numeracy and language comprehension with total points as the dependent variable. A significant model emerged

($F(2,57)$ = 17.49, p < .0005, R^2_{adj} = .37) which included writing (= .34, p = .016) and numeracy (= .35, p = .015). A similar pattern occurred for total GCSEs, ($F(2,57)$ = 11.31, p < .0005, R^2_{adj} = .37) again the significant variables included writing (= .30, p = .05) and numeracy (= .30, p = .05). Inclusion of other measures did not significantly change the equation. Nor did altering the order in which the variables were entered.
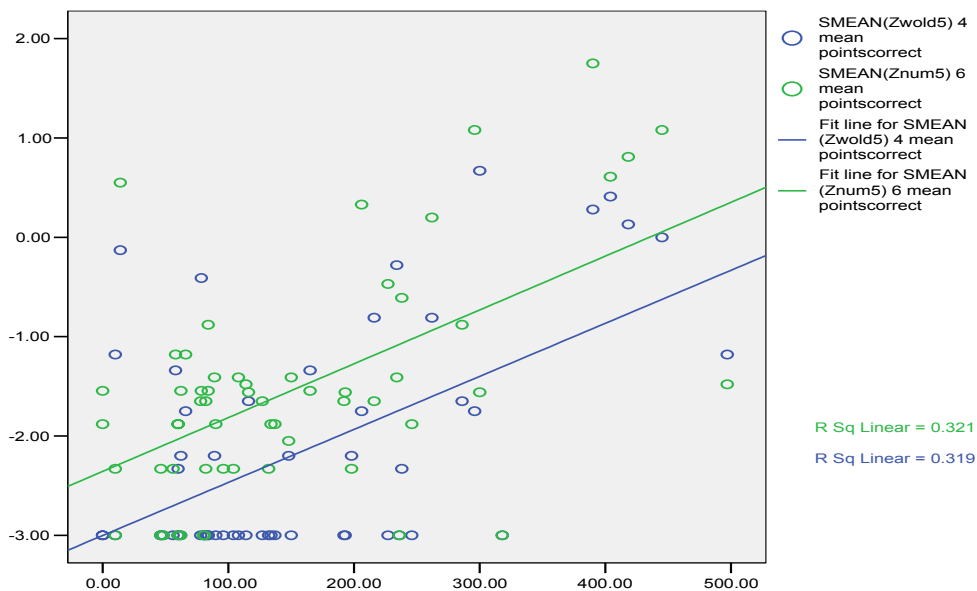

Figure 3.5 Regression equations for numeracy and writing with GCSE points

Examination of earlier skills which correlated with GCSE points indicated that at age 14 the major correlations were with measures of literacy (word reading r =.36, p = .003; text reading r = .31, p = .007, reading comprehension r =. .42, p < .0005; writing r = .45, p < .0005), while at age 11 language measures (word structure r = .46, p < .0005; listening to paragraphs r = .49, p < .0005; recalling sentences r = .25, p = .034; vocabulary r = .37, p = .002) as well as literacy measures (reading accuracy r = .30, p = .011; reading comprehension r =.27, p =.019) were associated with performance at 16. Significant correlations from age 8 again included both language (vocabulary r = .39, p = .001; oral narrative r = .28, p = .02) and literacy (reading comprehension r = .34, p = .006; reading text r = . 34, p = .005; spelling r = . 31, p = .01). These data emphasise the robust and significant role of oral language and literacy in pupils' attainments at the end of compulsory education.

3.6   Differential patterns of change across the project phases

We considered the pattern of performance on the key variables of non-verbal ability, language, literacy and writing over time for the SSLD cohort assigned to different PLASC categories (ASD, MLD, SLCN and Resolved). In all cases Z scores were used to allow comparison across measures. There were no significant differences over time or between groups for non-verbal ability or for numeracy assessments.

Nor was there an overall change in receptive vocabulary Z scores over time (F (1,44) = 2.49, *ns*) however there was an interaction between time and group (F (3, 44) = 3.21 p =. 03 p^2=.19) Children with resolved difficulties improved in their vocabulary performance relative to standardization norms over time whereas those classified with moderate learning difficulties declined. There were no other significant differences over time and no overall group differences (F (3,44) = 2.28, *ns*) as shown in Figure 3.6.

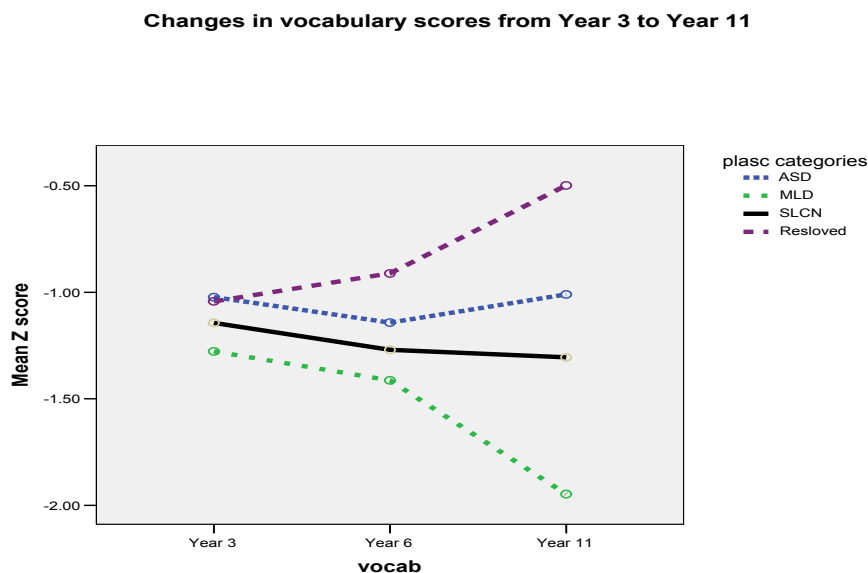**Changes in vocabulary scores from Year 3 to Year 11**

Figure 3.6 Changes in vocabulary for pupils with different needs recorded in PLASC

Expressive language difficulties revealed a different pattern, as shown in Figure 3.7. There was a trend for differences across the measurement points (F (1,44) = 3.90 p = .055, p^2 = .08) with no interaction between time and group (F (3, 44) = .60, *ns*) but a significant group effect (F (3.44) = 3.62, p = .02, p^2 = .20). Participants categorized as SLCN performed significantly worse than the ASD and resolved groups but not the MLD group. No other group differences were significant.

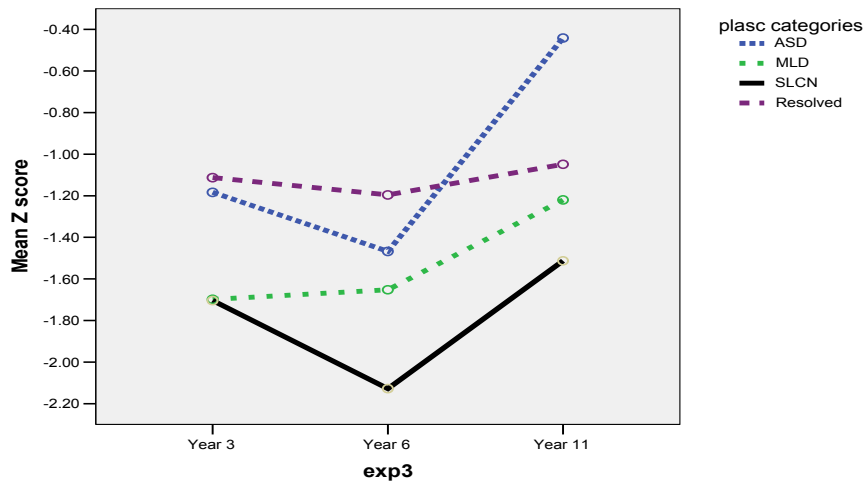**Changes in Expressive Language Year 3 to Year 11**

Figure 3.7 Changes in Expressive Language for pupils with different needs recorded in PLASC

As shown in Figure 3.8, word reading measures revealed a significant difference across the measurement points ($F_{(1,44)}= 15.61$ $p <.0005$, $p^2 = .27$) with an interaction between time and group ($F_{(3, 44)} = 2.88$, $p = .05$, $p^2 = .17$) and a significant group effect ($F_{(3.44)} = 8.22$, $p < .0005$ $p^2 = .37$). Overall, children with the MLD classification fared worse and were significantly poorer than those with SLCN who performed at a lower level than the resolved and ASD group. The latter groups did not differ significantly. The overall trend was a reduction in relative performance in reading in KS4.

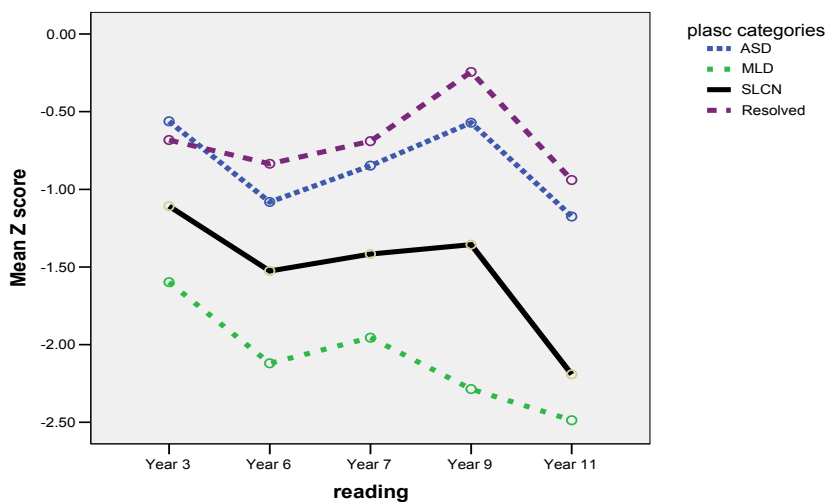**Changes in reading decoding Year 3 to Year 11**

Figure 3.8 Changes in reading decoding for pupils with different needs recorded in PLASC

Spelling scores revealed a similar decline (see Figure 3.9) in Z scores over time (F (1,44) = 9.84 p =.003, p^2 =.20) but no interaction between time and group (F (3, 44) = 2.45, ns). There was, however, a significant group effect (F (3.44) = 4.91, p = .005 p^2 = .27): MLD = SLCN < resolved; MLD < ASD = Resolved. Spelling is an area of weakness for all the children. As we have seen earlier, and in Chapter 2, spelling scores decline overall. These data indicate that, for all cohorts, their relative level of spelling competence was lower at school leaving than it was on entry to secondary education.
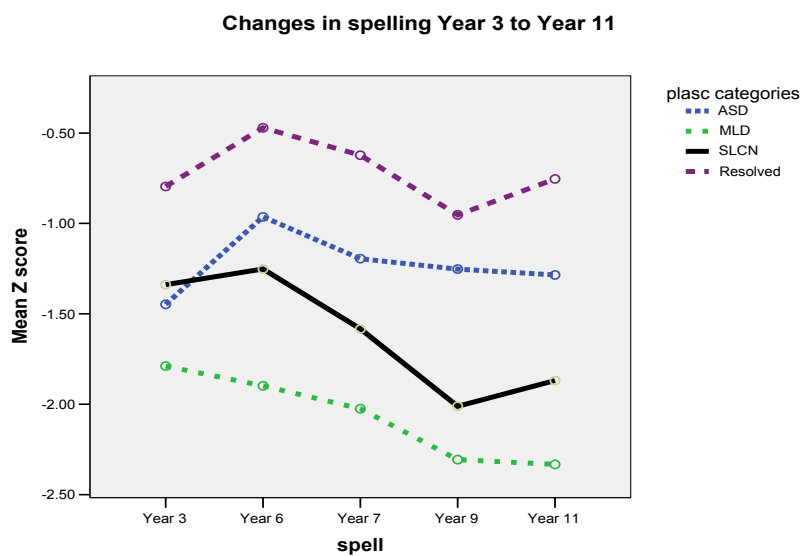

Figure 3.9 Changes in spelling scores for pupils with different needs recorded in PLASC

Writing performance is shown in Figure 3.10. The writing results mirrored those of reading with a significant difference across the measurement points (F (1,44) = 19.07 p < .0005, p^2 = .34) with an interaction between time and group (F (3, 44) = 4.47, p = .009, p^2 = 27) and a significant group effect (F (3.44) = 9.34 p < .0005 p^2 = .43) with MLD = SLCN < Resolved and MLD < ASD = Resolved. As with spelling, writing was an area of significant weakness for all but the resolved cohort. Moreover, writing performance shows a marked decline in relative performance in KS4.
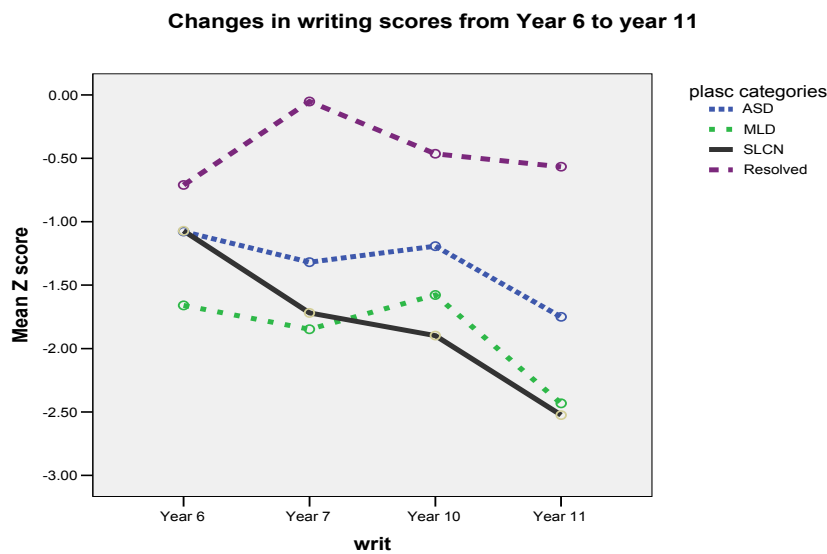
Changes in writing scores from Year 6 to year 11

Figure 3.10 Changes in writing scores for pupils with different recorded PLASC needs

3.7 *Post-16*

3.7.1 Destinations and courses.

To an extent, post-16 destinations in education are determined by local provision; in addition, the more academic route has conventionally been Sixth Form College and the more vocational route has been colleges of further education. As the Figure 3.11 shows, 55% of the participants were in colleges of further education with a further 11% in sixth form colleges. Overall 77% of the young people had continued in full time education with a further 12% in work training contexts. This compares favourably with the national average of 84% in further education or training (http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/5yearstrategy/chap6).
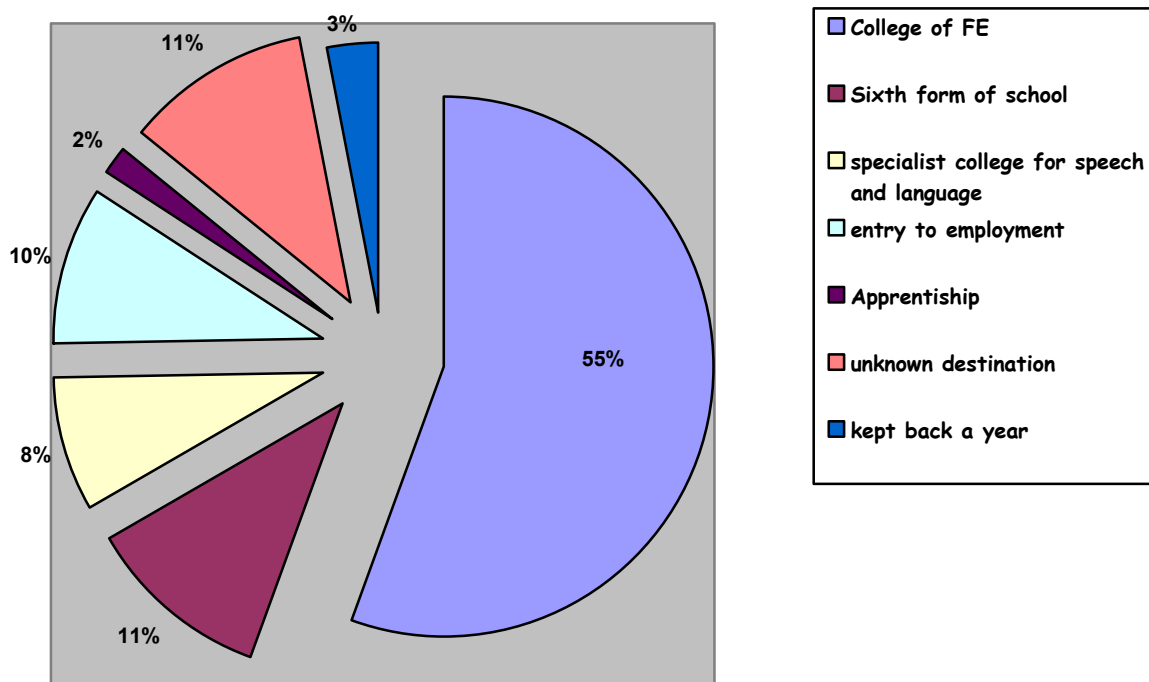
Figure 3.11 Predicted Post-16 destinations at Year 11 for the SSLD cohort

3.7.2   Individual case studies

We identified three young people whose progress throughout the project had resulted in different educational trajectories at the age of sixteen. We conceptualized these in terms of linear, extended or fragmented transitions. Linear transitions reflect the pattern of movement from KS4 to level 3 qualifications, extended transitions reflect a movement which entails an extension or a repetition of level 1 or 2 qualifications and we use the term fragmented to reflect a transition which is unconventional or unexpected given typical educational progression. Young Person 123/SSLD followed a linear transition where he moved to a conventional level 3 qualification in the sixth form. Young Person 138/SSLD, moved from a specialist residential language school to mainstream FE college to begin an NVQ course at Level 1 while Young Person 12/SSLD reflects a fragmented transition. We include details of their performance on language (Table 3.15) and literacy (Table 3.16) measures over time to illustrate the ways in which these complement the evidence collected from interviews and national examinations.

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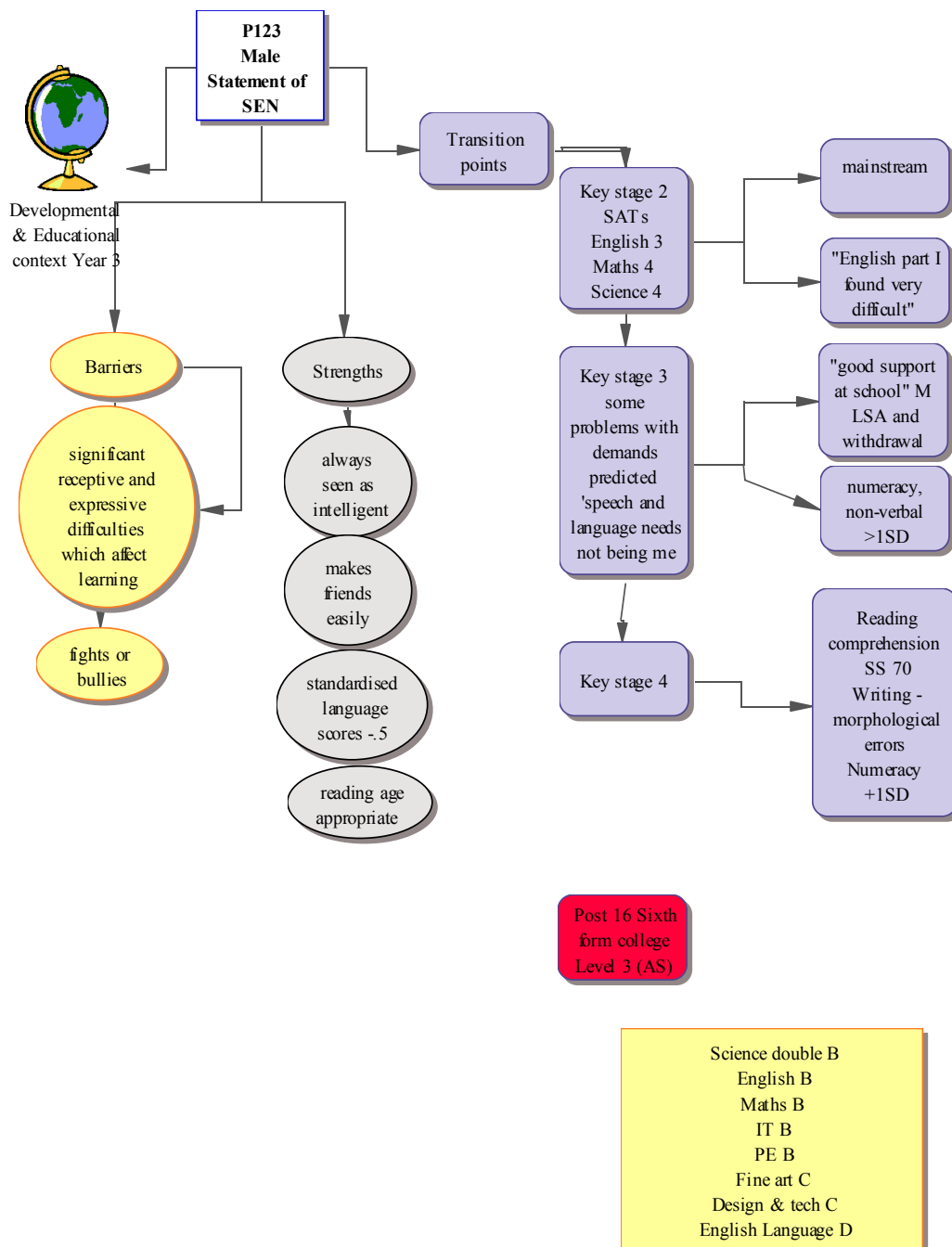
Figure 3.12 Example of linear transition

Young Person 123/SSLD moved from KS4 to and academic sixth form curriculum (Figure 3.12; see also Figure 7.2b). Despite early language difficulties, continued problems with reading comprehension and a reported failure of his language needs to be met in secondary school he achieved well. This was a highly motivated young man, with strong familial support who was offered both in class and withdrawal support during secondary school. This combined with his strengths in numeracy and writing may have served to moderate the impact of his current literacy needs.
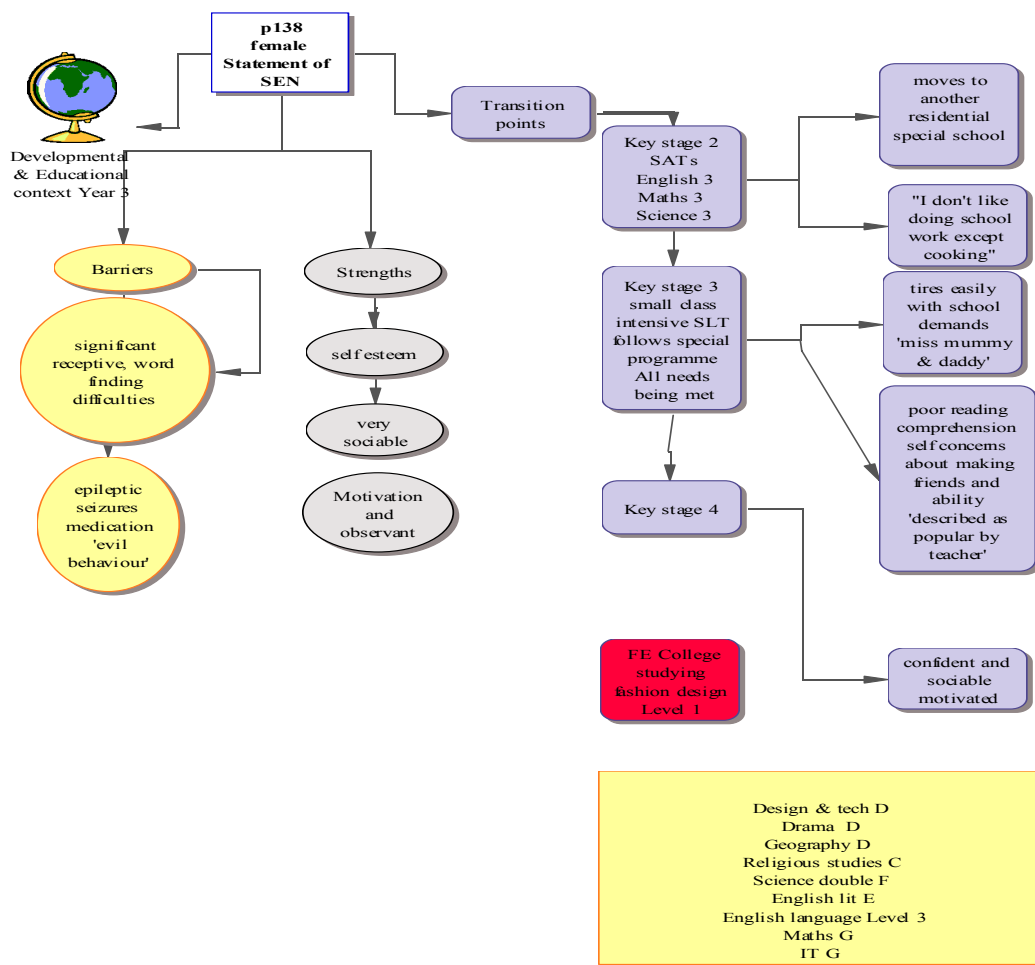
Figure 3.13 Examples of extended transition

Young Person 138/SSLD spent the majority of her primary school years and all of her secondary education in a residential special school providing for speech and language needs. She had continued and intensive SLT support and additional literacy help. Despite her pronounced difficulties she achieved a range of GCSEs at Level 1. Here independence, motivation and familial support provided a basis for her to identify a local FE college as a post-16 placement. She chose not to access the learning support on offer but to manage independently. Her entry into a Level 1 course resulted in an extended trajectory but her continued aspirations are high.
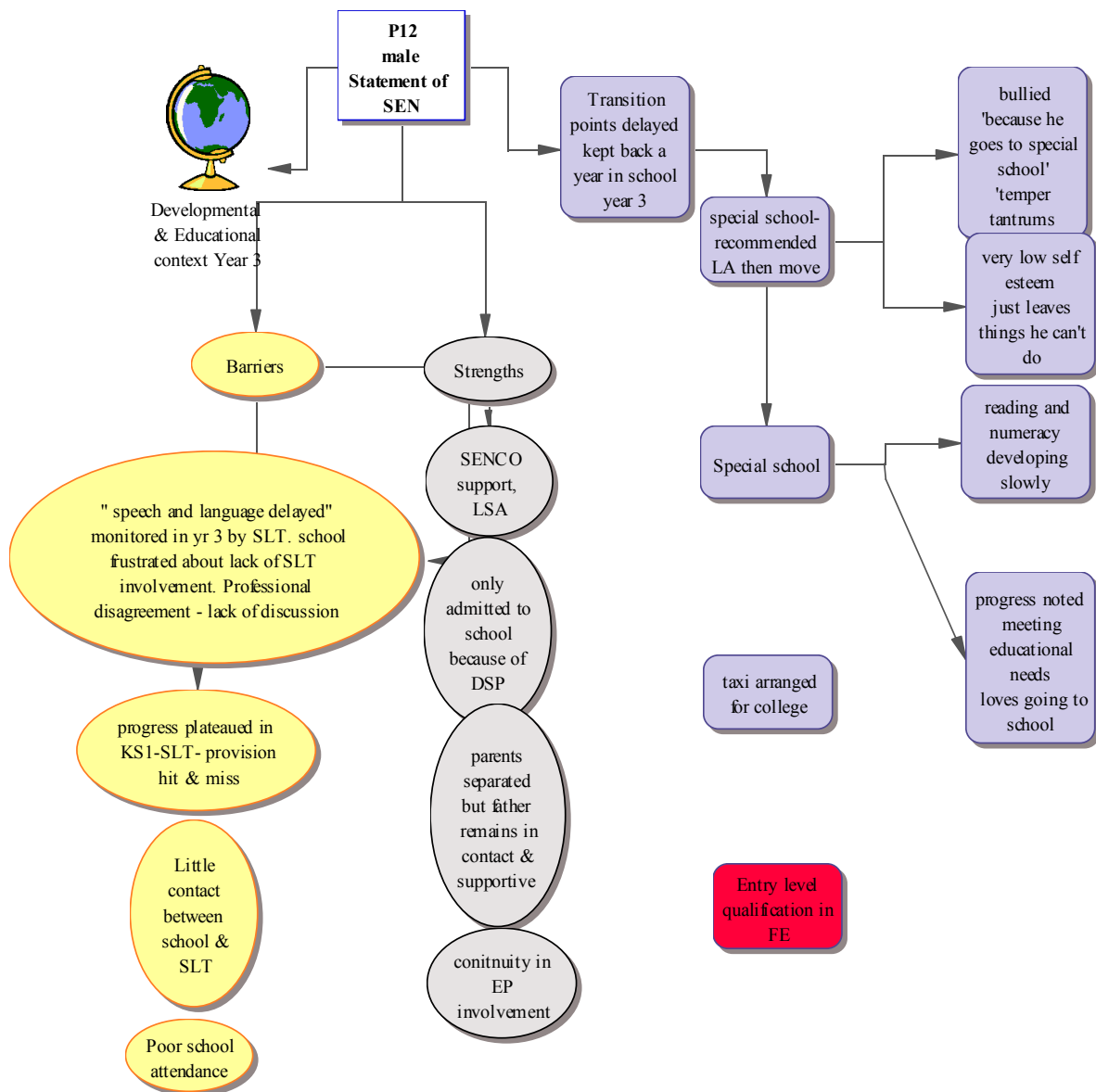
Figure 3.14 Example of fragmented transition

Young Person 12/SSLD had a difficult time throughout his education. Despite his average non-verbal abilities at 8 years of age his language and literacy scores showed little change and served as a continual challenge for school and family. He was held back a year in primary school and then placed in a special school. His history has been characterized by a lack of professional consensus and limited speech and language therapy support.
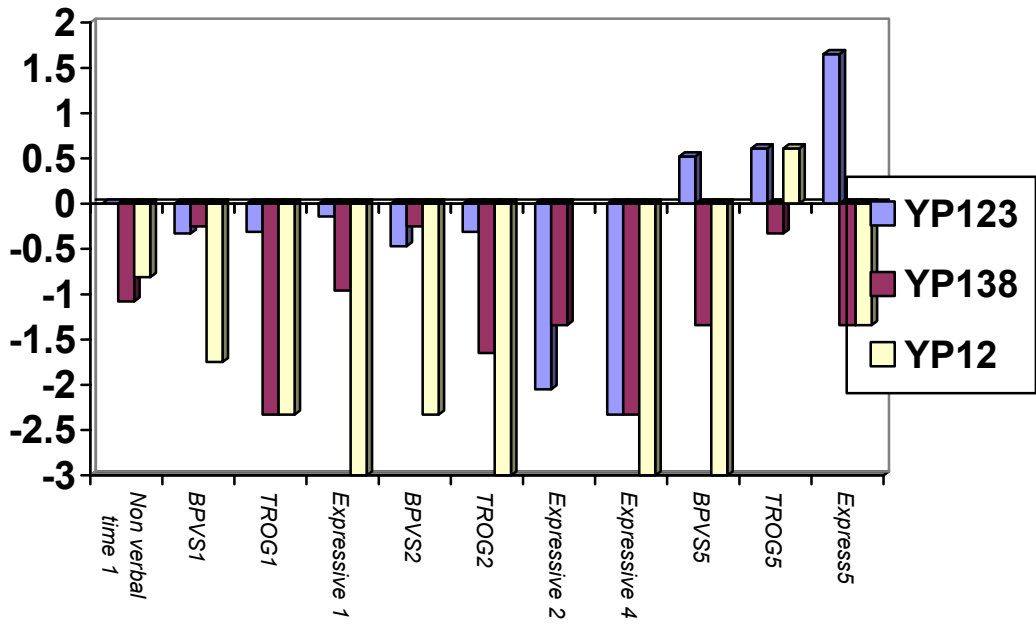
Figure 3.15 Comparison of young people 123 SSLD, 138 SSLD and 12 SSLD on language measures over time (Z scores)
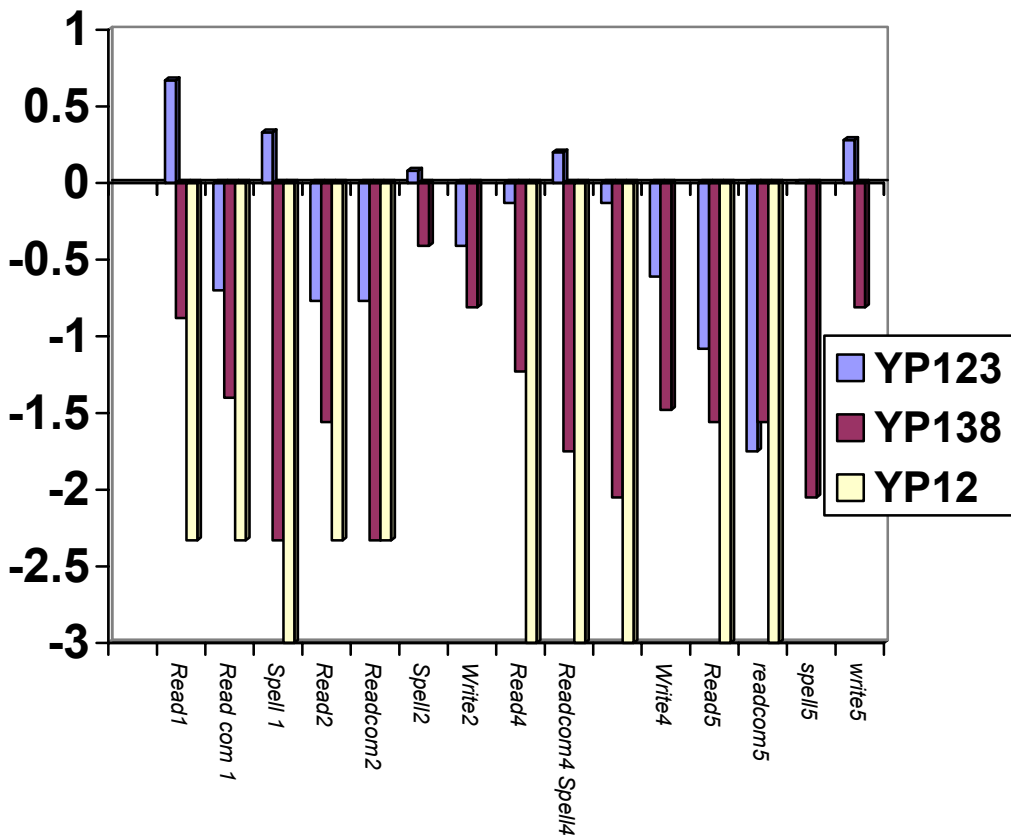
Figure 3.13 Comparison of young people 123 SSLD, 138 SSLD and 12 SSLD on literacy measures over time (Z scores)

Interpretation of individual scores on standardized measures is problematic. However, these data point to two factors: a) despite reduced literacy scores Young Person 123/SSLD was able to achieve well in school; b) Young Person 12/SSLD performance while generally poorer was masked by significant difficulties in both expressive and receptive language.

4. Behavioural, emotional and social development

Conclusions

- At both 16 and 17 years the SSLD and SEN groups had similar levels of self perception on all measures of self esteem, except physical appearance at 16 years.

- Boys had more positive self perceptions than girls at both 16 and 17 years.

- The combined SSLD/SEN cohort generally had less positive self perceptions than the (US) norms would predict at both 16 and 17 years.

- There was a significant level of stability on several scales: for the SSLD cohort (global self worth, appearance and athletic competence) and SEN cohort (athletic competence, close friendships).

- The young people with SSLD developed more positive self perceptions between 16 years (during the last year of school) and 17 years (first year post-16) across five domains including scholastic competence and global self worth.

- Across the period 8 – 17 years, the perceptions of the SSLD cohort were generally less positive than the norm on all three measures assessed at these times: scholastic competence, social acceptance and physical/athletic competence.

- At 16 years half of the SSLD cohort had peer problems according to their teachers and almost a third had significant levels of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

- For the SSLD cohort, trends between 8 and 16 years indicated that teachers rated:
  - The proportion of the SSLD cohort with hyperactivity decreasing from about half to almost none of the cohort.
  - Consistently normal levels of emotional symptoms.
  - Consistently normal levels of conduct problems.
  - High levels of peer problems (about a quarter from 8 to 12 years, rising to half at 16 years) and problems with prosocial behaviour (about 40% at 8 years, reducing to around 20% at 10 and 12 years, but increasing to about a third at 16 years).

- Parents' ratings at 8, 10 and 12 years generally indicated more young people with hyperactivity and conduct problems but prosocial behaviour being normal and similar (high) levels of peer problems compared with teachers' ratings.

- Unlike the teachers, parents reported a large percentage (about 30-40%) of the SSLD cohort having emotional symptoms.

- The SSLD cohort did not differ significantly in the use of productive coping compared to the typically developing cohort.

- However, the SSLD group was more likely to use the 'unproductive-helplessness' type of coping and this style of coping was negatively related to several domains of self-esteem.

- There was no relationship between either expressive or receptive language at age 8, 11, 14, or 16 and the use of productive coping at 16 years

- There was no significant relationship between productive coping and either GCSE points score at 16 years or post-16 destinations.

- Productive coping was not related to behavioural difficulties across ages, except that those with high levels of hyperactivity at age 16 were less likely to use it.

- At 17 years the SSLD and SEN groups had similar levels on a measure of emotional intelligence (Trait E1).

- There was no relationship between Trait EI and measures of language, literacy, numeracy, writing or productive coping for the SSLD group

- There was a statistically significant relationship between Trait EI and all domains of self-perception at 17 years.

In this chapter we present evidence on several aspects of the young people's behavioural, emotional and social development, namely self esteem, behavioural difficulties, emotional problems and coping mechanisms. The focus is on the transition period (age 16-17 years)

but data available from earlier phases of the study are also used, as appropriate, to explore trends or histories at other time points in the young people's development.

4.1 Self esteem

The model of self esteem used in the longitudinal study has been based on that of Susan Harter (1999) and the instruments used have been a series of age appropriate measures developed by Harter and colleagues (See Appendix 1). Briefly, self esteem is examined not simply in a global sense but rather as self perceptions of different domains. Children and young people are able meaningfully to distinguish increasingly differentiated aspects of their self; consequently the measures used increase from four dimensions at age 8 to 13 at age 17 years.

4.1.1 Self esteem at 16 years

The self perceptions of the SSLD and SEN groups were assessed during their last year at school (16 years) using the Self Perception Profile for Adolescents (SPPA[11]). This contains nine scales tapping eight specific domains (e.g. scholastic competence) as well as global self worth.

- The SSLD and SEN cohorts had similar self perceptions at 16 years (Year 11) on all measures except physical appearance on which the SSLD cohort scored lower, and on all measures at 17 years.

- The SSLD cohort showed stability from 16 to 17 years in most of their self perceptions including global self worth; the SEN cohort showed stability only on athletic competence, having close friendships and social acceptance.

Comparison of the SSLD and SEN groups indicated that there were no significant differences between the two samples on any scale (p > .05) except physical appearance where the SEN group (M = 2.95, SD = .70) had more positive perceptions than the SSLD group (M = 2.58, SD = .69), t (71) = 2.08, p = .04). The two groups were therefore combined for further analyses.

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[11] See Appendix 1 for details

The male students had higher (more positive) levels of self perception on all nine scales (Table 4.1) with two showing statistically significantly different levels: physical appearance (t (70) = 2.48, p = .02) and having close friendships (t (70) = 2.54, p = .01).

Table 4.1   Comparison of the self perceptions of the combined SSLD/SEN sample with the US norms at 16 years

| | Male (n = 55) | | | | Female (n = 17) | | | |
| | SSLD/SEN | | Norms | | SSLD/SEN | | Norms | |
	M	(SD)	M	(SD)	M	(SD)	M	(SD)
Scholastic competence	2.41	(.63)	2.8	(.69)	2.18	(.42)	3.0	(.69)
Job competence	2.76	(.61)	3.0	(.62)	2.46	(.69)	3.3	(.62)
Athletic competence	2.57	(.77)	2.8	(.78)	2.12	(.49)	2.4	(.78)
Physical appearance	2.70	(.69)	2.7	(.72)	2.26	(.66)	2.5	(.72)
Close friendship	3.14	(.66)	3.0	(.64)	2.75	(.52)	3.2	(.64)
Romantic appeal	2.42	(.61)	2.6	(.68)	2.29	(.53)	2.8	(.68)
Social acceptance	2.91	(.67)	3.0	(.66)	2.88	(.69)	3.2	(.66)
Behavioural conduct	2.71	(.56)	2.5	(.54)	2.51	(.61)	2.7	(.54)
Global self worth	3.00	(.57)	2.9	(.72)	2.51	(.61)	3.1	(.72)

The mean scores (*SDs*) of the combined SSLD/SEN group on the SPPA are presented in Table 4.1 with the appropriate male and female norms for comparison (Harter, 1988). The midpoint on each scale (1-4) is 2.5, hence any mean score higher than this may be interpreted as reflecting a positive mean level of self perception. However, the norms fluctuate around a value of 2.9 so this is a more appropriate value with which to compare the present SSLD/SEN sample. Table 4.1 indicates that for the female SSLD/SEN students' mean self perceptions were lower than 2.9 on all scales and for male students on six out of nine. Furthermore, in all cases, the mean levels of self perceptions for the female SSLD/SEN students were lower than the male students and were statistically significantly lower for three scales: physical appearance (t (70) = 2.48, p = .02), close friendship (t (70) = 2.55, p = .01) and global self worth (t (69) = 2.81, p = .006).

In comparison with the US norms, both male and female SSLD/SEN students had particularly low levels of self perception regarding scholastic competence. The female

SSLD/SEN group also had lower levels on every scale with perceptions of job competence, close friendship, romantic appeal and global self worth showing large differences.

Overall, therefore, the SSLD and SEN group were very similar with respect to self esteem at 16 years, but generally had lower levels than a normative sample, particularly the female sample who had particularly low levels of self esteem across a number of domains.

4.1.2 Self esteem at 17 years

The young people's self perceptions were again assessed during their first year post-16 this time using the Self Perception Profile for College Students (SPPCS). This extends the range of domains from nine to 13; behavioural conduct is dropped but creativity, intellectual ability, parent relationships, finding humour in one's life, and morality have been added.

Again the SSLD and SEN group have very similar patterns with no significant differences on any of the 13 scales ($p > .05$). The two groups were therefore combined for further analyses.

Comparison by gender revealed that the male students tended to have higher levels of self perception across the domains (Table 4.2), but only in the case of physical appearance was the difference statistically significant (t (70) = 2.94, $p = .004$).

Table 4.2　　　Comparison of the self perceptions of the combined SSLD/SEN sample with the US norms at 17 years

| | Male (*n* = 54) | | | | Female (*n* = 18) | | | |
| | SSLD/SEN | | Norms | | SSLD/SEN | | Norms | |
	M	(SD)	M	(SD)	M	(SD)	M	(SD)
Global self worth	3.24	(.54)	3.25	(.51)	2.94	(.70)	3.17	(.62)
Creativity	2.84	(.61)	3.02	(.67)	2.43	(.66)	2.79	(.72)
Intellectual ability	2.69	(.64)	3.28	(.65)	2.44	(.75)	3.02	(.68)
Scholastic competence	2.71	(.65)	2.94	(.69)	2.75	(.68)	2.78	(.66)
Job competence	3.05	(.66)	3.33	(.56)	2.92	(.79)	3.31	(.52)
Athletic competence	2.84	(.80)	3.00	(.82)	2.57	(.78)	2.67	(.88)
Appearance	3.08	(.72)	2.88	(.58)	2.46	(.95)	2.57	(.76)
Romantic relationships	2.54	(.69)	2.53	(.77)	2.44	(.64)	2.61	(.85)
Social acceptance	3.09	(.61)	3.16	(.58)	2.93	(.63)	3.17	(.64)
Close friendships	3.21	(.70)	3.15	(.70)	3.11	(.79)	3.42	(.65)
Parent relationships	3.16	(.76)	3.32	(.66)	3.15	(.73)	3.55	(.61)
Humour	3.01	(.63)	3.34	(.50)	2.79	(.86)	3.54	(.50)
Morality	2.98	(.68)	3.15	(.68)	2.86	(.69)	3.26	(.67)

The mean scores (*SDs*) of the combined SSLD/SEN group on the SPPCS are presented in Table 4.2 with the appropriate male and female norms for comparison (Neemann and Harter, 1987). The male SSLD/SEN sample had lower mean scores than the normative sample on 10 out of 13 scales, with only appearance and close friendships showing higher scores and romantic relationships an almost identical score. The largest differences were in self perceptions of intellectual ability, (0.59), job competence (0.28), scholastic competence (0.23), and humour (0.33).

In the case of the female SSLD/SEN sample, all mean scores were lower than those of the normative sample. As with the male group, the female SSLD/SEN sample had lower mean levels of perception of intellectual ability (3.02 – 2.44 = 0.58 lower) and job competence (0.39 lower), but creativity was also lower (0.36). On the other hand, the female sample's perceptions of their scholastic ability were similar to those of the normative sample (0.03 lower). In addition, and different from the male group, the female sample also had lower self

perceptions of their morality, e.g. living up to their own moral standards, (0.40) and ability to find humour in their lives (0.75).

4.1.3 Stability of self perceptions 16-17 years

Correlations of the common domains in the SPPA and SPPCS for the SSLD group revealed that most showed a statistically significant level of stability over the period 16 to 17 years (Table 3). Stabilities were particularly high for athletic competence, appearance and global self worth. For the SEN group the pattern was different apart from athletic competence: close friendship and social acceptance were the only other two domains to show significant correlations over this period.

Table 4.3   Correlation of measures of self esteem for the SSLD and SEN samples between 16 and 17 years

	SSLD ($n = 44$)	SEN ($n = 18$)
Scholastic competence	.35^x	.21
Job competence	.33^x	.34
Athletic competence	.53^{xxx}	.76^{xxx}
Appearance	.60^{xxx}	.45
Close friendship	.12	.71^{xx}
Romantic relationships	.39^x	.30
Social acceptance	.21	57^x
Global self worth	.51^{xxx}	.32

^{x} p <. -05, ^{xx} p <. 01, ^{xxx} p <. 001

Differences between the absolute levels of each young person's pair of scores on several domains were also statistically significant. For the SSLD group only, perceptions of:

- Scholastic competence *increased* from mean 2.38 to 2.74 (t (43) = 3.39, p = .002).

- Job competence *increased* from mean 2.68 to 3.01 (t (43) = 2.75, p = .009).

- Athletic competence *increased* from mean 2.47 to 2.75 (t (58) = 2.44, p = .019).

- Appearance *increased* from mean 2.61 to 2.96 (t (58) = 3.53, p = .001).

- Global self worth *increased* from mean 2.90 to 3.17 (t (58) = 3.02, p = .004).

These results indicate that the relative self perceptions of the young people with a history of SSLD had a degree of stability but also that there were increases in the levels of self perceptions in five domains, indicating increased self esteem. The young people in the SEN group, however, showed no significant increase in self esteem on any domain between 16 and 17 years.

4.1.4 Continuities and discontinuities in self esteem over the period 8 – 17 years

Measures of self esteem were collected from the SSLD group at age 8, 10 and 12 years as well as 16 and 17 years. Three domains were assessed at each time point although the title of the scale differed at age 8 (in parentheses):
- Scholastic competence (cognitive competence)
- Social acceptance (peer acceptance)
- Athletic competence (physical competence)

In this section we trace the trends of the SSLD sample's self perceptions across these three important domains, comparing boys and girls and the SSLD sample against the normative samples from the original manuals (referred to as the 'expected' scores).

Scholastic competence

Scholastic competence was consistently below expectation for both boys and girls (Figures 4.1 and 4.2). In the case of the boys, there was a reduction in this aspect of self esteem over the school period, but interestingly a degree of recovery once the young men had left school. The girls had a particularly low level of their scholastic competence at 16 years but this too improved considerably during their first year after school.

Figure 4.1   Trends in boys' perceptions of their scholastic competence 8-17 years
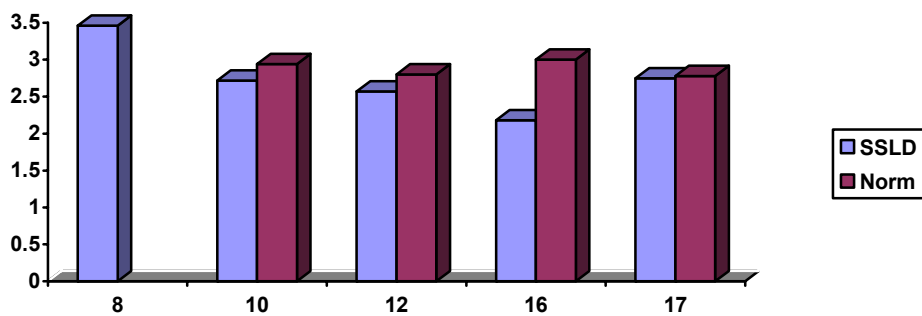
Figure 4.2   Trends in girls' perceptions of their scholastic competence 8-17 years

Social acceptance

Perceptions of social acceptance by the boys in the SSLD sample improved over the period 12 – 17 years (Figures 4.3 and 4.4). This trend was to be expected according to the normative data but is more pronounced for the SSLD sample. The girls displayed a similar, but less marked trend. However, the levels of self perception were continually below expectation for both boys and girls.
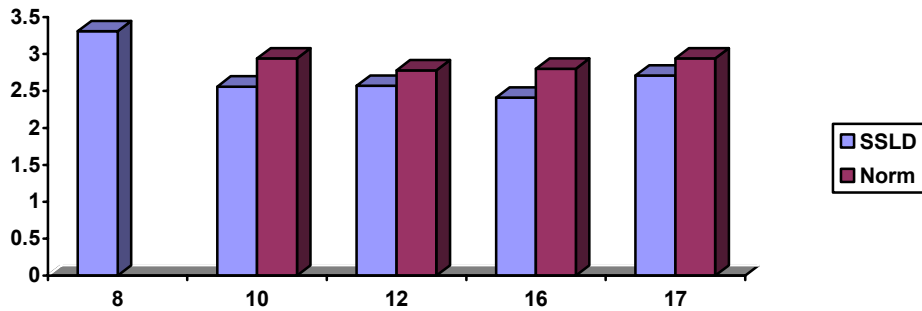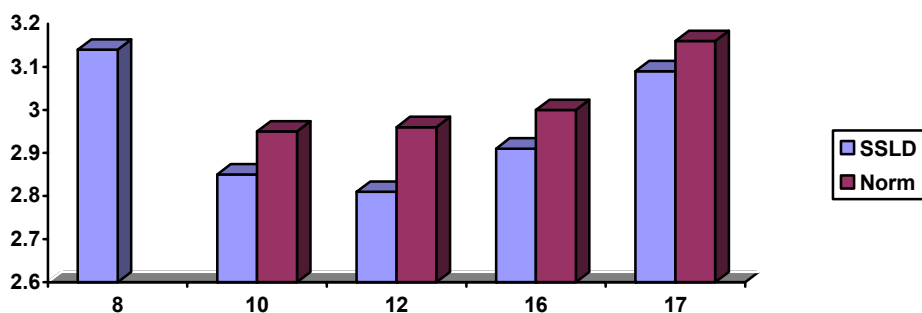

Figure 4.3   Trends in boys' perceptions of their social acceptance 8-17 years
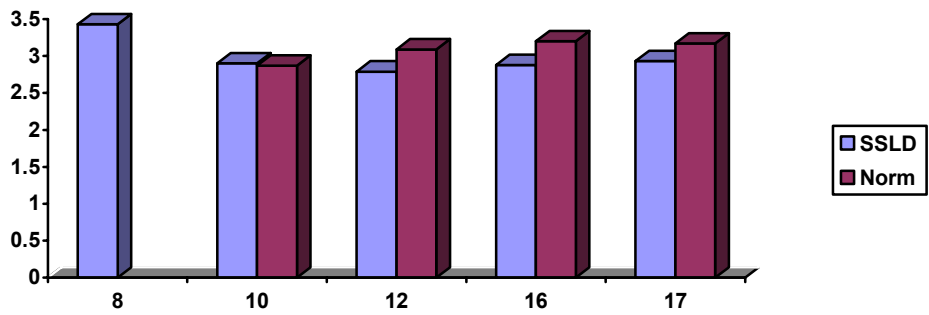
Figure 4.4   Trends in girls' perceptions of their social acceptance 8-17 years

Athletic competence

Here too the levels of self perception for boys were lower than expected and, apart from age 10, this was also the case for the girls. As with scholastic competence, there was a reduction in self perceptions for both male and female SSLD sample members between 12 and 16 years, followed by an improvement after leaving school.
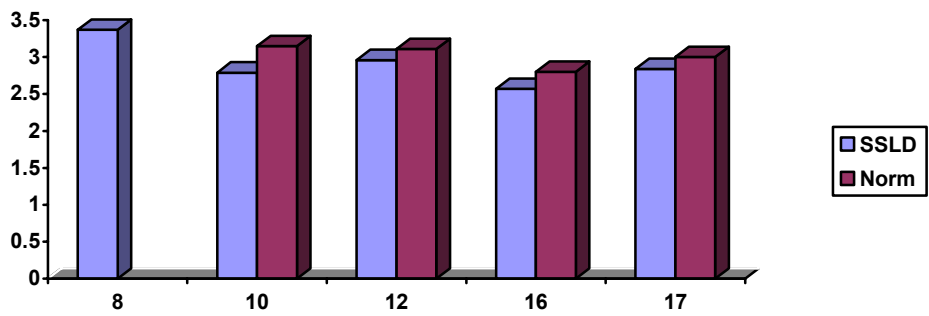
Figure 4.5   Trends in boys' perceptions of their athletic/physical competence 8-17 years
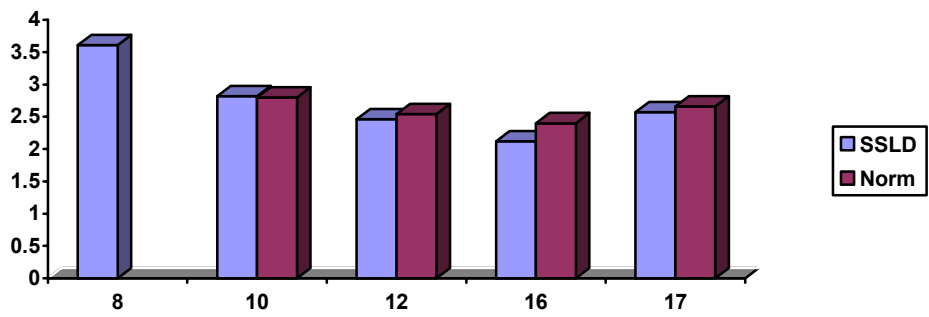
Figure 4.6   Trends in girls' perceptions of their athletic/physical competence 8-17 years

4.2   Behavioural and emotional difficulties

The SSLD group were rated by their teachers during Year 11 for a range of behavioural and emotional difficulties using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire. Earlier assessments at age 8, 10 and 12 years had been carried out by both teachers and parents and were also examined for evidence of trends. The SDQ uses a category system whereby it is expected that 80% will be rated within the 'normal' range, 10% 'borderline' and 10% 'abnormal'. This allows comparison of the frequencies of the SSLD group to be compared with expectation. (N.B. We have avoided the word 'abnormal' instead referring to 'significant levels of difficulty').

4.2.1   16 years

The SDQ examines four problem domains, namely hyperactivity, conduct problems, emotional symptoms, and peer problems, plus an aggregate score of these four scales, total difficulties. It also has a prosocial scale which examines positive behaviours such as helping others and a total difficulties score with aggregates for 'problem' scales.
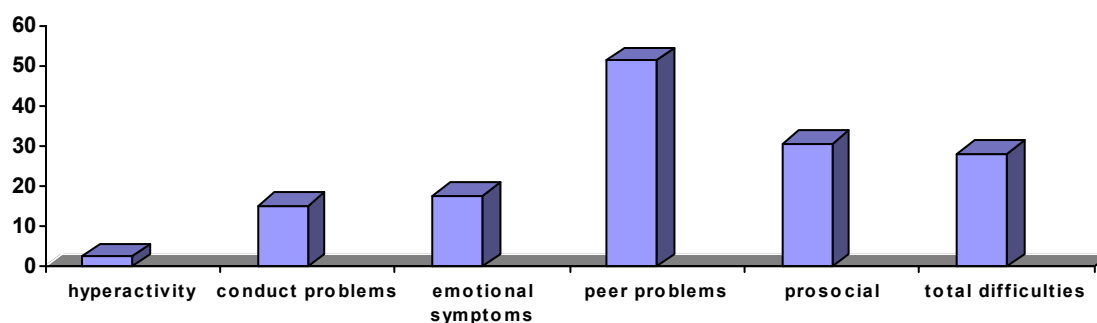
Figure 4.7   Percentage of SSLD sample with significant difficulties at 16 years on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

Figure 4.7 indicates that, at 16 years, the most frequent difficulties expressed by the SSLD group were peer problems (51% with significant difficulties) and prosocial behaviour (28%). In each case the distributions differed significantly from those expected ($p < .0005$). The young people's total difficulties score also differed significantly from expectation 28% v 10% ($p < .0005$). Neither hyperactivity nor emotional symptoms differed from expectation.

4.2.2 Trends from 8 to 16 years

In the present section we examine the trends in teachers' ratings of behaviour at four time points: 8, 10, 12 and 16 years. In addition, parents' ratings are available at 8, 10 and 12 years.

We explored two different issues:

- whether, and to what extent, the results from the SSLD group differed from the expected levels of problems for each domain.
- Whether there were significant trends over time (8, 10, 12 and 16 years of age)

Hyperactivity

Teachers' ratings of the SSLD group's hyperactivity show a clear reduction over time. Figure 4.8 presents the percentage of the group with significant problems at each age, with a reduction from 47% at 8 years to just 3% at 16 years.
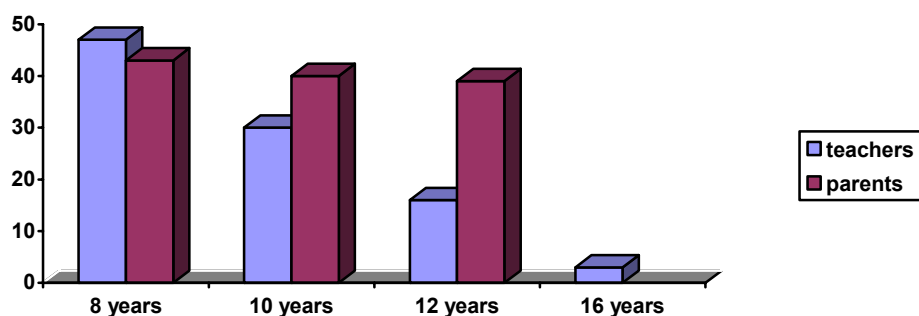
Figure 4.8   Teachers' and parents' ratings of hyperactivity 8 – 16 years (%)

The distribution of those rated 'normal', 'borderline' and 'abnormal' deviated significantly ($p < .001$) from expectation at 8 and 10 years but not at 12 years or 16 years ($p > .05$) Parents' ratings showed significantly higher levels of children with hyperactivity problems at 8, 10 and 12 years ($p < .001$).

The teachers' ratings show a statistically significant age trend indicating a reduction in the number of the SSLD group with problems of hyperactivity over the period 8 – 16 years.

Parents' ratings, however, did not show an age trend. Instead, parents rated significantly higher numbers of their children as having problems of hyperactivity at each age level up to 12 years compared with expectation (43% at 8 years, 40% at 10 years and 39% at 12 years).

Conduct problems

Teachers' ratings of conduct problems present a different profile (Figure 4.9). In this case, the percentage rated with significant problems fluctuates over time: 12% at 8 years, 18% at 10 years, 9% at 12 years, and 15% at 16 years. The profile of the SSLD was not significantly different from expectation at any age.
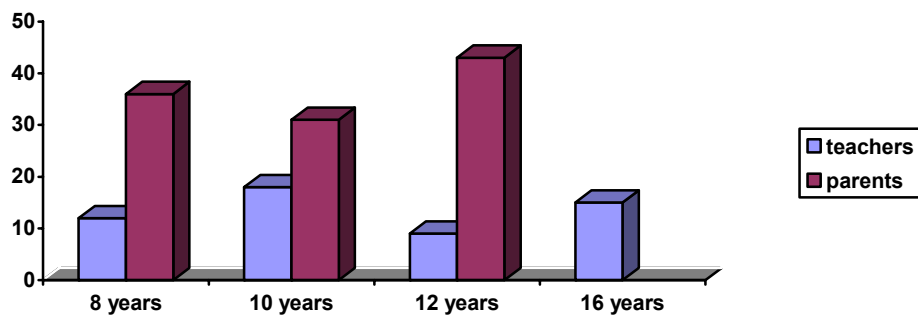
Figure 4.9   Teachers' and parents' ratings of conduct problems 8-16 years (%)

Comparison of the teachers' ratings at the four time points revealed a significant difference: $F_{(1,27)} = 12.85$, $p = .001$, $p^2 = .032$. Further analysis revealed that the level of conduct problems at 16 years was significantly higher than both 8 years ($p < .0005$) and 12 years ($p = .003$) but not 10 years.

Parents ratings, however, were consistently different from expectation at 8, 10 and 12 years. In each case, higher proportions of the children were rated as having conduct problems (36% at 8 years, 31% at 10 years and 43% at 12 years).

Emotional symptoms

The level of emotional symptoms was considered by teachers not to differ from expectation at any age (Figure 4.10). Although there was an upward trend in the percentage of the children considered to have significant emotional symptoms (from 10% at 8 to 18% at 16 years) this trend was not significant. Parents rated more children with emotional symptoms at 8 years (34%), 10 years (29%) and 12 years (43%) but there was no significant trend over

time indicating relative stability in the parents' views of the children's high level of emotional symptoms.
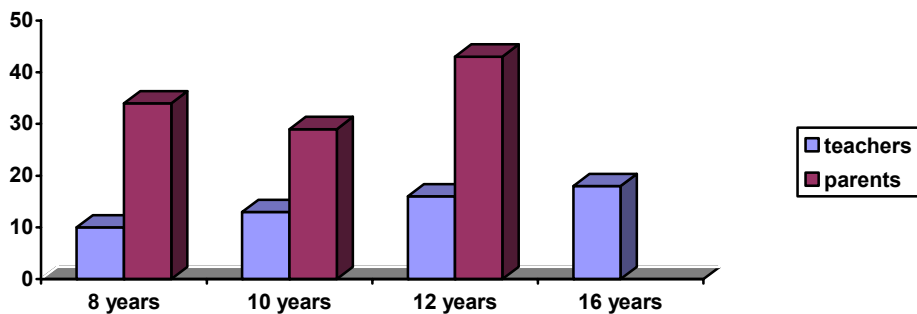
Figure 4.10   Teachers' and parents' ratings of emotional problems at 8 – 16 years (%)

Peer problems

Teachers considered over a quarter of the SSLD group to have significant problems with their peers at ages 8 (27%), 10 (28%), 12 years (30%), and 51% at 16 years. There was a significant age trend showing increasing evidence of peer problems over time (p < .01). This was attributable to the increase between 8 and 16 years (p < .01).
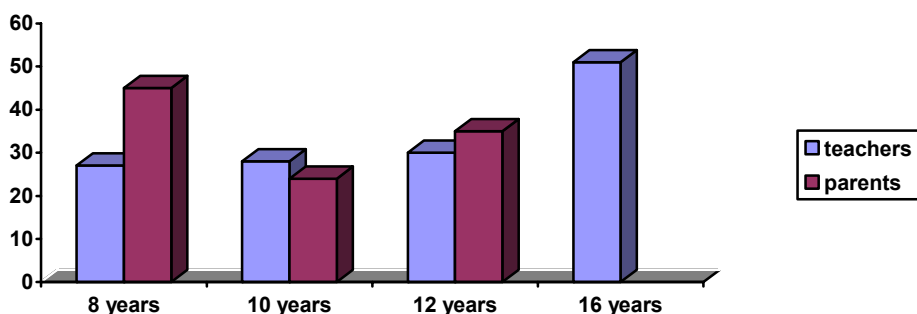
Figure 4.11   Teachers' and parents' ratings of peer problems at 8 – 16 years (%)

Parents also rated their children as more likely to have peer problems than expected (p < .0005): 45% at 8 years, 24% at 10 years and 35% at 12 years.

Prosocial skills

Teachers' ratings of the percentage of the SSLD group with significant problems of prosocial behaviour did not vary over time. Apart from 12 years, teachers rated significantly more prosocial difficulties for the cohort than expectation (p < . 0005).
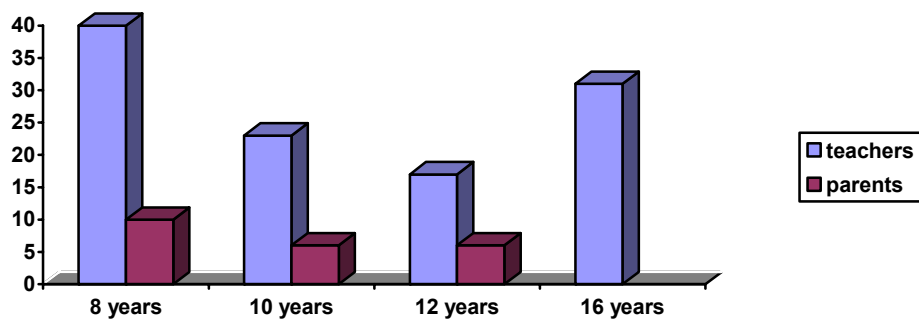
Figure 4.12   Teachers' and parents' ratings of prosocial skills at 8 – 16 years (%)

Parents, on the other hand, rated their children as similar to expectation at 8 years (10%), 10 years (6%) and 12 years (6%).

Total difficulties

Finally, the SDQ total difficulties reveals the overall level of problems as judged by teachers and parents. Teachers rated statistically significantly more of the SSLD group as having significant problems than expectation at all ages. At ages 8 (35%), 10 (33%) and 16 years (28%) these differences deviated from expectation to a highly significant degree (p < .0005) while at 12 years the difference was less significant (p < .05). The age trend just failed to meet statistical significance (p = .055).
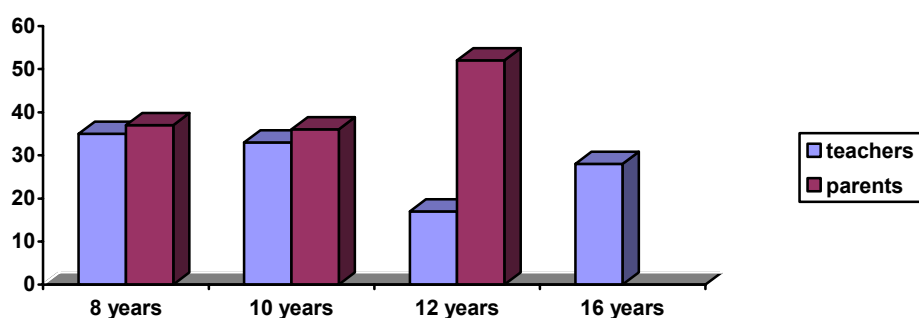
Figure 4.13   Teachers' and parents' ratings of total difficulties at 8 – 16 years (%)

Parents' ratings revealed significantly more of the children had total difficulties scores than expectation indicating significant difficulties (p< .0005) at all three ages: 8 years, 37%; 10 years, 36%; 12 years 52%.

4.2.3 Conclusions

The SSLD group had higher levels of a range of different behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and these high levels were common across the period 8 – 16 years. However, inspection of the various domains reveals some different trajectories. For example, according to teachers the numbers with significant hyperactivity problems dropped over this period whereas the numbers with peer problems were high and increased at 16 years. Those with acting out, conduct problems or emotional symptoms, however, were similar to expectation suggesting that, from the teachers' perspectives these were not areas of difficulty for these children

There were a number of differences between parents' and teachers' reports indicating that either the children's behaviour may be different at home compared with school or that parents have a more comprehensive view of their child's developmental needs. For example, parents, unlike teachers, identified high percentages with emotional symptoms at 8, 10 and 12 years. This is a domain where children's difficulties may be less likely to be identified at school but revealed at home.

4.3 Coping skills

An important development in the conceptualization of the trajectories of children with a history of disability or vulnerability is the examination of adaptive developmental outcomes despite adversity (Masten, 2006, Luthar, 2001). Coping is an important factor related to the positive adjustment of young people as they enter adulthood. To date studies of long term development of children with language difficulties have focused on socio-emotional problems including psychiatric diagnosis and academic limitations.

The coping skills of the SSLD and typically TD groups were assessed during their last year at school (16 years) using the specific short form of the Adolescent Coping Scale (ACS) (Frydenberg and Lewis, 1993). The ACS comprises 19 scales with 18 reflecting different coping responses (e.g. 'Talk to others to see what they would do if they had the problem'), each rated on a 5-point degree of use scale. The last item asks the students to write down anything else they do to cope.

4.3.1 Factor analysis

Following principal component analysis the factors were rotated via the Oblimin method. Three factors were extracted with eigenvalues 2.51, 2.15, 1.74. Factor 1 'unproductive coping-helplessness' comprised items such as 'wish a miracle would happen'. Factor 2 'productive-coping' comprised items such as 'keep fit and healthy', 'work hard'. Factor 3 'unproductive-unconcerned' coping comprised items such as 'shut myself off from the problem so I can avoid it' (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4   Factor analysis of the Adolescent Coping Scale

Scale	Unproductive-helplessness coping	Productive coping	Unproductive-unconcerned coping
Wish a miracle would happen	.68		
No way of dealing with the situation	.69		
Pray for help and guidance	.59		
Work at solving the problem to the best of my ability		.46	
Work hard		.65	
Look on the bright side of the things		.53	
Make time for leisure activities		.53	
Kip fit and healthy		.71	
Talk to other people about my concern to help me sort it out			-.60
Worry about what will happen to me			-.49
Spend more time with boy/girl friend			.45
Join with people who have the same concern			-.65
Shut myself off from the problem so I can avoid it			-.51
See myself as being at fault			-.46

4.3.2   Comparison between the SSLD and typically developing cohorts

Comparison of the SSLD and TD groups indicated a significant difference in relation to the 'unproductive-helplessness' type of coping ($t(91) = 2.73$, $p = .02$). Hence, the SSLD cohort were more likely to use this strategy than typically developing young people. There were no

differences in relation to 'productive' and 'unproductive-unconcerned' types of coping (Figure 4.14).
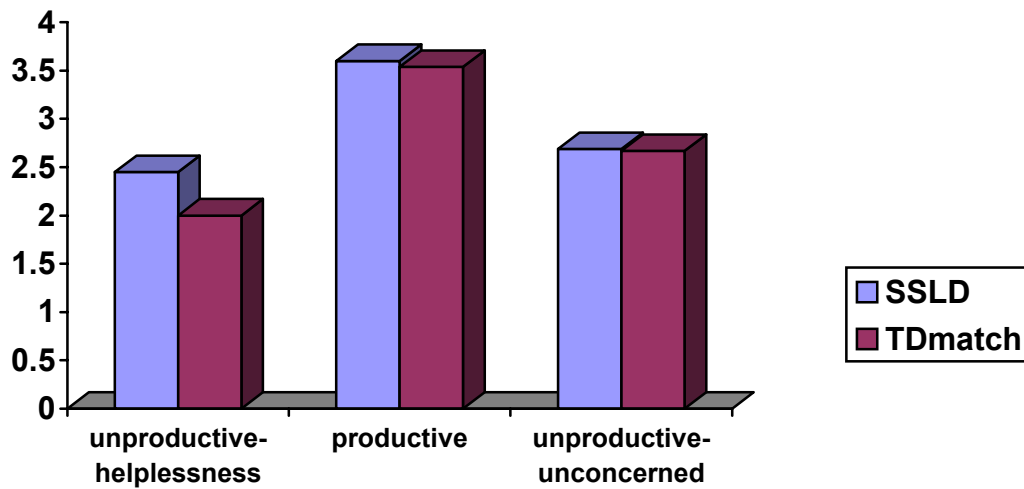
4.3.3   Relationship between coping skills and measures of language, behaviour and self-esteem for the SSLD cohort

There were no relationships between productive coping and measures of either expressive or receptive language at age 8, 11, 14 or 16. These data suggest that productive coping skills are not dependent on the children's oral language. Neither was there a statistically significant relationship between overall level of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (SDQ total difficulties score) and the three types of coping. However, there was a significant negative correlation between hyperactivity at age 16 (r = -.35, p = .05) and productive coping.

Table 4.5: Correlations of three types of coping with self-esteem measures

Scale	Unproductive-helplessness coping	Productive Coping	Unproductive-unconcerned coping
Job Competence		.30**	
Athletic competence	-.30**	.24*	
close friendship	-.22*		
Romantic relationship	-.29**		
Social acceptance	-.37**		-.21*
Self-worth	-.21*		

^{X} p <.-05, ^{XX} p <.01

There were positive correlations between productive coping and all domains of self-esteem at age 16, with *job competence* (*r* =.30*, p* = .004*),* and *athletic competence (r =.24, p* = .05) reaching a significant level (Table 4.5). Additionally, there were negative correlations between 'unproductive-helplessness' type of coping and all domains of self-esteem with *athletic competence* (*r* = -.30, *p* = .004), *close friendship* (*r* = -.22, *p* = .05) *romantic relationship* (*r* = -.29, *p* = .007), *social acceptance* (*r* = -.37, p < .0005) and *self-worth* (*r* = -.21, *p* = .048) reaching statistical significance. There were also negative correlations between 'unproductive-unconcerned' type of coping and all domains of self-esteem with *social acceptance* (*r* = -21, *p* = .048) reaching significance.

Finally, there was no relationship was between productive coping and GCSE points at age 16 or between productive coping and the SSLD students' post-16 destinations.

These data suggest that coping and the young person's views of themselves, independent of language and behaviour, were related.

4.5   Emotional self-efficacy

The SSLD and SEN groups were assessed during the first year of their post-16 education using the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Adolescent Short Form (TEIQue-ASF; Petrides, Sangareau, Furnham, and Frederickson, 2006).

This scale is derived from Petrides and Furnham's (2001) trait emotional self-efficacy *(trait EI or trait emotional intelligence)* model. Trait EI is defined as 'a constellation of emotion-

related self-perceptions and dispositions at the lower levels of personality hierarchies' (Petrides & Furnham, 2001, p3). Trait EI theory acknowledges the subjectivity of emotional experience and reconceptualises the intelligences that fail to recognise it (e.g. emotional, social, personal) as personality traits, rather than mental abilities.

The comparison of the SSLD and SEN match groups did not indicate a significant difference in relation to the Trait EI (t(62) = -0.32, p >.05). Further normative data are required to establish the pupils' standing in relation to a normative sample.

The data from the combined SSLD/SEN group were compared with a group of 160 typically developing children with mean age of 10.8 years (see Mavrovelli et al, 2006 for more details). Although the combined SSLD/SEN group had a higher mean than the typically developing young people, this difference was not statistically significant: combined SSLD/SEN group: M = 144.15, SD = 22.04, TD: M = 141.48, SD = 25.11, t (222) = .746, $ns.$

Table 4.6: Correlations of Trait EI with all the domains of self-esteem at 17 years.

SPSS Scale	Trait EI
Job Competence domain	.50**
Social acceptance domain	.51**
Physical appearance domain	.31*
Parent relationship domain	.31*
Close friendship domain	.41**
Intellectual ability domain	.44**
Morality domain	.37*
Romantic relationships domain	.37*
Humour domain	.40**
Creativity domain	.36*
Athletic competence domain	.34*
Global self-worth domain	.45**

[x] p <.-05, [xx] p <.01

There were no significant relationships between Trait EI and measures of literacy, numeracy, language, and writing, indicating that Trait EI was not related to scores obtained on standardized measures in the above areas. Nor was there a relationship between productive coping and Trait EI. There were, however, significant positive correlations between Trait EI

and all domains of self-esteem at age 17 (Table 4.6). Thus, as with the data on coping, the pupils' perceptions of themselves were linked to their emotion-related self perceptions and dispositions.

5. Planning and supporting transition to post-16 destinations

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Conclusions

- A range of support was available through Connexions.
- All those known to have statements of special educational needs were supported by personal advisers (PAs) in accordance with statutory obligations.
- There were also a small number of cases where, despite the availability of Connexions support, the young person became disengaged during KS4 and remained vulnerable post-16. Such cases highlighted the importance of Connexions' remit continuing into the post-16 phase.

This chapter reports data about planning and supporting the young people's transition to post-16 destinations. Section 5.1 is based on transition planning documentation sent in by schools and Section 5.2 is based on interviews with the young people's Connexions personal advisers (PAs).

5.1 Transition planning documentation

The *Special Educational Needs Code of Practice* (DfES, 2001) makes clear that formal Transition Plans must be drawn up for every young person with a statement of SEN at the Y9 Annual Review and reviewed each year until leaving school. In addition, every young person is expected to have a plan in place for post-16 before leaving school – these are called by a number of different names such as action plans, next steps plans. In May 2004, when the young people in the study were in Y10, their schools were asked to provide a copy of the young person's most recent Transition Plan (if they had a statement) or else an action plan for post-16. Transition planning information was received for 42 of the 64 in the SSLD group and 15 of the 28 in the SEN group at this time (Table 5.1)

Table 5.1   Transition planning documentation received from schools (number of
            young people)

Documentation received	SSLD (*n* = 64)	SEN (*n* = 28)
Transition Plan	24	4
Reply slip only	11	9
Connexions document	5	2
Section 140	2	0
Total received	*42*	*15*

Formal Transition Plans for those with statements of SEN

Of the 42 SSLD young people about whom transition planning documentation was received, formal Transition Plans had been completed for all but two of those who had a statement of SEN (32 of 34) - for the remaining two, the school reported that the lack of a formal Plan was because they had guaranteed places for post-16 and had Connexions support in place. All 15 of the SEN group with statements of SEN about whom information was received had a Transition Plan.

As Table 5.1 shows, schools sent in 28 of these formal Transition Plans (24 SSLD group, 4 SEN group). In every case, the young person had been involved in drawing up the Plan. With two exceptions (both SSLD), the Plans reported parental involvement too. Cross-checking the two exceptions with information from interviews with the young person's Connexions PA showed that, in one case (28/SSLD), the lack of parental involvement was understandable because the family had moved away during Y9 but then returned during Y11. Parents' views had been gained by phone at that stage and were included in the Y11 updated Plan. In the second case (46/SSLD), the lack of parental involvement was, according to the Connexions PA, due to the school involved having gone through a difficult time with a number of staff absent through illness and a focus on management and administration changes linked to workforce remodelling. This had caused problems for transition planning for that whole Year 9 cohort, such that it had led to a rethink at LA level as to how transition planning at Y9, and follow up of subsequent action plans, could be improved.

Regarding involvement of appropriate external professionals, a Connexions service representative (usually the young person's PA) must attend the Y9 Annual Review; other professionals are involved in transition planning as appropriate. In all but three of the

Transition Plans, Connexions involvement was clearly indicated (25 of the 28). In the three exceptions, it was not clear from the written Plan whether or not Connexions had been involved. However, other data gathered during the research showed that the Connexions PA had been involved. In the 28 examples received, a range of other professionals had also been involved: college/post-16 staff (16 cases), SLTs (8 cases – all re SSLD young people and mainly those in specialist language schools), other health professionals (9 cases), educational psychologists (6 cases, all SSLD and five of them in specialist language schools), social service staff (4 cases – all re SSLD young people) and a special needs parents representative (one case).

The 28 examples of Transition Plans submitted varied in content and format but those sent in for nine young people attending residential specialist language schools were, in general, more detailed than the others. In 27 cases, the Plans showed that the schools were involved in providing for the young person's curriculum needs, including curriculum flexibilities where necessary, and were aware of special exam needs. The one Plan which did not clearly show these two pieces of information was for Young Person 96/SSLD who attended an integrated resource for speech and language difficulties. According to her Connexions PA, this young woman had only been entered for two GCSEs, (gaining one G-grade in the end). This perhaps suggests that the Transition Plan ought to have given greater consideration to curricular flexibility and special exam needs.

In all but one of the Plans, responsibility for actions were clearly identified; in the remaining one this was not clear from the information sent in but it is likely that this was because the plan, according to his Connexions PA, was for the young man involved (68/SSLD) to stay on at his residential specialist language school for two and possibly three more years.

Figure 5.1   Predicting difficult transitions – examples of comments from schools

SSLD group

- Social services and CAMHS are involved in helping [Name] with home environment which impinge on her self esteem and in turn with her ability to cope with transition to college. [Name] has special timetable at school; has panic attacks. Connexions to keep in contact through college (Young Person 4/SSLD)

- [Name's] attendance fell in Yr 11 and she had a special inclusive learning teacher and EWO involvement. She is now working with our Connexions representative. (Young Person 49/SSLD)

SEN group

- Connexions have interviewed [Name] and will post job vacancies for her to read at home. She has left family home. Currently staying with a friend. Connexions will remain in regular contact. (8/SEN)

- [Name] has personal, social and behaviour issues which militated against positive classroom behaviour and academic progress. In discussion with head of key stage, she followed a plan whereby she collected work from subject teachers and completed this within a set time span. Work was returned marked and new work set. [Name] responded well and is happier in herself. She is now on exam leave and should be following revision guides set by subject teachers.(Young Person 21/SEN)

Source: Reply slips from school in response to request for post-16 planning documentation

Other transition planning documentation

As well as the 28 Transition Plans received, schools also sent in other information about post-16 plans for an additional 29 young people (18 SSLD; 11 SEN). As Table 5.1 shows, for seven, this comprised Connexions documentation, such as action plans or career development plans; for two, it was their Section 140 assessment of need and provision and, for 20, it was a comment on the reply slip providing information about post-16 plans or about problems that could potentially disrupt such plans (see Figure 5.1).

Of the 15 young people in the SEN group about whom schools sent in information, four of them had stopped attending school (see Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2   Disrupted transition planning due to non-attendance – examples of comments from schools

- [Name] has now left school to work with father. (Young Person 15/SEN)
- [Name] has moved away from area and although still on school roll, has not attended for 8 weeks. (Young Person 65/SEN)
- Transition Plan is not complete. It is in the form of a college application with CV and support. However, [Name] has not attended school for a while and has missed appointments. 1-1 guidance through application process, role play for interview, support for initial college visit, special programme on life skills with SEN teacher. (Young Person 81/SEN)
- [Name] has stopped attending school and does not want Connexions help. He is going to work with his dad. The last year in school has not been a success. He has become increasingly disturbed with bad mood swings and has become violent and threatening towards staff. (Young Person 107/SEN)

Source: Reply slips from school in response to request for post-16 planning documentation

Overview

The overall impression created by the transition planning documentation was of schools and appropriate professionals working hard to be caring and to meet the individual needs of the young people. Across the mainstream sample, processes to ease the transition to post-16 were in place, such as close school-college links that offered a guaranteed place to the young person. For most, the plan was for a transition to FE college to study a vocational course or to move in to manual work. A number attended college part-time during KS4 and planned to continue these courses post-16.

5.2   Support from the Connexions Service

During the summer and autumn terms of 2005, the 57 Connexions PAs covering the 92 young people involved in this phase of the study (64 SSLD and 28 SEN) were identified and invited to take part in a telephone interview. Forty-six Connexions PAs provided information on 83 young people in the study (90% of those involved in this phase).

The level of PA involvement with the young people in the sample depended on the priority category (P) to which each young person was allocated - P1 (Intensive), P2 (Enhanced) or

P3 (Minimal intervention) - and on how these were interpreted in each Connexions Partnership. National guidance for Connexions suggests that young people with learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD) should be given targeted, rather than universal, support at Intensive (P1) or Enhanced (P2) levels.

The majority of the 46 PAs interviewed were employed by two Partnerships, called here Connexions County and Connexions City. The remaining PAs worked for another eight different Partnerships, referred to as Connexions plus a number: for example, Connexions 10. The interviews explored the role of the Connexions Service in supporting the transition to post-16 of the young people in the sample.

The findings are presented in four sections: PA deployment, roles and training around SEN; Connexions' involvement with the young people during KS4; continuity of Connexions support post-16; and PAs' reflections on the strengths and weaknesses of the Connexions service as illustrated by the cases of the sample young people.

5.2.1   PA deployment, roles and training around SEN

The three main systemic factors affecting how PAs supported the young people in the study were: decisions made at Connexions Partnership level about how to deploy PAs, how the PA role was defined, and provision of training around SEN issues.

Deployment and roles

Across the 10 Connexions Partnerships, it was clear that the roles and deployment of PAs differed from Partnership to Partnership. The Roger and Marwood (2003) 'Models of deployment' was useful in making sense of this variation, particularly as a number of different models could be used within a single partnership. In terms of relevance to our sample of young people, the key issues were:

- deployment - whether or not the Connexions Partnership deployed PAs in a specialist SEN team;
- PA role - the PAs' level of specialism in SEN issues;
- caseload - balance between targeted support cases (such as those with special educational needs) and universal support cases.

The situation in Connexions County and City at the time of the research (2005) is summarised in Figure 5.3. The configurations of PA deployment, role and caseload in both Partnerships had drawbacks for the young people in the study. In Connexions County, there was concern about the limited nature of the support the generic PAs were able to give to young people with special educational needs. For example, County PA9 spoke about having to support young people across a "*crazy*" range of needs and stated: *"my frustration is that I don't have sufficient skills and experience and time to get involved [as I'd like]. It would need a much smaller caseload and to specialise."* Similarly, County PA14 was dissatisfied with the time she had to spend with young people with SEN:

'I don't feel I have as much time with the young people with special needs as I would have had as a Careers Adviser. … I do feel it's something the Government have not really understood or, if they've understood it, they've chosen to not give it the priority it needs. … (Connexions County, PA14)

Figure 5.3   Effect of deployment and role on support to young people

Deployment and role	Connexions County	Connexions City
Deployment	No teams	Two teams: 'mainstream' and 'special educational needs'
Role/s	Generic role; Minority of PAs had a specialism.	Four distinct roles: Specialist – SEN Link – main contact for school; careers advice and guidance from Y9 Careers – careers advice and guidance from Y9 Generic – worked with non-attenders, disengaged and those needing additional support
Caseload	Generic PAs - full range of young people's needs (Priorities 1-3) across all settings (school, college, community); Generic PA with specialism – as Generic PA but included young people matched to specialism	Specialist and Generic PAs - targeted young people at Priority 1; Link and Careers PAs – young people at Priority 2 and 3
Support to young people in:		
Special schools	Generic PA with specialism in SEN	Specialist PA from SEN team
Mainstream schools	Pupils with statements supported by generic PA with careers guidance specialism; Other pupils supported by non-specialist generic PA.	Careers PA, with advice and support from Specialist PA as necessary
Issue raised	Limited support generic PAs could give to young people with SEN	Young people potentially supported by a number of different PAs who may or may not *"connect".*

Source: Interviews with Connexions PAs

In Connexions City, one result of there being four distinct PA roles was that City young people in the sample were supported by various combinations of PA types. This meant that young people with a history of communication difficulties or of other SEN had to build relationships with several PAs, rather than having one person to whom they could turn to for advice and support regarding their transition to post-16 (see Figure 5.4)

Figure 5.4   One young person: multiple Pas

Young Person 84 (SEN) was seen by at least two Careers PAs regarding the universal service offered to all young people, by an SEN PA in relation to specialist advice regarding planning for transition to a post-16 placement and by a Generic PA regarding targeted support to enhance social and leisure activities. In this case, the PA interviewed was pleased about how this support had all "*connected*" and resulted in the young person having a successful transition to post-16 - but the potential for lack of connection was clear.

Caseloads

Caseloads (numbers of active cases and types of need presented by the young people) varied widely across the 46 PAs interviewed. Sixteen noted the negative impact of their caseload size and range on their work with the young people in the study. They spoke, for example, about not having enough time to spend with the young person to ensure that the most appropriate post-16 destination had been secured (see Figure 5.5), about being unable to act as quickly as they would have liked, and as having to limit their involvement. They particularly would have liked to have been able to spend more time with the sample young people in Year 10 and Year 11 so that they could have, for example, got to know the young person better, done more work with parents, helped more with applications to post-16 providers, and taken the young person on visits to some of these providers.

Figure 5.5   Negative impact of large PA caseload: an inappropriate post-16 destination

- City PA16 was only able to be involved with Young Person 105 (SSLD) when there was a problem; as a result, the PA was concerned that that young person may have gone on to an inappropriate college course rather than followed up on his strong inclination towards work-based learning. Our interviews with this young person and his parent indicated that this had been the case – he had gone on to a Foundation course where he struggled with the academic work and had a few problems with his course tutors. Despite this, he enjoyed the practical taster elements of the course and hoped to go on to gain a bricklaying job.

Awareness of caseload issues (the range of needs supported, the numbers of young people worked with, the tension between universal delivery and targeted support) is an important background to the findings about Connexions' involvement with the young people in the sample – particularly given that these young people were single cases from among many others dealt with by the PA interviewed. PA16 illustrated this point well as she described her caseload of universal and targeted support:

> I actively work with 300 Y11s at [Name] School and about 120 at [Name] College, as well. That doesn't cover the group work and other things we do with younger ones so it's huge. I do individual careers guidance interviews with well over 200 at the school. It's spread very thin in that sense. I think I had 1.5 days throughout the year at both college and school, to work with special needs young people. The first contact with [Young Person 105 (SSLD)] was on that basis – I did a special needs review.

Training of PAs around SEN

Formal training around supporting young people with SEN was very limited in both Connexions City and County. It mainly concerned procedures, such as assessments under Section 140 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 or about the SEN Code of Practice. The PAs from City and County mainly learned about supporting young people with special needs through experience built up over time, from advice and support from the SEN PAs and from building up a relationship with the SENCOs in the schools where they worked. A few PAs from a Careers Service background said that training around supporting young people with SEN had been offered in the Careers Service but had been *"less evident"* since becoming Connexions. Those who had taken the PA Diploma confirmed that it included some information on the services on offer and on the support available in schools.

In some of the other Connexions services, training on supporting young people with SEN was more readily accessible. The PA interviewed from Connexions 10 was unique among the interviewees in his very positive experience of SEN training provided by his Connexions Partnership and of support at management level for work with young people with *"disability"*: In his view, the training, leadership and specialist team of PAs resulted in a high quality of support for young people with special educational needs and an increasingly integrated, multi-agency style of working, as well as improved strategic planning.

None of the PAs interviewed had had any formal training about supporting young people with specific speech and language difficulties. Again, they learned from experience and from the professionals they met in schools, including SENCOs, special needs teachers and speech and language therapists.

5.2.2   Connexions involvement with the young people during KS4

Priority categories

About two-thirds (66%) of the sample were prioritised at a targeted, rather than universal support level, including all the young people with statements of SEN. This confirms that national guidance on support for young people with LDD was being followed for the young people in the sample – see Table 5.2.

Table 5.2   Priority categorisations of the sample young people (number of young people)

Priority level	SSLD	SEN	Total
	($n = 64$)	($n = 28$)	($n = 92$)
Intensive (P1)	33	12	45
Enhanced (P2)	11	5	16
Minimum intervention (P3)	12	6	18
Priority level changed	3	2	5
Priority level missing	1	0	1
No info. on young person from PA	4	3	7

Source: interviews with Connexions PAs

In a small number of cases (n = 5, 5%), priority levels changed in response to changes in the young person's circumstances (see Table 5.2), providing evidence of Connexions being responsive to young people's changing circumstances. However, the PAs were often reliant on schools to alert them to such issues and were aware that young people whose circumstances changed, making them more vulnerable and in greater need of Connexions support to ensure a positive post-16 transition, sometimes slipped through the net because schools did not communicate the information to the PA (see Figure 5.6).

Figure 5.6 Slipping through the net – an instance of poor communications

Young Person 78 (SSLD) was excluded from school in the spring term of Y11 and so did not sit his GSCEs. His PA was disappointed that the Learning Mentors in school had not involved her earlier. This case is one of a small number where young people in the sample who were experiencing difficulties were not targeted for Connexions support in time to prevent exclusion or disengagement from education through non-attendance. Young people with similar difficulties who also had statements of SEN had statutory Connexions involvement from Y9.

The APIR Framework

The framework through which PAs were expected to structure their one-to-one work with young people is known as the Connexions Assessment, Planning, Implementation and Review (APIR) Framework (CSNU, 2001). It consisted of three elements (LSC, 2001) – the APIR process, a profiling sheet covering 18 factors that may impinge on transition and the assessment profile in visual format (wheel or linear). The visual profile is then discussed with the young person and a personal action plan drawn up and reviewed at regular intervals.

The 46 interviews with PAs showed that patterns of use of the APIR Framework varied both across and within Connexions Partnerships. Overall, though, the APIR Framework was used only with a small minority of the young people. In those cases, the PAs found it a useful way of building up a better picture of the young person.

Seven of the 46 PAs interviewed, when reflecting on their work with the young person in the study, considered that they had not worked closely enough with school staff and other services to gain a full understanding of the young person's needs. In these case, it may be that having used the APIR Framework could have helped.

Statutory involvement with those with statements of SEN

Under the Education (Special Educational Needs) (England) (Consolidation) Regulations 2001 , a Connexions PA must attend the Year 9 Annual Review and oversee the delivery of the resulting Transition Plan. The PA must be invited to each subsequent Annual Review and is expected to attend the last review prior to the young person leaving school. From the

interviews with PAs, it was clear that statutory obligations were being met for young people in the sample who had a statement of special education needs. Figure 5.7 illustrates some examples of this.

Figure 5.7   Examples of PA involvement with young people with statements

Young Person 72 (SSLD), supported by SEN team PA, Connexions City
Y9 – PA attended Y9 Transitional Review; met parents there; suggested referral to Youth Service for support in accessing social activities for young people with special educational needs; discussed suitable post-16 destinations and course options.
Y10 – Attended Y10 Annual Review.
Y11 – Attended Y11 Annual Review; mother present; School-College Liaison Officer from local FE college attended; post-16 options refined to a first and second choice*,* completed Individual Development Plan; did 1:1 interview with young person to check he was on track for post-16 college course*,* completed Section 140 assessment report; tracked to ensure that college had confirmed place on desired course. Action planning used throughout.

Young Person 16 (SSLD), supported by Generic PA (Careers specialism), Connexions County
Y9 – Young person (YP16) dropped in to see PA in the careers room at school; PA had 1:1 meeting prior to Y9 Transition Review*;* attended Transition Review; met YP16's mother there.
Y10 - PA talked to YP16 about post-16 options that related to expressed interests*;* PA took YP16, his mother and stepfather to visit a FE college and to meet the tutor of a possible course.
Y11 - PA helped YP16 to fill in college application form and spoke to college to clarify course details*;* attended Y11 Review (college place was confirmed by this stage)*;* Section 140 completed*;* PA tracked to ensure college had confirmed place on desired course. Action planning used throughout.

Section 140 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 sets out the statutory requirement for all young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who were likely to carry on into post-16 education or training to have their educational and training needs assessed from Year 11 onwards. The reports based on these assessments are known as 'Section 140s.' It was the

responsibility of Connexions Partnerships to complete a Section 140 for all those with a statement of SEN.

The interviews with the 46 PAs indicated that Section 140s were produced for each young person discussed who had a statement of SEN and for those with special educational needs but without a statement. Overall, the PAs interviewed regarded these as potentially key documents that contained much information about the strengths, weaknesses and interests of the young person and of their support needs post-16. The destination of Section 140s varied, however, and PAs' knowledge of what happened to them was often either hazy or cynical.

In Connexions County, the Section 140s went directly to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) but PAs were unsure about what was then done with them and how information was passed on to post-16 providers. In Connexions City, Section 140s were sent directly to the post-16 provider once that was confirmed. This direct route was seen as important as it addressed the previous complaints of colleges and training providers that they did not receive enough information about young peoples' individual needs. It was also seen as putting a statutory responsibility (under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005) on the post-16 provider to ensure the young person's needs were appropriately addressed. A number of PAs in City, however, were sceptical about how much notice was taken by the colleges and training providers to implementing support for the needs identified in the Section 140s: *"More cynical colleagues feel that [...] they're shoved in a bottom drawer somewhere and nobody ever looks at them".*

PAs in City also raised as a *"serious concern"* their perception that the sole college provider in the city was funded one year retrospectively for support for students with additional needs and that, even although this money would be reimbursed by the LSC, this was used as an excuse by the college not to employ support staff and therefore resulted in needs not being addressed. Three PAs were concerned about the failure of identified support to be implemented in this FE college:

'College has to spend the money upfront to put the support staff in place and then the Learning and Skills Council give them the money a year later so, in effect, the college are in debt. That is a serious problem that needs sorting out because all these young people, you could argue that their lives are being ruined, because they are not getting the extra support that they've been promised. In effect, college won't recruit the staff

because otherwise they're going to be in debt and they get the money a year later. It's a very strange system.' (City PA19)

This highlights the need for clear guidance to colleges from local Learning and Skills Councils about funding mechanisms that ensure that there is no excuse for support not being provided to students.

A wider issue was raised by a PA from Connexions 6 who was concerned that, in general, Connexions support in FE colleges was insufficient, arguing that Connexions: *"should be doing more in college and less in school … the bigger transition is the* next *one"*.

Another issue raised was that PAs required the young person's agreement in order to forward Section 140s to the post-16 provider and in two cases this was not given despite the PAs' believing that the young person would benefit from their post-16 provider knowing about their additional needs (hearing impairment in one case and learning difficulties in another). In both instances, the PAs kept the Section 140 on record and intended to try to persuade the young person to allow them to pass it on to the college or training provider.

For those young people in residential special school, it was very important that the Host PA (covering the residential special school) and the Home PA liaised well together throughout KS4 and that both offered appropriate support to the young person (see Figure 5.8).

Figure 5.8 Example of good communication around young person in a residential out-of-authority placement

In the case of Young Person 139 (SSLD), the Host PA attended the annual reviews but the Home PA saw him at home in the school holidays. The Home PA attended the final Annual Review and had copies of all the information sent by the Host PA. The Home PA (Connexions 8) and his SEN PA colleagues met with the LA each month to monitor any students where the LA funded the post-16 placement and to discuss young people coming up to Year 11 who might require out-of-LA placements.

PAs' views of the young people's strengths and barriers to achievement

PAs were asked about their views of the strengths of the young person being discussed and also of any barriers to the achievement of the young person's goals and aspirations. Not all

PAs interviewed felt that they knew the young person well enough to provide this information. This was either because the young person had only accessed Connexions at the universal level of minimum intervention or because the PA's caseload had changed and so s/he had not yet really got to know the young person. Interestingly, the PAs able to talk about the young people's strengths did so in terms of factors that closely related to the aspects of resilience being explored in the post-16 stage of the data collection. They spoke about:

- Academic skills and attainment – achievements relevant to aspirations for the next step
- Personal attributes – for example, having a positive attitude, a likeable manner, being articulate, motivated, being aware of needing help and willing to ask for this, being hard working, being mature, positive self-presentation, good attendance record;
- Work experience – having a part-time job; having had a positive record during one or more work experience placements;
- Positive social engagement – for example, having hobbies and interests; having a positive social life
- Supportive structures – for example, support from family, a supportive school environment, willingness to engage with the support offered through Connexions.

When discussing the barriers in the way of the sample young people achieving their goals in life, the PAs tended to focus on the obverse of the strengths. Factors raised in relation to specific young people in the sample were:

- Learning difficulties and disabilities that would continue to have an impact throughout life – for example, poor concentration, poor literacy skills, autism, the degree of developmental delay, increasing visual impairment;
- Low or non-achievement in exams – sometimes this was because of exclusion from school or illness;
- Personal attributes – lack of confidence, poor social skills;
- Disengaged from available support – for example, those who refused to engage with Connexions or to accept appropriate support around a disability;
- Negative family circumstances – for example, poor relationships with one or both parents; family bereavement leaving young person as main carer; negative sibling role models (such as drug use; serving time in prison);

- Structural barriers – for example, lack of supported employment, lack of jobs in desired sector, no funding for Basic Skills support for those doing Modern Apprenticeships, identified support needs not being met in college.

5.2.3   Continuity of Connexions support post-16

Year 11 follow-up

Part of the role of Connexions was to continue to stay in touch with the young people over the summer and into the autumn term after Year 11. This was to ensure that the necessary support was offered to enable the young person to make the transition to education, employment or training. In some cases, this simple follow-up telephone call made all the difference between a positive transition and a young person slipping into NEET status – that is, being 'not in education, employment or training' (see Figure 5.9).

Figure 5.9 Held by the net of support – the importance of PA follow-up after Y11

After the end of Y11, PA18 made a routine follow-up call to Young Person 66 (SSLD) who explained that he had a place with a local training provider but was unclear about his start date. The PA rang the training provider repeatedly to enquire further but did not receive the required information. The PA kept YP66 and his mother informed about this process. Finally, it transpired that the training provider had lost track of that application from YP66.

Because of the PA's involvement, the training provider contacted the young person to offer an alternative programme to the one originally applied for. After discussing this new option with the PA, the young person began in his new programme in the August after Y11. The PA described this case as an example of advocacy, where the PA was able to persist on the young person's behalf, whereas the young person may well have lacked the confidence to be so dogged and might well have given up and so lost the place at the training provider and become a NEET statistic.

Post-16 destinations

All Connexions Partnerships must return figures on post-16 destinations to the DfES in the term after Year 11. These data were provided to Connexions by local schools, colleges and training providers and supplemented by PAs making telephone calls and/or home visits to enquire about the remaining cases. Post-16 destinations for the young people in the sample,

as known to PAs by mid-November 2005, indicated that all of the SSLD young people for whom information was obtained (54 of 64) were in positive post-16 destinations (education, employment or training). In the SEN group, PAs reported destinations for 21 of the 28 young people, of whom three were unemployed.

Post-16 options differed in the two LAs from which the study sample was drawn. In City, only a small number of schools had a Sixth Form. Most young people who stayed on in education went to the local FE college which had a number of sites across the city. Some City PAs were concerned about the demand for post-16 options that incorporated support for basic skills, such that they worried that not all who needed this would receive it. Where the sample young person was going on to employment, the PA usually regarded this as *"higher risk"* than a college option because employers were operating in a business environment where they might not be able to afford to be patient with the young person and allow for learning from mistakes.

In County, options were affected by whether or not the young person lived in a rural, urban or city area. One PA working in a very rural area was concerned about the limitations the local area placed on young people's post-16 opportunities:

> 'There is a massive issue about the lack of opportunities for the rural area; lack of training and no public transport. In loads of the villages, the young people are stuck. […] A lot of people stay on to sixth form just because there are no other options.' (Connexions County PA28)

Options could also be constrained for those attending out-of-authority residential schools. Two PAs working with residential special schools spoke about striving to provide the family and the young person with "*impartial*" information about the full range of post-16 options, particularly when staying on at the school was the parents' preferred option:

> 'They need to have considered the local options, if not for the fact of the LEA's funding mechanism, as much as that some students could well benefit far more [from a local placement] than going on to [post-16 in the same school].' (Connexions 9, PA25)

In both City and County, a small number of PAs were concerned for the young people in the sample going on to work-based training or into employment. Such transitions were regarded

as, *"less smooth"* than the move into FE college. One concern was a lack of clarity about who funds Basic Skills support for those on Modern Apprenticeships.

The agenda to raise the skills of workers in the childcare sector concerned one PA who was aware that Childcare was a very popular option among young women especially but knew that this route was increasingly not accessible to young people with SEN who would not attain the newly raised required entry grades.

Connexions support post-16

PA support continues to be available until the young person's 19th birthday (25th birthday for those with LDDs). Connexions PAs, therefore, also worked in FE colleges, acted as Link PAs to training providers, and worked as PAs in the community. According to the PAs interviewed, a number of mechanisms were in place to ensure that young people were able to access Connexions support as necessary after leaving school. These included, for example:

- some PAs were able to keep the young people on their caseload;
- all PAs in each Connexions Partnership had access to the central database where individual's records were recorded – thus, any PA meeting a young person for the first time could access existing Connexions information about that person;
- PAs working in schools generating an internal referral to another PA covering the post-16 destination (including community PAs working with those not in education, employment or training) to alert them to a particular young person felt to require targeted support;
- named PAs were linked to Foundation and special needs courses in FE colleges in order to target support on those young people with continuing LDDs;
- PAs working in colleges ran Induction sessions for new students to introduce themselves and the continuing role of Connexions in supporting young people;
- Personal Tutors at college were aware of Connexions and would refer the young person if there were any concerns.

The continued support after the end of compulsory schooling was regarded as important and valuable by the PAs interviewed and impacted directly on particularly vulnerable young people in the sample. This included support to enable those who had not made a direct transition to post-16 education, employment or training to do so (see Figure 5.10). It also

included support for those who, having entered education, training or employment, foundered and required PA involvement to transfer to a more appropriate placement.

Figure 5.10   Continued Connexions support after KS4 – 1: Reducing disengagement from education, employment or training

Offer of support accepted

- YP110 (SEN) left school and got a job. Subsequently, however, he became unemployed. He was therefore put on the caseload of a Community PA. She spoke to him on the phone and invited him to come to the Connexions office for help in applying for jobs. He took up this offer of support and, by January 2006, remained in contact with his PA. With Connexions' help, he hoped to obtain a relevant work placement while he waited to enrol at college in autumn 2006.

Offer of support held open – take-up hopeful

- Young Person 63 (SSLD) dropped out of school without completing Year 11. He had accessed Connexions support while in school. He had also dropped in to the main Connexions office for advice on post-16 options. Every effort was made to engage him in positive community-based projects to help him gain employment skills but he refused to take part. Many attempts were made by Connexions to contact him but by the December after Year 11, he was thought to be unemployed. The PA concerned thought this was a case where the young person was not ready for the support offered but that, because the Connexions service continued, she hoped that he would choose to use it when the time was right for him.

Offer of support held open – take-up unlikely

- Young Person 75 (SEN) had been a non-attender since the end of Year 10, despite having had a full-time KS4 alternative curriculum package arranged for him. His school PA had never seen him, despite many phone calls and home visits. The school PA feared he had been lost to a disengaged subculture but, nevertheless, he was added to the caseload of a community PA who would continue to try to engage him.

The positive impact of continued support post-16 was evident in the cases of some young people interviewed during their first, post-16 year (see Figure 5.11).

Figure 5.11   Continued Connexions support after KS4 – 2: Reducing drop-out from education, training and employment

- Young Person 28 (SSLD) gained a place on a Modern Apprenticeship through support from Connexions but problems arose and he *"got the sack"*. However, rather than dropping out of the system, he obtained a place on an Entry to Employment course (E2E) *"through Connexions. I kept in touch with them and they kept in touch with me."*
- Young Person 89 (SEN) gained a place at FE college but found the large, busy environment too difficult to cope with. With intensive support from Connexions, he was prevented from dropping out of education, training or employment and made a successful move to a supported version of Entry to Employment. On E2E, he was supported by two Connexions PAs who worked closely with the training provider to maintain his placement and support him into work.

Post-16 Connexions support for those who stayed on in residential out-of-LA placements involved continued liaison between the Host PA (covering the school) and the Home PA. Typically, the Host PA would do group work in school around the next transition whilst the Home PA would explore realistic options in the local area, whether FE colleges or supported work opportunities, with the young person during school holidays. In one case, the school encouraged its post-16 students to link weekends at home to part-time placements in an FE college in the home area on a Monday or Friday. In another area, the Home PA, aware that the young person had few friends locally, arranged for support from a Connexions mentor (usually a gap year student) to act as a buddy to help him join in with social events at home.

5.2.4   PAs' reflections on the Connexions service in the light of these cases

At the end of the interview, the PAs were invited to reflect on the case/s discussed and to comment both on the aspects that had pleased them and anything that they wished could have been different. A thematic summary of their responses is given in Figure 5.12.

Figure 5.12   PAs' reflections about Connexions support in the light of the cases of the sample young people

Positive reflections
• targeted support worked well and delivered a positive post-16 destination for the young people (18 PAs) • school staff and Connexions PA/s worked well as a team to support the young people (7 PAs) • a good relationship was built up with the young person which laid the foundations for continued work post-16 (4 PAs) • parents and PA worked well together to ensure a positive post-16 destination for the young person (3 PAs) • offering a drop-in service worked well because it suited some young people better than more formal avenues of support (2 PAs)
Issues raised
• the size and range of caseload had a negative impact on the support offered to the young people (16 PAs) • school, other services and PA/s were not working closely enough together to prevent young people being excluded from school and/or slipping through the supportive net (7 PAs) • disruptions in Connexions personnel caused disruption in casework which caused delays in addressing issues relating to transition to post-16 (4 PAs) • on reflection, using the APIR Framework may well have improved the work with the young person (3 PAs) • despite Section 140s and Connexions PAs being in college, support for learning in FE college for those with LDDs did not always materialise (3 PAs)

Source: interviews with Connexions PAs

Several of the PAs who spoke about being pleased with how well targeted support had worked for the young person commented that perhaps this was because the young person had a statement of SEN:

'Perhaps it's because there's been a statement that it has worked so well.' (County PA10);

'There was more involvement because they have statements. The system seems to have worked well.' (County PA28)

Such comments suggest the importance of statutory obligations in ring-fencing Connexions support for these young people.

6.   Support in post-16 destinations: the views of tutors/trainers

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Conclusions

- Overall, the tutors' views created a very positive picture of successful transition to post-16 further education or training for *most* of the young people in both SSLD and SEN cohorts.
- For most students, tutors predicted a positive next step into continued education, employment or training and to a future where most of the young people were predicted to have jobs as adults in their early twenties.

For each of the young people involved in the post-16 phase of the research, interviews were also held with the member of staff who knew them best in their post-16 destination. As the majority were in education, this was usually their personal tutor. For those in training, it was their trainer assessor (also referred to as 'tutor' in this chapter). Sixty-six interviews took place (50 SSLD; 16 SEN). Interviews were not held with equivalent staff for three of the young people who were employed, one who was unemployed, or for three who remained at school and did not wish their tutor to be contacted (n=6).

This chapter reports tutors' views about the support available in the post-16 destinations, as well as their views about other factors that were supportive of the young people in these environments.

6.1   Support in colleges

Although the young people in the study attended a number of different FE colleges in different areas of England, the potential support offered was, in principle, rather similar. In general, there were two support systems: one which offered support to all students through personal tutor time, differentiation by lecturers/tutors and support from teaching assistants (TAs), also referred to as learning support assistants (LSAs), who were in some classes routinely; and a second system which offered individualised support for identified needs through a specialist department, usually called the Additional Support department.

For the young people in the study, the normal support available to everyone included, for example, learning in a first year group that automatically had a tutor and a TA assigned to it,

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or being taught by a tutor who was aware of identified need and differentiated accordingly (Figure 6.1) – as in the case of Student 11/SEN who had dyslexia and so, for example, his tutor made sure that he *'gave a verbal description of what I've written on the board'*.

Figure 6.1   Every day support in a college classroom

Young Person 9 (SSLD) was doing a college catering course. She described the normal pattern of support in the classroom:

'There is always a LSA [learning support assistant] on Mondays, and there is always someone in the kitchen. If you need help, they will come and help you and if you need help you can always ask them, so it is very good. [The LSA] tries to understand, from your point of you, what you couldn't understand and are confused about and then tries to help you in every way possible to get the result.
If there is not a LSA in the classroom then who do you ask?
Our chef. He will help us basically to do the same but, the thing is, in the kitchen, he has so many students to look after that he really needs someone else to look at all of us.
Is there anything that the college could do to make your studies easier?
Not really, everything is fine really. We have the library, we have computer room where we can go in and use that and I can always go to [name], my LSA, if I really need something, so everything is very good. So there is not really anything else that it can improve.'

All the colleges attended by students in the study had formal Additional Support available. Support from the Additional Support (AS) department was usually triggered by screening mechanisms at interview and at entry and, less often, by learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD) subsequently being picked up by tutors and referred to the AS department. All the colleges involved in the research interviewed potential students prior to entry and asked, verbally or via a questionnaire, for the young people to identify any additional support needs. However, colleges were also aware that not all young people were willing to admit to such needs and so they also used documentation received from schools, or other agencies, and diagnostic testing of basic skills and key skills.

Once the need for AS involvement was identified, an individual package of support tailored to the young people's needs was designed through discussion with the young people and personal tutor and sometimes also with teaching staff. Such packages varied but could include, for example, allocating a TA to support the student in class, 1:1 sessions on weak curriculum areas such as literacy or numeracy, allocation of a keyworker/mentor, allocation of a personal support assistant, signing support, Braille readers, provision of laptops or dictaphones. In both the SSLD and SEN groups, a minority received support in college via the AS department. Figure 6.2 provides some illustrative examples of the individualised support in place for the students involved in the research.

Figure 6.2   Support from Additional Support departments in colleges

SSLD group examples

- Some of the young people in the SSLD group were offered an individual session per week with a member of the AS department during which they had the opportunity to go through queries related to their coursework and to do some additional work related to the areas of needs and the targets set in their Individual Learning Plan.

- Additionally, two of the SSLD students, about whom there were concerns related to family and personal issues, were offered the opportunity to have regular sessions with the college counsellors and their PAs from Connexions.

SEN group examples

- Young Person 36 (SEN) had cerebral palsy. He was allocated a personal support assistant to ensure his safety whilst moving around the college;

- Young Person 48 (SEN) had dyslexia. She had been allocated a laptop and dictaphone but, after trying these out, decided she could manage without them.

- Young Person 68 (SEN) had Asperger's Syndrome. His progress was kept under regular review by the AS department whose staff had circulated information about the implications of the condition to all his tutors.

Table 6.1 provides details of the numbers in each group who were offered, and who took up, additional support in college. In or out-of-class additional support was the most common, but the range of support offered illustrates the efforts made by the colleges to tailor support to individual needs. Table 6.1 also shows that colleges accepted the young people's autonomy in that they were able to refuse support offered. In four cases, young people in both the SSLD and the SEN group initially took up particular forms of support, tried them out and then

decided they could manage successfully without them (e.g. Young Person 48/SEN, Figure 6.2 above).

Table 6.1   Offer and take up of forms of additional support by those in college (number of responses)

Additional support	SSLD (*n* = 45 in college)		SEN (*n* = 14 in college)	
	Taken up	Offered but not taken up	Taken up	Offered but not taken up
Whole class LSA	32	0	4	2
1:1 LSA	15	1	5	2
1:1 additional sessions	15	6	3	2
Personal support assistant	0	0	1	0
Regular Connexions involvement	3	0	0	0
Special exam arrangements	0	0	1	0
Access to SLT	*4	0	0	0
Access to counselor	0	0	0	1
Caseworker/mentor	1	0	1	0
Specific equipment	1	0	1	0

Source: interviews with college tutors. *All 4 were in specialist colleges for students with speech and language difficulties. Tutors could give more than one response so columns do not sum to N.

Co-ordination of information related to support needs in colleges

A small number of students had only one tutor; for example, some of those doing a vocational training course. Most had several. In such cases, tutors reported that information about support needed by the young person was shared across all the tutors/lecturers involved in teaching that student (40 SSLD; 12 SEN). The mechanisms mentioned included informal, but very regular, discussions among staff about the young person's support needs; regular meetings among staff and between personal tutors and AS staff (where relevant); and briefing sheets from AS department to all tutors/lecturers working with that student.

Most personal tutors also said that their colleagues were receptive to suggestions about how best to support particular students' needs but a few (5 SSLD; 2 SEN) noted that colleagues were mixed in their responsiveness – for example, in some colleges, some of the hands-on tutors in vocational areas, such as bricklaying or engineering, had a reputation as being less willing to differentiate teaching and learning to support those with SEN.

6.2   Support for those not in education

Of the young people interviewed in the post-16 phase, the minority who had gone on to employment or training providers (4 SSLD; 3 SEN) had a more varied experience: those who went on to Entry to Employment (E2E) courses with training providers had access to support for basic and key skills but those who went into employment had no guarantee of formal support.

The young people at training providers had access to formal additional support, such as in-class additional support, one-to-one learning support and access to regular Connexions involvement. Indeed, some training providers specialised in offering a supportive training environment for potentially vulnerable young people. An example here would be one young man (89/SEN) who had started college but found the college environment too big and intimidating. Through Connexions, he found a place with a specialist training provider who offered a tailored package of support to prepare him for a work placement in a sector where it was hoped he would thrive. On the other hand, a fourth young person (15/SEN) refused to engage with any support offered and came very close to being excluded from E2E:

> '[Name] has been offered all the support he needs - but I've found him very difficult. He's not done what he's asked. He's very good at watching other people work; not so good at doing it himself! In all honesty, I've sort of thrown him out of my area [construction] because he's messing it up for everyone else. He's stopping them working so, at the moment, he's in what we call the "sin bin" [the administrator's office] because I couldn't get him to work, to apply himself. He was just getting in the way, basically. He'd had plenty of opportunities – he'd had two or three warnings. … I was quite happy to throw him out but he was given another opportunity to buck up his ideas.' (Trainer for Young Person 15/SEN)

At time of interview (January 2006), the young man had a work placement interview booked in. If successful, he would be able to spend part of the week working in a garage and part of the week at the training provider, studying mechanics. His trainer was hopeful that *"maybe we'll get a positive outcome for him"*.

Of the three young people interviewed who were in employment, two were working in supportive environments - one with his father and one with an employer who was willing to support a plan that, in 2006-07, he could swap from full-time to part-time work to enable him also to study at college part-time. The third had had a series of temporary jobs with no support (see Figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3   Example of gap in formal support for young people in employment

a) Gap in support

- One young woman (21/SEN) had had a series of short term jobs (waitressing, office work, retail, telesales), none of which had offered any training or support.

b) Filling the gap through family and social networks

- Young Person 21/SEN had left school without taking her exams. She used her network of friends to find her first two jobs and a recruitment agency to find the third. When that was due to finish, an older colleague with whom she had become friendly rang Connexions on her behalf to arrange an appointment for her. Accompanied by her mother (with whom she no longer lived) to that Connexions interview, she was put forward for a job interview and put in touch with the local college to begin thinking about her longer term future. At time of interview, it seemed likely that this young woman would succeed in staying in employment or returning to education, despite the lack of support in her first jobs which had made her vulnerable as a young worker.

This case corroborated the concerns expressed by Connexions PAs (reported in Chapter 5) that young workers were particularly vulnerable due to the lack of support in the work environment. It also showed, however, that even young people with little formal support in work could, nonetheless, prove resilient by succeeding in making links to other formal supports, such as Connexions, through informal networks of social relationships.

6.3   Tutors' views of the young people as learners

Academic progress compared to peers

As Table 6.2 shows, according to their tutors, the progress of the majority of both groups, compared to their peers, was at least 'OK', with just under a quarter doing 'very well'.

Table 6.2   Tutors' views of the young people's academic progress in post-16 education and training, compared to peers on same course (number of young people)

Progress	SSLD ($n = 46$)	SEN ($n = 16$)
Very good	11	5
Quite good	16	3
OK	14	6
Not very good	4	1
Not at all good	1	0
I don't know	0	1

Source: interviews with tutors, post-16

Only a small minority of the young people were reported by tutors to be struggling, compared to their peers (5 SSLD; 1 SEN – two on training programmes and four in college). Of those six, the five young people reported to be making 'not very good' progress, had all had statements of SEN at school and had been highlighted by their Connexions PAs as requiring considerable support post-16 – one (6/SSLD) because of issues within the family that had affected the young man, one because of a history of non-attendance during KS4 (15/SEN) and the others (12, 38 and 92/SSLD) because of learning difficulties. The one young man reported to be making 'not at all good' progress (101/SSLD) had not had a statement of SEN during Key Stage 4 and so had received minimal (P3) support from Connexions over transition to post-16 yet his literacy and numeracy skills were very poor and he struggled with the work in college:

> '[Young Person 101] started at Foundation and he found it very stressful. … I think the workload - he found it difficult to cope with literacy, because I don't think he is a reader or a writer. He has no literacy skills whatsoever and even if there one-to-one literacy support in there, which the generic LSA offers him, it's only coping that he can do, and he is not going to get anywhere just coping. I think it was recognised by the subject tutor that [Name] wasn't coping and his personal tutor at that time contacted the head of Foundation Studies and he came to me, as the course co-

ordinator of the Severe Difficulties course, which has units at pre-Entry Level, and now we are trying, together with the family, to decide what is best for [Name]'.

Self-perceptions as learners

As Table 6.3 shows, the tutors' thought that over three times as many SSLD young people held positive self-perceptions of themselves as learners, as held negative perceptions (34:9). Conversely, tutors' thought that over twice as many of the SEN group held negative self-perceptions of themselves as learners as held positive views (10:4), a significant difference ($\chi^2 = 9.95$, df = 1, $p < .01$).

Table 6.3   Tutors' views of the young people's self-perception as a learner (number of young people)

Self-perception	SSLD ($n = 47$)	SEN ($n = 16$)
Very positive	5	0
Positive	32	4
Negative	9	10
I don't know	1	2

Source: interviews with tutors' post-16

Among the tutors of the SSLD group, 40 thought the young person's self-perception was realistic, with only six (all positive ones) deemed unrealistic. Conversely, tutors' of the SEN group of young people thought more of their views were unrealistic (9) compared to realistic (5) - only one of the self-perceptions deemed unrealistic was a positive one, the other eight were negative ones. This suggests that, overall, the SEN group had an unduly negative view of themselves as learners. Tutors were aware of this as a general issue that needed to be addressed by staff:

'It's a little difficult to even talk to students about this [self-perception as a learner]. I would imagine that for [Name], he can be very like a number of students on Foundation Studies, which is they essentially think that they're 'thick' and that that is why they are on the Foundation Studies Programme. Part of the job of the personal tutor, and the tutors in different subject areas, is to try to address that. … I think this is one of the most depressing things about the course in many ways because you've got all these students who, for a number of reasons, have been given this message throughout their education and I think sometimes that a year is not enough time to

address that fully. We're kind of chipping away at it and hoping to get them on the right path. … Particularly with [Name], and there's a couple of other students in the tutor group with him who are also like that, I think, if I was not to work with them on this, then they would leave college thinking, "I'm stupid. I can't do it" and that's certainly not the case. [Name] is doing well in his maths and he's doing very well in his English.' (Tutor of Young Person 126/SEN)

Another college tutor, although discussing one young man in particular, linked this issue of negative self-image as a learner to a fear of making mistakes in front of peers that perhaps particularly affected those who had a history of SEN in mainstream schools:

'I think [Name] tends to put himself down a little bit. I think he's actually more able than he realises. We'll say to him, "But you *can* do that" and, although he will never say, "No, I can't", he'll sit back and you can see he's a little bit afraid to try sometimes. He doesn't like to get things wrong so he's afraid to make mistakes. I have that problem with a lot of them within that group [Accessing a College Education]. It's almost like losing face if they make a mistake. We spend quite a lot of time explaining to them that part of learning is making mistakes; that's how you learn. It's difficult for them, particularly if they've been in a mainstream school; that's very different to the ones that come in from special schools. It's almost as if they've thought, "If I make a mistake, they'll know I'm different"' (Tutor for Young Person 36/SEN)

Group difference

- Post-16 tutors interviewed thought that about three-quarters of the SSLD group had a positive perception of themselves as learners and deemed this unrealistic in only six cases.
- Tutors thought that about two-thirds of the SEN group had negative perceptions of themselves as learners. Tutors viewed eight of these negative views as unrealistic.

Tutors' views of the young people's strengths

Tutors' regarded almost all the young people in both groups as having strengths in terms of positive personal qualities, such as, friendliness, determination, enthusiasm, politeness, independence, hard working (Table 6.4).

[Name]'s strengths are that she is becoming more independent. When she needs help, she knows who to ask for advice when she has a problem and then she will go and sort it out by herself. She works and works and works and I think that is a real strength. (Tutor for Young Person 96/SSLD).

'[Name] is polite and responsive. He's friendly. He's got a positive attitude, too.' (Tutor for Young Person 118/SEN)

Table 6.4   Tutors' views of the young people's strengths (number of responses)

Strength	SSLD (*n* = 47)	SEN (*n* = 16)
personal qualities	40	13
people skills	32	9
communication skills	18	4
curriculum areas	8	6
artistic/creative skills	2	1
no strengths/ I don't know	1	1

Source: interviews with tutors, post-16. Tutors could give more than one response so columns do not sum to total

People skills (getting on well with others) were regarded as a strength of well over half the SSLD group (n = 32) and just over half the SEN group (n = 9).

'[Name] is getting on very well with her tutors and peers. I would say that she is very popular. She will always come around and ask how you are doing and have a short chat with almost everybody.' (Tutor for Young person 138/SSLD)

'She's popular with her peers. She also does a lot of work with the Guides.' (Tutor of Young Person 48/SEN)

Tutors regarded over a third of the SSLD group as having a strength in communication skills (n=18), compared to a quarter of the SEN group.

'I think her communication skills are one of her strengths. She is a lovely girl, always smiling and getting on very well with most of the students and staff.' (Tutor of Young Person 9/SSLD)

'She is great with her communication skills with clients and gets on very well with the staff [in her work placement].' (Tutor for Young Person 84/SEN)

One tutor of those in the SSLD group reported not knowing what his student's strengths were at the time of interview as he only worked with the student once a week in a group of seven others. The one SEN young man reported as having no strengths was Young Person 15/SEN about whom his tutor said:

'I've never seen any [strengths]. He's quite clever; not at all unintelligent – he's quite clever at using people against each other … but they're all [i.e. the trainees] quite good at that. They're very manipulative.' (Training assessor for Young Person 15/SEN)

These were the exceptions, however; tutors were able to describe a number of strengths for almost all the students in both groups, even though sometimes they had to pause to think before responding to the question – perhaps indicating that it was relatively unusual for them to reflect on their students' strengths.

6.4 Tutors' views of the young people's social competence

Overall, tutors viewed almost all the young people in both groups as socially competent in terms of the relationships they had with their tutors and peers (Table 6.5).

Table 6.5   Tutors' views of young people's social competence (number of young people)

Social competence	SSLD ($n = 47$)	SEN ($n = 16$)
Gets on with course tutors:		
very well	36	6
quite well	8	5
OK	3	3
mixed	0	1
not very well	0	0
not at all well	0	1
Gets on with peers:		
very well	29	4
quite well	12	3
OK	3	7
not very well	3	1
not at all well	0	1
Fights or quarrels with peers:		
yes	3	3
no	44	13
Positive, active social life:		
yes	20	7
no	5	5
I don't know	22	4

Source: Interviews with tutors, post-16

Getting on with tutors

All the SSLD group were reported as getting on at least 'OK' with their tutors, and the majority (n = 36) as getting on 'very well' (Table 6.5). Among the SEN group, all but two got on at least 'OK' with their tutors. The two exceptions were both on vocational training courses. Young Person 15/SEN was on an Entry to Employment training programme learning skills for the construction industry. His tutor regarded him as uncooperative, defiant and more interested in watching others work than doing anything himself; in other words, he saw him as having an attitude problem, rather than learning difficulties, despite his history of SEN. Young Person 11/SEN was at college doing a Level 1 Progression Award in Motor Vehicle Mechanics. His tutor explained that, like others on that course, he had had some issues with the engineering tutors who had high expectations of the precision and accuracy

of the young people's work and who sometimes forgot that some students, including Young Person 11/SEN, had a history of SEN:

> 'Although [Name] has not had any disciplinary procedures through them [the engineering tutors], it has been mentioned that he tends to sit back a bit. I told them that you can see he's got a bit of a problem so I think they remember that now.' (Training Assessor for Young Person 11/SEN)

It is worth noting that additional support had not been offered until it became known that this young person was involved in this research and only then was his case reviewed and his need for support around dyslexia taken on board.

Getting on with peers

Over half (n = 29) of the SSLD group were reported as getting on 'very well' with their peers and all but three as getting on at least 'OK' (Table 6.5). The three exceptions were, respectively, a young woman with a history of having been bullied at school which had affected her confidence to interact with her peers at college (4/SSLD) and two young men reported by their tutors to "*irritate*" their peers one by *"talking all the time about his sexuality"* (124/SSLD) and one by *"putting himself forward all the time"* (119/SSLD).

Only two young people were reported to have fought/quarrelled with their peers. In one case, the tutor explained the student's difficulty in tolerating certain peers by referring to social interaction difficulties associated with autism, exacerbated by moving from a small special school to a large college (Young Person 122/SSLD). In the other case, the tutor explained that the incident had not been a physical fight:

> 'She wasn't physically involved in a fight; it was mainly a verbal fight but it happened quite early during the year and we were quite surprised. It was when we found out that she can shout.' (Tutor of Young Person 52/SSLD)

Tutors had a positive view of relationships with peers for all but two of the SEN group. In one of these cases, the tutor explained the issue in terms of peer jealousy of the student's family life and the student's tendency to talk too much about this:

> 'He does have problems with a couple of people in the group. [Name's] home life represents everything that they would *like* their home life to be and because [Name]

talks about home constantly it's a bit of a red rag to a bull to them because they don't have that so we had quite a few problems before Christmas. … They *all* do get a little bit fed up with him because he'll talk and talk and talk.' (Tutor of Young Person 36/SEN)

The other case was once again Young Person 15/SEN – his tutor reported that his peers were all '*fed-up with him. They don't want him. He's disruptive.*'

Three SEN students were reported as getting involved with fights/quarrels with peers but none of these cases were regarded by tutors as serious – '*She can get quite heated with her friend but they make it up.*' (84/SEN); '*Little quarrels – nothing serious*' (118/SEN); '*It's verbal sparring that lasts 10-15 minutes, no different from others in the group*' (126/SEN).

Social life

Table 6.5 also shows that just under half the tutors of the SSLD group did not know enough about the young people's social life outside of college to make a judgement but those that did based their views on conversations either with the tutor or overheard by the tutor, during which the students talked about what they had done in their evenings and weekends. Of those who had a view of the social lives of the SSLD young people, the majority were positive.

'Sam has quite an active social life. I know that his parents take him to quite a few things. And also, because he is the eldest of three brothers, he gets involved in the activities that his brothers are doing, even if it is like a supporting role, to go and watch them in a football match ' (Tutor for Young Person 45/SSLD)

Tutors' views of the social life of the SEN group were less positive. About a quarter did not know enough to make a judgment, but of those who did, five had negative views compared to seven with positive views. In two cases, the negative views were about very quiet young people (one male, one female) who, the tutors thought, probably spent most of their time with their family, rather than going out with peers – "*I don't think she goes out a lot; not clubbing like the rest of them.*". The other three cases related to young men with learning difficulties, two of whom (54 and 68/SEN) were regarded as not sociable and thought to spend their free time in lone activities such as computer games – "*he talks about watching DVDs and videos and playing computer games*"; the third young man was thought to have

no friends outside his family circle (36/SEN) – *"he lives a sheltered life revolving round his mum and dad"*.

6.5 Tutors' views of the problems faced in post-16 and coping strategies

As Table 6.6 shows, tutors viewed about three-quarters of the SSLD young people (*n* = 30) as having problems with coursework, compared to an eighth of the SEN group (*n* = 2).

Table 6.6   Tutors' views of problems faced by the young people (number of responses)

Types of problems that had arisen	SSLD (*n* = 47)	SEN (*n* = 16)
related to coursework	30	2
with peers	5	4
related to additional support	3	0
related to work placement	0	1
personal and/or family problems	1	4

Source: interviews with tutors, post-16. Tutors could give more than one response so columns do not sum to total N.

Many of the SSLD students reported that they found it difficult to adjust the different style of coursework at college compared to the work that they had had to do at secondary school. For example, one young man (23/SSLD) attending a 6th form reported that more critical thinking was needed in order to complete his essays.

Some other SSLD students had difficulties understanding the requirements of the essays included as part of their coursework and so fell behind, not managing to meet important deadlines (127/SSLD, 6/SSLD). This situation affected their attendance at college and for Young Person 127/SSLD it also caused fights with his parents at home.

Group difference

- Tutors reported the SSLD young people as having problems with coursework far more frequently than they did for the SEN group (SSLD *n* = 30/47; SEN *n* = 2/16)

When faced with a problem, overall, tutors said that most of the SSLD group (n = 40) and half of the SEN group (n = 8) had asked them for help at least 'sometimes' (Table 6.7). Table 6.7 also sets out the other coping strategies tutors thought the young people used in their pst-16 destinations. Behaviour characteristic of diligent students (focussing on the work and

being cooperative with the tutor) were most frequently cited for the SSLD group, whilst a tendency to avoid the issue or to walk away from problems, for example with peers, was cited for a quarter (n = 4) of the SEN group. Tutors could be sensitive in the way they handled this; for example:

> 'He keeps quiet and keeps out of bother that way. I go along with that, after I'd discussed it with him. I negotiated with [Name] that he would shake his head if he didn't understand something.' (Tutor of Young Person 78/SEN)

Table 6.7   Coping strategies used when faced with a problem in post-16 destination (number of responses)

Coping strategy	SSLD (*n* = 47)	SEN (*n* =16)
Turns to tutor when faced with a problem:		
always	15	3
often	9	3
sometimes	16	2
rarely	2	1
never	5	3
would if had a problem	0	4
Other coping strategies noted by tutors	SSLD	SEN
focus on work	8	2
co-operative with tutors/listens	6	2
good use of additional support	3	2
articulate, talks way out of it	2	0
avoidance	1	4
reflective	2	0
supportive friends	1	2
sense of humour	1	0
nothing in particular	3	3

Source: interviews with tutors, post-16. Tutors could give more than one response so columns do not sum to total N.

6.6   Tutors' views of factors supporting young people in post-16 destinations

Tutors' views about the factors that supported the young people in their post-16 destination were categorised into three groups: college/training provider factors, family factors and personal factors. As Table 6.8 shows, tutors in both groups most frequently cited a within-person factor, positive personality traits ($n = 100$), as supporting resilience in the post-16 destination. The high number of responses reflects the fact that tutors often cited more than one such trait for a young person. The next four most frequently cited factors had a different order of frequency between the two groups. When tutors were talking about SSLD young people, the order of frequency was supportive tutors ($n = 45$), support provision ($n = 40$), positive actions ($n = 41$) and supportive family ($n = 31$) whilst, for the SEN group, it was positive actions ($n = 11$), supportive family ($n = 8$), supportive tutors ($n = 6$) and then support provision and supportive peer group (both $n = 5$): this last came much lower in the order of frequency for the SSLD group.

Table 6.8   Tutors' views of factors that supported the young people's resilience in their post-16 destination (number of responses)

Factor supporting post-16 resilience	SSLD ($n = 47$)	SEN ($n = 16$)
College factors:		
Supportive tutors	45	6
Support provision	40	5
Tutors' experience of SEN	11	1
College culture	7	2
Supportive peer group	3	5
Education maintenance allowance (EMA)	0	1
Family factors:		
Supportive family	31	8
Active involvement in young person's education	30	2
High expectations	4	1
Aware of young person's needs	19	2
Cooperative with post-16 staff	9	4
Personal factors:		
Positive actions (good attendance; hard work; positive interests or hobbies; asks for help when needed)	41	11
Positive personality traits (in general or specific e.g. determined; enthusiastic;	87	13

polite; confident; high self-esteem)

Cognitive ability	13	4
Good social skills	16	4

Source: Interviews with young people's post-16 tutors or supervisors. Tutors' could give more than one response so numbers do not sum to total N.

Some case study examples are given in Figure 6.4 to illustrate how such factors combined, in tutors' views, to support the young people in their post-16 destination.

Figure 6.4 Case study examples of tutors' views of factors supporting young people's success in post-16 college/training

Student ID	Factor/s	Comments
9/SSLD	Personality	She is always polite and pleasant.
	Social	She … gets on with almost everybody.
	Family	He parents are very supportive and leave her to make her own decisions about her future.
	College	She gets lots of support from her tutors and from the college.
48/SEN	Family	She can talk to her parents and they are supportive.
	Friends	She has a group of friends.
	Voluntary Work	Her involvement with Guides.
	Hobbies	Makes craft cards and has sold some
	Personal attributes	Polite
68/SEN	Family	Mum came to interview with him and she's kept in contact since to discuss his progress
	Withdrawal	*'survives a lot of situations'* by withdrawing into himself e.g. getting his book out, choosing to be alone outside of class
	College	Supportive environment, understanding tutors who know what his difficulties are

Source: interviews with tutors, post-16

6.7   Tutors' predictions for the young people's futures

As Table 6.9 shows, the majority of the SSLD group were predicted by their tutors to move on to further study or training as their next step. Only six were predicted to move on into employment – three into employment in their chosen area and three into any job. For example, after college, Young Person 46 planned to move on to full-time work in his family's pub where he had worked part-time for some time whilst Young Person 119 was keen to finish studying and move on to a manual job.

Table 6.9 Tutors' predictions for the young people's next step after current course, training or job (number)

Predicted next step	SSLD ($n = 47$)	SEN ($n = 16$)
further study/training	38	7
job in chosen field	3	6
job (even if not chosen field)	3	0
work placement	0	2
hard to imagine	0	1

Source: Interviews with the young people's post-16 personal tutors, training supervisors

Table 6.9 also shows that tutors predicted further study/training for just under half the SEN group ($n = 7$) and employment or work placement as the next step for the other half ($n = 8$). The exception was a young man with Asperger's Syndrome whose difficulties in social interaction in a group made it unlikely, according to his tutor, that he would gain his Level 2 key skill qualification in Communication and made his progression hard to plan:

> '[His next step] is something that is concerning us. …I worry about when he has to move on from this college because the work he is producing is really high standard, he could go in to the industry [multi-media animation] but it's just that barrier that, within the industry, you've got to be able to talk to clients. You've got to interact with work colleagues and on projects he'd be working on it in integrated teamwork so I worry a little bit about where he could go after the course. … It's a real shame because he has got a lot of talent. … It's really bad if that is going to be a barrier all his life.' (Tutor of Young Person 68/SEN)

Invited to predict ahead five years, to what the young people's lives would be like when they would be in their early 20s, tutors tended to focus on whether or not the young person would have a job. A smaller number spoke about other aspects, such as living independently of

parents, being in a serious relationship with a partner and having a positive social life (Table 6.10).

Table 6.10 Tutors' predictions for the young people's life in their early 20s (number of responses)

Predictions for five years time	SSLD (*n* = 47)	SEN (*n* = 16)
Employed	42	14
Living independently of parents	14*	*7
In a serious relationship	1	2
Positive social life	8	6

Source: Interviews with tutors, post-16. Interviewees could give more than one response so columns do not sum to N. * Includes one predicted to be in supported accommodation but independent of parents.

Some of the tutors mentioned reasons why the young person being discussed might not be living independently of parents by their early twenties. These included:

- that the young person would not be ready to do so by then (2 SSLD; 1 SEN);
- that the young person's parent/s would not be ready to let them go by then (2 SSLD; 1 SEN);
- that the young person lacked the social connections to move out from home (1 SSLD).

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7. The young people's voice

Conclusions

- Most of the young people, particularly the SSLD cohort, were positive about the support received in school to address their learning needs
- Informal support around school work from family members and friends was also valued
- Post-16 courses were viewed positively by most of the young people with sufficient support in place to enable progress to be made
- All the young people had at least one person in their family or friendship circle to whom they could talk about joys and concerns
- Friendships were an important and positive part of life for all but two of the young people
- Almost all the young people hoped to be employed by their early twenties but the SSLD group were more likely to expect to undertake further study/training.

7.1 Introduction

During the first two terms of the academic year 2005-06, interviews were held with the young people from both the specific speech and language difficulties (SSLD) cohort ($n = 64$) and the special educational needs (SEN) control group ($n = 28$). (Table 7.1)

Table 7.1 Interviews with the young people and their tutors/supervisors

Interviews with:	SSLD cohort $n = 64$	SEN control $n = 28$	Totals $n = 92$
Young people	55	17	72

Due to low levels of receptive language, one young person in the SSLD group (137/SSLD) was not able to engage with the interview questions beyond basic information about his destination. The total number for the SSLD group used in most tables in this chapter is therefore 54, not 55.

The young people not interviewed post-16
We were unable to interview 20 young people post-16 (9 SSLD; 11 SEN). The most common reason for this was that we no longer had accurate contact details for either home or post-16 destination. In such cases, we tried a number of routes to find the young person.

For example, we used the last known contact (such as, school, parent, employer, hostel), we searched telephone directories and, where a Connexions PA had been involved, we requested the PA to forward a letter to the young person. The other main reason for not being able to interview a young person was a lack of response to, or a refusal of, the invitation to be interviewed.

Among the nine SSLD young people not interviewed post-16, three were known to have gone on to positive post-16 destinations because that information was provided either by Connexions or by a parent. A further three were in contact with Connexions, which decreased the likelihood of their becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training). For three young people, no definite information was found about their post-16 destination, although indications were that two were probably in education, leaving only one about whom nothing was known.

Of the 11 young people not interviewed from the SEN group, seven were known to be in a vulnerable situation post-16 and likely to be NEET (see Figure 7.1). Of the other four, one was in employment, thanks to engaging positively with Connexions support, and two were probably in employment, leaving only one about whom no post-16 information was obtained.

Figure 7.1 Missing cases: vulnerable young people not interviewed post-16 (SEN group)

ID	Situation	Source
Male 107/SEN	1) Had stopped attending school during Y11 and refused Connexions support – was displaying disturbed behaviour, mood swings, and violent behaviour towards school staff. 2) EWO supported him during KS4 due to non-attendance. Issues at home. Post-16, was unemployed and, according to mother, not ready to engage with Connexions.	1) School SENCO; 2) Connexions PA
Male 75/SEN	Non-attender from end of Y10. Had a full-time alternative curriculum package set up for Y11 but didn't attend there either. Neither his school Learning Mentors nor Connexions had succeeded in engaging with him.	Connexions PA
Male 81/SEN	Had statement of SEN. Non-attender during Y11 and didn't engage with Connexions PA either.	School SENCO

Male 121/SEN	1) Moved from mainstream to special school during KS4. Special school PA changed from experienced SEN specialist to new PA with no SEN experience. 2) Had started at FE college on a Foundation course but before the end of the first term was in serious trouble over his behaviour and was excluded early in second term; was due to return to college for third tem attending part-time on a different course. Mother's view was that his behaviour was due to having fallen in with the wrong crowd at college but reported that, with medical advice and parental agreement, he had also come off medication – this may have played a part although mother did not believe so.	1) Connexions PA 2) Mother (college tutor also interviewed)
Male 110/SEN	1) Intensive support offered from Connexions PA during KS4 but did not fully engage. Unemployed since leaving school, despite continued support from Connexions. 2) In January 2006, still did not know his GCSE results because he refused to go to school to collect them and school refused to send them out. Staying in house all day and had lost touch with his friends.	1) Connexions PA 2) Mother
Male 27/SEN	Had a statement but was permanently excluded from school during KS4 so was *"challenging"* for Connexions to engage with him, plus his PA went on maternity leave so there was some disruption in support.	Connexions PA
Female 8/SEN	1) By Y11, had left home and was staying with friend. Connexions PA in regular contact. 2) In Y11, supported by specialist PA for non-attenders. Post-16 was in touch with Connexions but was unemployed and living in YMCA hostel. 3) Due to non-attendance, did not sit any GCSEs. Aged 16, she left home. Post-16, had little contact	1) School SENCO 2) Connexions PA 3) mother

	with mother or any other family members and had turbulent relationships with friends. Had been in trouble with police, due to shoplifting. Unemployed, living on benefits.	

This chapter focuses on the young people's views, based on analysis of interview data from the young people. The young peoples' views of their special educational needs (SEN) are presented, followed by supportive factors associated with resilience in the face of such difficulties, including: individual attributes, such as good intellectual skills, high self-esteem and positive views of the self; family qualities, such as high warmth, cohesion, expectations, and involvement; and supportive systems outside the family, such as strong social networks or good schools and colleges.

7.2   The young peoples' views of their special educational needs

In this study, a key risk factor for all the young people was that they had had special educational needs (SEN) identified whilst at primary school. In the interviews, the young people were asked if *they* thought that they had, or ever had had, special educational needs at school. Almost all (67; 94%) agreed that they had, or that they had had, SEN. Three young people said that *other* people thought they had had SEN (2 in SSLD group and 1 in SEN group). One young person (48/SEN) didn't accept that she had had special educational needs. She said, *'Other people thought I had'* and went on to compare her self-perception of having *'needed help on the odd occasion'* to a friend who had Down Syndrome - in the young person's view, her friend was a clear case of someone having SEN. The majority of the SSLD group who accepted that they had had special educational needs at school reported feeling fine about having their SEN identified (38 of 51). This was also the case for the SEN comparison group (12 of 15). A minority (12 of 51) of the SSLD group reported negative feelings about it, such as feeling worried or upset (7), frustrated (2) or ashamed (3).

As Table 7.2 shows, most of the young people described their SEN in terms of the learning needs they experienced *('I had trouble with reading'; 'It was just really my spelling')*; some used both a label and a description of what this meant for them in school *('I have ADHD. I had behaviour problems. My concentration wasn't good and my handwriting is not the best.')* and a minority used only a diagnosis or diagnostic label *('I have dyslexia', 'I have Asperger's Syndrome')*.

Table 7.2   How young people's spoke about their special educational needs (number of young people)

	SSLD group (*n* = 54)	SEN group (*n* = 17)
Described needs only	43	9
Used label and described needs	8	5
Used label only	2	2

Source: Post-16 interviews with young people.

A wide range of needs and diagnostic labels were used by the young people in both groups in order to describe their special needs, as Table 7.3 illustrates. Having, or having had, difficulties with speech and/or language was the most frequent description of SEN given by the SSLD group (43 of 54), none of whom used any of the recognised labels for such difficulties, such as 'specific language impairment' (SLI) or 'specific speech and language difficulties' (SSLD). Only 22 (of 54) reported such difficulties unprompted; after prompting by the researcher, a further 21 did so. However, 11 young people, selected in Y3 as having identified SSLD, did not report such difficulties, even with prompting.

Table 7.3   Young people's self-descriptions of their special educational needs (number of responses)

	SSLD group (*n* = 54)	SEN group (*n* = 17)
Label		
Dyslexia	4	5
Autism/Asperger's syndrome	4	1
Epilepsy	1	0
Cerebral palsy	0	1
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	1	1
Dyspraxia	1	1
Description of difficulties:	SSLD group (*n* = 54)	SEN group (*n* = 17)
Speech and /or language	43	1
Reading	39	6
Writing	35	7
Spelling	26	6
Maths	9	3
Memory	3	0
'I'm not very bright'	2	1
concentration	1	2
Behaviour	1	1
Sight	1	0
physical	*1	1

Source: Post-16 interviews with young people. More than one response could be given so columns do not sum to N. *Had been involved in a car accident after initial identification.

The next most frequently described areas of difficulty for the SSLD group (and most frequent for the SEN group) were reading, writing, spelling and maths, i.e. basic skills. For those in the SSLD group, describing themselves as having difficulties with both reading *and* writing was most likely to equate to studying at Entry Level or Level 1 post-16.

7.3   *External-contextual factors-processes*

7.3.1   *Support at school*

All the young people had attended at least two schools (primary and secondary) but some had attended three (lower, middle and upper) and others had moved schools between phases and so had attended more than three. Their individual histories of support in school created a varied pattern (see Figures 7.2a-c). Overall, however, the kinds of support reported can be summarised as in Table 7.4.

Table 7.4   The young people's recollections of types of support for their special educational needs in school (number of responses)

Type of support	Primary school*		Secondary	
	SSLD	SEN	SSLD	SEN
	(*n* = 54)	(*n* = 17)	(*n* = 54)	(*n* = 17)
TA in classroom	25	6	31	10
Work with SLT	25	0	9	0
Small group work outside of class	9	6	9	3
1:1 work with TA outside of class	3	1	4	1
Homework/coursework club	0	0	12	3
Excused homework	0	0	5	1
Alternative curriculum	-	-	0	1
Special exam arrangements	0	0	3	1
Writing practice	0	1	0	0
No additional support	0	5	2	3

Source: Post-16 interviews with the young people. More than one response could be given so columns do not sum to N. *Includes middle schools

Sometimes patterns of support included 'stop/start' support – for example, according to Young People 103/SEN and 11/SEN, they had no support in primary school but were supported in secondary, while Young Person 51/SEN had support in middle school but then none in upper school.

Views of support received in school
As Table 7.5 illustrates, views in both groups ranged from very positive –*'Very good. It helped a lot. Now I'm improved on reading and on maths as well.'* (28/SSLD) *'It was very*

nice. It taught me a lot.' (54/SEN) - to negative - *'It was rubbish. I don't see why I couldn't have had support in the class. Then I could have stayed up with the work.'* (48/SEN). However, the majority of views were positive and many of the young people expressed gratitude for the help and support they had received:

'I am very grateful for all the support I received, especially in primary school. I wouldn't have been at college, if it wasn't for this support' (/SSLD)

'[The support] was good. I thank them for that. I have done well. It helped me a lot.' (13/SSLD)

Table 7.5   The young people's views about the support they had received at school (number of young people)

View	SSLD group (n = 54)	SEN group (n = 17)
very positive	35	5
Positive	11	4
wanted more support	2	4
not very positive	2	1
Negative	1	1
didn't know	1	0
view not stated	2	2

Source: Post-16 interviews with the young people

A number of those who had experienced 'stop/start' patterns of support, *and* who considered themselves to have had continued SEN throughout school, thought that the benefits of the help they received would have been greater if they had received it consistently, rather than for limited periods of time. For example, one girl (51/SEN) felt her spelling had greatly benefited from two years of small group work focused on improving this skill received in middle school but that, without this support in senior school, her spelling skills *'went down again'*. (see chapter 3 where continual decreases in spelling scores throughout secondary school for the whole cohort are noted). On the other hand, there were a number of the young people who felt that they had received the support they needed and accepted that it stopped at an appropriate time for them because they considered that they had, by that stage, no longer had SEN: for example, Young Person 21/SEN described having had support for spelling in lower school but no support in middle or upper school because she no longer needed it.

Figures 7.2a-d provide case studies of support for four of the young people in the SSLD group: one who attended mainstream schools, one who went to mainstream infant and junior schools and a special school secondary, one who went to special school in primary and moved to mainstream for secondary, and one who attended a residential specialist language school. The cases described in Figures 7.1 b,c and d are the same young people highlighted as case studies in Chapter 3.

Figure 7.2a   Case study of support: mainstream school

Young Person 82/SSLD – gained 3 GCSEs (all at Level 1 D-G); post-16, on Level 1
Foundation course at FE college

Her description of her special educational needs

"I needed to have help with my writing and maths and with my spelling and how to say certain words … my language and my speech. I couldn't get my words and because people didn't understand me when I was young, I was getting frustrated and I had tantrums and I used to kick things."

Her description of support received in primary school

"[Support] started in Y3. …I had to go out and see people. I used to go somewhere out of school to get speech and language therapy from Y3 to Y6."

"A [special needs] teacher was coming in to the classroom and she used to help me … and LSAs but not all the time. The main teacher usually helped me and for some hours I used to go to a room and get help from an additional teacher. It was routine, On a couple of days, I'd see them for longer."

"[For my homework], they would write it down in my book and on my diary and I would take it home. They'd ask, 'Are you OK with this?' and I would finish it off at home."

Her description of support received in secondary school

"Then [the SLTs] were coming to see me … in secondary school."

"In secondary school, there were different one-to-one teachers because we had different timetables. … I had learning support assistants for maths, science and ICT."

"[For my homework], in secondary, I had a lot of help. Classroom assistants. I would go to see them and they would help me. … They gave me a piece of paper with the work and the questions and the learning assistant had the same piece of paper. I'd do my homework during lunch time and they would always check it for me. … Not English, because my teacher helped me with the homework so I could just type the words up. She was happy if I was doing that."

Her view, post-16, of the support received

"[Without the support], I think I wouldn't have achieved so much. It helped me through, to get my grades to get to college. … I would have liked to have had more support with GCSE. I was only allowed a reader for some of the subjects. If I had a reader for all subjects, I might have been able to get on to Level 2 in college."

"[What helped the most] in primary was my one-to-one teacher for special needs. I always went to see her and she wrote my timetable. In secondary school, [it was] the different one-to-one teachers I had."

Figure 7.2b   Example of individual patterns of support: Special school (primary) and mainstream school (secondary)

Young Person 123/SSLD - gained 9 GCSEs (8 at A-C); post-16, taking 3 AS levels in school

His description of his special educational needs

"My English skills were not good." [I realised] probably in primary because my teachers knew that I wasn't among the strongest in class. I was struggling to keep at the same level with the other children in the classroom. … It had to do with writing, when I had to write long passages. Then speaking and listening, these were weaknesses."

His description of the support he received in primary school

"I [moved] to [special school] and learned through them. I got stronger and stronger and by the time I got to secondary school, [my skills] had built up. … From Monday to Thursday, I was in [the special school] and on Friday, I was in the mainstream school. At [the special school], they build you up. They go through things with you and help you become better. … There were two teachers in the classroom. … On Fridays, going to the mainstream school particularly helps you as a person to blend in and associate with people normally at that level and to get used to the mainstream feel of it and the normal aspects of school."

His description of the support he received at secondary school

"I didn't do as many lessons as everyone else did. Say everybody else had 25 hours of lessons, I ended up with 22 hours and 3 hours in the resource to do any work I needed to build on my skills and improve. … At the beginning, I had support in most of my lessons but then, for example, maths, that is one of my strengths, usually I didn't need any kind of support. When it came to English, I had most support there because it was one of my weaknesses. For all the other lessons, I had a little bit of support. They would come over to see how I was doing. In Year 9, when I had SATS, they came over to help you a little bit more to see the tasks that you are doing. There was a lot more support in GCSEs, just to make sure that you get the notes and revise

everything. Also, I worked as much as I could to get ahead to a different environment."

"Any homework and help I needed for that, I'd stay at the resource. Most of the time, they'd help me there but, if they couldn't help me with some of the stuff, I'd go to a teacher and ask."

His view, post-16, of the support he received

"I got help to build up [my English skills] and, over the years, I improved a lot in my English. In my GCSEs, I got a B for that. … [Speaking and listening] came to be one of my strengths when I took GCSEs. I got an A for speaking and listening."

"[The support] was a big help. Without that, I don't think I would have been so successful as I am now. I may not have been able to do the subjects that I wanted to do now [i.e. in sixth form]."

"[Ideally], maybe you needed to have maybe like a place outside of school that you don't get distracted as much. Maybe also with time management, to have somebody to tell you what you have to do, get a diary so that you plan the time more efficiently."

"[What helped the most] was that, also on Saturdays, I was going to this place, it was like a Saturday school, where you go to get extra support. We did additional work and they were trying to keep you one step ahead."

Figure 7.1c   Example of individual patterns of support: mainstream infant school, junior school with designated language unit, special secondary school

Young Person 12/SSLD – held back a year so no formal qualifications noted at this point; post-16, Entry Level course at FE college with release from special school
His description of his special educational needs

"My English, reading. I couldn't read long words. I was alright with maths. … I feel fine about that because some of my friends have the same kind of difficulties.

His description of support at mainstream infant and junior school

"I can't remember about that." *Did you have an LSA with you in primary school?* "Yes, sometimes." *What did she do in order to help you?* "Pointing to the words. Cutting down the long words." *Did you receive any support for your homework?* "No, we had to take it home and do it."

His description of support at secondary special school

"Doing more reading, to make me read the words and cut them down. Going in the lesson, going in a little corner and doing some more reading."

His view, post-16, of the support he received

"It was fine."

"[What helped the most was] there was a teacher in Y10 that helped me a lot with reading. The classroom teacher, she helped people. She helped some people to read. I asked for help and she helped me."

Figure 7.2d   Example of individual patterns of support: residential language special school

Young Person 138/SSLD - gained 8 GCSEs (1 at A-C); post-16, on First Diploma course at FE college
Her description of her special educational needs

"I had epilepsy when I was younger. It used to happen when I was in swimming pools. I can't remember a lot from when I was a baby but I'm not sure why the rest of the [time] it's been OK."

"Most of my friends didn't always understand what I was like or what I was saying. Sometimes I'd say something, like a sentence, and it came out wrong and they'd get confused. … When I was 5, maybe 6, I couldn't speak for a little while so they were teaching me sign language and helping me with lip reading."

"When I was about Year 9, my teacher and my SLT in [residential language school] … they told me I had dyslexia."

Her description of support at the residential language school

> "I used to have a teacher by my side all the time. … It was [helpful]. She used to sign to me, to lip read. That was helpful because I understood more. [In the residential language school], there would be my teacher, my speech therapist and a support assistant and if I needed help, one of them would come to help me."

> "I didn't have a lot of homework given. If we did, we would have care workers helping us. That was helpful. We had a little bit of homework but the care workers were always there. By Y11, I could do my homework on my own but there was always a teacher in the classroom."

Her view, post-16, of the support she received

> "I am grateful. I wouldn't have been here [i.e. at college] if I didn't have the help. I am glad that I was taught how to do things right."

> "[Ideally], I am not sure but I think [the support I would have liked] would be the same as they put in place for me. … I am not 100% sure, but I think that, if there was a laptop that most disabled children have, if they could talk, then press a button and then the sentence comes out – that would be cool."

> "[What helped the most] was the lip reading and the sign language. That helped me. And, in [the specialist language school], it was taking notes during the classes and getting read for exams and just picking up all the concepts of English, maths and the other lessons.

The types of support that helped the most

The type of support most frequently mentioned in this regard was help from a particular teacher or personal tutor at secondary school, followed by help from teaching assistants (see Table 7.6). However, when the young people were asked to reflect on what it was that had been so helpful about this support they mainly reported strategies, such as, *'they were reading or writing things for me'* (101/SSLD), or *'explaining things for me'* (104/SSLD). Additionally, some of the young people described the teachers and TAs as *'good personalities that cared a lot for me and helped me build up my confidence'* (/SSLD).

Table 7.6   The young people's views of the types of support that helped them the most (number of responses)

Type of support	SSLD group (n = 54)	SEN group (n = 17)
Formal support:		
Personal tutor/teacher (secondary school)	15	5
Teaching assistant (primary school)	14	2
Teaching assistant (secondary school)	10	1
Speech and language therapy	5	0
Teacher (primary school)	3	0
Special exam arrangements	1	0
Homework club	0	1
Informal support:		
Parents	6	0
Self	4	0
Friends	4	3
Siblings	1	0
private tuition	2	2
Other views:		
Nothing helped	5	3
didn't know	5	0

Source: Post-16 interviews with the young people. More than one response could be given so columns do not sum to N.

Only five young people in the SSLD group singled out speech and language therapy (SLT) as having helped the most, although those who did so acknowledged its beneficial impact:

'When I was younger, that speech therapy helped a lot! Before I started it, I couldn't really speak very good.' (28/SSLD)

'I think I would have found it more difficult to speak if I hadn't had speech and language therapy.' (112/SSLD)

It may be that, because most of the SSLD group had had SLT only when younger, it was no longer uppermost in their mind as a type of support that had helped them.

A small number of young people in both groups identified informal support from family and friends as having helped them the most:

> 'My mum helped me a lot. She wanted me to succeed. I had a lot of support at home; some at school but not much. [Mum] helped me to understand things. She also helped with my handwriting. She would sit me down and tell me that she would help me if I needed help.' (71/SSLD – mainstream school)

> 'My four parents have always been there for me. The days that I am staying at my dad's place, he helps me with numeracy and IT, he is very good with computers. My father's girlfriend will sit next to me and help me with writing and spelling. She is very nice, she is lovely. When I am in my mum's house, she will go through my homework with me and my step father is always there for me, when I feel disappointed. School helps me a lot, but my parents help me with all the things that I find difficult at school'. (31/SSLD – specialist language provision)

Four young people in the SSLD group thought *their own* attitudes and behaviour had been the biggest factor in doing as well as they had. For example, Young Person 22/SSLD, who had attended a mainstream primary and secondary school, reported that it was his own determination to do well that had helped him the most to succeed at school:

> 'I never gave up. I knew that I had problems, but I tried hard. I always thought English was the most difficult subject, but I worked very hard in secondary school. I made very good progress. I never thought that I was different from the other the young people. I didn't want to disappoint my mum. I think she is very proud of me that I did so well in the GCSEs [He gained 3 GCSEs - 1E, 1F, 1G].'

On the other hand, a small minority in each group (5 SSLD; 3 SEN) believed that nothing had particularly helped them at school. This was linked to an overall dissatisfaction with their secondary schooling and the seeming inability of staff to offer the support they needed: for example,

'Nothing really helped me to do better in school. Because I was shy and quiet, sometimes teachers didn't even notice that I was in the classroom. When my mother complained to the [secondary] school about the other students' behaviour towards me, the teachers did nothing to help me. In Yr10 and Yr11, when my attendance was very poor, they were just calling my mum to put the responsibility on her. I preferred to do anything else than going to school.' (Young Person 4/SSLD)

'There were many times when I didn't know what to do in the class and when I asked some of the teachers to help me out, they just didn't know what to do.' (Young Person 37/SSLD)

'At [secondary school], it was just do crap work that no-one ever wanted to do and that just made us mess about' (Young Person126/SEN)

'I don't really think I did that well at school. I don't know. No, [nothing helped the most] because the classes were so big and you only had one teacher and they couldn't – it would be so hectic in the class, they couldn't get round to everybody.' (Young Person 51/SEN)

The range of types of support identified in Table 7.6 above as having 'helped the most' indicates how important it is that support packages for young people are flexible enough to reflect individual needs and preferences.

Ideal types and levels of support
Table 7.7 shows the support the young people would have liked to have had if they could have chosen any support they wanted. Not all the young people were able to grasp the hypothetical concept of support they *would have liked to have had* at school. Of those who were able to do so, Table 7.7 illustrates that most wanted more of the types of support listed in Table 7.4.

Table 7.7   Support the young people would have, ideally, liked in school (number of responses)

Type of support	SSLD group (*n* = 54)	SEN group (*n* = 17)
More of same support:		
from teaching assistant	13	2
from SLT	3	0
for homework	1	0
Additional form of support:		
Small group out of class	1	2
Homework/coursework club	0	1
Access to a laptop	1	0
Change in school experience:		
Better quality of school	2	4
More practical curriculum	0	3
More respectful teachers	0	1
More attention paid to peer relationships	1	2
Improved teachers' attitude to SEN	1	0
Improved own attitude to school	0	1
I don't know	10	0

Source: Post-16 interviews with the young people. More than one response could be given so columns do not sum to N.

A small number in both groups ('Change in school experience' section of Table 7.7) would have liked their experience of secondary school to have been better. Ideally, they would have liked changes to the curriculum and to the overall learning environment and school culture. Three in the SEN group spoke about changes to the curriculum to make learning more active and practical – for example, Student 15/SEN said:

> 'Having to sit at a desk for five hours was really hard. I've got to be active and doing things. I'd have liked more active stuff in class.'

Some spoke about a different relationship between teachers and young people – for example, Young Person 24/SEN would have liked, *'stricter teachers – ones you trust*

because they don't take crap off you and they make sure you do the work'; whilst Young Person 21/SEN would have liked, *'teachers not to have shouted so much'*. The three young people who mentioned wanting teachers to pay more attention to peer relationships (1 SSLD; 2 SEN) had all experienced bullying in school which they felt had not been taken seriously enough by staff. Others talked about wishing they could have learned in a more relaxed, comfortable environment – for example, Young Person 11/SEN would have liked *'a common room to sit down and chill out'*. This theme around school culture as a form of support is important as it suggests that an aspect of the young people's resilience relates to the interaction between the overall quality of the teaching and learning environment in their schools and the young people's response to this. In relation to the latter, one young people, looking back, reflected that what he would have liked to change was his own attitude to school: *'It would have helped if I hadn't messed about in school. I think that's what would have helped.'* (Young Person 15/SEN).

7.3.2   Support at college, training placement or in work

Post-16 destinations and level of study

The post-16 destinations of the young people are given in Table 7.8, including, where known, those of the young people who were *not* interviewed. This shows that the majority carried on in education, mostly at further education college but also via Modern Apprenticeships (which involved spending part of the week in FE college and part in the workplace) or in school sixth forms.

Table 7.8 Post-16 destinations of the young people (number of young people)

Destination	SSLD group (*n* = 64)	SEN group (*n* = 28)	Total (*n* = 92)
Education:			
FE college	37 (36 + 1 likely)	7	44
FE college and work placement*	0	7	7
residential college for speech and language difficulties	7	0	7
residential college for general learning difficulties	0	1	1
Sixth form	4	0	4
Year 11	3	0	3
Education subtotal:	51	15	66
Employment:	5 (4 + 1 likely)	5 (3 + 2 likely)	10
Training (Entry to employment)	5 (4 + 1 likely)	2	7
Not in education, employment or training (NEET)	1	5 (4 + 1 likely)	6
No information	2	1	3

Source: Post-16 interviews with the young people, plus a range of other data gathered during 'KS4 to Work and College' phase of the research. *Depending on the course and level of study, time at college varied from half a day to four and a half days per week.

Of those who were in education (51 SSLD; 15 SEN), the largest number in the SSLD group were studying at Level 1 (n = 28). Of those who had left school, a further 14 SSLD young people were studying at Entry Level with only one at Level 2 and one at Level 3. However, seven of the SSLD young people were still at school, with three in Year 11 working towards GCSEs (Level 1 or 2) and four in Year 12 working towards AS levels (Level 3). In the SEN group, the largest number were studying at Level 2 (*n* = 7), with four working at Entry Level, two at Level 1 and one young man (with Asperger's Syndrome) working at Level 3.

Reasons for choice of post-16 destination

When asked why they had chosen to do what they were doing post-16, young people in the SSLD group most frequently gave responses to do with interest and enjoyment (*n* = 41). Reasons related to hopes for subsequent employment were the second most frequent type of response (*n* = 25). For the SEN group, these frequencies were the opposite way round: the most frequent response was related to hopes for subsequent employment (*n*=12) whilst the second most frequent related to interest and enjoyment (*n*=7). Other reasons given by smaller numbers of young people included: school influence (12 SSLD; 2 SEN), parents' influence (11 SSLD; 1 SEN); practical learning (10 SSLD), college location (2 SEN). Three young people (one each in education, employment and training) reported being influenced by their Connexions PA to make the choice they did. Only one young person (SSLD group) cited the influence of friends on their decision to go to college and two felt they had had no other option but to do the college course they were on (2 SSLD).

Aspects the young people enjoyed in their post-16 destination

When asked what they enjoyed about their post-16 course, training or job, the young people in the SSLD group most frequently responded that they enjoyed the course/training/job because it was interesting and they could succeed at it (44 SSLD: 4 SEN). Making new friends (18 SSLD; 11 SEN) and the practical side of learning (18 SSLD; 10 SEN) were also frequent aspects mentioned as enjoyable. Other reasons for enjoyment given by smaller numbers of young people were having good tutors/supervisors (9 SSLD; 5 SEN) and a greater sense of freedom (7 SSLD).

> '[I enjoy] doing the practical side of this course. I come and do all my work and go. I just enjoy it generally. It's a nice college; good classmates.' (Young Person 13/SSLD

> '[I enjoy] talking with my classmates and teachers.' (Young Person 71/SSLD)

> 'You get more freedom, not so much in what we do but you are treated better, I mean, like an adult. For example, my key Skills teacher, she tells us what to do and we go off and do it.' (Young Person 138/SSLD)

Problems experienced in post-16 destinations and sources of help

Twenty-eight (39%) of the young people interviewed acknowledged having experienced problems since moving to their post-16 destination (23 SSLD; 5 SEN). Mainly these had

occurred in education (22 SSLD; 3 SEN), but small numbers had experienced problems in work ($n = 2$) and training ($n = 1$).

For the SSLD group, the two main problematic issues were difficulties with the course ($n = 12$) and peer relations in college ($n = 9$). These issues were also raised by tutors (see Chapter 6).

> 'I had some problems with coursework. It's harder than GCSE. [For GCSE], the work that you had to produce was much shorter. It is longer here. The questions are harder and a lot more research has to be done.' (Young Person 71/SSLD)

> 'In the classroom, we had a lot of fights. There are two girls who don't like everyone in the class and these two girls ganged up against me and my friend. Then they left – they only came to the course for the money [Education Maintenance Allowance]. Now they've gone, we're all friends I the class. It's been fine since then.' (Young Person 82/SSLD)

Coursework and peer relationships were less of an issue for the SEN group – the course chosen caused problems for only one, and peer relations problems for only two. Other aspects that each caused problems for a small number in the SSLD group in college were relationships with tutors ($n = 5$) and additional support ($n = 4$).

> 'I haven't had my [support] assistant yet but that's because the person who is dealing with it hasn't been in since September and because it is hard to find someone with the qualifications to [support] in Art. I'm doing Ok most of the time. I don't know now if I really need one because my work is up to date.' (Young Person 138/SSLD)

When problems were experienced, the young people in both groups turned mainly to their personal tutors (11 SSLD; 4 SEN) but other sources of support to sort out problems were parents (4 SSLD), friends (2 SSLD) and the formal disciplinary systems (3 SSLD, 1 SEN).

Young people's descriptions of support offered in post-16 destination

In the interviews, the young people were asked to describe how the adults in their post-16 destination helped them to do the work expected of them. As Table 7.9 shows, the responses given most frequently related to having tasks and concepts explained to them,

having their questions answered and having tasks demonstrated to them. Help with reading and writing was less frequently mentioned than when recalling the kinds of support given in school.

> '[College staff] go through with you. They read, they sit beside you and go though [the work]. If you don't get it, they will say over and over again until you eventually get it.' (Young Person 16/SSLD)

Table 7.9   Young people's descriptions of support received (number of responses)

Help given	SSLD ($n = 54$)	SEN ($n = 17$)
Explanation	47	9
response to queries	40	4
demonstration	38	5
reading out	9	1
writing down	4	0
Additional Support dept.	6	2
pleasant TA	6	1

Source: Post-16 interviews with young people. More than one response could be given so columns do not add to N.

For most young people interviewed, the support they received was, in their view, sufficient and helpful. When asked what else the adults in their post-16 destination could do to support them, the majority replied, 'nothing'. Of those at college, 15 had ideas about how support could be improved for them (8 SSLD; 7 SEN), as well as two who were in employment (1 SSLD; 1 SEN). Ideas for improved support tended to be specific to the young person's course and circumstances but included more support assistants in course classes, in Key Skills classes, more information about coursework requirements and breaking questions down into small steps.

7.3.3   Support from family

The young people described a range of living arrangements in terms of living with:

- both birth parents (33 SSLD; 8 SEN);
- birth mother (10 SSLD; 5 SEN);

- birth mother and step-father (6 SSLD; 2 SEN);
- birth father (2 SSLD; 1 SEN);
- birth father and step-mother (2 SSLD);
- alternating between birth father and birth mother (1 SEN).

In each case also, there could be no, one or more siblings.

Familial sources of support

Overall, when happy or upset, the young people in the study were most likely to talk things over with their mothers (Table 7.10), but both parents, fathers, siblings, and the extended family of grandparents, aunts and cousins were also mentioned. A small number of young people in each group (more in the SEN group) said they told nobody in the family when they were happy or upset about something, turning instead to friends or keeping things to themselves.

The extended family seemed to be used more frequently when the young people wanted to discuss concerns and worries or as a second tier of familial support – the family closeness of grandparents and aunts/uncles, for example, enabled trust, whilst the greater relational distance compared to mothers and fathers enabled a greater sense of freedom of expression. For example, one boy (24/SEN) explained that he talked to his aunt and uncle when he was upset because they didn't mind him swearing whereas his parents wouldn't find such language acceptable. Others spoke about talking to their grandmothers ('nans') about concerns so as not to worry their parents. One girl from the SSLD group reported (82/SSLD) that:

'I always talk to my aunt about things that worry me. She is like an older sister to me. She doesn't get upset like my mum does and she can always advise me for boyfriends and things that I cannot discuss with my parents'.

Table 7.10   Talking to family members when happy or upset (number of responses)

Who?	When happy		When upset	
	SSLD (*n* = 54)	*SEN* (*n* = 17)	*SSLD* (*n* = 54)	*SEN* (*n* = 17)
Mother	23	6	21	6
both parents	12	3	12	1
Father	8	0	5	1
Siblings	5	2	1	3
grandparent/s	1	1	0	0
aunt/uncle	0	0	4	0
whole family	2	2	3	0
no-one in family	2	3	1	6
friends instead	0	0	2	0

Anyone else?	*SSLD* (*n* = 54)	*SEN* (*n* = 17)
No-one else	30	4
grandparents	14	3
Siblings	4	2
Cousins	3	1
aunt/uncle	1	3
other parent	1	2

Source: Post-16 interviews with young people. More than one response could be given so columns do not sum to N.

All the young people interviewed mentioned at least one friend or family (including extended family) member to whom they could talk about joys and/or worries, although for some, this was a much less common occurrence than for others.

Family rules-trust continuum

The majority of the young people in both groups told their parent/s where they were going and when they would be back (44 SSLD; 10 SEN). The range of reasons they gave for doing this indicated that their families were at different points along the continuum of rules-trust, with most in the middle ('I tell them so they know'). The rule-to-trust range was:

'I tell them – because it's a rule' (3 SSLD; 2 SEN);
'I tell them - because they ask' (1 SEN);
'I tell them - so they know' (41 SSLD; 2 SEN);

'I tell them - so they don't worry' (3 SSLD; 3 SEN);

'I *don't* tell them now – because I'm old enough and they trust me' (1 SSLD; 3 SEN).

A minority of the young people (6 SSLD; 1 SEN), in response to this question, explained that they never went out without their parents. However, there were a range of reasons for this – for some, this was about not having friends but for others it was due to particular circumstances including having recently moved house and so not yet knowing anyone else in the neighbourhood or having recently returned to live at home after a school-life spent in residential schools and valuing time spent with parents.

Familial support around college coursework or issues at work

The young people were also asked if anyone in their family helped them with their college course work or with issues arising at work. Seventy nine per cent (56 of 71) received help with post-16 work from their families (45 SSLD; 11 SEN). Most frequently, this was from their mothers (22 SSLD; 7 SEN) but fathers, both parents, siblings, everyone in the family, members of the extended family and friends were also mentioned (in that order of frequency) by those in the SSLD group. For example, eight young people in the SSLD group reported that everyone in the family, including siblings, helped them a lot with their homework. One boy (20/SSLD) reported:

'My older brother always helps me with numeracy; he is very bright. When I don't understand something, he will try to explain it to me, until I get it. Sometimes, he will come to me the next day to check if I still remember it.'

Those in the SEN group were less likely to receive help form the extended family.

As Table 7.11 illustrates, the help given by family members consisted of quite specific actions, most frequently explaining work and concepts to the young person (43 SSLD; 3 SEN) and/or checking over the young person's work (36 SSLD)..

Table 7.11   Help provided by family members for those who had course work (number of responses)

Helpful action by family	SSLD (*n* = 54)	SEN (*n* = 17)
explain work to me	43	3
check my work	36	0
read it for me	15	0
they spell words for me	10	2
they write for me	7	1
help me with computer	5	0
no help from family	7	1

Source: Post-16 interviews with the young people. More than one response could be given so columns do not sum to N.

Six of those who had coursework did not get help from a family member (7 SSLD; 1 SEN). Sometimes this was because sufficient help was available at school or college:

'No, if I need any help with my coursework the teachers are good enough to help me with that. I can get help from them.' (Young Person 123/SSLD)

For others, help from the family was associated with the demands of schoolwork, not their post-16 course:

'No. [My mum helped me] last year, in secondary school. … I used to ask for help for maths. She made me understand and, you know what I mean, go through the exercises with me.' (Young Person 13/SSLD)

7.3.4   Support from friends and social networks

Importance of friendship

All but one of the young people from the SSLD group, and all but two from the SEN group, reported that friendship was 'very important' or 'quite important' to them. When asked to justify the reasons why friendship was important to them they reported reasons that can be summarised as:

- it's nice to talk to friends (45 SSLD; 7 SEN);
- it's nice to go out with your friends (24 SSLD; 4 SEN);

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- it's good to have friends to discuss your problems with (18 SSLD; 6 SEN);
- it's good to have friends because otherwise you would be lonely (10 SSLD; 1 SEN);
- it's important to be polite and friendly (2 SEN).

Two of the three for whom friendship was not important (1 SSLD; 1 SEN), explained that they didn't really talk to people. For example, Young Person 68/SEN said:

> 'I just find it hard to talk to people. I'd rather be on my own most of the time. … I just find it hard to actually open my mouth and talk.'

The third young person explained that while friendship was not 'important' to him, it was "*good*".

Peers at college

Ninety-six per cent of the young people interviewed (68 of 71) reported that they got on 'very well' or 'quite well' with their peers at college or other post-16 destination. Only two young people in the SEN group and one in the SSLD group stated that they had not made new friends post-16. Popular activities with these new friends were talking to them, going for lunch together and meeting up in the evening or at the weekend.

Continuing friendships from school

When asked about whether they still had any friends from their previous schools, most of the young people in both the SEN and the SSLD groups reported that they still had some friends from their primary and/or from their secondary school. Most of these school friendships had started in secondary school (30 SSLD; 13 SEN) but some had been friends since primary school (14 SSLD; 2 SEN). The reasons reported, when asked why they have remained friends for such a long time, included:

- getting on very well (31 SSLD; 6 SEN);
- having similar characters/personalities (26 SSLD; 3 SEN);
- trusting each other (12 SSLD; 4 SEN);
- living close to each other (9 SSLD);
- previous school organising meeting for former pupils (7 SSLD).

Only 8 SSLD and 1 SEN young person reported no longer having friends from school. There were a number of reasons for this, including moving away from the area where they had

gone to school, leaving residential school to return to home area, family troubles which had impacted negatively on formation of school friendships in the first place, and difficulties with social interaction related to identified special educational needs.

7.4 Predictions for the future

The SSLD cohort were more likely to expect to undertake further study/training.

Table 7.12 shows the young people's predictions for their next step. All but one predicted a positive next step. The exception was a young man who said that he never made plans for the future:

'I just generally take life as it comes. I find it hard to organise anything at all. I just find it really, really hard to plan anything out. Normally, I end up ignoring [my plan] or forgetting it or wishing I'd done something else or wanting to do something else instead.' (Young Person 68/SEN)

There was a clear difference in expectation with the SSLD group split between further study/training and a job, whereas only two of the SEN group were expecting to engage in further study/training.

Table 7.12 Young people's views of their next step after current course, training or job (number of young people)

Predicted next step	SSLD ($n = 54$)	SEN ($n = 17$)
further study/training	28	2
job in chosen field	15	8
job (even if not chosen field)	10	4
year out to travel	0	1
hard to imagine	0	1

Source: Post-16 interviews with the young people.

Table 7.13 shows how the young people imagined their lives five years on from time of interview. This was an open question but most talked about whether or not they would have a job, be living independently of parents, and be in a serious relationship with a partner.

Table 7.13 Young people's views of their life in their early 20s (number of young people)

Predictions for five years time	View of likelihood	SSLD ($n = 54$)	SEN ($n = 17$)
Employed	Yes	52	14
	maybe/hope so	0	1
	No	1	0
	don't know	0	1
	not mentioned	1	1
Living independently of parents	Yes	41	8
	maybe/hope so	1	4
	No	5	1
	don't know	5	2
	not mentioned	2	2
In a serious Relationship	Yes	15	2
	maybe/hope so	0	1
	No	0	0
	don't know	1	0
	not mentioned	38	14

Source: Post-16 interviews with the young people.

Twelve of the young people hoped to be running their own businesses by their early 20s (8 SSLD; 4 SEN). In terms of living independently from parents, the young people who thought this unlikely explained their view in relation to four factors: their own sense that they were unlikely to be ready to do so by age 22 (5 SSLD); their parents not being ready to let them move out by then (3 SSLD; 1 SEN); their lack of a social network of friends making it unlikely that they would be able to share a flat (4 SSLD); and the high cost of renting or buying accommodation (4 SSLD; 3 SEN).

8.   The Parental voice

Conclusions

Parental interviews revealed a picture post-16 education/training as a positive placement for the majority of these young people
:

- were positive about college experience
- reported few problems with peers and teachers
- and considered the educational support was appropriate

Success was attributed to a range of factors including:

- Individual characteristics of the young person
- Factors within the college
- Strong familial relationships.

8.1   Background

Over the course of the study parents had provided important insight into their child's success and needs. They had also commented on difficulties with the educational system and the ways in which their child's needs had impacted on the family and their own concerns (e.g. Lindsay & Dockrell, 2004). In this chapter we describe the parents' views as their children completed their first year of post compulsory education

Interviews were carried out with 50 parents of the original SSLD cohort and 19 of the original SEN cohort (Total interviews *n* = 69). Sixty-one interviews were with the young person's mother and eight with the father. Sixty per cent of the sample were living with both birth parents, 24% with one birth parent and 17% with a birth parent and step parent. There were no significant differences on responses to the questionnaires by cohort (SSLD or SEN).

8.2   Perspectives on school achievement and performance at college/training

The parents of the SSLD cohort were more satisfied with their children's GCSE results and their progress post-16.

This section of the interview focused on parents' perceptions of their child's performance at school leaving and factors (if any) they felt contributed to the overall profile of results. Three parents were unaware of exams set and results achieved.

'Not had results yet (Jan 2006). Because haven't been up to the school to get them and school won't post them out. Will need to get them to get a college place' (Parent of 110/SEN)

As Figure 8.1 shows, the majority of parents were pleased or very pleased with the young people's results.
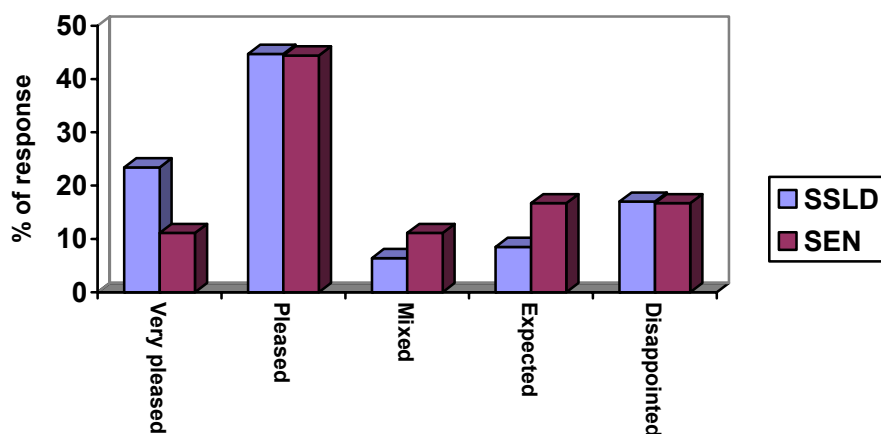
Figure 8.1   Parents' views of the young people's Y11 results

'Has come a long way. When he was younger, the outlook was very bleak for him but he's made a lot of progress' (Parent of 140/SSLD)

'School was so awful …surprised he got anything at all' (Parent of 36/SEN)

'Dreadful year, didn't succeed as well as school predicted. Personality clashes with teachers. Not grades she expected. C in Math, Fs and Es in everything else. Could have done a lot better bright girl' (Parent of 1/SSLD)

Parents' explanations of the young people's results were classified into four categories: internal attributions positive or negative, external negative attributions (there were no external positive attributions) and descriptive comments (e.g. 'just as expected 'or 'hoped for

better'). As shown in Figure 8.2 nearly half the sample attributed the young person's eventual results to internal factors such as 'worked hard' or 'did well given SEN' (Figure 8.2).
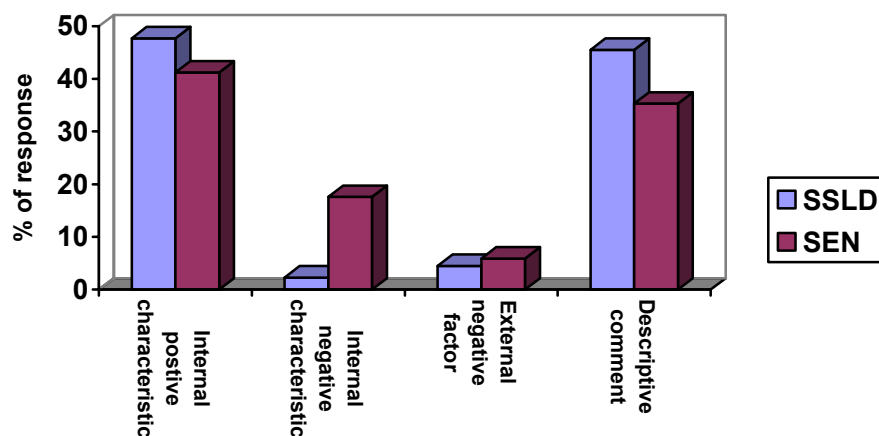

Figure 8.2 Attribution of Year 11 results by parents

This general 'positive' perception is mirrored in the young people's reported progress post-16 where two- thirds of the parents reported progress as being very good or quite good (see Figure 8.3). Sixty-seven per cent that the young people had settled well, with only four reporting transition difficulties and one reporting being on an unsuitable course. There was only one comment about negative tutor attitudes. Fourteen parents raised the issue of extra support with half noting that extra support was in place ($n = 7$); 3 reporting a need for extra support and 4 a general lack of support.

> Had someone in class at school, not at college. Only support is once a week meeting. […] Has a little support in college – finding chemistry difficult. Finds essay writing difficult. (Parent of 129/SSLD)

> Does OK when he gets support but when this is not in place (which happens a lot) he doesn't do very well. (Parent of 33/SSLD)
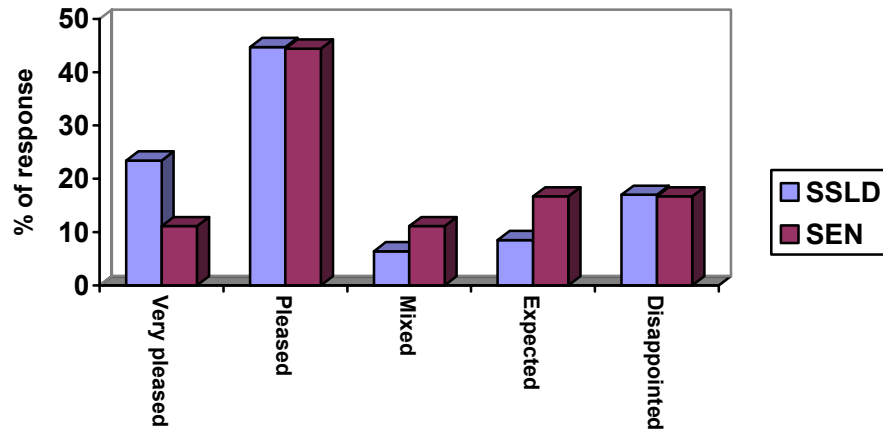
Figure 8.3 Progress post-16 reported by parents (n = 65)

When things are not working well there were few constructive options

'Was being bullied. Have seen boss and he sorted it out. College also got involved and were helpful. Supervisor says X needs to use his initiative more and not wait to be told what to do' (Parent of 103/SEN)

Doing a foundation course. Has been a bit disruptive while he's been there so they've excluded him. May go back after Easter. Not sure what he will do. Got in with wrong crowd. Was on medication at school – psychologist suggested weaning him off so they did. Now having problems. Parents not happy to put him back on medication. Other than college, he is fine off medication. Looking at work possibilities and maybe going back to do a different course. (Parent of 121/SEN)

Over 75 per cent of the young people were reported to have good or quite good relationships with their tutor at college. Only seven parents (10%) reported problems in one or more subjects. In addition to positive reports of college/training, the young people were reported to have a range of interests (Figure 8.4) with playing sport and computer games being particularly popular.
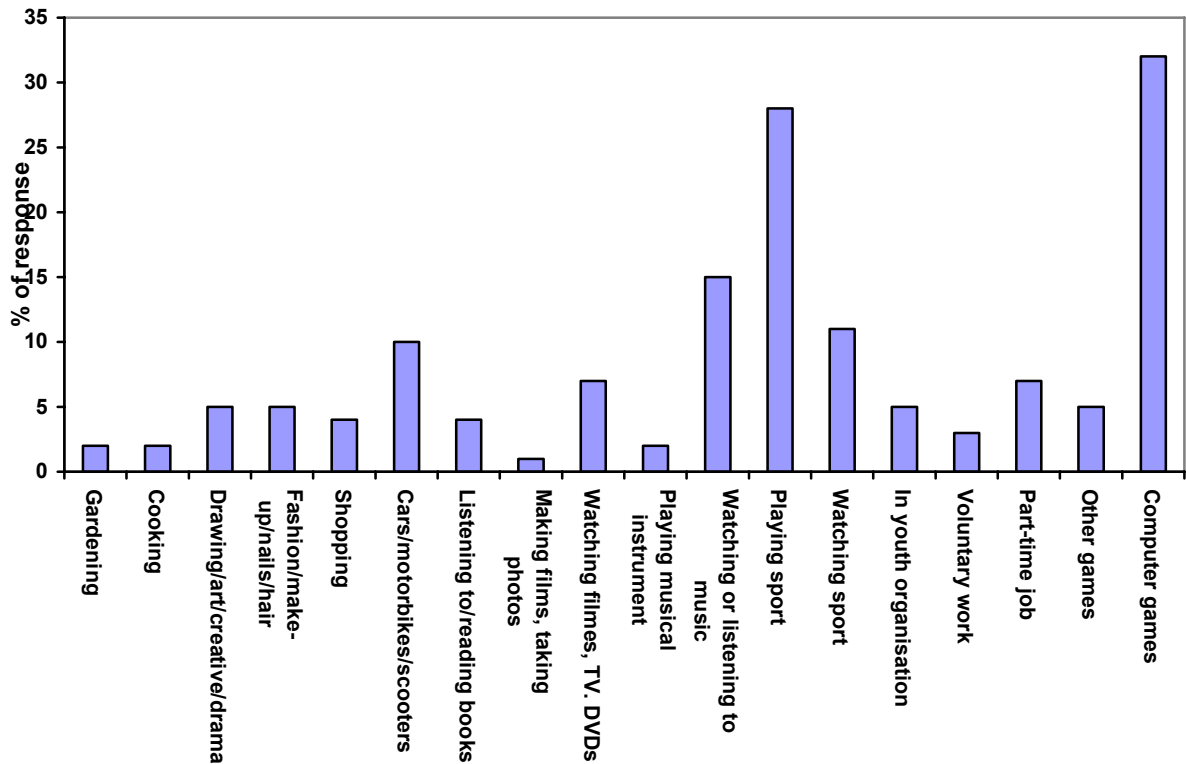
Figure 8.4 – Young People's interests as reported by parents

8.3 *Family, friends and relationships*

As a cohort (both SSLD and SEN groups), the young people were reported by their parents to have 'good' or 'very good' relationships with their peers (76%) with only 5 young people being described as isolated outside the classroom (8%). Sixty-six percent were reported to know students from outside their immediate course, with 60% of the sample, according to parents, reporting close friendships. Only one young person was reported as seeing no need for friendships. These positive reports of friendship were further complemented by comments about active social lives by 64% of the cohort's parents. Nonetheless, 32% of both the SSLD and SEN groups were reported to fight or quarrel with their peers, with retaliation when being picked on or poor language comprehension being a feature of the SSLD group (*n* = 6) but not the SEN group (*n* = 1).

> Seems to be talking to people – goes to lunch with others. Improving socially. More confident with other people than he was at school. (Parent of 129/SSLD)

> Likes college better than school because she was bullied at school. (Parent of 61/SSLD)

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A lot better now but no real friends. Tends to mix with the 'special needs' children. Mother thinks he needs to mix more with 'normal' children. (Parent of 33/SSLD)

Gets on well. Only 15 in class which is helpful. Much better than at school where she was bullied a lot. (Parent of 48/SEN)

Has made quite a few good mates. Had previously had a lot of problems at end of Y11 in school – a group of girls weren't very nice to her and she was spending a lot of time on her own. (Parent of 51/SEN)

The family continues to be an important part of these young people's lives. Parents reported good relationships with the young person (32% very good/close, 49% good/close, 15% not very good and 5% not good at all) and the vast majority continued to do activities together (83%).

Thirty-one per cent of the young people did not get course work to do at home. For those who did get coursework, the majority were independent with 61% either not needing or requesting help. For the remaining 39% help was provided in a range of ways

Will talk it through with him. Sometimes I (mum) scribe for him because of his motor difficulties (Parent of 71/SSLD)
Yes, have helped her. Go through it with her. But so far has had very little work home. (Parent of 104/SSLD)
The boss has a short fuse so I (mum) sometimes try to show X how to deal with this. (Parent of 42/SSLD)
He's not great about bringing his work home. College need to write down what he needs to do or he doesn't do it. (Parent of 38/SSLD)
Do it with her (Parent of 52/SSLD)

Parents also felt that the young person would/could discuss problems with family members (see Figure 8.5).
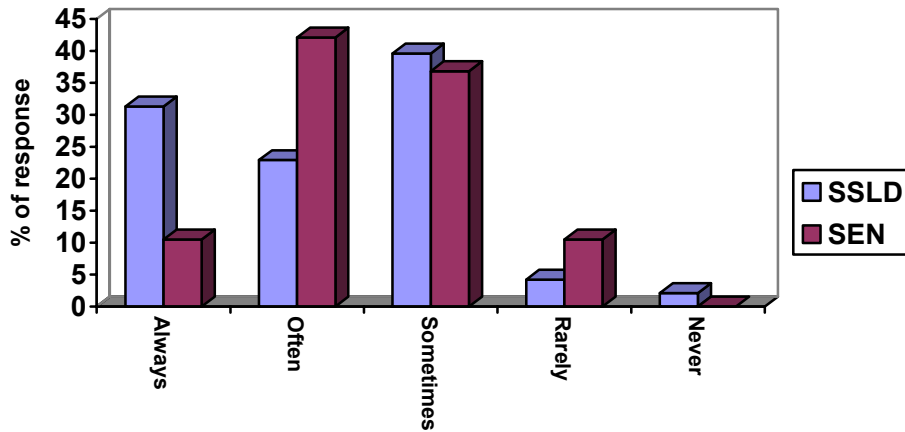
Figure 8.5 Parents' reporting of discussing problems with a family member.

8.4 Parental perspectives on strengths and support factors and the future

Parents identified a range of strengths in the young people - perhaps surprisingly, a number were identified as having good interpersonal skills (Figure 8.6).

Good confidence in herself. Speaks up for herself. Works hard. Helpful. (Parent of 39/SSLD)

Generous and kind. Good sense of humour. Good natured. (Parent of 19/SSLD)

Very sensitive person. Quite intuitive. Very understanding and kind. (Parent of 13/SSLD)

In addition, personal qualities such as 'works hard', 'determined' or 'doesn't give up' were the most frequently identified factor supporting success (27%), closely followed by 'asks for help when needed'.
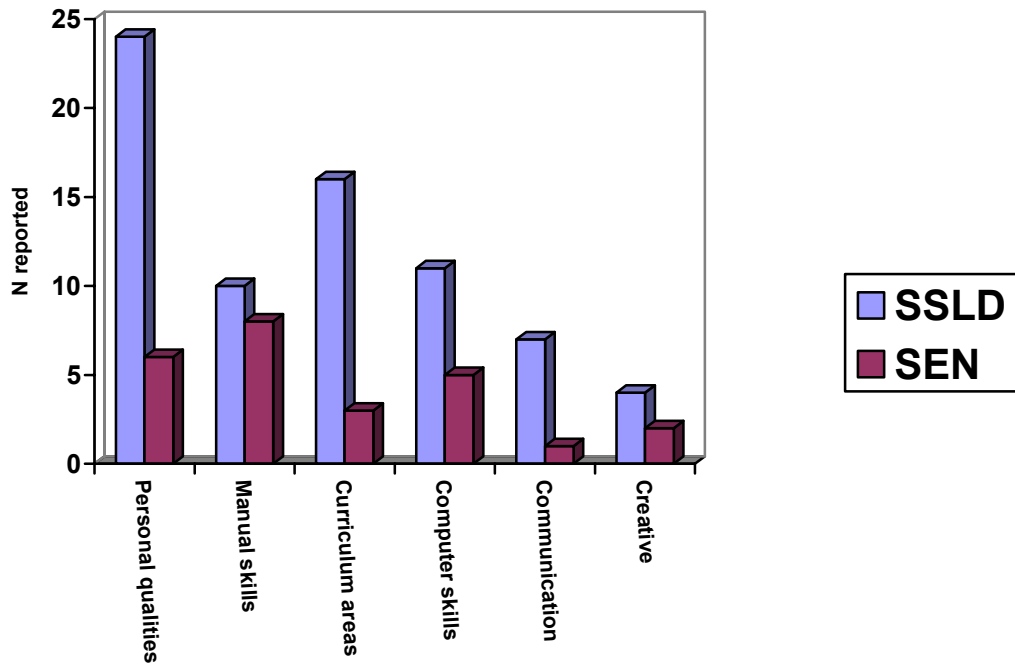
Figure 8.6   Reported strengths by the parents for each cohort

Supportive factors in the environment were identified in both schools and colleges and also within the family at this stage (Figure 8.7).
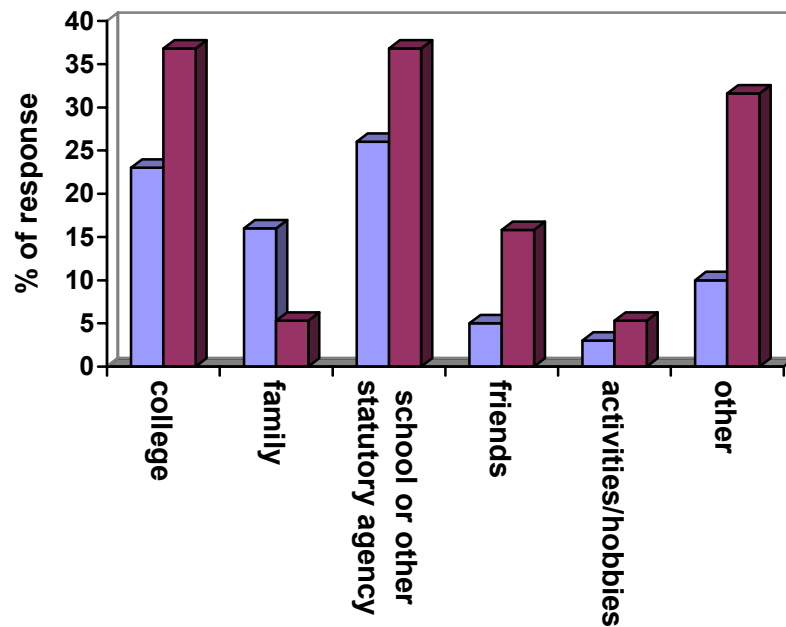

Figure 8.7 Supportive factors identified by parents at post-16

Gets support if she needs it in college. (Parent of 82/SSLD)

Quite good support from college – college not as rigid as school – gives him more freedom and helps him develop confidence. (Parent of 92/SSLD)

Support from college has been excellent. Very good special needs department. They have given him a Dictaphone and a laptop. He records lectures and then puts them on to laptop. (Parent of 46/SSLD)

College has tested him and diagnosed dyslexia. He will get a lot of help now especially in exams – reader, writer, extra time. (Parent of 78/SEN)

he can offload to his aunt – she is very good at helping him and talking things through (Parent of 101/SSLD).

Very good support at primary school – had a lot of one-to-one. (Parent of 105/SSLD)

School (residential special school) has really helped him. Had to fight hard for special needs education but it has really helped. (Parent of 140/SSLD)

Friends will read things for him if he can't. (Parent of 126/SEN)

Parents were asked about the 'next step' for their child. Typically, employment was mentioned (50%), with 17% considering further study or training. Only 8% of parents found the next step difficult to imagine. In addition employment was a major feature in the parents' hopes for the future

9.   Discussion and Conclusions

9.1   Background

The present project addressed the development of young people at the transition from school (Year 11) to the post-16 world of education, training and work. The SSLD cohort were identified at 8 years (Year 3) and the SEN cohort and a typically developing (TD) matched group were identified from the same classes as the SSLD cohort in Year 6, the end of Key Stage 2. Hence this report draws upon longitudinal data to provide a richer basis from which to consider these young people's development. Summaries of key issues from individual data sources have been provided at the end of each chapter.

In this final chapter we identify themes which are salient because they are supported by and reflected across multiple data sources. We then consider mediators and barriers to successful developmental trajectories. Before this, it it is important to note two general results:

- there was little to differentiate the performance and views of young people in specialist provision (special schools, units and resourced provision) and mainstream settings except that children within specialist provision performed lower on measures of literacy in year 7 and significantly lower in reading comprehension and writing in Key Stage 4. Children within specialist settings were more likely to have access to speech and language therapy.

- in general, the SSLD cohort fared better than the SEN matches, which raises important questions as to why the latter group were so vulnerable.

9.2   Themes

We identify seven main themes, with supporting evidence:

Theme 1: continued and increasing difficulties with writing, and spelling, evidenced in:
- All national tests at KS3 and KS4
- Standardized measures
- Parental reports
- Post-16 tutors' reports

- Views of the young people

This study has demonstrated that young people with SSLD at 8 years are at a high risk of low levels of educational achievement at GCSE. However, success in improving writing and numeracy abilities was a predictor of better GCSE outcomes.

Theme 2 - the SSLD cohort continued to have ongoing needs with oral communication/conversation, evidenced by:
- Parental reports
- SENCOs' reports
- Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (prosocial)
- Peer problems reported by parents and teachers

Although some of the young people identified as having SSLD when aged 8 years had improved their oral language abilities to be within the average range by the end of Key Stage 4, others continued to have significant communication difficulties. For example, about half had difficulties in holding conversations and one in six had significant problems.

Theme 3 - lack of curricular flexibility to address the pupils' needs, evidenced by:
- Mainstream teachers not being sufficiently prepared.
- Differentiation too often limited to simply making things easier
- Young people's views of themselves as learners and about KS4 not meeting their needs.

Theme 4 - lack of use of alternate qualifications in KS4, evidenced by:

- SSLD cohort parents's views is that teachers were not meeting the children's needs when the children were 8 years old (Lindsay & Dockrell, 2004), a view confirmed by the teachers themselves (Dockrell & Lindsay, 2001).

- Teachers in Year 7 reporting lower levels of difficulties than Year 6 teachers had predicted. However, over KS3 the SSLD and SEN cohorts made relatively less progress in maths than the TD cohort, and made no significant progress in absolute terms in English as measured by SATs. Only in science did they make progress at a comparable rate to typically developing peers, although their levels of attainment were much lower.

Theme 5 - measures of BESD present a complex picture, evidenced by:

- Self esteem of SSLD and SEN cohorts being generally lower than the norm, with girls lower than boys, but with some evidence for improvement post-16
- Hyperactivity levels decreasing over time
- Peer problems remaining significant across the ages
- Parents and teachers having different perspectives, possibly reflecting different behaviour at home compared with school
- Post-16 tutors having a more positive view of their peer relationships and social lives.

There was a complex pattern of relationships of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) for the SSLD group. There were positive changes: for example, many children had significant hyperactivity difficulties when in Key Stage 2, but these had reduced by the end of Key Stage 4. There were, however, negative trends: peer problems remained a significant area of concern throughout the period 8 – 16 years. There was also a trend for self esteem, as measured by self perception across a number of domains, to be generally lower than the standardization norms. However, there was also some evidence of an improvement of self esteem after leaving school.

This evidence indicates the need for more analytical approaches to the behavioural, emotional and social needs of children with SSLD, and also for those with general learning difficulties as exemplified by our SEN cohort. Of interest also are the positive correlations found between positive coping strategies and emotional intelligence with self esteem. These suggest the importance of resilience as a key factor in limiting the negative impact of adverse factors.

Theme 6 - the success of Post-16, as evidenced by:

- Pupils' views
- Parents' views
- College staff views
- and increased
- Social and academic success
- Higher levels of self esteem

There was evidence from several sources that the young people in this study were achieving success in their first year post-16, reflected also in increased levels of self esteem. This contrasts with earlier lack of success at school and raises the possibility that provision post-16, in particular that made by FE colleges, was more appropriate to meeting their needs, with different curricula and greater flexibility. This in turn raises questions about why provision at school was not as appropriate and flexible especially since this is now more possible than in the earlier days of a more constrained set of requirements to meet the national curriculum.

<u>Theme 7 - a significant minority of the SEN cohort were very vulnerable at post-16</u>

Despite the positive picture of greater success post-16 for many, there was also evidence of a minority of young people in the SEN cohort who were highly vulnerable at this stage. Lack of qualifications and impaired social relationships associated with a lack of positive support from family and a college, work or training placement put young people at enhanced risk (see also Lindsay & Maguire, 2002). The Connexions Service provided important support for young people at transition and helped to guide some vulnerable young people through this difficult period. This study suggests that any changes to the service should take account of its important role in addressing the most vulnerable young people.

9.3   *Barriers and Mediators*

These young people have had significant learning and developmental needs since early in their school career. Those factors that appear as barriers and mediators to successful development and transitions are reported.

9.3.1 Barriers
- Lack of knowledge, skills and specialisms of key staff
- Lack of targeted appropriate curriculum in KS3/KS4 enhanced by lack of focus on oral language and communication
- Structure and focus of KS4
- Lack of communication and consistency within the system
- Lack of support and development of basic skills
- Literacy difficulties acting as a barrier to achievement
    - KS3 and KS4 writing and spelling

       ○   KS3 and KS4 oral language and communication difficulties – especially tied to conversations and contexts

9.3.2 Mediators

- Familial support
- Young people's internal attributions and personal qualities
- Professionals
- Informed specialists
- Connexions staff play a key role
- Appropriate planning and provision of 'safety nets'
- Higher levels of literacy

9.4   Developmental trajectories

The young people with SSLD in this study provide evidence of a range of developmental profiles through secondary schooling and for a number of young people this entailed moving between special schools and mainstream schools or resourced provision and mainstream schools. No simple statements can be made about the best educational setting to meet the children's needs as a cohort. While young people in specialist provision had higher levels of need, as evidenced by poorer scores on some standardized measures, the overlaps between the groups was high. In Key Stage 3 mainstream schools were not aware of the range of needs experienced by the young people. While pupils in special schools at this point were characterised by a decline in some skills, notably writing, raising the question about the appropriateness of the challenges of the curriculum in these settings. In KS4 pupils in special schools were entered for fewer GCSEs but the points they achieved were no different from those in mainstream settings. While special schools may be more attuned to the young people's level of attainment, the wider community may value a GCSE in contrast to an entry level qualification. By corollary, social experiences and self esteem differed across settings but there was no identifiable 'best setting'. Pupils in specialist settings did have access to speech and language therapy, a provision that was uncommon in mainstream schools, although the size of the cohort in special schools prevents an examination of the efficacy of such provision. The comparison children with SEN appeared not to have their needs identified and met in school with a resulting negative pattern of educational results and a failure to continue into further education.

These data speak to the complexity of identifying appropriate educational settings yet they are clear in highlighting the need for access to specialist services - both in schools and for advising pupils and their families. The fact that the young people fare well in mainstream further education settings when additional support is provided suggests that the key feature is a flexible, supportive setting that has the potential to identify additional learning support as required in a timely fashion. Enhancement of young people's attainment and self esteem can be attained if specialist facilities and knowledge are available and if the young person's contribution and progress are acknowledged. An awareness that when a young person experiences a special educational need their trajectory may be extended or fragmented provides a framework for providing appropriate educational opportunities; whether this is provided in a special or mainstream school will depend on the individual pupil and the opportunities that are available in the local authority. The requirement to consider the full range of pupil and family needs is paramount.

10. Conclusions and recommendations

The triangulation of data from pupils, parents and professionals and the use of both qualitative and quantitative analyses lead to the following broad issues and recommendations being identified, which we see as providing scope for raising the achievements of all pupils with additional learning needs.

Curriculum

Pupils' literacy and language skills are supported within the primary system but on entry to secondary this specific support either declines or is absent. Evidence based interventions should be designed to can support the development of basic skills within the KS3, KS4 and post-16 curriculum.

The KS4 curriculum currently for these pupils has focused on traditional GCSEs. There is too little variety and insufficient flexibility and use of opportunities. Basic skills should be supported by alternative curricula between 14 and 19, curricula which interest pupils and allows them to attain qualifications that are recognized nationally.

Staff development

Many staff in KS3 and KS4 were neither aware of the challenges the pupils face nor equipped to meet the pupils' needs. Better use of transition plans and a key worker system would go some way to support the young people. Children who have not been identified as experiencing a specific problem in KS2 are particularly vulnerable and special attention should be placed on profiling and monitoring progress in Year 7 in collaboration with parents.

Co-ordination of services

In KS3, KS4 and post-16 there is scope to improve co-ordination between professionals with the involvement of personal advisers early and throughout the transition to post-16 to smooth transitions and identify individuals who are at risk. Such professionals should have an expertise in SEN.

Parents

Throughout their children's school careers parents are key players in supporting them and fighting for services. Greater acknowledgement of parents in secondary school has the potential to raise achievement and support student well-being.

Pupils

The pupils in this sample had low levels of self-esteem during secondary school and high levels of emotional distress (as reported by parents). Peer groups and collaborative activities should be employed as they have the power to moderate these problems. There should be a greater focus on the establishment of social groups and networks in KS3 and KS4 and a range of different ways of recognizing and valuing achievements should be employed to raise achievement and improve coping skills.

Post-16

Post-16 offers the potential of success for these young people both academically and socially. Low levels of reading and writing skills need to be identified and supported early. Special systems are needed to support young people who are on Entry 2 Employment schemes.

Action in these six broad areas can raise achievements and improve the quality of life for these young people and better support their parents.

A number of specific activities could be implemented immediately:

- the National Strategies should address the wider needs of pupils in terms of oral language. Specifically, the needs of children with language and communication difficulties and special educational needs more generally should inform guidance at KS3.

- Local authorities should provide information to support the identification of children with language and communication difficulties in KS3 and KS4. This could be achieved by leaflets for subject specialists highlighting 'warning signs' such as poor peer relations and limited skills with written language.

- Local Learning and Skills Councils should provide parents of children with special educational needs with information, independent of that provided by schools, about the range of curricular choices available at KS4 and in further education.

- <u>Local Learning and Skills Councils</u> should design a leaflet for young people, using the voices of the pupils and parents in the present study to provide information about the range of choices and the opportunities at post-16.

- <u>Specialist Connexions advisors</u> should work with, and inform the development of information provided to, parents and young people

- <u>Local Learning and Skills Councils</u> should consider whether the post-16 opportunities of these young people lead to wider achievement and opportunities.

- <u>Schools</u> should develop strategies for involving young people with SSLD and SEN in valued activities within the school community.

- <u>The DfES together with Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA),</u> should consider how best to provide specialist guidance to schools with evidence based strategies to support the development of basic skills in KS3 and KS4.

- <u>The DfES</u> together with QCA and the National Strategies should undertake additional research to establish curricula and teaching strategies and approaches that will engage 'at risk' young people in KS3 and KS4

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APPENDIX A - Standardized assessments

Measures were identified to tap both receptive and expressive oral language skills, literacy, nonverbal ability and written language. Language assessments previously identified as clinical markers of SLI were included in the assessment battery. Reading was assessed for both accuracy and comprehension. Tests were identified to be age and culturally appropriate, standardized, and used with children with SLI. Measures of reliability and validity derived from the technical manuals are reported for each scale on first mention.

Cognitive and educational

Measures taken at Time 1

    Nonverbal ability.

    British Abilities Scales II (BAS II) Matrices subtest (Elliot, Murray, & Pearson, 1997). Children are presented with a set of patterns where one pattern is incomplete. There is a choice of six responses and children are required to point to the missing piece: reliability .85; validity with the WISC-III performance scale .47.

    Vocabulary.

    British Picture Vocabulary Scale (BPVS; Dunn, Dunn, Whetton, & Burley, 1997): Children are shown four line drawings and asked to choose the one that best illustrates a word spoken by the assessor: reliability .89; validity with the expressive one-word vocabulary test .72.

    British Abilities Scales II (BAS II) Naming subtest (Elliot et al., 1997). Children are shown a series of familiar items and asked to name them: reliability .75; validity with the Wechsler Preschool Primary Scale of Intelligence Performance scale .68.

    Grammar.

    Test of Reception of Grammar (TROG; Bishop, 1983). A multiple-choice test designed to assess understanding of grammatical constructions. Children are shown four pictures and the assessor reads a sentence. The child is required to select a picture that matches the sentence: reliability .88; validity with the Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals: Revised UK Edition (CELF-R [UK]; Peers, Lloyd, & Foster, 1999) .53.

    Expressive Narrative.

    Bus Story: Information Score (Renfrew, 1997). The assessor tells the child a short story about a naughty bus. The narrative is supported by pictures. The child is asked to retell the story as accurately as possible using the pictures as cues. A score for information

reported is computed: reliability .70; validity for British and American versions of the test as .98.

Phonological Awareness.

Phonological Assessment Battery (PhAB; Frederickson, Frith, & Reason, 1997) rhyme and alliteration measures: For the rhyme test children choose two words that rhyme out of a choice of three (one irrelevant word and two that rhyme). The alliteration test is similar with the exception that the chosen words have the same beginning sound.

Fluency measures. The fluency test involves children generating as many words as they can in each of the following areas: semantic, e.g., food and animals; alliteration, e.g., words beginning with 'm' and 'b'; and rhyme, e.g., words that sound like 'whip' and 'more'.

Scores on these separate measures are combined to form a composite phonology measure: reliability $\geq$ .80; validity with the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (NARA; Neale, Christophers, & Whetton, 1997) reading accuracy .24 - .56.

Reading.

Individual Reading Analysis (IRA; Accuracy and Comprehension; Vincent & de la Mare, 1990). The pupil reads aloud a series of graded passages and responds to a series of questions about the passage: reliability accuracy .97, comprehension .89; no validity reported.

Spelling.

British Abilities Scales II (BAS II); Spelling Scale: This scale provides a number of phonetically regular and irregular words to assess the child's ability to produce correct spellings. Each item is first presented in isolation, then within the context of a sentence, and finally in isolation. The child has to respond by writing the word: reliability .91; validity with Wechsler Objective Reading Dimension (WORD: Wechsler, 1993) spelling .63.

Measures taken at Time 2

Where possible we maintained the same measures at T2 that were given at T1. Repeated measures at T2 included the BAS II Matrices subtest, BPVS, TROG, PhAB and BAS II Spelling Scale. The following measures were used where the originals were no longer age appropriate or new measures were required.

Working Memory.

Children's Nonword Repetition (CNRep; Gathercole & Baddeley, 1990) involves the child hearing a single novel word-like item, such as "barrazon", and being required to repeat

it immediately. The test contains 40 items: reliability .77; validity with measure of digit span .45 to .51.

Grammar

CELF [UK] (Peers et al., 1999) – recalling sentences and listening to paragraphs. In the recalling sentences task children are asked to imitate orally presented sentences: reliability .82; validity with other expressive subscales .43 - .49. Listening to paragraphs requires the child to attend to a short paragraph and answer specific questions related to the content: reliability 74; validity with other receptive scales .30 - .43

Reading.

BAS II Word Reading Scale. This scale assesses recognition and oral reading of single words. The principal aim is to test single word decoding ability using a sample ranging from common words found in children's books to less common words: reliability .93; validity with WORD reading scale .71.

Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (NARA). The NARA is a standardized reading test containing six passages of prose of gradually increasing difficulty. The test measures reading speed and accuracy in text reading, and comprehension. Comprehension ability is measured by asking the child several questions after they have finished reading each passage. Speed and accuracy of reading are measured simultaneously: reliability accuracy .86, comprehension .94; validity with Schonell graded word reading accuracy .95, comprehension .88 and rate .76.

Written Language.

The Wechsler Objective Language Dimensions (WOLD): writing expression (Rust, 1996). The child is asked to write a letter outlining his or her ideal house. Children are allowed 15 minutes to complete the task. This free writing task addresses the development of ideas and organization, as well as punctuation and use of capitals. The written output can either be scored holistically or analytically: reliability .89, correlation with Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery-Revised, Dictation = 0.72. The analytic scale was used to assess the children's written text. This comprises six dimensions, each rated on a four point scale, which are scored independently of each other: Ideas and development; Organization, unity and coherence; Vocabulary; Sentence structure and variety; Grammar and usage; Capitalization and punctuation.

Behavioural, emotional and social development

Self Esteem

Scales devised by Harter and her colleagues were used to assess self esteem. These scales were devised to assess perceptions of different aspects of self and so provide a more differentiated aspect of self and so provide a more differentiated picture the scales that aggregate data to provide an overall estimate of self esteem. As children are able to reflect meaningfully on an increasingly differentiated sense of self with age the scales having increasing numbers of scales. In addition to these specific self perception scales, global self worth scale is also evaluated from middle childhood. The scales used were as follows:

1. *Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Social Acceptance* (Harter & Pike, 1984) Cognitive Competence, Physical Competence, Peer Acceptance, & Maternal Acceptance.

2. *Self Perception Profiles for Children* (Harter, 1985) Scholastic Competence, Social Acceptance, Athletic Competence, Physical Appearance, Behavioural Conduct, & Global Self Worth.

3. *Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents* (Harter, 1988). Scholastic Competence, Social Acceptance, Athletic Competence, Physical Appearance, Job Competence, Romantic Appeal, Behavioural Conduct, Close Friendships and Global Self Worth.

4. *Self Perception Profile for College Students* (Neemann & Harter, 1988). Creativity, Intellectual Ability, Scholastic Competence, Job Competence, Athletic Competence, Appearance, Romantic Relationships, Social Acceptance, Close Friendships, Parent Relationships, Finding Humour in One's Life (Humour), Morality, and Global Self Worth.

   The relevant scale was completed by the children at age 8, 10, 12, 16 and 17 years.

   Behavioural, emotional and social difficulties

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ): Goodman, 1994, 1998) comprises four scales which examine problem behaviour: Hyperactivity, Conduct Problems, Emotional Symptoms and Peer Problems. A further scale, Prosocial, assesses children's positive behaviour (e.g. helping others). In addition, the four 'problem' scales produce a Total Difficulties score.

The SDQ was completed by teachers at years 8, 10, 12 and 16 and by parents at years 8, 10 and 12 years.

Coping Skills

Adolescent Coping Scale (ACS) – specific short form (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993).   The ACS- specific short form includes 18 scales representing different coping strategies *e.g. 'shut myself off from the problem so I can avoid it'.* The young person rates each strategy on a 5-point scale: *not used at all, used very little*, *used sometimes*, *used frequently*, and *used a great deal.*

Trait emotional self-efficacy

Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Adolescent Short Form (TEIQue-ASF; Petrides, Sangareau, Furnham, & Frederickson, 2006).

The TEIQue-ASF is a simplified version, in terms of wording and syntactic complexity, of the adult short form of the TEIQue. For the purposes of this study, small changes were made in the wording of the scale to further simplify the language without changing the meaning. The TEIQue contains 30 short statements (responded to on a 7-point Likert scale, (e.g. 'I often find it hard to understand other people'). All items were sampled from the 15 subscales of the adult trait EI sampling domain (two items per subscale). Higher scores on the TEIQue-ASF indicated higher levels of trait EI. The internal consistency reliability of the scale was high both on a UK (Petrides, Sangareau, Furnham, and Frederickson, 2006) and on a Dutch sample (Mavroveli, Petrides, Rieffe, and Bakker, in press).