

**Leaving Special School:
Post-16 outcomes for young adults with
Specific Language Impairment**

by

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Abstract

Investigations of the post-16 outcomes for young people with a specific language impairment (SLI) are limited in scope. This thesis contributes to this body of knowledge by examining the academic, employment, independence and social outcomes of a cohort of pupils who attended a residential special school for pupils with SLI and the explanations provided by the young people for these outcomes and experiences. Sixty participants ranging between seventeen and twenty-two years of age completed a telephone survey to investigate their transition outcomes. Survey data are complemented by in-depth, face to face, interviews taken two years later with nineteen of the original cohort to explore their views on what had facilitated and hindered their transition experience.

As a cohort, the young people were generally adapting well to the demands of life as a young adult. Almost all had continued into further education, with over half going on to increase their level of qualifications and some had entered university. Those young people who had started their working career were predominantly employed in the retail, administrative and skilled trade sectors and most of them enjoyed their work. The majority lived at home but reported a growing sense of independence and confidence. The transition back to their home communities, for the most part, had been positive with new friendships and a range of social activities engaged in. However, factors relating to gender and very low levels of qualifications were associated with more vulnerable transitions.

The thesis uses the interplay of agency and structure to examine the transition accounts of the young people within the context of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development. The findings have implications concerning the 14-19 curriculum provision for young people with SLI and for how their role in the transition process should be strengthened.

Key words: Transition; Specific Language Impairment; Post-16; Special School; Special Educational Needs; Bounded Agency

Declaration and Word Count

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

Word count: 72,030

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Chapter 1 Transition from school in the 21st century

Introduction

This chapter examines how the literature conceptualises post-16 transition today and the different patterns of transition. It explores how the experience of transition in recent years has undergone a rapid transformation from previous generations. This is followed by an account of how successive governments have responded to and in many respects initiated these changes in transition, particularly within the education context and especially with regard to the support of young people with SEN. Finally, transition trends for young people post-16 are examined. This Chapter establishes the context for this thesis which investigates the post-16 transition outcomes of a group of young people with a history of Specific Language Impairment (SLI). For the purposes of this thesis, SLI is defined as the experience of significant difficulties in language ability that cannot be attributed to nonverbal intelligence, hearing problems, neurological status or any other unknown factors (Leonard, 1998).

During the 1960s, most young people in the United Kingdom (UK) left full time education at sixteen to enter the labour market (Evans and Furlong, 1997). By the 1970s this number had decreased to just over half of all sixteen year olds directly entering employment after leaving school (Pearce and Hillman, 1998). In contrast, by 2005 the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) reported that 89% of all sixteen year olds were staying on into further education (FE) after leaving school (DfES, 2005a). In the same year 43% of young people who completed an FE course went onto university, a considerable increase compared to the 6% of young people who went to university in the mid-1970s (Maringe and Fuller, 2006). These figures highlighting the number of young people remaining in education after compulsory schooling indicate a key change in post-16 transitions over the past four decades; the impact of which is examined later in the chapter.

Various explanations have been offered for this rapid growth in FE participation rates in recent years (McVicar and Rice, 2001). These explanations include an increase in educational attainment at sixteen, a change in attitudes of young people towards FE and finally the substantial reorganisations which have taken place in the labour market

(Furlong and Cartmel, 2007, Henderson et al., 2007, OECD, 2005). However, one certain consequence of these changes is that transition into adulthood in the 21st century is undergoing its own transition as young adults find a way to accommodate a changing economic and social climate (Ball et al., 2000, Catan, 2004, OECD, 2000).

1.2. Transitions: Conceptual and theoretical frameworks

The wealth of literature written on the transition of young people over the past two generations has focused on one or more of the following aspects:

- i. The timing of the post-16 transition phase.
- ii. The different dimensions of the transition process.
- iii. The varied transition routes experienced by young adults.
- iv. The theoretical context within which transition takes place.

This section addresses each of these aspects of transition in turn.

1.2.1. The different ages of post-16 transition

'Transition is the passage from one stage to another' which cannot be 'defined through some clear-cut beginning and end' (Polat, 2001, p. 20). The author use a description from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to support their interpretation of transition as 'a continuous journey that starts well before pupils leave school and does not end when they first enter work' (OECD, 1996, p. 42). Typically, the age of this transition period has centred around 20-24 years old (OECD, 2005) but another interpretation describes three stages in this transition period, an early phase between ten and fourteen years, a middle phase between fifteen and twenty years and a later phase from 21 years and upwards (Lloyd, 2005). It has also been described as the period of 'post-adolescence' (Ball et al., 2000) and 'emerging adulthood' which may continue up to the age of thirty (Arnett, 2004). One consequence of this ambiguity has been the uncertainties surrounding the ages used to define the period of when a young person undergoes transition to adulthood. This is particularly important as studies within this field have included participants from fifteen

years up to their late twenties with subsequent challenges for making generalisations from findings with such variations in age range.

1.2.2. Dimensions of transition

If the definitions of the timings of the different phases of youth and young adulthood are contested, the literature demonstrates a more coherent approach towards the notion that transition has many dimensions and affects all aspects of the life of a young person. Academics and policy makers in the field vary to some degree in their categorisation of these dimensions. Bob Coles (1995), for example, classified three main transitions for the young person; transition from school to work, the domestic transition which includes establishing new social and family networks and finally the housing transition with the young person moving away from home (Coles, 1995). A report from the OECD in 2000 which focused primarily on the transition from education to work, recognised the importance of transitions which included young people forming their own households, gaining economic independence, family formation and personal development (OECD, 2000). Similar dimensions were developed by Ball et al. (2000) through their conceptual framework of transition, which they termed 'arenas of action' and 'centres of choice'. These 'arenas' included the three dimensions of work, education and training; leisure and social life; family, home and domesticity, where transition in one arena could be seen to affect outcomes in another (Ball et al., 2000).

However, for some authors the features which characterise adulthood such as regular paid work, independent living and family membership no longer have the same degree of certainty and longevity as in previous generations (Pole et al., 2005). By the middle of the nineties researchers in the field of transition had started to suggest that the three traditional centres of transition: education and work, family and leisure and social life had started to fragment (Morrow and Richards, 1996). Lloyd (2005) classified and broke down these three dimensions further by focusing on five adult roles including, worker, spouse, parent, household manager and citizen. This loss of certainty within transition has influenced how adulthood has been defined in that it is no longer a period of total independence as previously perceived and that the boundaries between youth and adulthood have been obscured. Barry (2001), in her qualitative study of 108 young people in the UK, recorded how the young people felt that there was a

difference between 'feeling adult'; which came with life experiences regardless of ages and 'being an adult'; which was associated with legislation and rights and 'settling down'; which implied that transition was complete. This led to a call on the part of some academics, for youth to be reconceptualised as the transitional stage to citizenship, rather than adulthood (Coles, 1995, Pole et al., 2005, Barry, 2001). However, this view has yet to be widely supported especially as many of the conditions required of adulthood are those required of citizenship and it is argued that citizenship is just another marker for adulthood such as independent living and paid work (Mizen, 2004).

1.2.3. Describing the transition experience

The perception of transition as an evolving process is one that is prevalent and generally agreed upon throughout the literature and implicit in the meaning of transition are the notions of progress and development (Polat et al., 2001). The standard or linear trajectory of transition up until the eighties was one where the majority of young people, once they had left compulsory education would find work and have set up their own home and family within a few short years (Coles, 1995). However, as the results of research from the OECD highlights 'Transition patterns differ markedly from those that were the norm twenty years ago' (OECD, 2000, p. 149).

The last ten to fifteen years have witnessed a proliferation of terms in the literature to describe transition experiences which no longer follow a linear pattern, such as fractured, delayed, fragmented and churning (Aston et al., 2005, Coles, 1995). Within this trajectory the young person experiences minimal progress with regard to one or all of the main areas of transition. They might, for example, find themselves completing successive academic courses at the same qualification level with no distinct purpose to the completion of another course other than a lack of alternative options. If in employment, some young people may find themselves completing a variety of temporary or part time jobs with little direction or relation to one another. The transition experience of some young people has also been described as having to:

..cope with simultaneous, often contradictory shifts between dependency and independence as a result of prolonged, ambiguous and switching trajectories, which make them feel and (self)-define them as young and adult at the same

time, depending on the present situation. This is what we have called the *yoyoisation* in post-traditional life-courses: linear transitions change into reversible and fragmented yoyo transitions with uncertain perspectives and outcomes. (du Bois-Reymond & Stauber, 2005, p. 23)

Current research is only just beginning to address the effect of such changing transitions on the lives of young people, especially the more vulnerable, but even less is known on the subject of the impact on families and how they might be accommodating to these changes. Anecdotal evidence from the media reveals a new vocabulary evolving to describe the effect of such developments. For example, the term 'boomerang children' is to describe those young people who leave home temporarily for university or travel who find themselves returning home on a regular basis. Young adults have also been portrayed as 'kippers': kids in parents pockets eroding retirement savings, highlighting the financial impact of the shifting transition patterns for parents (Hastings, 2008, Womack, 2007).

The development of a new vocabulary in the media has coincided with researchers seeking new metaphors to describe the concept of transition. The perspective that transitions are less linear in nature with a greater emphasis on choice and complexity, has led to the replacement of metaphors such as 'routes' and 'trajectory' with the idea of the young person 'navigating' his or her way through this period in their lives (Evans and Furlong, 1997). In addition, transition has been seen as an 'outcome orientated process' but our understanding of the term transition 'outcome' is also one that has been subject to differing interpretations, particularly in relation to the lives of young people with special educational needs (SEN) (Halpern, 1993). This study does use the term outcome to describe findings in the different aspects of the lives of the participants included in the study but with an understanding that an outcome can be temporary in nature and subject to change both positively and negatively. The term route is used to describe what happened to the young people with respect to the different educational and employment careers and experiences.

However, a different perspective has challenged the view that previous to the last three decades, transitions for young people were stable, linear and predictable as overstated (Furlong et al., 2005). Roberts (2009) also cautioned against over emphasising the differences between the post war generations and today:

There was never a golden age when everything was mapped out and all school-leavers made smooth and rapid transitions into employment. (Roberts, 2009, p. 80)

Furlong and his colleagues (2005) argued that if the same criteria for different trajectories of transition were applied to studies conducted in the 1960s or 1970s there would, as today, be a range of transition trajectories. The value of this interpretation lies in the contribution it makes by delivering a note of vigilance as to the nature and extent of the changes in transition which have taken place at the end of the 20th and into the 21st century.

1.2.4. Transition within a theoretical context

The theoretical context of transition is dominated in the sociological literature by the debate between agency and structure; which is defined in this study as the extent to which the transition outcomes of young people are determined by their own actions (agency) or by the way society is organised (structure). The increased importance of the role of the individual in society over the past thirty years has meant for some academics that personal agency is seen as the greatest influence on life outcomes (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2006, Giddens, 1990). Nevertheless, for others, a structuralist explanation, notably theories relating to class and gender, still shape our understanding of the experience and outcomes of transition (Ball et al., 2000, Furlong and Cartmel, 2007, Gill and Wallace, 1990). Most recently, academics have attempted to bridge these two theories and identified how transition operates within both theoretical contexts (Catan, 2004, Henderson et al., 2007, Roberts et al., 1994, Evans, 2002). The substantial element of research in this field has been conducted by sociologists. However, the increasing participation of psychologists within the discussion, such as J. J. Arnett (2004) has contributed to enriching the debate. Each theoretical perspective is addressed in the following section.

1.2.4.1. Agency and transition

For some theorists the rise of economic liberalism in response to the problems of inflation and unemployment of the 1970s and 1980s was accompanied by the advent of individualism (Giddens, 1990) and the notion of a 'risk society' (Beck, 1992). Thus society in the UK and across Europe witnessed a diminishing influence of government on market forces and the lives of citizens and a corresponding increase in opportunities, choices and freedoms for the individual. Although greater risk and uncertainty became a more dominant feature of life, this was balanced by a reduction in the influences of traditional barriers to improvement such as class and gender. The theorists who support such a view did not advocate an end of social inequality but that it had changed to operate at the level of the individual rather than groups or classes of people. As traditional roles and routes were replaced with a greater range of post-16 opportunities, so the young person was able to exercise greater individual choice over their transition. The normal biography of transition was replaced with the 'choice' biography (du Bois-Reymond and Stauber, 2005). Within this perspective the young person was:

..playing an increasingly important role in constructing their own routes, wielding strategies and choosing from alternatives. (Merino, 2007, p. 141)

This greater freedom of choice has extended from education to the world of work with the notion of a 'patchwork' or 'portfolio' career as the expectations of a job for life eroded with the breakdown of the traditional labour market (Ferri et al., 2003). Nevertheless, for some, greater freedoms entailed greater risk and insecurities as those processes and certainties that had helped smooth the transition process subsequently became risk factors (Bagnall, 2005).

1.2.4.2. Structure and transition

The notion that transition over the last thirty years is one dominated by choice has been challenged in the literature (Ball et al., 2000, Furlong and Cartmel, 2007, Evans and Furlong, 1997). Firstly, a number of studies have pointed to evidence of traditional structures in society such as class, locality and educational attainment as continuing to affect transition outcomes (Bynner, 2001, Shildrick and MacDonald, 2007, Furlong and

Cartmel, 2007). Secondly, many authors from this perspective have recognised that there has been an increase in flexibility and choice with respect to transition as witnessed in part by the dismantling of traditional post-16 paths and structures. However, they argued that this has been accompanied by a corresponding increase in risk; thus placing even greater pressure on the resources of an individual and their family (Ball et al., 2000, Brannen and Nilsen, 2002). Finally, this 'illusion of choice' with respect to transition has become so pervading that it has created a climate in which young people seek to blame themselves for less successful transition outcomes rather than the lack of opportunities afforded to them by society (EGRIS, 2001, Brannen and Nilsen, 2002, France, 2007, Evans, 2007).

Large scale and smaller qualitative studies have revealed that the class and social economic status (SES) of the family of a young person appear to be the most common structures to affect the experience of transition (Bynner, 2001, Shildrick and MacDonald, 2007, Webster et al., 2004, Furlong et al., 2003). A specific example of the effect of SES is provided in the widening participation rates in post-16 education. Those who endorse this perspective, claim that the expansion of the number of students in FE and Higher Education (HE) in the UK has been portrayed as young people experiencing greater flexibility and choice within education and between education and employment. However, France (2004) in his study of youth, used data from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to highlight that in 2000, 72% of all students entering university were from the highest socio-economic group, and only 17% were from the lowest. HEFCE described this phenomenon as the 'postcode' effect, reporting that young people from more advantaged areas of the UK were six times more likely to go to university. This impact of locality has been replicated and recorded in further studies (Shildrick and MacDonald, 2007, Webster et al., 2003). Webster et al. (2004) in their longitudinal study of a group of young adults from Teeside, an economically deprived area of the north east of England, found that by the time the time the young people had reached their mid-twenties, very few of them had been able to improve upon initially poor transitions from school.

Despite continued commitment with finding and getting better work, most were still experiencing poor, low waged and intermittent work at the bottom of the labour market. (Webster et al., 2004, p. 5)

In addition to SES, and locality, a lack of qualifications has also been demonstrated to negatively influence transition outcomes (Furlong et al., 2003, Bynner, 2005, Bynner, 2001).

Until the 1980s failing to get qualifications was no hindrance to getting work in Britain, because the labour market absorbed all such unqualified young people into the large number of unskilled jobs that existed then (Bynner, 2005, p. 377).

Although the number of young people leaving school today with more General Certificates in Secondary Education (GCSE) has steadily increased over the past ten years, there are still young people leaving compulsory education without sufficient academic qualifications to attain regular and gainful employment (Webster et al., 2003, Brannen and Nilsen, 2002). Hence, a further structure; a more qualified workforce, is operating at a group level to prevent a linear transition from school to employment for some young people. Finally, the effect of gender on transition outcomes has been one of contention between academics between those who maintain that it still functions as a barrier (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007, Furlong et al., 2003) and those that counter such a belief arguing that 'the life course is no longer so clearly gendered' (Brannen, 2002, p. 514). This has been in part, as a consequence of young women completing higher levels of education and the expectation of combining motherhood with a career (Bynner et al., 2002).

A second feature of the structuralist perspective is that the rise of individualism and a 'choice' biography, which allows young people to choose from a variety of transition routes, is not the position for all young people. Furlong and Cartmel (2007), for example, despite a strong belief in class and gender as being central to any understanding of life experiences, still recognised the importance of the role played by personal agency. An example of agency for them, was evident in the part motivation could play in providing the link between a deficit in resources in one or more areas and a successful transition. Thus the young person at best requires certain levels of resilience in order to balance and compensate for deficits in resources in order to succeed. For some young people, structural barriers to transition are not evident and in this instance 'structural forces and personal resources, such as gender and class support one another' (Nilsen et al., 2002, p. 42). For this particular group of young people, structures still exist, but they have taken an invisible quality. Nilsen and

Brannen (2002) have described it as the 'silent discourse' that can support or hinder the transition of a young person. France (2007) developed this notion one step further with the argument that individualism had become a new social structure in itself, acting as a barrier to a successful transition for those without the resources to take advantage of the options on offer.

Finally, the fact that individualism and choice appear to be so embedded in the transition discourse, is demonstrated by the responses of young people in studies where they reported taking responsibility themselves for a weak or even failed transition describing, for example, poorly made choices or failing to maximise opportunities on their part (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007, Brannen and Nilsen, 2002). In certain circumstances this might have been an accurate interpretation for some young people, but is more difficult to understand when research could show to the young person that external, structural factors might have contributed to their less positive experiences and outcomes. This also raises potential questions in relation to the reliability and validity of such findings. However, researchers and policy makers have increasingly called for the views of young people, recognising and valuing the contribution they provide to the process of understanding transition (EGRIS, 2001). Webster and his colleagues (2004) highlighted a further paradox in their findings; on the one hand there was evidence of very limited, if any progress of economic transition between 15 and 25 years old, yet in interviews, the young people reported that they felt their lives had moved on pointing to changes with respect to housing and family careers. Therefore, despite the existence of old and new barriers to transition, according to some researchers, the fact that transition as a whole is now such a complex and multifaceted process, may mean that young people are not experiencing and interpreting difficulties in the same way as that of previous generations (Gauthier, 2007).

1.2.4.3. Transition: agency and structure combined

An attempt to bridge the different perspectives between agency and structure has also been proposed and three terms in particular have come to describe this position; structured individualism, the socially located subject and bounded agency (Evans, 2002, Catan, 2004, Roberts et al., 1994, Henderson et al., 2007). Roberts et al. (1994)

used the term structured individualism to describe what was happening in their comparison of the transition of a group of 16-22 year olds in Germany and England. In both surveys the young people felt that they themselves had made significant choices and that they had control over their future choices and career paths. Nevertheless, Roberts et al. (1994) also found that these opportunities were heavily influenced by family background, gender, place of residence and secondary education.

Even when individuals had moved consistently towards pre-formulated goals, these aims themselves, and the individuals' ability to realise them, were the mere products of social locations. (Roberts et al., 1994, p. 51)

Similarly, Catan (2004) in her review of seventeen transition projects from 1998-2001 which included small-scale qualitative studies and two large scale national birth cohorts, found further evidence of a trend away from the either/or theoretical explanations provided by structure and agency. She used the term 'socially located subject' to illustrate, in much the same way as Roberts and his colleagues found that the choices of the young people with respect to transition had increased significantly compared to previous generations, but that their experiences and opportunities were still governed by structures in society such as class. Evans' (2002) use of the term 'bounded agency' similarly explained that the circumstances and structures in the life of a young person did have an influence on transition outcomes but that these influences did not have to determine outcomes. This explanation was supported and adopted in later studies in an attempt to elucidate why young people from very similar circumstances would make different transitions (Shildrick and MacDonald, 2007) and that some young people could overcome a number of challenges to achieve a successful transition (Ghee, 2005).

A more recent study by Henderson et al. (2007), attempted to merge and develop further explanations of structure and agency. In their ten year longitudinal study of young people from different communities in the UK, including Northern Ireland, they observed outcomes that recognised the importance of the individual, the context within which the individual was located but additionally the impact of further external influences which included historical and contemporary events. The changing political climate in Northern Ireland during the late 1990s and at the start of the new millennium, for example, had brought greater opportunities for young people not enjoyed by their parents. This explanation of Henderson et al. (2007) has much in

common with Bronfenbrenner's psychological perspective of transition discussed in the next section.

1.2.4.4. Transition from a psychological perspective

This last section within an exploration of theoretical frameworks for transition, addresses transition from a psychological rather than sociological perspective. It takes a model of human development and in doing so, complements those researchers within a sociological perspective (Henderson et al., 2007, Shildrick and MacDonald, 2007) who have attempted to explain the transition process more holistically.

The model is Urie Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory of human development (Lerner, 2005, Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998). His theory proposed that any study of human development across the life span must integrate a range of disciplines including psychology, education, history, sociology, biology and social policy. This inclusion allowed for a richer and more complex investigation and explanation of a person's development and behaviour. The benefit of such an approach with respect to a study of transition is that it allows for the acknowledgement of the influence of structures in society on transition outcomes, but combines with aspects of personal agency such as an individual's personal and psychological development.

This multi-disciplinary approach was operationalised through his bioecological theory of human development. Figure 1.1 shows how Bronfenbrenner explained human development taking place at different ecological levels but which were all interrelated, which he described as nested systems. Bronfenbrenner described the microsystem as '...a pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the person in a given face-to-face-setting.' (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). This extends to the mesosystem where relationships between the different settings or microsystems take place. The exosystem comprises of relationships between two or more of the settings where at least one does not directly involve the developing person. The macrosystem influences relationships at all levels by including, for example, the political and economic environments of the time (Lerner, 2005, Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998). The evolution of the ecological to a bioecological theory was a recognition by Bronfenbrenner of the importance of including the features of the developing person

such as their biology and behaviour, into his theory (Lerner, 2005). For the purposes of a transition study, these systems help to explain how a number of complex interrelated factors including the characteristics of the young person themselves could account for transition outcomes and for how a young person might experience the transition process. Within this model it is possible to identify examples of structure and agency thus allowing for comparisons between the two theoretical perspectives.

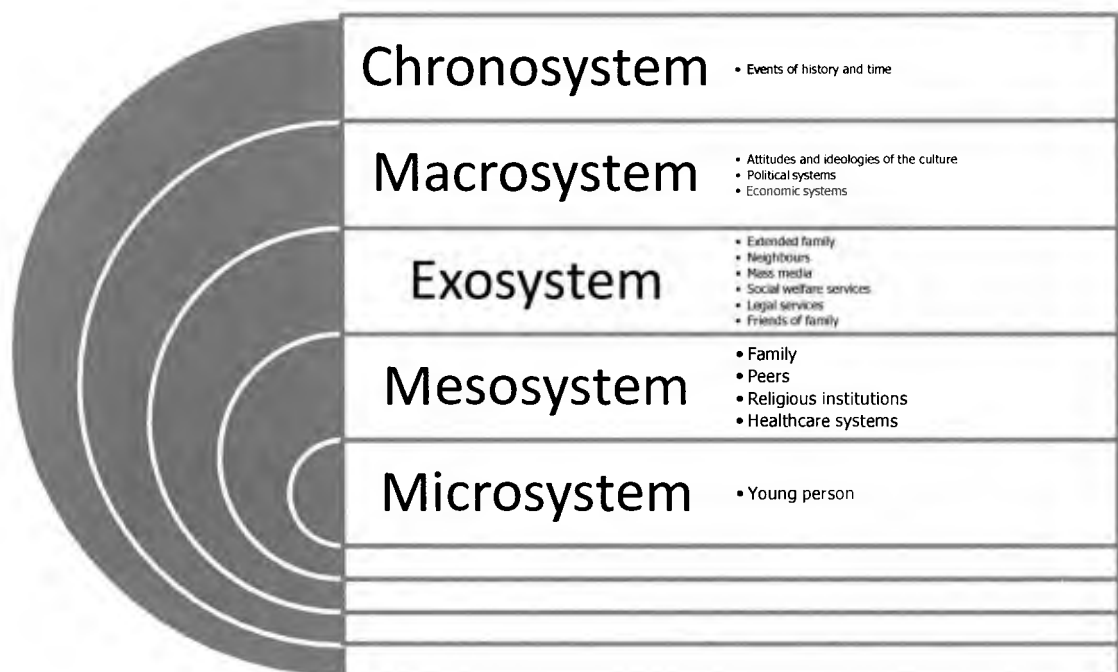


Figure 1.1 Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory of human development

1.3. Current education and transition policy context

1.3.1. Policy responses

In parallel with the theoretical context, transition and transition outcomes need to be explored and judged within the current policy context relating to young people in the UK. When the Labour government came into power in 1997, their White Paper *Excellence in Schools* (DfEE, 1997) was the first of many education initiatives which, in part, aimed to improve the transition process for young people. The policy advocated

knowledge and skills acquisition as the key to educational and as a consequence economic success. There was a recognition that academic provision post-16 was too narrow and that vocational courses were considered to have less status than their academic equivalents. In response, successive governments introduced what might now be regarded as a series of rather fragmented and piecemeal initiatives such as the replacement of General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) with the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) (Coffield et al., 2005). This was accompanied by a programme of Key Skills to be studied by all post-16 students, partly in response to employers' concerns about the need to ensure that young people were better prepared and trained for a changing labour market (CBI, 1989).

In 2000, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) was set up in part, to ensure more effective opportunities for transition following compulsory education. The LSC was responsible for planning and funding high quality education and training in England other than for those students in universities and thus brought a large part of the post-16 sector under one body. One important initiative was to introduce and expand the range of qualifications on offer with, for example, the introduction of new vocational and work related training schemes. In order to ensure a more skilled and qualified work force for the future, the curriculum and accreditation opportunities provided were to be more coherent and progressive (Dewson et al., 2004). Significantly, including for those young people with SEN, a greater range of courses were now available at foundation level with opportunities for further academic progress on completion.

Judgements concerning the effectiveness of the LSC were mixed; there was agreement that the LSC provided a more coherent and nationally orientated structure, replacing a very fragmented post-16 sector which was characterised by considerable inconsistencies with regard to funding and educational provision (Coffield et al., 2005, Ramsden et al., 2004). However, the provision of one national body which was driven in part by national objectives, led to criticisms that it was too centralised and unable to respond flexibly to differing local needs (Coffield et al., 2005). In 2004, Ramsden and his colleagues went so far as to claim that the LSC had had little impact in terms of provision to date (Ramsden et al., 2004). By 2009, the LSC was disbanded and its responsibilities were taken over by two bodies as a result of new legislation under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 (DCSF, 2009a). The Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) is responsible for the training and education of 16-19

year olds and the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) for adult learning and skills. However, the YPLA has the responsibility for ensuring provision for all 16-25 year olds with learning difficulties and disabilities which should assist with continuity of education and training for this potentially vulnerable group.

At the same time as the creation of the LSC, the Connexions Service was established, replacing the former careers advisory service, with the specific aim of supporting the transition of young people between the ages of thirteen and nineteen. For young people with learning difficulties and disabilities support from a Connexions Personal Adviser (PA) was to be provided up to the age of 25. As well as providing advice for all young people there was a particular focus on the reduction of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET). Research suggested that the combination of such broad aims were not always compatible (Grove and Giraud-Saunders, 2003, Hogarth and Smith, 2004, Coldwell et al., 2005, Russell et al., 2010). In particular the balancing of such a large and diverse caseload for the PAs proved challenging with the potential for some of the most vulnerable not to receive appropriate support. Nevertheless, other studies have shown that the individual work of PAs can have an important influence on ensuring more successful transitions for vulnerable young people (Coldwell et al., 2005, Cullen et al., 2006, Cullen et al., 2009).

A variable pattern is also observed regarding the statistical evidence for Connexion's effectiveness. In the national press (Bawden, 2007) and from organisations such as the National Literacy Trust, it was reported in February 2005 that Connexions partnerships helped reduce the number of young people falling into the NEET category by an average of 14% over two years. However, a Nuffield Review of 14-19 Education and Training reported to the House of Commons Select Committee in 2007 that the proportion of 16-18 year olds classified as NEET had increased from 10% at the end of 2004 to 11% at the end of 2005 (Pring et al., 2007). An additional area of uncertainty was the effect that the changes to the way the service was commissioned from April 2008 would have on supporting transition. When initially established, Connexions received funding direct from government grants thus taking the careers service out Local Authority (LA) provision. From 2008, as a result of recommendations from the Youth Matters Green Paper (2005) which highlighted the need to bring all services connected with young people back under the direction of one body, Connexions was funded through the LA. Each LA received a non-ring fenced grant based on a national

funding formula taking into account the 13-19 population, education attainment, NEET and deprivation figures. In 2010, as with many other LA services, Connexions was facing the prospect of severe funding cuts.

During this period, innovations to the National Curriculum in Key Stage 4 were also being implemented. One of the most significant changes included the introduction of a work related learning programme for all pupils which became a statutory requirement with the enactment of Work-related Learning for All at Key Stage 4 (QCA, 2003). As a consequence, all pupils were to be offered the opportunity of learning about work and developing their skills for work through a range of activities such as work experience, vocational courses and careers education. Initiatives such as the Increased Flexibility Programme (IFP), brought into operation in 2002, gave some 14-16 year-olds the chance to spend part of the week at an FE college and with a local employer. However, six years into government and with attempts at reform, many of the tensions and concerns which existed in post-16 education at the start of office, such as the division between the academic and vocational route, had persisted and the Labour government was compelled to call for a major and wide ranging review of education post-16 provision (Higham, 2003).

After six years in office, the Labour government, under the direction of Sir Mike Tomlinson, commissioned a review of the 14-19 curriculum and qualifications provision. According to Jephcote and Abbot (2005) it presented Tomlinson with an 'almost impossible task'. There were two major challenges faced by Tomlinson and his colleagues. The first task was to try and reconcile the often competing needs of different groups spread across schools, further and higher education, employers and government. The second challenge was the persistent theme of the division over differences in status and the acquisition and assessment of academic and vocational knowledge (Jephcote and Abbott, 2005). Tomlinson's major proposal in response to these concerns was the replacement of the existing system of 14-19 qualifications, including GCSEs and A Levels, with a framework of diplomas that could be taken at different levels. The proposals were welcomed by a broad scope of professionals across the educational spectrum including the LSC, the Secondary Heads Association, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). However, in a move that was met with wide spread criticism,

which was also reflected in the press at the time (Garner, 2005), the Government did not take the decision to unify all qualifications under one diploma.

On the 23rd February 2005, after the completion of the Tomlinson Review, the DfES published the 14-19 Education and Skills White Paper (DfES, 2005a). The White Paper set out proposals that aimed to build on the strengths of the existing education system. These proposals included, improving attainment in English and Mathematics as part of the new general (GCSE) Diplomas and specialised Diplomas. The newly proposed specialised Diploma in fourteen broad sectors aimed to improve vocational education and replace the 3 500 separate vocational qualifications which were in existence at that time (DfES, 2005a). For those young people in danger of disengaging from education, a new programme for 14-16 years olds was introduced based on Entry to Employment (E2E). For those participants and observers of education concerned about maintaining the 'gold standard' of the A level qualification, the proposal was to develop more optional questions at A level and an extended project, alongside offering higher education modules.

Accompanying changes in education legislation have been a raft of wider policy initiatives brought in by the Labour government of the time, to support, in part, the transition of young people. The first of these was Every Child Matters (ECM) (DfES, 2003) which advocated a new approach to the well-being of children and young people from birth to nineteen. Along with the appointment of the first Children's Commissioner for England, the ECM agenda proposed a series of measures many of which focused on bridging the gap between education and social services through, for example, the designation of Directors of Children's Services. In contrast to some other government initiatives, ECM, was warmly welcomed by professionals working with young people in a variety of contexts and services with the recognition of the importance of placing the child at the centre of everyone's attention (Jewell, 2006). As part of the ECM agenda and the subsequent publication of the Government's Green Paper: Youth Matters (DfES, 2005b) and Youth Matters: Next Steps (DfES, 2006b) aimed to provide better information, advice and guidance to young people. One way to achieve this was by making services more integrated such as bringing Connexions under LA provision and more responsive to what young people and their parents wanted through, for example, the provision of the opportunities fund to each LA to spend on local projects.

1.3.2. Policy responses and young people with SEN

1.3.2.1. *Transition policy and young people with SEN*

Dee (2006) maintained the importance of recognising that the transition experience of young people with disabilities and learning difficulties is both similar to and different from that of all young people. One of the fundamental differences was the public and bureaucratic process that accompanied the decisions young people with SEN made during the transition to adulthood. More formal procedures to support transition have been introduced over the past twenty years. The earliest of these was the 1981 Education Act, which recognised for the first time the term 'Special Educational Needs'. In order to provide more practical advice for LAs to carry out their duties, the first Code of Practice (DFE, 1994) came into effect from 1994. This code explicitly required that the annual reviews (yearly reviews of provision and progress) for those young people with a statement of SEN, should also focus on transition planning as the young person neared the end of statutory schooling. This annual review would include the young person, parents and carers and all relevant professionals, drawing up a plan for the young person's next steps and ensuring that appropriate support and provision was in place. However, these transition planning procedures did not always operate as expected and there were three aspects of particular concern. The first was attendance at the annual review, with one in five parents, and almost one in six pupils not attending reviews (Polat et al., 2001, Dewson et al., 2004). Secondly, differences have been recorded in how schools reported on the way the transition planning process took place with pupil and parent accounts of the process describing a lack of information provided by schools and agencies (Bowers and Wilkinson, 1998, Polat et al., 2001). Finally, just one-fifth of young people reported the attendance of an independent adviser such as a Careers or Connexions Adviser at the annual review meeting (Dewson et al., 2004). In 2007, to address these tensions and weaknesses in the support offered to young people with SEN and disabilities as they made the transition into adulthood, the Transition Support Programme (TSP) was introduced as part of the Aiming High for Disabled Children (AHDC) review (DCSF, 2007b). Guidelines for transition for all agencies were published as well as funding provided to LAs for initiatives to support young people in their transition to adulthood. The National Transition Support Team is due to publish their first major review of the programme in April 2011.

1.3.2.2. *Inclusion policy and the education of young people with SEN*

In 1997, the Labour government renewed the debate on inclusive education. Previous debates on inclusion can be traced as far back as 1928 when the Wood Committee raised concerns about the integration of ordinary and special education (Lindsay, 2003). This renewed awareness of inclusion was partly a consequence of the publication of the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) in 1994 which promoted the 'rights' basis for inclusion. A commitment to inclusive education was further developed in the UK through such legislation as the Special Education Needs and Disability Act 2001, Special Education Needs Code of Practice 2001 and Raising Barriers to Achievement 2004 (DfES, 2001, DfEE, 2001, DfES, 2004b). One of the fundamental principles driving these pieces of legislation was that inclusion best serves the educational needs of pupils with SEN and contributes to reducing barriers and discrimination not just within education but within society in general. Raising Barriers to Achievement 2004 identified one in six school age children as having SEN (DfES, 2004b). The reform endorsed the principle that most children with SEN should be educated in mainstream schools. Legislation has been further supported with initiatives such as the Children's Plan 2007 which, for example, required schools to demonstrate higher expectations of pupils with SEN (DCSF, 2007a). A further initiative included The Inclusion Development Programme (IDP) 2008, a continuing professional development programme for teachers to support pupils with a range of SEN (Strategies, 2008).

More than ten years on from the beginning of a proliferation of inclusion policies, related research has yet to establish with certainty the benefits for children and young people with SEN of the various initiatives (Roulstone and Prideaux, 2008, Lloyd, 2008, Lindsay, 2007). The concept and our understanding of inclusion continues to evolve, particularly within the academic community (Graham and Slee, 2008). However, attempts to take the debate forward appear somewhat thwarted by policy (Wedell, 2008) and current schooling structures, not least and pertinent to this study, what has been commented on as the sterile debate between the respective merits of special and mainstream education (Slee, 2008). Despite the legislative changes, the number of children in special education since 2000 (1.2%) has seen little change (Norwich, 2008). Children with SLI are educated in a range of settings including mainstream with support, language units in mainstream and special schools. Similar tensions and limitations are apparent in the transition process after schooling, with ideological and

moral perspectives, especially with respect to independent living and employment taking precedent over the genuine needs of some young people with a disability (Burton and Kagan, 2006, Clegg et al., 2008).

1.4. Transition outcomes for young people post-16

Table 1.1 shows an overview of transition outcomes for all sixteen years olds in the UK in 2006 supporting the growing trend for young people to remain in education post-sixteen. As might be predicted, these outcomes change when studied over a wider age group between sixteen and nineteen. In 2006, the UK government reported that 44% of young people had entered full time employment, with over half (53%) working in the distribution, hotel and restaurant sectors (DCSF, 2007c). The same report recorded ten per cent of the same age group not in education, employment or training for the equivalent age group. Finally, studies of outcomes with respect to positive leisure activities are fewer in number but in 2005, just over 70% of sixteen to nineteen year olds took part in one leisure activity per week (DCSF, 2007c). The limited evidence available for young people with SEN and/or a disability does not suggest an altogether positive set of circumstances. As Coles points out:

Youth has been restructured in the last quarter of a century, it is the vulnerable who have suffered the most in coping with the transitions associated with these changes. (Coles, 1995, p. 25)

Table 1.1 Transition outcomes for 16 year olds in the UK in 2006

Outcomes	Percentage
5 GCSEs (Grade A*-C	59
Full time education	78
Full time employment	4
NEET	6.4

Source: Youth Transitions Research Overview DCSF (2007)

Even in 2007, young people with SEN were still identified as vulnerable:

In looking across the outcomes for young people, it is apparent that in the main, many young people are doing well... However, some young people are doing less well and the same groups come up again and again....those with disabilities.... (DCSF, 2007, p. 27)

However, these broad statistics mask a more complex picture with respect to the transition context today and four common themes can be identified in the literature as part of the wider transition experience. These themes are:

- i. The extension in time of the transition period
- ii. The multitude of different transition routes open to young people
- iii. The blurring of boundaries between youth and adulthood
- iv. The increasing evidence of the polarisation of some young people within the transition process

The evidence referred to in this section has been collated from a range of studies over the past twenty years. This field of research has benefited greatly from the different

research methods adopted, including data from large longitudinal studies namely the 1970 British Cohort Study (BCS70), the Youth Cohort Study (YCS) and internationally from OECD reports. These data have been complemented with more in-depth theoretically led and qualitatively analysed projects which additionally aimed to give a voice to young people in the research process (Ball et al., 2000, Henderson et al., 2007, Furlong and Cartmel, 2007). It is testament to the strengths of the studies that despite the diversity of research approaches to the field, common themes are evident and each are addressed in turn.

1.4.1. An extended road to adulthood

Arnett (2004), in his description below, succinctly summed up one of the most striking features of transition over the past twenty to thirty years recognised by many authors in the field (Evans and Furlong, 1997, Roberts et al., 1994, Shildrick and MacDonald, 2007, Webster et al., 2004).

For today's young people, the road to adulthood is a long one. (Arnett, 2004, p. 3)

In 1990 the transition from school to work took on average five and a half years, by 1996 the time was seven and a half years (OECD, 2000). Six years on again, there was evidence that this time had increased further and it was contended by some that adulthood was not reached by most young people much before thirty years of age (Arnett, 2004). The foremost explanation for this extension in the time of the transition phase was the increased participation of young people in post-16 education. Changes in the global economy witnessed the demise of the traditional manufacturing work force as new technologies demanded a more highly trained workforce (Bynner, 2001, Brannen and Nilsen, 2002, Hutton, 1996). In 1951, 64% of the workforce was manually based, but forty years later the number in manual work had dropped to 38% of the population. This period also saw a corresponding decline in the numbers of men in the work force from 64% to 57% respectively.

Table 1.2 shows the effect of such changes on transition by comparing the staying on rates into full time education at sixteen and eighteen of young people from the BCS70 with the same age group in 2000. By 2000, numbers remaining in education at sixteen

and eighteen had increased by 26% and eighteen per cent respectively (DfES, 2000, DfES, 2005a, Bynner, 2005, Bynner and Parsons, 1997). By 2005, 89% of sixteen year olds stayed on in education after sixteen. During this same period, the numbers of students moving into university after FE had also increased from six per cent during the 1970s to 43% in 2005 (Maringe and Fuller, 2006). The increased numbers remaining in education have been accompanied with an increase in the level of qualifications achieved at sixteen; with a rise of fifteen per cent in the A-C pass rate at GCSE between 1995 and 2006 (DfES, 2007).

Table 1.2 Post-16 education participation rates in the UK (%)

Age	1958	BCS70	2000
Post-16	42	55	69
Post-18	16	28	42

As previously stated, the increase in numbers remaining in full time education post-16, also extended into university with 43% of young people moving on to university after FE in 2005 compared to six per cent in the seventies (Maringe and Fuller, 2006). This escalation in participation rates in post compulsory education corresponded with a steady reduction in the number of young people moving directly into the labour market. In 1958 the majority of young people left school and entered employment with few opportunities for continued formal training (Bynner and Parsons, 1997). However, by 2000, just eight per cent of sixteen year olds left school for employment and sixteen per cent to some form of work/government training scheme (DfES, 2000).

1.4.2. A complex road to adulthood

The lengthening in time of the transition phase over the past three decades has in part, been due to the increasing complexity of post-16 transition resulting from the myriad of courses and options available, in theory, to all young people (EGRIS, 2001, Merino, 2007, Raffe, 2003). For previous generations, the traditional route for those who went on to university was via a two year A Level course, but today young people can take a variety of routes such as access and vocational courses to get to university, that may take up to three and four years to complete. For some young people there has been a postponement of undertaking a career in the pursuit of travel or a gap year, which may have been supplemented by temporary employment. It is not uncommon for a young person to retrain very early on in their post-16 educational career and take a different course; a phenomenon described by the OECD as 'double dipping' (OECD, 2000). An important implication of this increasing complexity is that the notion of a linear transition, indicating a straightforward and predictable routes from full time education to full time work has now been challenged, not just in the UK but also internationally (OECD, 2000, EGRIS, 2001, du Bois-Reymond and Stauber, 2005, te Riele, 2004, Evans and Furlong, 1997).

1.4.3. Blurring of boundaries between youth and adulthood

As the length of the transition phase has extended and routes have become more complex, it has become increasingly difficult to identify obvious boundaries between youth and adulthood (Bagnall, 2005, Brannen and Nilsen, 2002, Bynner, 2005, EGRIS, 2001, France, 2007). In many respects, this blurring of boundaries between youth and adulthood has taken place at both ends of the 'youth' phase. At one end, the emergence of the 'boomerang' generation, to denote young people who may initially leave home but return to live with parents well into their twenties and even their thirties and the subsequent postponement of marriage and parenthood, signal the increasing difficulty young people have in achieving a full adult identity (Bagnall, 2005). At the same time, a blurring of the youth stage has also been documented downwards into childhood with the combination of evidence of earlier biological and sexual experimentation (Bynner, 2005). Nilsen et al. (2002) suggest that one consequence of this lack of delineation between the phases is that 'young adult' is a term that is defined by lifestyle rather than age.

This notion of lifestyle rather than age is also highlighted by the European Group for Integrated Research (EGRIS, 2001), which described three ways that this uncertainty with respect to identity has been experienced by young people. The first is divided lives where young people experience simultaneous aspects of youth and adult life. The second experience is termed pending lives; describing those young people who do not see themselves as youth or adult and finally swinging lives; meaning those young people consciously alternating between traditional youth and adult biographical phases.

1.4.4. Polarisation of young people within the transition process

Increasing inequalities and polarisation in the distribution of wealth in the UK is well documented (Hutton and Giddens, 2000, Oppenheim, 2007, Palmer et al., 2007, Hutton, 1996). This polarisation is evident in a labour market characterised by a core of prosperity but with temporary, part-time and contract work experienced by the less qualified and lower paid. Recent statistics from the UK reveal that the gap in overall earnings inequalities is at its greatest than any time in the last forty years and that in the last fifteen years there has been an increase in the number of households living below the poverty line (Palmer et al., 2007). Ball et al. (2000) commented further on evidence of polarisation demonstrating the high incidence of child poverty in inner city areas. This picture is supported by recent research which sites London as having the highest rate of regional poverty in the UK with 39% of children living in poverty (Oppenheim, 2007).

The notion of shifting but persistent social inequalities is also evident within the context of further and higher education. There is universal recognition of the widening choice and participation at these levels of education. However, a closer examination of these participation rates revealed that in 1981, twenty per cent of children from the highest quartile of family income had completed a university degree compared to six per cent from the lowest quartile. By 2000 the completion rates of children from the highest income quartile had more than doubled to 46% but for those in the lowest quartile it had risen to just nine per cent (Blanden and Machin, 2007). Remaining within education, Furlong and Cartmel (2007) claimed that divisions in society were also reflected in the divide between academic and vocational courses, with vocational courses being completed by proportionally larger numbers of young people

from poorer backgrounds. From the structuralist perspective such factors would considerably influence the opportunities for successful transition experienced by some young people.

Furthermore, these inequalities were being replicated within the transition experience evident in national (Bynner, 2005) and smaller scale studies (Shildrick and MacDonald, 2007, Webster et al., 2004). Data from the British Cohort Studies comparing transitions at age thirty across three of the longitudinal studies starting in 1946, 1958 and 1970, demonstrated increasing evidence of social inequality for some groups despite the greater opportunities and choice within, for example, the education system (Bynner, 2005). As a consequence of globalisation, deindustrialisation and subsequent changes in the labour market those young people in transition and looking for work after the 1980s with no or few qualifications have not had the same opportunity to take up unskilled employment which was in plentiful supply for previous generations. Thus Bynner commented of this period that '...the most dominant feature was growing polarisation between...the advantaged and the disadvantaged...' (Bynner, 2005, p. 377).

Similarly, findings from smaller qualitative longitudinal research, shows young people from less advantaged backgrounds experiencing greater polarisation during the transition years. Shildrick and MacDonald's (2007) study found that since leaving school, their post-16 transition had been characterised by low quality education or training which led to insecure employment patterns in low paid positions. Webster et al. (2004) in their in-depth interviews with a smaller cohort ($N = 34$) from the same Teeside study, also reported the continued economic polarisation of the participants in their mid to late twenties (Webster et al., 2004). However, many of the young people felt that their lives had changed since earlier interviews (aged 15-25) as many had set up home and had families. This was facilitated by the availability of social housing and welfare benefits as opposed to steady employment. Thus, the Webster et al. (2004) study highlighted not just continued polarisation but two further issues of concern. The first issue is the challenge of how to define a successful transition in the 21st century and to what extent a young person's employment and economic status dominates this definition. The second concern is the potential for difference in how participants and researchers might interpret transition outcomes and experiences.

1.4.5. Post-16 outcomes for young people with SEN

Over the past ten years more systematic data regarding transition outcomes for young people with SEN or a disability have been collated. According the YCS, in 2006 in England and Wales, just 9.2% of sixteen year olds with SEN gained five A*- C GCSE passes compared to a national average of 59%. A comparison of activities of eighteen year olds with and without a disability in the same year is shown in Table 1.3 and highlights a similar gulf in achievement. One area of particular concern, accepting that the characteristic of disability is a broad term, was the high number young people not in education or training.

Table 1.3 Comparison of activities for 18 year olds in the UK (%)

Activities	All 18 year olds (YCS)	18 year olds with a disability (YCS)	18 year olds with SEN (Dewson et al., 2004)
Full time education	47	42	46
Higher education	30	23	-
Government supported training	8	10	6
Employment (Full time)	23	12	28
NEET	13	30	14

Source: Youth Cohort Study DfES (2006) and Dewson et al. (2004)

The beginning of the millennium also saw the start of a large scale longitudinal study of young people with SEN by researchers based at Manchester University. As with data

from the YCS, the young people in this study were not achieving the same level of success with respect to academic attainment and employment as the rest of their peers (Aston et al., 2005, Dewson et al., 2004, Polat et al., 2001). Nevertheless, as Table 1.3 shows the outcomes at eighteen for those young people involved in the Manchester study were more positive with fewer unemployed young people. However, by the occasion of the third time point for interviews in 2003/4, 27% of the participants, then aged nineteen to twenty, were unemployed or not in education, although more positively half were in employment and 24 % in education (Aston et al., 2005).

1.5. Conclusion

Evidence from a variety of studies reveals major changes in the transition experience of young people over the past thirty years. Today, a young adult in their early twenties will typically have stayed in post-16 education for longer, be better qualified and have been exposed to a greater number of choices than previous generations. As a result, national data suggests that many young people are making a successful transition to adulthood with respect to their educational careers (DCSF, 2007c). These promising developments are also evident in data for young people with SEN and disabilities, particularly with academic outcomes at sixteen. Dewson and his colleagues (2004) reported that 89% of the individuals in their study were hopeful about the future. Nevertheless, findings from small and large scale studies show that there are groups of young people with and without SEN whose experience of transition is less encouraging. Their transition is characterised by low qualifications, few or no opportunities for secure employment and social isolation leading to polarisation from the mainstream experience. From a theoretical context, there remains much debate and ambiguity about the causes of these variations in outcomes and how much we look to the individual or society for an explanation for these differences.

Chapter 2 Specific Language Impairment

2.1. Introduction

As previously highlighted concern has been raised as to the potential vulnerability of young people with a disability with respect to their transition outcomes (Coles, 1995, DCSF, 2007c). In response to this disquiet, recent small and large scale studies have been conducted, that have focused specifically on the transition of young people with SEN and/or disability. However, the populations of these studies, by definition have been diverse and transition data in sufficient depth regarding specific learning difficulties and disabilities is only just emerging (Kaehne and Beyer, 2009). Discrete studies, focusing on specific impairments are necessary in order to assess which particular groups might be more at risk and the exact nature of that risk. The experience of transition is not the same for all young people with SEN. This thesis addressed this limitation as it focused on a group of young people who had experienced long standing and significant language difficulties up to and including secondary education and who from here will be described as having a history of SLI. In order to set in context and gain a greater understanding of their transition experiences and outcomes, this chapter includes a brief description of the language system, the impact and prevalence of SLI and how approaches to criteria for and identification of SLI have developed over the past thirty years.

2.2. The development of the language system

Despite the relative ease with which most children appear to acquire their language, it has still been described as a 'staggering feat' (Saxton, 2010, p. 3). One explanation of the language system has been to describe language acquisition in terms of structure and use, both of which are very closely related (Crystal, 1987). Structurally, language can be described as developing in three areas including the phonological level, the acquisition of vocabulary, the morphological level and the development of syntactical understanding, with these last two areas forming the basis of grammatical understanding of language (Dockrell and Messer, 1999). An important feature of the structural acquisition of language is that development in all these aspects of language

take places concurrently and are interdependent (Karmiloff and Karmiloff-Smith, 2002, Saxton, 2010). Phonological development relates to the sounds of speech, morphology includes understanding the parts of words associated with, for example, grammatical understanding and syntactical language relates to an understanding of grammatical rules at sentence level. Crystal (1987, p. 49) described language as 'primarily an interactive phenomenon' which demonstrates the importance of the second element of language and the development of the use of language and in particular the social use of language or which has also been described as the 'pragmatics of dialogue' (Karmiloff & Karmiloff-Smith, 2010, p. 149). This involves the acquisition of a range of skills including turn-taking, maintaining relevance to the subject matter being discussed and an understanding the intentions of a sentence, for example, whether or not it requires a response. The complexity of the language development system means that any difficulty experienced in the development of one or more aspects can have considerable implications for the functioning of a child and adolescent in many aspects of their life.

2.3. Impact of SLI on functioning

A child or adolescent with SLI can experience a range of difficulties with either or both the understanding of spoken and written language and with expressing spoken or written language; which is usually described as receptive and expressive language respectively. Evidence available concerning the trajectory of SLI and its impact on different aspects of functioning reveals a disorder that can have severe repercussions into childhood, adolescence and adulthood. SLI in childhood can affect the development of a range of literacy skills (Botting et al., 1998, Catts et al., 2002, Mackie and Dockrell, 2004, Stothard et al., 1998), academic attainment (Aram et al., 1984, Snowling et al., 2001, Conti-Ramsden et al., 2001) and social and emotional functioning (Baker and Cantwell, 1987, Beitchman et al., 1996, Cantwell et al., 1989, Lindsay and Dockrell, 2000, Dockrell et al., 2007). For those children whose language difficulties persist into adolescence, studies have shown that for language, literacy and academic attainment, these young people continue to fall behind in respect to their peers who do not experience language difficulties (Aram et al., 1984, Stothard et al., 1998). Research also indicates that some adolescents with SLI may be more susceptible to difficulties with psychosocial functioning (Conti-Ramsden and Botting, 2008, Snowling et al., 2006, Wadman et al., 2008). The potential to affect so many

aspects of functioning highlights the importance of research in the field, particularly when this knowledge and understanding is combined with the evidence concerning the extent of prevalence of SLI amongst the population.

2.4. Prevalence of SLI

Establishing accurate prevalence of language disorders in general and in particular with SLI over the past four decades has been a complex task. Although there have been some large scale epidemiological studies (Tomblin et al., 1997), comparing the results has been complicated by the use of varying criteria for language impairment , employment of different assessment methods and sampling strategies. Some studies, for example, include samples that screen a whole population and others that screen a sample of children that has already been referred for speech and language therapy. Studies which attempted to determine prevalence in particular areas of language impairment such as SLI, are further limited in number. Apart from the rate of prevalence there is also dispute in the literature as to prevalence amongst different age groups and whether SLI declines as children get older (Goodyear, 2000). Despite these concerns there is an emerging body of evidence with similarities in findings, which although not conclusive, are sufficient to make provisional judgements.

One of the earliest reviews of the prevalence literature was conducted by MacKeith and Rutter in the early seventies (MacKeith and Rutter, 1972). This study identified general language difficulties in five to six per cent of children just before entering school. Even though these figures were based on non-standardised tests of language and predominantly expressive language, they were not that dissimilar to the findings in subsequent studies. The most current systematic review of the literature with regard to prevalence of SLI identified that 5.9 per cent of children were reported for a delay in speech or language (Law et al., 2000a). Although this study also highlighted that very little evidence had been published as to whether the prevalence of SLI was increasing, there seemed to be a general consensus from the studies of a rate of somewhere between five and seven per cent at school entry age. When compared with the findings from the early seventies, the rate appears to have remained quite static. However, a recent study by Meschi and Vignoles (*in press*) analysed Government data in the English education system on children who had been identified as having Speech,

Language and Communication Needs (SCLN) within the wider context of all children identified with SEN, to find that at age seven, three per cent of this cohort were identified as having some form of SCLN (Meschi and Vignoles, in *press*).

Nevertheless, figures of between five and seven per cent are supported by the most robust epidemiological study of prevalence for SLI to date (Tomblin et al., 1997). Tomblin and his colleagues found an estimated prevalence rate of 7.4 per cent from a stratified sample of 7,218 children in kindergarten from a spread of rural, urban and suburban areas from the upper Midwest of the United States (US). One important finding from their study, which was different from previous research, was the comparatively high prevalence rate for girls at six per cent. (They estimated the rate amongst boys at eight per cent.) SLI has traditionally been seen as an impairment that predominantly affects boys and this is reflected in the gender differences of the samples from small scale and longitudinal studies (Botting et al., 1998, Snowling et al., 2006, Dockrell et al., 2007). However, it will take further large scale epidemiological studies to determine if Tomblin et al.'s (1997) findings with respect to gender were accurate.

The greater number of boys identified with SLI reflects a similar picture across all SEN categories shown by studies in the UK and the US (Daniels et al., 1999). Daniels and his colleagues found that boys also received more hours of support in education and that this was likely to be assistance of a more specialist and expensive nature. The reasons for these gender differences as yet remain tentative, but with respect to SLI it may well be that the methods of assessment and/or the processes behind referrals to speech and language therapy work in some way act to prevent girls being identified. Lastly, in 2008, the Bercow Review, a comprehensive review of services in the UK for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs, reported that in 2007 nearly 40,000 five year old children in England entered school with significant difficulties with speech and/or language, this was almost seven per cent of all five-year-olds (Bercow, 2008).

Finally, the dynamic nature of SLI and how it can resolve or even change the impact on functioning for an individual over time complicates data relating to prevalence. Research addressing this issue is limited and inconsistent. In 2000, Goodyer's review of studies to date, reported a decline in prevalence between children aged two to five years and stated that:

Overall, the epidemiological findings, whilst not entirely consistent, suggest a moderate declining rate of SLI by late childhood/early adolescence. (Goodyear, 2000, p. 229)

Although recognising a sharp drop in language delays after two years of age, Law and his colleagues in their 2000 review found little evidence to suggest any decline in rate in children all the way up to sixteen years old. Much of this uncertainty might well be explained to some extent in differing criteria for identification. However, Goodyer (2000) points to the possibility of two distinct groups of children with early onset SLI. The first is a group which as a result of intervention see their difficulties resolve. The second is a larger group with a more heterogeneous profile where the difficulties remain more persistent. It is possible to add a third group of children whose difficulty is predominantly linked with social communication and pragmatic language and these difficulties only become more obvious as the child grows into adolescence and as more socially complex environments are encountered. All these factors combined with the high rate of co-occurrence with other learning difficulties (Section 2.5.), make judgements relating to prevalence somewhat provisional at the current time.

2.5. SLI and co-occurring difficulties

Issues relating to SLI and high rates of co-occurrence contribute to the complexities of establishing prevalence. Bishop (2004) noted that:

Co-morbidity between development disorders is so widespread that the child with a truly specific disorder is the exception rather than the rule. (Bishop, 2004, p. 316)

The difficulties SLI are most commonly associated with are Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (McGrath et al., 2008, Campbell and Skarakis-Doyle, 2007), Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) (Hill, 2001), Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) (Conti-Ramsden et al., 2006b, Loucas et al., 2008) and dyslexia (Bishop and Snowling, 2004, Catts et al., 2005, Fraser et al., 2010). A robust account of the rate of co-occurrence has yet to be established, with DCD for example, Hill (2001) found in studies that forty to ninety per cent of children with SLI also met the criteria for DCD. One consequence of such intricate relationships noted by Bishop

(2004) was that the identification of the primary difficulty was often the result of the specialist who made the assessment. The co-occurrence of SLI with other difficulties has also contributed to the problematic nature of identifying children and young people with SLI examined in the next section.

2.6. Identification of SLI

From some of the earliest studies in the 1980s, approaches to the identification of SLI operated very much within a diagnostic model with a focus on categorising what was 'wrong' with a child and what they couldn't do. This model continued for almost thirty years, but recent developments in identification, partly in response to calls for change within the SLI community (Dockrell and Lindsay, 2000) and as part of a wider social change in attitudes towards disability, (Oliver, 1990), have adopted a focus on the needs and functioning of a child within everyday contexts (Dempsey and Skarakis-Doyle, 2010). This section examines these developments in more detail.

2.6.1. Identification of SLI: Diagnostic approaches

1981 saw the publication of criteria for SLI, by Rachel E Stark and Paula Tallal, the core of which remains familiar and still in use today. Plante (1998) commented:

Since it first appeared, the Stark and Tallal (1981) criteria for the selection of children with specific language impairment (SLI) has had a profound influence on research with this population. (Plante, 1998, p. 951)

The criteria included:

- i. A performance Intelligence Quotient (IQ) of at least 85
- ii. A receptive language age (LA) score of at least six months below mental age (MA) or chronological age (CA)
- iii. A combined LA score of at least twelve months below the lower of MA or CA
- iv. An expressive LA score that is at least twelve months below the lower of MA or CA.

These criteria are based on a diagnostic model towards identification, with a 'diagnosis' of SLI formed on a discrepancy in standardised test scores with aged matched children. The identification also includes exclusionary criteria namely any hearing, cognitive or neurological deficits and emotional and behaviour difficulties.

The 1980s also produced studies that used clinical judgements as opposed to standardised tests from which to base identification (Rapin and Allen, 1983, Rapin, 1996). Rapin and Allen (1983) devised three subtypes of developmental language disorders: mixed receptive/expressive, expressive and thirdly, higher order processing difficulties which included difficulties with social communication. Almost a decade later Conti-Ramsden et al. (1999) combined clinical judgement and test scores in a study of 242 seven-year-old children with language impairments. Their results and subsequent identification of different sub-groups were very similar to and reflected the sub-types described by Rapin and Allen. A further development in this decade was the formal identification of a subgroup of children with pragmatic language impairment (PLI) who could be differentiated from children with difficulties associated with the structure of language and those with autistic disorders (Bishop, 1998). However, more recent findings would now suggest that children who would have previously been identified in this particular group maybe experiencing difficulties more closely associated with ASD (Conti-Ramsden et al., 2006a, Bishop and Frazier Norbury, 2002). Finally, over the past decade a review of the literature and further empirical evidence has provided broad support for a reduction in the number in the number and nature of sub-groups (Bishop, 2004, Weerdenburg et al., 2006).

Two international systems for the classification of a range of disorders: the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM IV) and the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10) although do not reference SLI by name, include criteria for language disorders. A definition of SLI much quoted in research studies and used in Chapter 1 of this study by Lawrence B Leonard, has much in common with the DMS IV and the ICD-10 which includes a classification of Developmental Disorder of Speech and Language unspecified as a:

...significant impairment in the development of speech or language that cannot be accounted for by mental retardation or by neurological, sensory or physical impairments that directly affect speech or language. (WHO, 1993, p. 175)

2.6.2. Identification of SLI: Diagnostic dilemmas

Three issues in particular that contribute to the complex context within which a diagnostic approach operates are firstly the use of standardised assessments in identification, secondly the heterogeneity of SLI and finally debates that are ongoing concerning the etiology of SLI. This next section addresses each area in turn.

2.6.2.1. *SLI and the use of standardised assessments*

The variation in criteria to identify SLI described in the previous section have in part, contributed to establishing a context which has and continues to be problematic for professionals in the field when attempting to identify children and adolescents with SLI. As previously outlined, SLI is typically described as operating within an exclusionary and discrepancy model of identification. The exclusion element rests on ensuring that a child's language difficulties do not, for example, relate to any physical or cognitive deficit. Discrepancy is linked to the specific differences in language functioning. Both models influence which children are identified with SLI, but the use of standardised assessments for both elements are problematic.

As part of the exclusionary criteria, the DSM IV and ICD-10 exclude any individual with an IQ of 70 or above. This is complicated for three reasons. Firstly, any standardised assessment includes the possibility of a standard deviation error of five points each way (Leonard, 1998) which can result in over and under identification of SLI. Secondly, it has become common within SLI studies that a nonverbal IQ of 85 or above is a fundamental criterion which is a significant increase on the 70 defined by the DSM IV and the ICD-10. Furthermore, many SLI studies have often used 85 on the non-verbal task only, which results in the possible exclusion of children who would meet the DSM IV criteria. Lastly, which particular assessments to use to identify SLI, has proved contentious. IQ in SLI is typically assessed with a non-verbal IQ test which allows an individual to demonstrate their cognitive ability unhindered by factors associated with language. Some studies have shown, however, that it is possible for the same child to achieve different results on different non-verbal assessments and thus identification of SLI can rest on the assessment rather than an accurate investigation and identification of the child's difficulties (Plante, 1998, Leonard, 1998).

Concerns surrounding the use of scores from assessment tasks to meet the exclusion criteria, extend to the discrepancy criteria used to identify SLI. Once the exclusionary criteria have been met, a child is only identified with SLI if there is a significant difference in their language function to the 'norm', namely the language development of children without language difficulties. This raises two questions which ultimately affect identification. The first concern is that there is no universally agreed definition for 'significant' difference. Secondly and perhaps more importantly, there currently exists a lack of formal agreement as to what is the norm for language development in typically developing children (Dockrell and Messer, 1999). Hence, researchers and clinicians are left to devise or decide their own specific criteria in relation to these two areas which again contribute to a context of inconsistent identification.

One consequence of the aforementioned ambiguities surrounding identification is that clinicians as opposed to researchers, have often identified more children with SLI than if stringent exclusion and inclusion discrepancy criteria are applied (Stark and Tallal, 1981, Dockrell and Messer, 1999). This does not necessarily have to be seen as a weakness; as Bishop (2004) maintained that classification should reflect the context and purpose for identification. In other words the criteria used by a researcher investigating etiology would and should be different to, for example, a speech therapist working in a clinic. However, such an approach does have implications from the perspective of attempting to reach more conclusive findings with regards to populations.

2.6.2.2. *The heterogeneous nature of SLI*

SLI has been widely regarded as heterogeneous in nature and subsequently means that identification using diagnostic criteria has to be approached with some caution (Weerdenburg et al., 2006, Leonard, 1998, Botting and Conti-Ramsden, 2004, Bishop, 2004, Dockrell and Messer, 1999). This heterogeneity is evident in three ways. Firstly, by the wide profile of children and young people that have been identified with SLI both in research studies and in the wider population by clinicians (Dockrell and Lindsay, 2000). Secondly, the different degree to which functioning is affected; from mild to severe and finally, the fact that the nature of the difficulty can be dynamic meaning that it can change over time (Botting and Conti-Ramsden, 2004). Longitudinal

studies, for example, have shown that for some children SLI can resolve over time and yet for another child the onset of adolescence can present challenges that bring to the fore difficulties with social language and communication that had previously not been identified (Stothard et al., 1998, Snowling et al., 2001, Dockrell et al., 2007). One important consequence of such heterogeneity in SLI relates to how parents and professionals, including for example, teachers and clinicians consider different and appropriate options for supporting the development of a child identified with SLI.

2.6.2.3. *The etiology of SLI*

The third issue that contributes to the complexity of identification of SLI concerns the conflicting and currently inconclusive knowledge and understanding of the etiology of SLI at a cognitive and biological level. From the cognitive perspective there remains debate as to the extent that SLI is a domain general (Leonard, 1998) or domain specific impairment (Leonard & Deevy, 2004). From the biological perspective, those researchers that have focussed on investigations in this area are in the phase of presenting very tentative findings at present. Both these concerns are examined in this section.

At a cognitive level, research has demonstrated that SLI can have an impact on a number of functions including phonology, morphology, syntax, pragmatic language, auditory processing, working memory and visio-spacial awareness. As yet, debate still surrounds whether these difficulties are caused by a general delay in cognitive functioning; commonly known as a domain general impairment or as a consequence of distinct differences in functions relating to language development, which has been termed as a domain specific impairment (Dockrell and Messer, 1999).

The domain general account or as Leonard (1998) described; the Generalised Slowing Hypotheses (GSH) explains the difficulties experienced by an individual with SLI as a consequence of limitations in their information processing capacities. Specific examples of this include difficulties with maintaining attention, slower speed of processing information and working memory (Windsor, 2002). Studies which support a domain general explanation are few, none-the-less, in 2004, Gillam and Hoffman in their

detailed review of studies investigating the relationship between cognition and language learning in children concluded:

It is likely that the language learning abilities of most children with language impairments are simultaneously constrained by multiple factors that affect information processing. Therefore, we question just how specific language impairments might be. (Gillam & Hoffman, 2004, p. 150)

They found that difficulties with attention, perception of sounds, phonological representativeness, central executive function and general processing capacity feature most commonly in the literature in relation to what impacts on an individual's information processing capacity.

Evidence to support a domain specific explanation of SLI is one that has accumulated over the past twenty years (Paradis et al., 2006, Leonard and Deevy, 2004). Within this account distinct cognitive processes linked to the development of various language skills are impaired. These language deficits include; phonology and the perception of sounds (Bortolini and Leonard, 2000, Aguilar-Mediavilla et al., 2007), morphology with an emphasis on grammatical difficulties (Rice and Wexler, 1996), syntax including sentence construction (Mackie and Dockrell, 2004, Ebbels et al., 2007), semantic understanding (Froud and van-der-Lely, 2008, Alt and Plante, 2006) and difficulties with the social use of language which is associated with pragmatic difficulties (van Balkom and Verhoeven, 2004, Marton et al., 2005). To end, an emerging explanation of SLI at the cognitive level suggests a more subtle relationship. Increasingly researchers have proposed the possibility that deficits in both domains may account for the difficulties experienced by some individuals (Paradis et al., 2006) and even the notion of a domain specific deficit operating within a domain general explanation (Leonard, 1998).

It is at the biological level that investigations concerning the etiology of SLI remain in the early stages of research. Anecdotal reports from clinicians, alongside research studies, have reported a strong heritable link between family members and SLI (Bishop and Hayiou-Thomas, 2008, Bishop, 1992, Fisher, 2005, Tomblin and Buckwalter, 1998). Establishing the exact nature of a genetic explanation has been more problematic. Although some developmental language disorders, such as Williams Syndrome, can be attributed to a single gene disorder, others such as SLI and autism

present a more complex challenge. Despite some initial anticipation that the findings from the KE family study (Lai et al., 2001) might indicate that one possible gene, the *FOXP2* gene resulted in SLI, subsequent studies have illustrated that this finding was just the beginning of an understanding of the complex relationship between genetics and SLI. A multiple gene explanation, linked with interactions with the environment has received wider support (Bishop, 2002, Whitehouse et al., 2007).

Although firm conclusions have yet to be established, advances in neuro-imaging have helped to shed some light on the intricacy of the biological etiology of SLI especially regarding the thorny issue that despite evidence of heritability, other studies have shown that thirty to sixty per cent of children with SLI are the only members of their family to exhibit language difficulties (Leonard, 1998). Very recent studies have revealed that brain function, particularly in the temporal lobe region, is impaired in individuals with SLI (Reilly et al., 2004, Plante et al., 1991a). However, it has also been demonstrated that some children with SLI and their family members can have variations of language difficulties including; atypical brain structures but no language difficulties and language difficulties without observable differences in brain structures (Plante, 1991b). Findings which show that certain elements of a language impairment, such as speech production, are genetic in origin but other language deficits are influenced by the environment are contributing to the unravelling of the intricate links between phenotype and genotype (Hayiou-Thomas, 2008).

To summarise this section, this author has used Morton's (2004) model of representing causal relationships for cognitive impairments (Figure 2.1) to demonstrate what is currently known about SLI. Morton used three levels of description: behaviour, cognitive and biology to help explain the relationships. The model helps to present and explain what might happen at an individual level for someone with SLI within each of the three elements. This model allows for possible causal relationships between the various levels of an impairment, when robust knowledge and understanding has yet to be attained. Morton's model is particularly relevant for SLI as presently there remains much to be firmly established about the typology; how the different features of a specific language impairment are identified and the etiology or causes of the difficulty. This model therefore allows for this uncertainty between direct links. It would be accurate to describe that our knowledge and understanding of SLI becomes less secure as you move up the model from the behavioural to the biological level.

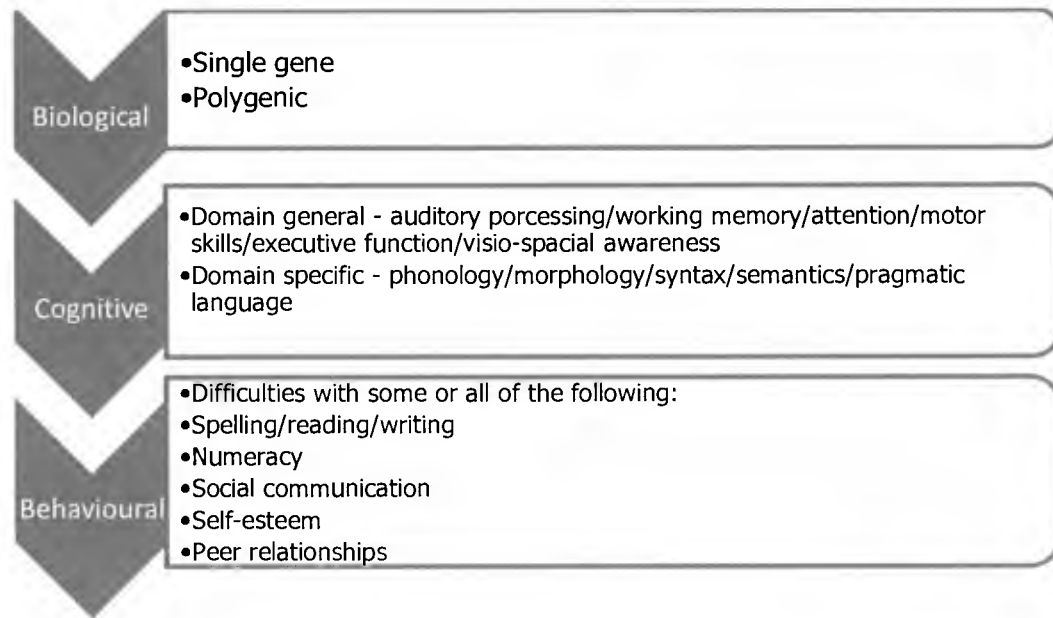


Figure 2.1 Morton's model representing casual relationships in SLI

This context of uncertainty, along with issues concerned with heterogeneity and the fact that a child identified with SLI may present with very different strengths and areas for development, helps us to understand why professionals have experienced difficulties in trying to identify and define language impairments, including SLI and this has been a common feature in the literature in the last thirty years (Donaldson, 1995, Bishop, 2004, Leonard, 1998, Bishop and Rosenbloom, 1987, Stark and Tallal, 1981). Such uncertainty has led to some questioning of SLI as a distinct impairment and it has even been described as perhaps:

.....little more than a terminological way station for groups of children until such time as finer diagnostic categories can be identified. (Leonard, 1998, p. 23)

However, although future research will continue to shed light on these complexities, there remains the crucial concern that a diagnostic and clinical approach to SLI and SEN in general does not provide sufficient information and guidance that helps parents and professionals support the development of this group of children and adolescents (Dockrell and Lindsay, 2000). A different approach to identification; one that focuses

on functional ability rather than categories and scores relating to impairment is examined in the next section.

2.6.3. Changing approaches to identifying SLI

The limitations of clinical and diagnostic approaches for practice have been increasingly documented within the SLI community (Threats, 2006, McLeod and McCormack, 2007, Dockrell and Lindsay, 2000). However, these concerns are shared within the wider context of approaches to identifying and supporting children with a range of SEN (McLaughlin et al., 2006, Norwich and Lewis, 2001, Florian et al., 2006) and also form part of an associated debate that relates to perspectives of disability within SEN (Reindal, 2009). Florian and her colleagues (2006) summarised these limitations of the diagnostic approach as failing to provide information on the functional characteristics of a child and from which to devise intervention or prevention strategies, unnecessarily labelling of children and ultimately the lack of potential for a child to benefit from the process of identification. In response to these concerns, in 2001, the World Health Organisation (WHO) published the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) and in 2007, an amended version for children and youth: the ICF-CY (WHO, 2010). Unlike previous classification systems such as the ICD, the focus of the ICF-CY was to look at the child more holistically, combining information about the nature and severity of the difficulty with that of functioning and being able to participate in activities.

When introduced, the ICF was positively received by researchers and practitioners working in the field of SLI as an opportunity to ‘...capture the realities researchers and SLPs (Speech and Language Pathologists) have observed among the children they have seen...’ that diagnostic methods were not able to capture (Dempsey and Skarakis-Doyle, 2010). An example of one of these ‘realities’ being that a group of children with similar levels of language assessment scores could differ markedly in their use and functioning of language in everyday situations. Speech and Language Therapists, as a result of the ICF would now have the necessary information about a child and their language functioning from which to provide more targeted and effective interventions. Findings are emerging as to the effectiveness of the ICF in identifying pre-school children and those in early childhood with SLI, which have documented positive

findings, not just with outcomes of speech and therapy interventions but with the enhanced and empowering contribution played by parents in the process (Thomas-Stonell et al., 2009, McCormack et al., 2010).

2.7. Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the potential impact that SLI can have for a child in different aspects of their life including, for example, performance at school and in their relationships. For some children, these difficulties can remain into adolescence and adulthood. Evidence from prevalence studies indicate that approximately seven per cent of children at school entry age in the UK, are at risk of experiencing difficulties with one or more aspects of their language. Approaches to identifying children with SLI have undergone important developments in recent years, particularly with the launch of the ICF-CY that has the potential to improve practices to support children's language development and ultimately outcomes for them. Within the field of disability studies, the strengths of the ICF have been acknowledged, along with however, certain limitations of the framework, most notably the failure to capture the 'capabilities' of an individual where capabilities is defined as '...the opportunities to live a valued life.' (Reindal, 2009, p. 159). Discussions and investigations as to what this might constitute are especially relevant for this study as they may provide valuable indicators from which to assess more informed and meaningful judgements in relation to post-16 outcomes for young people with SEN. An investigation of post-16 outcomes for young people with SLI is provided in chapter 3.

Chapter 3 Transition outcomes for young people with a history of SLI

3.1. Introduction

A review of the literature has shown that SLI can impact on functioning in many areas of life including academic attainment, self-esteem and relationships with peers. Such effects might well place the young person with SLI who is about to embark on early adulthood, at more risk of experiencing greater difficulties during transition. This Chapter provides an account of the investigations to date regarding post-16 transition outcomes for young people with a history of SLI which are limited in scope but which have begun to establish a picture of the transition experience for these young people.

One of the first studies to document outcomes beyond adolescence (Mawhood et al., 2000, Clegg et al., 2005) focused on seventeen men with a severe receptive developmental language disorder (DLD) who were part of a longitudinal study since early childhood and at the latest time of study were in their mid-thirties. This study was followed by a longitudinal study (Snowling et al., 2001) of a cohort of sixty 16 and 17 year olds with a preschool history of SLI. Additionally, the cohorts of two major UK longitudinal studies (Conti-Ramsden et al., 2009, Dockrell et al., 2007, Palikara et al., 2009) had recently completed compulsory schooling and at the time of study were in their first year of post-16 education, training or full time employment. Another, more recent, small scale study in the UK, published findings relating to nineteen young adults with SLI, with a mean age of 24.8 years (Whitehouse et al., 2009). Finally, the Ottawa longitudinal study in Canada has recently published family, education, occupation and quality of life outcomes for 244 adults (aged 25) with language impairments that have been followed up at four different time points since the age of five (Johnson et al., 2010). A summary to the background of each of the main SLI studies relevant to this thesis has been included in Appendix I.

The following sections compare the range of outcomes, including education, social and emotional, and independence from the various studies and identifies patterns that emerge from the data. However, an important consideration to take into account when making any final judgements based on these comparisons is the nature of the samples

and the cohorts selected which were very heterogeneous. One specific aspect was the influence on outcomes between those young adults termed as 'persistent'; those children whose language difficulties continued into school age and adolescence and those with 'resolved' SLI, where, usually after some form of intervention, children no longer experienced any difficulties with language (Snowling et al., 2001, Dockrell et al., 2007). A potential problem therefore, with longitudinal studies involving a difficulty such as SLI, is that it may resolve or diminish over time and this has implications for generalising findings across this group of young people.

An additional consideration is the varied sampling criteria used by the studies including randomised selection from all seven year olds attending language units across the country at one point in time (Conti-Ramsden et al., 2001). Another example from a longitudinal study was the recruitment of participants between the ages of four and nine from six special units attached to schools and six special schools throughout the UK where the participants also had to have performance IQ of at least 70, severe delays in receptive and expressive language and no identifiable aetiology such as hearing impairment (Clegg et al., 2005). A third UK longitudinal study included the random selection of 58 eight year olds from a group of 133 children from two Local Authorities (LA) (plus a further ten children who were attending residential special schools for SLI) identified by a range of professionals as having a discrepancy between their level of functioning in the area of speech and language and what would be expected given their functioning in other areas (Dockrell et al., 2007). The implication of variation in sampling and the timing of participant identification can make it very difficult to generalise findings within and between studies and remains a constant backdrop to any judgements made.

3.2. Academic outcomes

3.2.1. Examination outcomes at sixteen for young people with SLI

Although the key longitudinal studies documented thus far reported their results with regard to academic attainment in different ways, it is possible to identify some common trends. The first is the increased academic attainment in examinations achieved by the young people. In the earliest study during the early eighties (Mawhood et al., 2000, Clegg et al., 2005) just one participant achieved one nationally recognised

qualification. By the nineties this had increased with fifty per cent of those young people identified with 'persistent' SLI in the Snowling et al. (2001) study achieving a GCSE in English and Mathematics. By the next decade findings showed further improvement with thirteen per cent achieving the national average of five GCSEs at grades A* to C in the Dockrell et al. (2007) study and sixteen per cent for the young people investigated by Conti-Ramsden et al. (2009).

Although the evidence showed that young people with resolved SLI were achieving significantly higher results at GCSE than their peers with persistent SLI, those with resolved SLI were still under performing with regard to examinations when compared to young people without language difficulties (Conti-Ramsden et al., 2009, Snowling et al., 2001). This distinction between the two groups is important as it shows that although this particular group of young people may perform within the norm on standardised language assessments later on in adolescence, nevertheless the effect of language impairment at a young age continues to have some impact in the long term on academic attainment.

3.2.2. First destinations after compulsory schooling

An emerging picture of progress for young people with SLI can also be seen with their choice of destination after leaving compulsory schooling at sixteen. As with the examination results there has been a considerable increase in the numbers of young people with SLI who have stayed on in further education over the past ten years (Snowling et al., 2001, Clegg et al., 2005, Dockrell et al., 2007, Durkin et al., 2009). This pattern was also reflected in a broader longitudinal transition study of young people with SEN that included young people who experienced difficulties with communication and interaction; with 57% of this group staying on in further education (Dewson et al., 2004). Although communication and interaction difficulties can cover a very broad range of language impairments, with SLI comprising one of many, it does provide additional data for what is happening to young people with similar language difficulties after school. However, these results compare less favourably with findings from studies focusing exclusively on SLI, with staying on rates of 75% (Dockrell et al., 2007) and 91% (Durkin et al., 2009). During the eighties the figure for those who moved into further education was just 52% (Clegg et al., 2005). Table 3.1 provides a

comparison of the destinations chosen by young people after school from the main SLI follow up studies.

Table 3.1 Post-16 destinations for young people with a history of SLI

Study	FE	Training	Full time work
Clegg et al. (2005)	52%	Not reported	Not reported
Snowling et al. (2001)	Resolved: 72.6	Resolved: 18.2%	Resolved: 9.2%
	Persistent: 54.2	Persistent: 29.2%	Persistent: 8.3%
Durkin et al. (2009)	91%	Not reported	8%
Dockrell et al. (2007)	75%	7.8%	7.8%
Dewson et al. (2004)	57%	7%	18%

3.2.3. Level of qualifications post-16

Once again the studies showed that young people with SLI who continued with their education post-16, were, over the past two decades, beginning to access and achieve higher levels of qualifications. Although the majority of young people were on Level 1 qualifications (part of the National Qualifications Framework starting at Entry Level and working up to Level 8) such as the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) (Snowling et al., 2001, Dockrell et al., 2007), there was evidence of higher academic achievement with some young people studying 'A' levels (Level 3 on the National Qualifications Framework). However, the data in Table 3.2 relating to this type of qualification highlights the quite marked differences in level of qualification studied between those with resolved and those with persistent SLI. Those studies which included young people with resolved SLI in their cohorts showed more young people taking 'A' levels (Durkin et al., 2009, Snowling et al., 2001). However, a comparison of those with

persistent SLI across the studies revealed a more consistent finding of between seven and eight per cent studying at Level 3 (Snowling et al., 2001, Dockrell et al., 2007).

Table 3.2 Young people with a history of SLI studying Level 3 qualifications

Study	Level 3 Qualifications
Clegg et al. (2005)	0
Snowling et al. (2001)	Resolved: 31.8% Persistent: 8.3%
Durkin et al. (2009)	12%
Dockrell et al. (2007)	7.8%

The possible reasons for this improvement in academic outcomes evidenced in the studies include differences in methodology and time frames of the studies between (Lindsay and Dockrell, 2008). For example, the men in the Clegg et al. (2005) study were in their mid-thirties and therefore much older than the populations of the other longitudinal projects. However, policy which has set the agenda for the inclusion and improved teaching and learning provision of children with SEN has been an important development over the past ten years. Legislation such as the Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs, (DfEE, 2001), Removing Barriers to Achievement, (DfES, 2004b), The Children Act (DfES, 2004a) and the 14-19 Education and Skills Framework (DfES, 2005a) have contributed to providing an education system which has begun to target the individual needs of pupils as well as provide more opportunities in the curriculum and greater access to different types and levels of qualifications, both academic and vocational. During this time, schools have been encouraged to work with a range of professionals to try and improve provision for children with SLI including greater links with speech and therapy services (Law et al., 2000b) and there has been

a significant increase in the number of Teaching Assistants in schools working with children with SEN (Blatchford et al., 2009).

3.2.4. Outcomes for emotional and social development

This section presents the outcomes relating to social and emotional development. These are quite wide-ranging terms but include self-esteem, self-perception, relationships, friendships and affective disorders. The study of these factors are relevant for all children and young people, as deficits or difficulties relating to social and emotional development can impact on functioning in all aspects of their lives including relationships, educational attainment and well-being. However, for children with SLI there has been research documenting development in this area as potentially problematic (Cantwell et al., 1989, Lindsay and Dockrell, 2000, Dockrell et al., 2007). These concerns have also been reported with adolescents (Snowling et al., 2006, Conti-Ramsden and Botting, 2008). Unlike outcomes for academic attainment, the differences in research questions and in methodological approaches make it more problematic to directly compare the results of studies. Thus, each of the main longitudinal studies will be discussed in turn with comparisons and conclusions drawn at the end of the Chapter.

3.2.5. SLI and a potential link with affective disorders

The debate surrounding a potential link between SLI acting as a risk factor for affective disorders such as depression and anxiety is controversial and there remains insufficient literature to date to compare findings in order to reach any firm conclusions. As previously outlined, the first longitudinal study to present life outcomes for young adults with a developmental language disorder also presented detailed findings on psycho-social outcomes (Clegg et al., 2005). Although a small scale study in terms of numbers of participants ($N = 17$) and classification criteria which took 70 as a score for IQ, detailed discussion is given to this study as it was such an influential piece of research and in many respects set the agenda for subsequent studies. This was due to the fact that its overall findings presented a somewhat bleak picture for adults with DLD and in particular it was some of the results found by Clegg and her colleagues

(2005) which were to raise the profile of a possible relationship with a language difficulty and mental health difficulties in adolescence and adult life.

Two earlier studies of young children with SLI (Baker and Cantwell, 1987, Beitchman et al., 1996) had attempted to explore a possible link between SLI and affective disorders, but conclusive results were not apparent. Baker and Cantwell found that fifty per cent of 600 children selected from community speech clinics were found to have high diagnosable psychiatric disorders according to DSM III criteria. When they compared the differences between the children who did and did not demonstrate aspects of psychiatric disorders, the most highly significant differences were found in the areas of linguistic functioning. However, Beitchman et al. (1996) found no significant differences in psychiatric status between the children with SLI and a typically developing control group. It is interesting to note the differences in how the samples were selected between the two studies. The 600 children selected by Baker and Cantwell (1987) ranged from ages two to sixteen with a mean age of 5.7. The sample for Beitchman et al. (1996) consisted of 91 speech and language impaired children with a mean age of 12.5 years. Beitchman and his colleagues (1996) did report a higher rate of psychiatric disorder for their sample of children when they were aged five years but their young age and the vast difference in mean age between the studies prevented firm conclusions being drawn at the time.

In 2005, Clegg et al. contributed to concerns by reporting a possible association between DLD in adults and mental health difficulties with social adaptation which they operationalised as independent living, continual employment, relationships and friendships. Out of the seventeen adults reassessed again in their mid-thirties, four of the cohort were identified as having significant mental health problems. Two had developed in their early twenties acute episodes of schizophreniform disorders and later were given a confirmed diagnosis of schizophrenia. This was followed by two additional participants who were diagnosed with mental health difficulties; one with a major depressive disorder and the other with a personality disorder. In 2009 Whitehouse and his colleagues also reported that five of the nineteen participants with SLI in their study had received a psychiatric referral having been diagnosed with major depressive disorders. However, the limitations of both cohorts in terms of sample size, make it difficult to claim robust findings of a link between a language disorder and of mental health difficulties.

Nevertheless, where Clegg and her colleagues were able to present stronger data was in an association between DLD and poor social adaptation. As Clegg remarked:

The breadth of social difficulties still evident in the mid-thirties was very striking. Employment constituted a major area of difficulty where only 3 DLD adults had successfully held down jobs since leaving school at 16 years. Only two-fifths of the DLD adults were living independently..... Approximately half of the DLD adults had sustained problems in establishing relationships, across acquaintances, friendships and sexual relationships. (Clegg et al., 2005, p. 18)

Clegg's results are strengthened further with the marked differences between the results of the DLD adults in relation to their siblings and to controls matched on performance IQ. Almost half of the siblings, for example, went on to have a university education, all but one, at the last time of assessment, were living independently and all of them experienced positive relationships. This seemed to indicate that the difficulties experienced with social adaptation were more a function of the language disorder rather than the family background (Clegg et al., 2005).

The following four years after Clegg et al.'s (2005) paper, publication of further studies continued to raise the profile of a possible link between SLI and affective disorders. In 2006, Snowling and Bishop published their findings of psycho-social outcomes for 71 young people aged fifteen to sixteen with a pre-school history of SLI. As with Beitchman et al. (1996) Snowling and her colleagues in 2006 could find no significant association between having SLI and any form of adolescent psychiatric disorder. In fact they found that performance IQ was a better predictor of psychiatric problems than a history of language impairment. Consistent with Clegg's research, they did find that there was a raised incidence of social difficulties ($N = 11/71$) with those young people whose SLI had persisted into childhood and adolescence. In 2008, Conti-Ramsden and Botting reported on their comparative study of 139 adolescents with SLI between the ages of fifteen and sixteen and 124 typically developing (TD) peers. Using self-report and parent report from the Child Manifest Anxiety Scale (CMAS-R) and the Short Form Moods and Feelings Questionnaire (MFQ), the researchers did find that the young people with SLI reported higher levels of anxiety (16/139 vs. 3/124) and depression (54/139 vs. 17/124) than their peers without a language difficulty. However, Snowling et al. (2006) who also used self-report measures in their study, made reference to concerns with the validity of using this form of assessment for young people with language disorders. Conti-Ramsden and Botting (2008), for example, found no

correlation between the reports of parents and the young person, with parents reporting lower scores indicative of more concerns in comparison to the young people. In contrast to previous findings (Clegg et al., 2005, Snowling et al., 2006), Conti-Ramsden and Botting did not find any significant relationship between the language and cognitive skills of the young person and evidence of any affective disorders. Finally and perhaps most importantly, Conti-Ramsden and Botting reported that:

..the majority of adolescents with SLI in our study did not appear to suffer from emotional problems. (Conti-Ramsden & Botting, 2008, p. 522)

3.2.6. SLI and self-esteem and peer relationships

Two UK studies (Dockrell et al., 2007, Palikara et al., 2009) which are examined in this section, both investigated the same cohort (previously described) but used a variety of measures and methodological approaches to explore and report on social and emotional outcomes. Furthermore, their results showed a group of young people experiencing more positive outcomes relating to social and emotional development than previously reported. Dockrell et al. (2007) focused, in part, on self-esteem and the coping mechanisms used by the young people and two encouraging features stood out. Firstly, they found that during the last year of school and into the first post-16 year, the young people developed more positive self-perceptions including global self-worth. However, they still generally had less positive self-perceptions than would be expected from a peer without such difficulties. Secondly, the young people with SLI did not differ significantly in their use of productive coping strategies from the control group, although they were more likely to use the 'unproductive-helplessness' style of coping as well. Nevertheless, the fact that Dockrell (2007) and her colleagues did record that productive coping strategies had no significant relationship with expressive or receptive language scores throughout childhood or GCSE points scores at sixteen might suggest less of an association between SLI and potential risk for affective disorders than previously anticipated.

However, in line with previous studies highlighting concerns over relationships, Dockrell et al. (2007) did report that according to their teachers, half the cohort at sixteen year olds experienced some form of difficulties in their relationships with peers. Yet, by the time they young people reached college, reports on relationships with peers had

improved with most tutors (41/47) describing that the young people got on quite well or very well with their peers. This would also support the improvement in self-perception experienced by the young people in that transition year. Despite this reported improvement though, difficulties with relationships continues to appear even in the most recent literature. In their refreshing approach which gave a voice in the research and in the reporting to the young people themselves in their first year of post-16 education, Palikara et al. (2009) found that just under half of the young people (22/54) reported experiencing concerns over relationships with peers at college.

3.2.7. Summary of findings

Returning to Ball et al.'s (2000) conceptual model of transition and the three arenas of action (education, training and work; social and leisure activities; and thirdly family, home and domesticity) a picture for some of these aspects has started to emerge. Within the arena of education, many of the young people are leaving compulsory schooling having achieved greater academic success but very little is known about the transition to work. Secondly, relevant studies have reported differing findings when investigating features of SLI and social adaptation with some finding stronger relationships between various aspects of language and poor social adaptation (Whitehouse et al., 2009, Clegg et al., 2005) whilst other studies revealed no significant relationship between the two (Beitchman et al., 1996, Snowling et al., 2006, Dockrell et al., 2007). In terms of relationships, friendships with peers, self-esteem and developing coping mechanisms they still appear to remain a vulnerable group. However, whether young people with SLI are more at risk of affective disorders in adult life has yet to be convincingly demonstrated. This is particularly true in the light of the Ottawa study which reported that at age 25, although outcomes in education and employment were poorer when matched with the group without language difficulties, the language impaired group did not differ in the results of quality of life assessments (Johnson et al., 2010). As for the final arena, due to the age range of the participants in the various studies, most of whom were not yet eighteen years old, domestic arrangements have not been investigated in any great depth in the UK but once again the Ottawa study reported more positive findings with 14% of the language impaired group married, 43% living with partners and 35% having had children.

3.3. The Research Questions

3.3.1. Research Aims

This study originated as a result of the experience of the author as a Key Stage 4 teacher working in a residential special school for pupils with SLI. An important aspect of this teaching role was supporting young people and their parents with the numerous decisions that had to be made around transition from school after the age of sixteen. However, the experience of staff showed that this process was made more challenging due to the lack of knowledge surrounding transition outcomes for young people with SEN and in particular those young people with a history of SLI.

The restricted age range of the cohorts of the two main UK longitudinal studies (Conti-Ramsden and Durkin, 2008, Dockrell et al., 2007, Palikara et al., 2009) meant that at present very little is known about the transition outcomes of young adults with a history of SLI who are currently in their late teens and early twenties in all three 'arenas' of transition in the UK. This knowledge is important as its absence makes it difficult for schools and the multiple agencies currently involved with young people with SLI to consistently provide informed advice between the ages of 14-19, which in turn inhibits the decision making process about the future at such a critical time for the young person and their families. Both of these studies included significant proportions of children in mainstream education settings who were receiving minimal to more intense support for their language and educational needs as well as in highly structured specialist settings. Moreover, the studies last reported at a point during which and since there have been significant policy innovations to keep young people in education post-16. The current study aimed to address these gaps in our knowledge by extending the age range of the participants included in the research and focussing on a sample where the young people all received specialist support for their language learning needs at the same residential special school. This allowed for a more in-depth exploration of the variation of the outcomes within the context of a common education experience.

The age group of this study provided unique insights and opportunities to examine their experiences and outcomes within the policy context of post-16 transition. This context encompasses a range of legislation and policy measures brought in over the past ten to fifteen years to support children and young people with SEN. Such legislation included the Special Education Needs and Disability Act 2001 and the Special

Needs Code of Practice 2001 (DFE, 1994, DfEE, 2001, DfES, 2001) and wider initiatives such as the establishment of the LSC and Connexions, both of which were set up, in part, to ensure more effective opportunities for transition following compulsory education. This allowed for an examination of how the outcomes of a group of potentially vulnerable young adults relate to the wider changing transition context for all young people and whether, for example, their experiences differ from the patterns currently identified in the literature.

Using both qualitative and quantitative methods this study examined the range of transition outcomes in relation to; work, education and training, independence and the social and leisure activities of a group of young people with a history of SLI. These data provided a base from which to explore whether certain groups amongst the young people were experiencing particular difficulties with the transition process and the extent to which the experiences of the young people reflected general current directions of transition experienced by all young people at this stage in their lives.

3.3.2. Research Questions

The above context and the nature of similar transition studies conducted within the SEN and general population contributed to the formulation of the following research questions:

1. What are the transition experiences and outcomes for young people with a history of SLI in relation to:
 - a. Work, education and training
 - b. Independence
 - c. Social and leisure life.
2. What are the factors which facilitate and inhibit the transition of young adults with a history of SLI?

3.4. Conclusion

Research examined in this chapters 2 and 3, has demonstrated that SLI in adolescence can affect literacy development, educational attainment and social and emotional

functioning. Evidence as to the effect of SLI on post-16 outcomes and into adulthood has yet to be established. Current findings of young people with SLI in their first post-16 year have reported improvements in academic attainment and more positive findings with respect to aspects of social and emotional functioning. These results were in contrast to findings from a small study of men with DLD in their thirties. The purpose of this study was to investigate the post-16 outcomes and experiences of a group of young adults under researched in the literature, especially for those young people over the age of eighteen. Even less is known about the factors that have helped and hindered their transition, especially from the perspective of the young people themselves and this thesis aimed to address both gaps in the literature.

Chapter 4 Methodology: Research design and methods

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents an explanation and rationale for the use of a mixed methods sequential explanatory design (SED) in the thesis. An account is provided of the two samples chosen and of the data collected. It explains how two types of analyses: statistical and thematic were applied to the data. The measures used to address issues of reliability and validity are described including the specific concerns of conducting research with young adults with a history of SLI. Finally, the ethical considerations to the demands of the study are presented.

4.2. A Mixed Methods Sequential Explanatory Research Design

According to the literature (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007, Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009, Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003, Yin, 2006) a study using mixed methods would need to meet the following criteria:

- i. Use qualitative and quantitative methods
- ii. Data to be collected simultaneously or sequentially, including highlighting which phase has priority
- iii. Integration of approaches in at least one time point during the study.

Each criterion and how it was applied to this study is addressed in turn.

4.2.1. Rationale for a mixed methods study

It was to meet the requirements of the different types of research questions described in chapter 3 that a mixed methods approach was adopted. As previously stated in chapter 3 little is documented on the post-16 transition outcomes of young people with a history of SLI and what is known has raised concerns about their transition into

adulthood. Consequently, the first research question which was concerned with the transition experiences of young people with a history of SLI, aimed to describe their transition in relation to education, employment, social and leisure activities and the development of their independence. As a research question primarily concerned with description rather than explanation and as a consequence of the need to collect data on a range of variables from as many participants as possible due to the dearth in the literature, a telephone survey was adopted using a questionnaire of largely fixed choice questions to collect the data. The power of surveys to allow for the systematic collection of quantifiable data on different variables and identify possible patterns and associations has been well documented (de Vaus, 2002, Bryman, 2004, Robson, 2002).

The second research question sought to primarily gain the perspectives of the young people as to what had facilitated and inhibited their transition to date. In contrast to the first research question, the focus was explanatory rather than descriptive and a semi-structured interview was used to allow for a more in-depth open-ended enquiry yet guided exploration of the views of the young people (Freebody, 2004, Flick, 2006, Wengraf, 2006) and hence the qualitative latter phase of the design. These two methods also took account of the potential needs of the participants which are discussed further on in the chapter.

The tradition of pragmatism has widely been acknowledged as the principle philosophical and traditional foundation of mixed methods research (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009, Denscombe, 2008, Johnson et al., 2007). Johnson and Onweugbuzie (2004) acknowledged the contribution of the classical pragmatists of the 18th and 19th centuries; such as John Dewey and William James to pragmatism, creating the foundations later developed upon in the 20th century by Abraham Kaplan and Richard Rorty (Maxcy, 2003). At the core of the tradition is a rejection of the subjective *or* objective view of reality with the acceptance of the notion of knowledge as being socially reconstructed but that there also exists a reality/body of knowledge separate to human interpretation. The marked distinction from the more positivist perspective is a belief that certainty of this knowledge is not possible. This view, with respect to epistemology allows pragmatism to occupy a middle ground within social science research and attempts to draw on common areas between the purely qualitative and quantitative traditions (Woolfe, 1989, Bryman, 2008). By recognising the strengths and value of each tradition, the researcher is able to select the method

most relevant to the aims of the research. It allows for a deductive and inductive approach to theory, recognises that there are causal relationships within human behaviour, but to establish these with conviction is complex and that validity can be achieved both internally and externally (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009).

However, Denscombe (2008) brought a note of caution and clarification to the role of pragmatism and recognised that within the field that there was not agreement as to its precise relationship within mixed methods research. He described four ways in which pragmatism was used including; a 'fusion of approaches', a 'third alternative' and a 'new orthodoxy', highlighting the desirability of combining methods. However, it was his final description; the advocacy of pragmatism as an 'expedient' approach to research that is of particular interest for this study. He claimed that this was not the philosophical meaning of pragmatism, and that the mixed methods approach was in danger of being associated with a lack of rigour with respect to principle and with an ad hoc attitude to research strategies. This study has attempted to address these concerns and they are highlighted and addressed throughout this chapter.

4.2.2. Sequential Explanatory Design (SED)

As well as different methods of enquiry and philosophical assumptions, a mixed methods study involves the collection of data either simultaneously or sequentially (Creswell, 2003). For this thesis a SED (Creswell, 2003, Ivankova et al., 2006) was used involving the collection of quantitative (QUAN) data from the survey on a range of variables relating to the transition of the young people, followed by qualitative (QUAL) data almost two years later from the semi-structured interviews on the views of the young people as to what factors had helped and hindered their transition since leaving school. A sequential in preference to a simultaneous research design was adopted to allow for purposive sampling described in section 4.3.2. and as with the research methods also took account of the needs of the young people and their history of SLI. Any interview which attempted to address both research questions would have been too long for the participants and is explained in more detail in section 4.7.2.

Within the thesis priority was given to the QUAL phase thus resulting in a SED (Quant-QUAL) design (Morse, 2003) as this would be the strongest contribution to the

originality of the study. A similar design was adopted by Woolley in her transition study of the lives of a group of 18-25 year olds in Derby, England (Woolley, 2009). The first step in this current study was a telephone survey where predominantly quantitative data was collected from sixty participants to establish transition experiences and outcomes for the young people in relation to education, work, independence, friendships and leisure activities. The second step, the qualitative phase, used a face-to-face semi structured interview of nineteen young people to explore the factors which had facilitated and inhibited transitions. Figure 4.1 summarises the design of the study, including the different phases and the points of integration.

Integration in any mixed methods study is the element that differentiates it from a study where the quantitative and qualitative elements take place side by side and with little relationship between the two. Yin commented that a, "continuing challenge is to maintain the integrity of the single study, compared to inadvertently permitting the study to decompose into two or more parallel studies." (Yin, 2006, p. 41). Yin identified five procedures to assist integration across a study, which included the research questions, units of analysis, sampling, instrumentation and data collection and analytic strategies. He argued that the more procedures that were completed the greater the degree of integration and these procedures have been used to guide integration in this thesis.

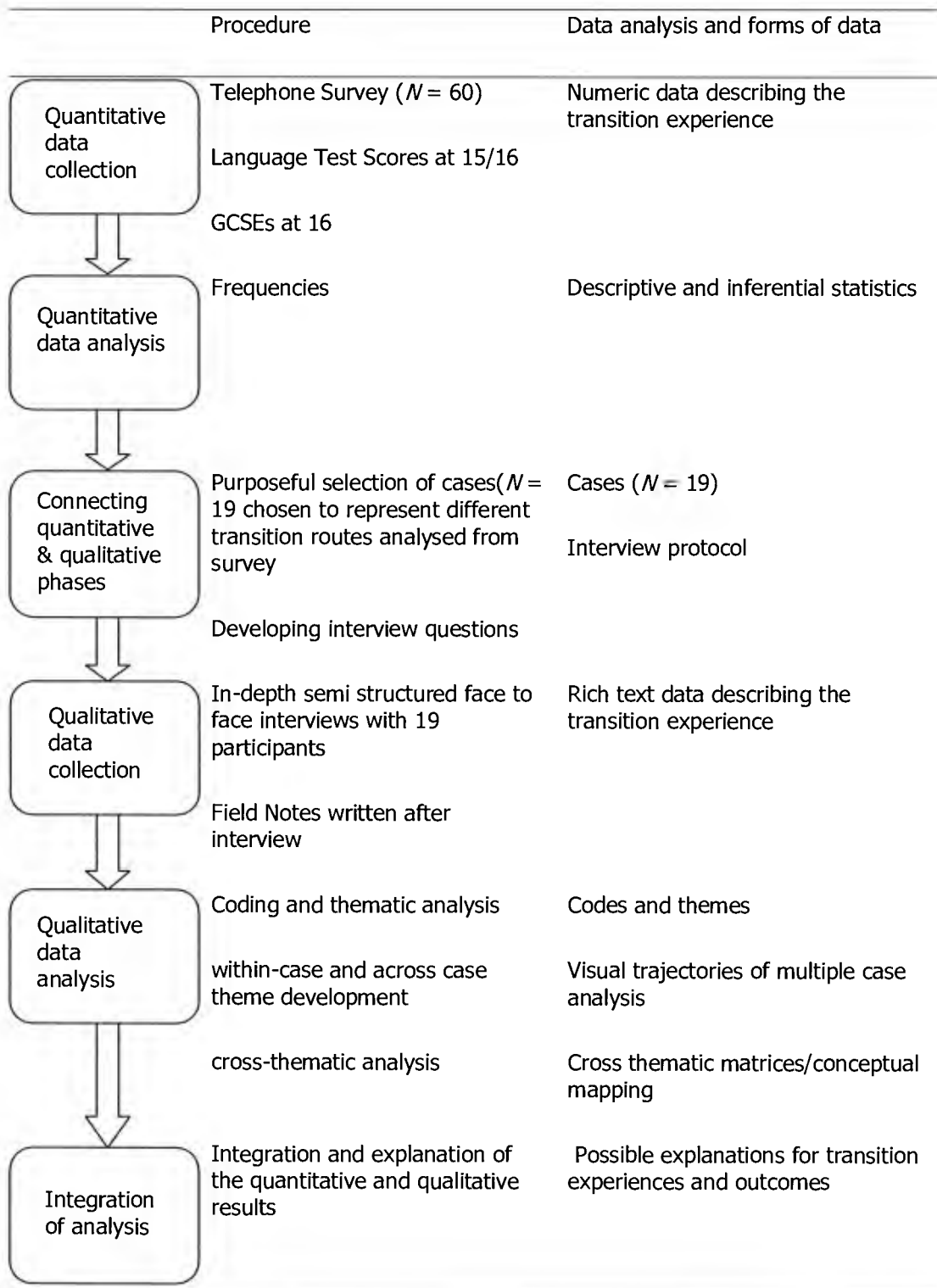


Figure 4.1 Visual trajectory for mixed methods sequential explanatory design

4.3. The Participants

4.3.1. School Setting

All of the participants had attended a residential special school for pupils with SLI in the south east of England that operated on a multidisciplinary and collaborative model of education with pupils taught in small groups by specialist teachers, teaching assistants, speech and language and occupational therapists. Teaching was based on the English National Curriculum; planning for which took place weekly in multidisciplinary teams. The teacher to pupil ratio was 1:10. All pupils received a highly specialised and differentiated speech therapy programme that was integrated into the school curriculum. The pupils were provided with extensive life skills training and if appropriate had access to external specialists such as counsellors and psychotherapists. By focusing on one special school this study provided a homogenous group with regards to educational and therapy provision, throughout the secondary school period, from which to research and examine findings. The author had been a teacher at the school.

4.3.2. Sequential Purposive Sampling

As described, a sequential purposive sampling strategy was used in this thesis. It was purposive in design to allow for a detailed analysis of a specific group of young people who are much under researched in the literature; that was the transition to adulthood of young people with a history of SLI; described in Chapter 3. The group of young people in the study had also attended a special residential school and the experiences and outcomes for pupils who have attended this type of educational setting had also been identified as a concern in the literature (Fletcher-Campbell and Pather, 2003). Maxwell defined purposive sampling as a type of sampling in which, '...particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide...' (Maxwell, 1997, p. 87). It was sequential in design, in that the sample for phase two was based on the findings from phase one and the first research question in order to ensure that the young people in the interview sample would have followed a range of different routes and have had contrasting experiences to answer the second research question in depth and breadth. It also meant that the participants were almost two years older with more experiences to report and greater maturity with

which to consider these experiences (Flick, 2006). Both sampling phases stemmed logically from the research questions; the first point to consider with mixed methods sampling (Teddlie and Yu, 2007). The sample size precluded the possibility of findings being generalised to the wider population of young people with a history of SLI. Hence, this study aimed to generalise the findings to theory (Yin, 1994) including changes in transition over the past twenty years and an exploration of sociological and psychological theoretical explanations.

4.3.3. The survey participants

Between 2000 and 2004 seventy nine young people in total had completed their compulsory education at the school and all were invited by letter to take part in the first phase of the study. Sixty pupils (12 female and 48 male) agreed to participate in the telephone survey. The participants ranged from seventeen to twenty-two years of age, with a mean age of nineteen and the sample reflected leavers from all the five school years included in the study (Table 4.1). All of the participants had received a statement of SEN.

Table 4.1 Number of participants from each year cohort across the study

Year	Number in study
2004	15
2003	11
2002	14
2001	10
2000	10

4.3.4. The interview participants

Using the results and analysis from the survey, the participants for the interview were purposefully sampled to demonstrate as much as possible, the breadth and diversity of experiences and backgrounds of the original sixty participants. The specific criteria for sampling included a representative spread of gender and ethnicity, a range of scores achieved on language tests and GCSE results in the last year of compulsory education and that this group had followed a range of first placements and routes after leaving school.

Data analysed after the telephone survey revealed that there were a total of thirteen different possible routes that the participants took after leaving school (Table 4.2). It was important, in terms of expanding theoretical knowledge, that as many of the routes as possible were represented in the interviews, all but three of the routes were included in the sample. The two routes that were not included fell into the one exclusion criteria which this study adopted and that was if a participant's profile included more severe ASD features. Exclusion from the sample on grounds of ASD was for two reasons. The first was that the primary designation of the school in the study was for pupils with SLI. It was important that the participants in the interview were typical (as much as possible with SLI having such a heterogeneous profile) of this profile and did not have significant additional learning impairments. It did not exclude participants who had pragmatic language and communication difficulties as part of their profile.

Table 4.2 Transition routes followed after leaving school (survey) and numbers selected for interview

Routes Number	Transition Routes	Total Sample (n)	Excluded due to severe ASD features	Remaining (n)	No. selected for interview
1	Currently in first placement at specialist college	13	1	12	4
2	Currently in first placement at FE college	12	1	11	3
3	Specialist college followed by FE college	9	3	6	1
4	FE college followed by work	8	0	8	5
5	FE college followed by university	4	0	4	1
6	Specialist college followed by work	3	0	3	1
7	Left college early followed by work	3	0	3	1
8	Specialist college followed by unemployment / employment training	2	2	0	1
9	FE college followed by unemployment/employment training	2	0	2	1
10	Specialist college followed by FE followed by employment	1	0	1	0
11	In first post-16 placement at work	1	0	1	0
12	FE college followed by specialist college	1	1	0	0
13	Specialist college followed by FE followed by university	1	0	1	1

As a result of the above selection criteria nineteen young people (4 females, 15 males) from the sixty original participants were selected for interview (names have been changed). Table 4.3 highlights that the sample reflected diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, age, language scores assessed in Year 11 and the transition routes reported at the time of the survey. The data from two language assessments that were used with all of the participants in Year 11 have been included in this thesis. The first was the Wechsler Objective Reading Dimensions (Wechsler, 1993) which included three sub-tests which assessed decoding and spelling of single words and a final test of reading comprehension. The second was the Test of Adolescent and Adult Language (Hammill et al., 1994) which includes six sub-tests addressing word opposites, deviations, spoken analogies, word similarities, sentence combining and the orthographic use of language. The score reported on in the study was the General Language score which was formed by combining the scaled scores of the six sub-tests. Finally, a brief pen portrait of each of the young people can be found in Appendix II.

Table 4.3 Characteristics of interview participants

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	Home	Cohort	Transition Routes	GCSE No.	WORD Reading (SS)	WORD Spelling (SS)	WORD Reading Comp (S S)
Holly	F	White British	Surrey	2000	4	3	72	98	75
Teresa	F	White British	Kent	2004	1	1	53	53	58
Daisy	F	White British	Suffolk	2002	6	4	75	81	85
Wendy	F	White British	Kent	2003	1	3	99	110	87
Finn	M	White British	Surrey	2000	2	3	68	67	66
David	M	White British	Cornwall	2001	4	4	83	79	92
Simon	M	White British	Bucks	2001	5	5	73	79	83
Antony	M	Black British	Middx	2002	13	4	97	114	79
Sandeep	M	Asian British	Middx	2002	4	4	93	104	89
Mark	M	Chinese British	Herts	2002	4	5	109	107	85
Tim	M	White British	Swansea	2003	3	0	67	78	66
Joseph	M	Chinese British	London	2003	2	6	99	104	109
Brandon	M	White British	Kent	2003	2	6	82	92	85
Lawrence	M	White British	London	2001	9	4	90	90	90
Robert	M	White British	London	2002	8	1	57	61	55
Owen	M	White British	Suffolk	2004	1	6	73	74	89
Ben	M	White British	Kent	2003	7	3	85	92	87
Steven	M	White British	London	2001	4	2	97	83	89
Gary	M	White British	Sussex	2004	1	3	66	77	73

4.4. Data collection

The following section describes and explains the process of data collection used in this thesis.

4.4.1. Telephone Survey

4.4.2. Rationale for Telephone Survey

According to Creswell (2003) a postpositivism claim to knowledge is not one of absolute truth but one that does look to develop true statements that can, for example, help to describe and explain certain situations. The first research question focused on the specific transition experiences and outcomes of the participants. This presented the need to address, at a factual level what had happened in their lives since leaving school. These facts or details, for example, included additional qualifications gained, nature of employment and participation in different forms of leisure activities. It is possible for such knowledge to be observed and measured thus falling within a postpositivism claim to knowledge.

In order to collect this observable data a telephone survey was used. One principal aim of a survey as previously outlined is to describe a particular situation (Gray, 2009, Cohen and Manion, 2000, de Vaus, 2002).

Descriptive surveys are designed to measure the characteristics of a particular population ... They are designed to measure what occurred, not why. (Gray, 2009, p. 220)

It was used in this study, firstly, due to the general strengths of telephone survey research as identified in the literature and secondly in consideration of potential difficulties with literacy posed by other survey methods such as postal questionnaires. Telephone surveys are the most popular form of survey (Mertens, 2005, Gray, 2009) and when constructed with care compare favourably with other research methods (Czaja and Blair, 2005). The response rate is usually higher than , for example, that of postal surveys (Gray, 2009, Mertens, 2005), it allows for a wide geographic distribution of participants and for a rapport to be established between interviewer and interviewee (Czaja and Blair, 2005).

The geographical and rapport benefits were particularly relevant to the group of young people in this study. The residential school previously attended by the all of the participants, educated children from England, Scotland and Wales. The sixty participants who took part in the survey came from each of these three countries. Therefore, a telephone survey was the most practical and only financial option for such a large, geographically dispersed group. A telephone as opposed to a postal survey was used as the reading and writing levels on leaving school of many of the participants may have acted as a barrier to participation if a written survey was used as difficulties with literacy into adolescence with similar populations have been established (Stothard et al., 1998). However, it was also acknowledged that difficulties with communication for many of the participants on leaving school could also include verbal communication and social interaction. Therefore, measures were taken, described further on in this chapter, to accommodate potential concerns on the part of the participants around telephone use.

4.4.2.1. *The survey schedule*

There were three main influences on the structure and question content of the survey. Firstly, as previously stated, the impetus for this study originated from a lack of knowledge about the transition into adulthood for young people with a history of SLI. For parents, pupils and staff associated with the school in this study there were few answers to questions such as:

- i. How had former pupils experienced the transition into mainstream education?
- ii. What were experiences of returning home permanently particularly in relation to friendships when the young people were not educated in the home catchment area?
- iii. What type of employment did former pupils secure?

Little information was available except in anecdotal form and this was compounded by the lack of published literature.

Secondly, questions surrounding these and other concerns were given greater structure and order by reference to conceptual frameworks relating to transition. Ball et al.'s (2000) three arenas of action, explained in chapter 1, was a major influence on the construction of the survey instrument and their conceptualisation of transition helped to categorise the questions and contribute to the overall framework. Finally, further guidance was provided from the literature; specifically the large scale longitudinal SEN transition studies of Dewson et al. (2004) and Aston et al. (2005) to assist with the design of specific questions. It also meant that at the analysis stage a comparison of findings from this study could be made with this large scale study.

A pilot study to test the survey instrument was conducted with three young adults who had attended a similar school in another part of the UK to the one in the study. One of the main concerns of the pilot was to establish the accessibility of the language in the questions in terms of ensuring that the participants understood what was being asked of them and whether the survey instrument was too long; placing excessive demands on cognitive functioning and memory. (Appendix III includes a summary of the results of the survey pilot). The feedback from the three participants was positive on all aspects apart from the questions that demanded recall on specific items such as examination results. As a consequence, in the final survey a 'prompt' sheet was sent out with the written request for participation, in order to allow the participants to gather any necessary information for the telephone survey (Appendix IV). Appendix V includes the final survey schedule.

4.4.2.2. Procedure for telephone survey

Initially, seventy nine young people were contacted by letter requesting their participation in the project. For those below eighteen years of age, letters were sent to parents to ensure their consent to talk with the young person. As previously described, the communication also included a 'prompt' page of the content of the survey questions. This provided more detailed information about the survey and acted as an aide-memoire if the participant felt they needed more guidance to prepare for the survey. The letter was followed up by a telephone call to discuss the project further and if the young person had indicated that they were willing to take part, to arrange a convenient time for the telephone call to conduct the survey. The survey took place in

the autumn of 2005 and winter of 2006. The telephone interviews were recorded manually and by dictaphone to ensure greater accuracy with analysis at a later stage. The interviews ranged from thirty five minutes to two and a half hours long, with a greater length of time since leaving school accounting for the longer interviews.

4.5. Phase 2: Semi-structured Interview

Unlike quantitative data collections techniques such as surveys, the purpose of data collection methods within the qualitative tradition, including the use of a semi-structured interview, is subject to different opinions. Cohen and Manion (2000) outlined three purposes including finding out about knowledge, values and testing hypotheses or variables. However, a comparison with the views of Seidman (2006), originating from a phenomenological perspective, highlight a different perspective.

The purpose of in-depth interviewing is not to get answers to questions, nor to test hypotheses, and not to 'evaluate' as the term is normally used. ... At the route of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experiences of other people and the meaning they make of their lives. (Seidman, 2006, p. 9)

The second research question investigated transition from the perspective of the young person and in particular their views about which factors had helped and hindered their transitions to date. A semi structured, face to face interview was used in order to collect from the participants their experience and perspectives of transition. It facilitated a more in-depth and exploratory discussion of transition, building on the evidence gathered during the telephone survey. It gave a greater voice to the young person in the research process and a more open forum for the young person to talk with greater freedom on the salient issues. This approach helped to provide a more considered and nuanced understanding of what was happening in the lives of the participants.

As a 'why' type question, a semi-structured interview allowed for the exploration of their experiences, in order to achieve what Mason expressed as "...depth, complexity and roundedness in data' to sufficiently answer the question (Mason, 2002, p. 41). The use of this method in particular offered a balance between the purpose of an interview

facilitating an opportunity to share the other person's perspective (Patton, 2002) through the open-ended questions and with the more structured questions the opportunity to test hypotheses and theory (Cohen and Manion, 2000, de Vaus, 2002).

4.5.1. The semi-structured interview: Question content

The structure and content of the interview schedule was the result of three main influences. Firstly, many of the questions focused on allowing the young person to discuss what had helped and hindered their transition. As with the survey, Ball et al.'s (2000) conceptual framework of transition provided a template for the overall structure of these questions in the interview. In addition, a number of questions were added in relation to 'theory-testing'. As described in chapter 1, the theoretical perspectives explored by this study focused on the role played by the concepts of structure and agency in the transition experiences and outcomes for the young people and how Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model might also apply to the findings. Finally, a third contributing element to the content of the interview schedule was the inclusion of questions that were repeated from the initial telephone survey. This allowed an opportunity for the participants to expand and develop initial responses and findings, identify any changes that had taken place between the different phases of the study and to a certain extent, contribute to processes of assessing reliability and validity by comparing responses to the same question between the two instruments. The interview schedule included a list of probes that were used, where necessary, in order to ensure a depth of response from the participants and to explore any relevant aspects relating, for example to theory, if not brought up by the participants themselves (Patton, 2002). As with the survey, a pilot study was conducted with two young people selected from the original 60 participants. Appendix VI describes the pilot study in more depth and Appendix VII includes the full semi-structured interview schedule.

4.5.2 Procedure for Semi-structured Interview

Those participants selected as a result of the sequential sampling process following the survey were contacted by letter and a telephone call and invited to take part in a face-to-face-interview. They were offered a selection of venues including their home, home

town, the school they had attended or another venue of their choice. Table 4.4 summarises the venues chosen by the participants. Those participants who chose the school were made aware that this might reveal their personal involvement in the project to staff, and therefore potentially could affect their anonymity in the study.

Table 4.4 Venues for semi-structured interviews

Venue	Number of participants
School	10
Home	7
Home town	2

The interviews took place in the autumn of 2007 and the winter of 2008 after the telephone survey in 2005/6. The interviews were recorded manually and using a dictaphone and ranged from approximately ninety minutes to three hours in duration. As with the telephone survey, the young person was assured confidentiality, (with respect to content only if the interview took place in the school) before and at the end of the interview. They were also offered a number of breaks which were taken as requested by the interviewee and/or interviewer.

4.6. Analysis procedures

The study used two main methods of analyses that are common in a mixed methods study (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009). The first method used descriptive and some inferential statistical analysis of the survey data using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The second method used the NVivo software package to apply thematic analysis to the semi-structured interview. A purely deductive content analysis approach was excluded primarily on the grounds that there was little pre-existing theory to confirm or test with such a population and that this method usually adopts

some form of stratified sampling technique. Also this research did not authentically follow the more inductive grounded theory approach as the sample had been selected prior to interviewing and not as new theory emerged (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

However, echoing the notion that research is more a craft than adhering to a list of methodological rules, thematic analysis in terms of this research selected salient features from both grounded and content analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Thematic analysis does allow for a complete sample to be identified before the interviewing process but it is more inductive than content analysis, by allowing the nature of themes and categories to be explored. The next section describes how the coding framework for the interviews was devised but from the start of the project the decision was taken that part of the thematic analysis would include codes concerned with the arguments in the literature relating to theoretical explanations concerned with the facilitators and inhibitors of transition. As explained in chapter 1 the main theoretical explanations concern the relationship between 'agency'; the extent to which the transition experiences of a young person were determined by their own actions and 'structure'; the way in which society is organised and the resources made available to a young person as a result.

The ability to communicate valid meaning from a wealth of data is a considerable challenge so a range of qualitative methods such as matrices and tables were used to present the findings with regard to the facilitators and inhibitors of transition and with the description of the trajectories of the young people since leaving school. To assist with the presentation of the theoretical elements of the thematic analysis, the visual representation in Figure 4.2 was used in the three Results Chapters to demonstrate the relationship between the presence of agency and structure in the transition experiences of the young people. The *X* axis relates to agency and the extent to which it was exhibited in the life of a young person. The *Y* axis is concerned with evidence of structure and the resources that the young person was able to call upon to help them with their transition. Once again these are defined separately for each transition area and combine those factors reported by the young people and any additional factors that were common in the literature. The Figure 4.2 shows that the young person could find themselves in four different quadrants; the reasons for which are explored and compared with findings for their peers in the study.

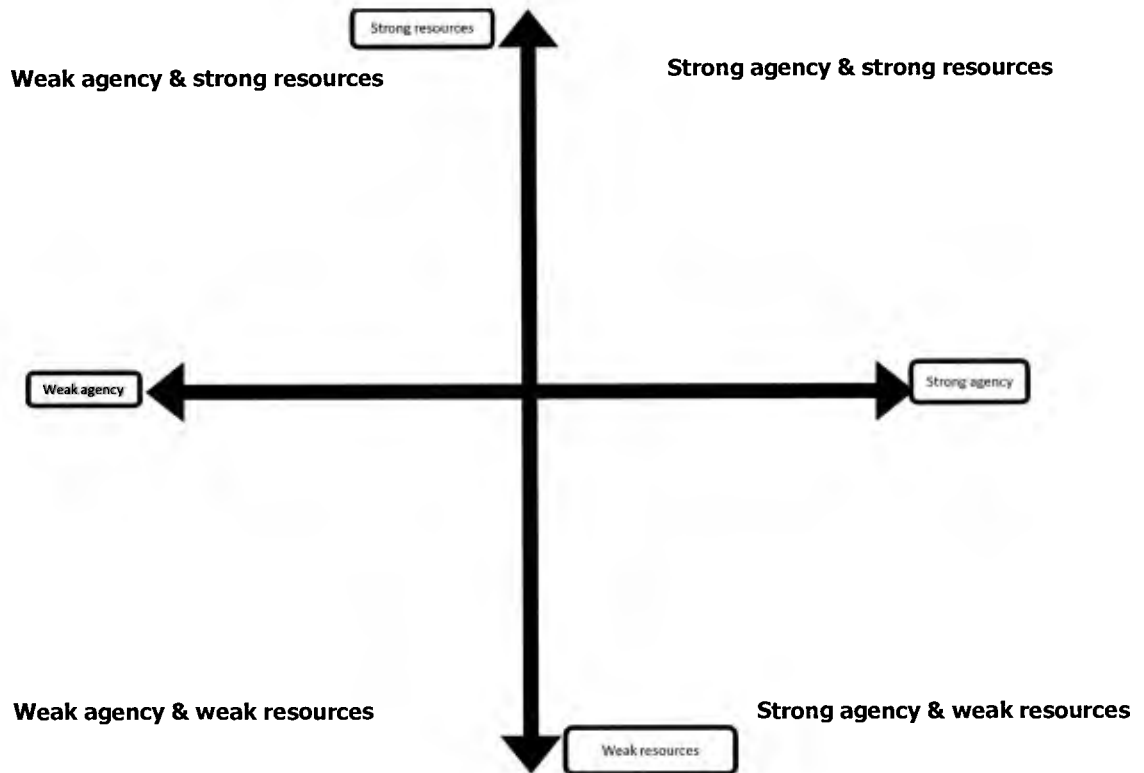


Figure 4.2 Role played by structure and agency

4.6.1. Coding framework for semi-structured interview

The timing of how and when to code in qualitative analysis depends on the coding tradition adopted (Ryan and Bernard, 2000, Bazeley and Richards, 2000). The intention of this study was to adopt an approach of critical realism which recognises that:

Social structure is at the same time the relatively enduring product, and also the medium, of motivated human action. (Robson, 2002, p. 35)

This ontological perspective makes the assumption that there is a reality which exists independently of our awareness of it but at the same time the researcher operates within a social context where activities are not value free and data are generated by research methods and research encounters. A role of the researcher, particularly in qualitative methodology, is to try and demonstrate as transparently as possible the

methods and choices they made in the research process which enabled them to come to their conclusions.

The timing of when to code in qualitative analysis was just one of these choices made in this study. In thematic analysis theory emerges through the coding process (Ezzy, 2002). Therefore, allowing for this inductive process, it was important that the coding framework emerged during the analysis of the pilot interviews. However, due to the background of the author, that is one of teaching in the special school concerned and the fact that sixty telephone interviews had already been conducted, it was impossible to ignore that ideas already existed as to what factors might, for example, be acting as barriers and facilitators to the transition process. Miles and Huberman (1994) maintain that collecting a start list of codes prior to beginning fieldwork can be helpful as it forces the researcher to tie research questions and any conceptual or theoretical knowledge to the data. As a consequence, a provisional list of codes was drawn up before the analysis of the pilot study but very much within the context that these were to be redefined or discarded as the analysis took place. In other words, initial coding was conducted but with fragility (Fisher, 1997). Appendix VII includes the coding framework for the semi-structured interview.

4.7. Data and inference quality – issues of reliability and validity

Concern has been raised with respect to the lack of depth with which mixed methods literature has addressed the issue of validity (Bryman, 2007, Bryman, 2008, Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005, Dellinger and Leech, 2007). One of the main concerns relates to data quality and issues of the appropriateness of quantitative terms such as 'reliability' and 'validity' to qualitative research. A review by this author of various mixed methods studies and supported by the findings of the interviews undertaken by Bryman and his colleagues (2008), suggests that researchers generally adopt different criteria for the quantitative and qualitative parts of the study, reflecting the 'traditions' and protocols of each paradigm.

This study adopted Teddlie and Tashakkori's (2009) 'Integrated Framework' to guide and use as a means to present how and what decisions were taken to secure a more

accurate account of the lives of the young people. One particular strength of the Integrated Framework and a key reason for its adoption in this study, was that it is based on an important distinction between the quality of the data collected and the quality of the inferences, interpretations and conclusions. Thus the two tenets of the Integrated Framework; design quality and interpretive rigour allowed this author to consider issues of quality in terms of the data collected and subsequent analysis in more depth and more holistically and is explored in the next section.

4.7.1. Integrative Framework for Inference Quality

Table 4.5 provides a summary of the criteria for the design quality and then the interpretive rigour that are outlined by Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) in their Integrative Framework and how they were applied in this thesis. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) identified four criteria that helped to ensure quality in the design of a mixed methods study; design suitability, design fidelity (adequacy), with-in design consistency and analytic adequacy. Through the use of different research methods that reflected the demands of the research questions, this study met Teddlie and Tashakkori's criterion of design fidelity. Table 4.5 highlights in detail how the study met the criterion of design fidelity and the factors from both phases of the study which contributed towards capturing adequately the experiences and perspectives of the young people. Criterion three relates to the existence of with-in design consistency and the use of a SED with a 'nesting' sampling strategy were examples of this in the thesis. Finally, analytic adequacy (criterion four) was achieved through a range of analytic approaches and the integration of findings from both phases in the results and discussion chapters.

Table 4.5 Application of the Integrative Framework for Inference Quality

Aspects of quality	Research criterion	Indicator in study
Design Quality	Design suitability (appropriateness)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of survey and semi-structured interview reflect demands of the research questions
	Design fidelity (adequacy)	<p>Survey</p> <p>Validity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey provided an overview of transition outcomes and experiences • Items on survey constructed from concerns of parents and professionals/relevant literature/pilot study <p>Reliability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of survey schedule • Language of survey assessed for accessibility • Prompt sheet sent out before survey to participants to help with their preparation • In-depth knowledge by interviewer of the particular nature of the history of the impairment of participants • Questions asked and processing time provided during the interview as necessary • Opportunities for clarification on part of interviewee and interviewer as necessary during the survey • Number of breaks taken during survey <p>Semi-structured interview</p> <p>Transparency (Bryman, 2004; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of interview schedule • Explanation of sampling strategy • Explanation of how items constructed <p>Representation of voice (Researcher and participant) (Tobin & Bagley, 2004)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured and open ended questions • Interview conducted in the same way as survey to take into account history of SLI • Explanations in thesis for choice of questions e.g. no direct question about effect of impairment, included as a probe

	Within-design consistency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of sequential exploratory design • 'Nesting' sampling strategy
	Analytic adequacy	<p>Survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS • Non-participant case analysis <p>Interview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic analysis • Data displays <p>Combined</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combination of survey and interview data for integrated analysis in results and discussion Chapters
Interpretive Rigour	Interpretive consistency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter-rater reliability of 78% (four interviews) • The inferences made from the analysis of interview data were consistent across findings
	Theoretical consistency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results consistent with general trends in transition e.g. length, complexity and polarisation • Results consistent with theory on transition including evidence of agency and structure
	Interpretive agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency of data collection, statistical analysis and coding frameworks in order for other researchers to compare similarities in interpretations
	Integrative efficacy (mixed and multiple methods)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main findings and interpretations of the study include the inferences made from the survey and the interview
	Interpretive correspondence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major interpretations of the findings correspond with the purpose of the study and the research questions

This thesis met five of the six criteria included in Teddlie and Tashakkori's (2009) Integrative Framework for interpretive rigour. Interpretive consistency was particularly evident in the interview findings and inferences. Theoretical consistency is shown in the discussion chapter which demonstrates that the findings of this study were consistent with many of the general trends in transition and theory related to transition. The main findings and interpretations of the study included inferences from the survey and interview phases which met the integrative efficacy criterion. To strengthen the 'design quality' of the study consideration was given as to how young adults with a history of SLI might have been supported in the research process in order to contribute more meaningfully and with greater ease to the study. The next section explores in more depth how these concerns were accommodated.

4.7.2. Researching young adults with a history of SLI

One of the aims of the study was to facilitate what Barton (1997) described as the opportunity for hitherto 'unfamiliar voices'; in other words the views and experiences of young adults with a history of SLI, to be heard within the research process; the power of which when included in other areas has contributed to reframing traditionally held views concerning disabilities (Snellgrove, 2005). Of primary concern within this study was the relatively under researched field of interviewing young adults with a history of SLI and how this could be accounted for in the research instruments adopted. As explained in chapter 2 it has yet to be conclusively established whether SLI is a domain specific or domain general learning difficulty and thus a number of factors including receptive language, expressive language, working memory and cognitive processing speed could all or individually have implications on the research process for the young person, for the researcher and the quality of findings of a study. The high co-occurring rate of SLI with ASD and the implications for the social use of language was another potential issue to be considered. One study within this area acknowledged the importance of considering the use of language and demands on memory.

Language and cognitive factors need to be considered in the design, execution and analyses of interview data. (Dockrell, 2004, p. 164)

Figures 4.3 and 4.4 set out how a SLI might have affected a participant within the demands of this specific study (survey and interview) particularly in relation to the

understanding of questions and formulating a response. Both these areas have been highlighted by Dockrell (2004) as areas where language impairment might influence the interview situation.

The figures also include the steps taken by the author to moderate the impact for the young person and for the quality of research design and inferences. To assist with the understanding of questions, for example, topic lists of subjects to be discussed were sent to all participants to allow time to familiarise themselves with the content of the interview. If needed, this would allow the young person to be more prepared and potentially reduce the cognitive processing demands of the survey and interview. One of the main aims of the two pilot studies was to ensure that the language used in both schedules was accessible to the young people to minimise again any potential misunderstandings. As documented in chapter 2, SLI is a heterogeneous in nature and the fact that the young people were known to the interviewer meant a deeper understanding of how their history of SLI had affected them. For example, some participants would need more processing time than others or perhaps receptive language levels were higher than expressive language and thus the interviewee was able to demonstrate greater sensitivity towards the specific needs of each participant in mitigating any potential challenges during the survey or interview.

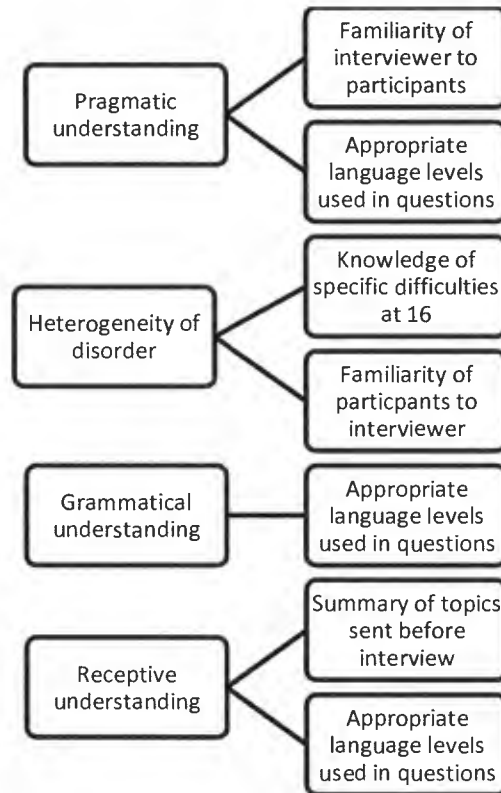


Figure 4.3 Methods to enhance reliability and validity - Understanding of questions

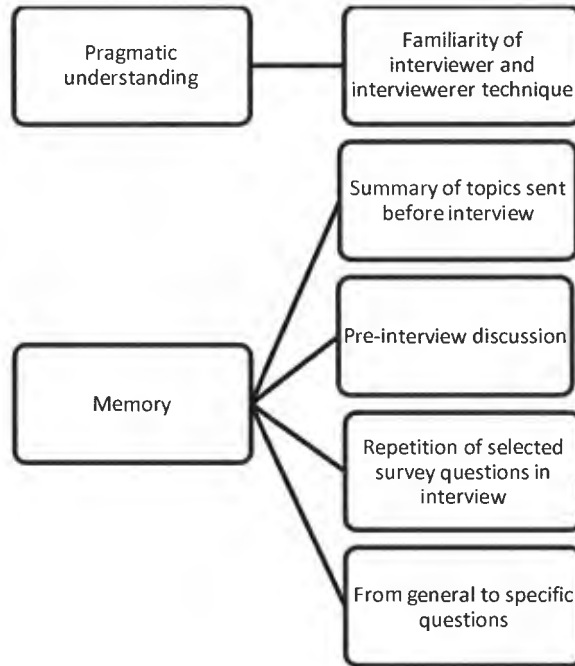


Figure 4.4 Methods to enhance reliability and validity - Formulating a response

The interview schedule entailed questions that went from the general to the specific which has been shown by other studies to yield more authentic responses and again allows the interviewee time to 'acclimatise' to the interview proceedings (Krahenbuhl and Blades, 2005, Waterman et al., 2001). The interview schedule also included a list of probes which helped to give an indication of level of response to the young person if needed, thus assisting with any concerns relating to expressive language.

Finally, the length of both the survey and interview schedules was considered in depth and tested during the pilot phases. The main concern was to balance meeting the needs of the research questions in ensuring that there was sufficient data from which to make inferences with the importance of not overloading the demands made on the young people, which was ethically unacceptable. This would also have inevitably compromised findings if, for example, a participant became too fatigued to respond to the best of their abilities because of an excessive number of questions. Consequently, as a result of the research questions and with the needs of the participants in mind, it

was decided that a separate survey and interview would be conducted and the pilots for both instruments asked the participants for feedback on this issue of time. Many of the points made in this section also related to the wider subject of ethical considerations in the study which are explained in the next section.

4.8. Ethical considerations

This study adopted the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Revised Ethical Guidelines to inform the research process and the three main issues of particular concern were one of consent, their history of SLI which was addressed in the previous section and the fact that author had been a teacher at the school attended by the young people and was thus known to the participants.

The importance of gaining informed consent at the time of the survey was first addressed by sending all of the young people who were below the age of eighteen, a letter containing information about the project in accessible language to their parents to request their verbal and written permission to contact their child about taking part in the project. All those young people who were eighteen or over were contacted directly by letter and their written permission sought to take part in the project. The initial letter also informed them of a follow up telephone call that would be made by the researcher, which provided a further opportunity to talk about the project in more detail before a decision about consent was made. The researcher ensured that sufficient time was given between the initial letter and follow up telephone call to ensure that anyone who did not wish to take part and/or be contacted could return the reply slip. As previously stated the initial letter also included the list of topics to be discussed in the survey and thus gave the parents and the young person more information about the project before making a decision.

At the time of the interview all of the participants were eighteen or over and once again were initially contacted directly by letter, following the same procedure as with the survey. At the time of the survey, their verbal permission was sought as to their interest in being contacted about a possible interview at a later stage. Both the survey and interviews were conducted at a mutually convenient time and as previously described the young person was provided with a choice of venue for the face-to-face

interview and any travel costs incurred by a participant were met by the project. Each participant was also given the freedom of participation at any stage of the project and during the survey and interviews breaks were regularly offered and taken to ensure that the participants were not over tired.

The combined role of researcher and teacher at the school during the data collection phase of the study raised some potential concerns particularly in relation to consent. The fact that the researcher was well known to the participants, especially in the role of an 'authority' figure might have resulted in them feeling 'compelled' to agree to take part in the project. If this was not an issue there still remained the possibility that a participant might have felt inhibited in their responses and refrained from being open or honest in presenting their views. It might potentially have been easier to discuss certain views, experiences and subjects, especially perhaps where achievements had not gone to plan, with an anonymous person. To address these potential difficulties it was important for the researcher not just to provide and ensure the necessary confidentiality with information reported by the participants but to also discuss the above concerns with the participants. In doing this it provided them with the opportunity to discuss and explore in more depth any concerns they might have had and in doing so helped to ensure greater informed consent on their part. A final challenge was for the researcher to maintain the necessary detachment and impartiality required of all researchers. This might have proved difficult when listening to feedback that might be negative about the school or the quality of provision and preparation for post-16 experienced by the young people. The researcher had to remain aware of maintaining impartiality during the interviews and in terms of reporting and interpreting findings accurately.

In many respects the fact that the researcher was known to the young people also brought important benefits in terms of ethical considerations. The researcher had a thorough understanding of how the specific nature of their language impairment might have affected a participant's involvement in the project. A professional knowledge and experience of the particular nature and complexity of the impairment for each of the participants meant a greater possibility of ensuring that the individual needs of the participants were met during the different research activities. The project involved working with potentially vulnerable young people and the extent of a language impairment can often remain 'hidden' unless considerable time has been spent with the

young person. An individual awareness of what conditions and approaches would best help to facilitate understanding and communication for each participant was an advantage.

4.9. Conclusion

The aims of this study for investigating the experiences of transition of a group of young adults with SLI and the factors that had facilitated and inhibited their transition were best served through a mixed methods study using a telephone survey and face-to-face semi-structured interview.

This author did not set out to undertake a mixed methods study. As highlighted in earlier in this chapter, mixed methods research is not without its detractors. The main criticism against the approach operates at philosophical and epistemological levels. For theoretical 'purists', the view is that it is not possible to combine the qualitative and quantitative paradigms due to their opposing views on the nature of knowledge, truth and the researcher's relationship to gathering that knowledge. As Guba commented, "The one (paradigm) precludes the other just as surely as belief in a round world precludes belief in a flat one." (Guba, 1987, p. 31) which has been described as the incompatibility thesis (Howe, 1988). A lack of published mixed methods studies that describe or explain in any depth how integration was accounted for in the research design and in particular in findings has not helped to inform the debate (Greene et al., 1989). Bryman's (2007) interviews with twenty mixed methods researchers with different levels of experience, revealed an acknowledgment on their behalf of the real difficulties of integrating meaningfully, quantitative and qualitative findings and that epistemological and ontological issues and tensions were often 'overlooked' (Bryman, 2007). He identified nine specific barriers to integrating data from the two traditions which may account for why it is often an aspect of mixed methods studies which is not fully addressed.

Nevertheless, the mixed methods approach has much to recommend. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) provided three overarching elements that demonstrated the 'utility' of the mixed methods approach which were common either in part or all other relevant literature. Implicit in their first element was flexibility in the research

questions/problems that can be investigated, which is a strength of the approach recognised throughout the community (Greene et al., 1989, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, Creswell, 2003, Armitage, 2007). Armitage (2007) described this as questions which allowed for breadth and depth and by others as allowing a combination of quantitative questions which surveyed the terrain and qualitative questions which mined it (McCracken, 1988). A second recommendation of the approach is that this combination of questions can lead to stronger inferences being drawn from the data (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This is in part achieved by the idea that combining methods results in the strength of one method overcoming the weaknesses of another (Elliott, 2004). Lastly, the 'broad church' aspect of mixed methods allows for a greater variety of views and opinions within a project (Armitage, 2007, Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003) which serves to reinforce intellectual and academic rigour. Woolley encapsulated it simply in that "...the project's findings may be viewed as a whole greater than the sum of its parts." (Woolley, 2009, p. 9).

Mindful, however, of the criticisms of mixed methods it was important to the author and for the study to take into consideration research that had been completed into how mixed methods research might be undertaken more rigorously. In 1992 Alan Bryman observed that:

We have very few guidelines for the contexts in which the two research styles can or should be combined. (Bryman, 1992, p. 68)

By the time of this study, guidelines were available, even if the philosophical debates continued, and two that influenced this research included Yin's (2006) five points of integration and Teddlie and Tashakkori's (2009) Integrative Framework. In line with Yin's five procedures this study included 'quantitative' and 'qualitative' research questions. The telephone survey and the semi-structured interview used the same group of young people, thus allowing for his second point of integration. The third point of integration was in the sampling procedures adopted. Yin commented, "Most desirably, the samples of each method may be nested within that of the other." (Yin, 2006, p. 44). The nineteen participants that took part in phase two of the study were all selected from the original sixty young people who had taken part in the initial telephone survey. Yin recognised that quantitative and qualitative approaches used different instruments of data collection. However, to assist with maintaining the integrity of a single study, "...various instruments could contain directly analogous

variables, if not actual items.”(Yin, 2006, p. 44). The semi-structured interview schedule had eight questions that were also present on the survey instrument. This fourth point of integration strengthened the thesis from a mixed methods perspective but also contributed to reliability as some answers could be compared across different time points. Finally, this study did commence, with some key decisions taken, for example, the research questions and choice of methods, before either guidelines were read by the author and the capacity of the study to meet so many of the criteria was in some respects more to do with ‘happy coincidence’ than the following of guidelines.

in conclusion, genuinely combining analyses in a mixed methods study (Yin’s point 5) presents the greatest challenge to researchers working within this approach and that was also the finding of this author (Bryman, 2007, Yin, 2006). Nevertheless, this study did seek to integrate more closely the findings from the two research methods. Hence, the three results chapters take the three areas of transition in the study, for example, employment and combines findings from the survey and the interview as opposed to writing separate chapters based on findings from the different methods. The author originally wrote the three chapters with few references to the origin of the data (survey or interview), in an exploration of the extent to which findings from the two methods could be combined. However, readers at different stages commented that they wanted to know the origin of the data, so the decision was taken to signpost the origin throughout the chapters.

Chapter 5 Results I: Outcomes, facilitators and inhibitors of transition for education and work

5.1. Introduction

The following chapter presents the findings from the survey and the interviews with the young people relating to their transition experiences and outcomes for education and employment. The outcomes for the young people are explored primarily through the survey data, combined with additional findings from the interviews. This is followed by a reporting of their views, based on the interviews, concerning the factors which they believed had helped and hindered the transition experience in these areas. Individual accounts from some of the young people are used to demonstrate and investigate facilitators and inhibitors of transition in these areas in more depth, including for those young people who were not in education, training or employment at the time of the survey or interview.

For parts of the analysis, namely the survey data, the participants were divided into two groups to allow for a more thorough exploration and comparison of the results. The first cohort included the young people who were one or two years out of school (17–18 years old) and the second group, those young people in their third to fifth year of leaving school (19–22 years old). The author adopted the terms adolescent (AD) to describe the first group and emerging adult (EA) to describe the older cohort (Arnett 2004). The adolescent group ($N = 26$) included twenty males and six females with an average age of 17.7 years. The emerging adults ($N = 34$) had an average age of 20.1 years and included 28 males and six females. Table 5.1 shows that in year 11, the participants scored more than one standard deviation (SD) below the mean on language and literacy measures. The participants achieved an average of 2.6 GCSEs at Grade C or above. There were no significant differences with respect to gender, academic attainment and language scores for the nineteen participants who did not take part in the study.

Table 5.1 Mean scores on language and literacy in Year 11

Measure	Assessment	Adolescent		Emerging Adult	
		SS	SD	SS	SD
General language	TOAL	62.8	16.5	63.2	12.6
Reading	WORD	75.2	13.8	79.8	17.4
Spelling	WORD	79	16.6	80.3	19.5
Reading comprehension	WORD	79.5	15.9	77.5	18.2

Table 5.2 shows the main activity of all of the participants at the time of the survey and for those interviewed two years later. A chi-square test conducted on the survey results demonstrated a significant difference across cohorts, $\chi^2(2, N = 60) = 11.512$, $p = .003$, with those in the EA cohort more likely to have started employment or be unemployed.

Table 5.2 Main activity at time of survey and interview (N/60 & N/19)

Activity	Adolescent	Emerging Adult	Participants interviewed two years later
Study	23 (88%)	16 (47%)	5 (26%)
Work	3 (12%)	14 (41%)	10 (53%)
NEET	0	4 (12%)	4 (21%)

Figures 5.1 and 5.2 show the routes taken by the participants after leaving special school at the time of the survey and then at interview. These different journeys indicate that the young people took a number of different routes, with no one route dominating at the time of the survey or interview. A young person could, for example, arrive at university having attended a local college or a specialist setting after leaving school and a post-16 mainstream or specialist experience could lead to a young person not being in employment or education. This would seem to suggest for this group, that an educational placement did not necessarily determine long term opportunities with respect to education and qualifications. Complexity of routes was also matched by some of the young people embarking and completing different subject qualification. Some of the participants at the time of interview, such as David and Wendy had also decided to 'double-dip' with their post-16 courses having moved from IT to Customer Care and Performing Arts to Health and Social Care respectively. These activities are explored in more depth in the next section.

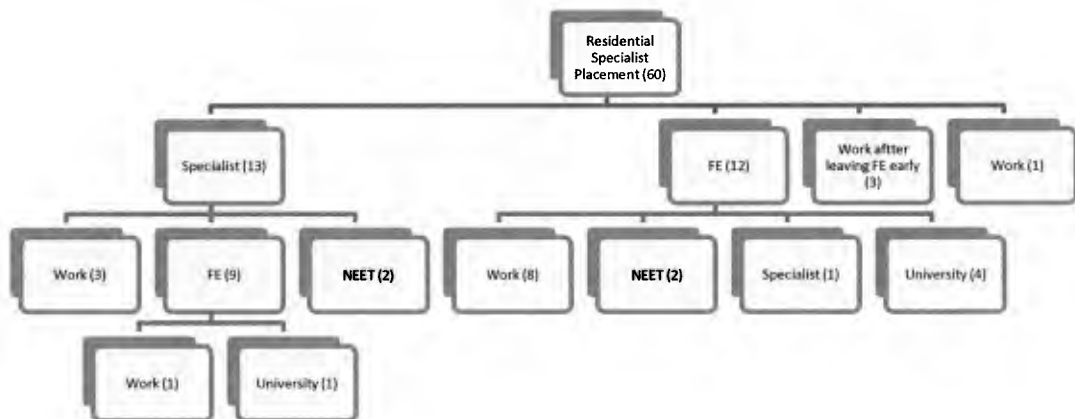


Figure 5.1 Routes on leaving special school (Survey (N/60))

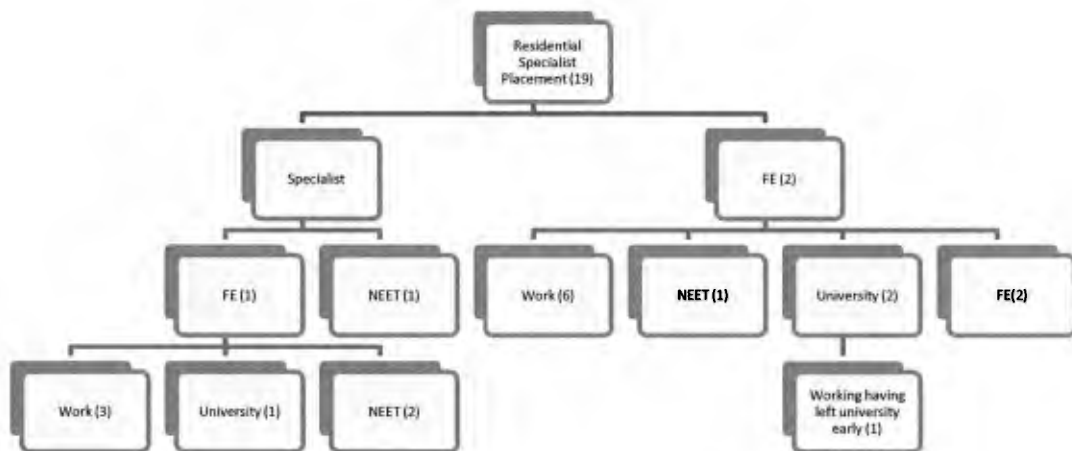


Figure 5.2 Routes on leaving special school (Interview N/19)

5.2. Education outcomes

Figure 5.3 shows that at the time of the survey, the participants had achieved qualifications ranging from Entry to Level 3, with Level 1 being the most common level of attainment. The figure uses the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) which classifies the levels against which a qualification is recognised in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (QCA, 2006)¹.

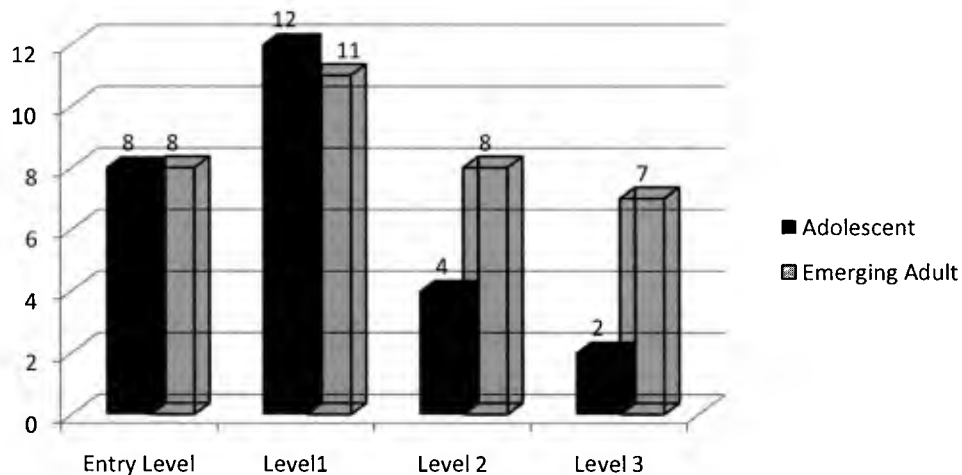


Figure 5.3 Highest level of qualification (Survey) (N/60)

Almost all of the participants had continued in full time education after leaving school ($N = 59$). At the time of the survey, just under half ($N = 19$) of those currently studying were in mainstream FE colleges or sixth forms and fifteen were in a specialist placement. Four of the participants were studying for higher education degrees at university with a fifth participant taking an access course for a university place (Table 5.3). Figure 5.4 highlights the range in level of courses taken from entry to degree level.

¹ Entry Level = pre GCSE
Level 1 = GCSE grades D-G
Level 2 = 5 GCSEs grades A*-C
Level 3 = A Level or equivalent
Levels 4-6 undergraduate degree

Table 5.3 Places of study for those in education (Survey N/39)

	N	%
FE College	16	41
Residential SLI	12	30
University	5	13
Specialist	3	8
Sixth Form School/College	3	8

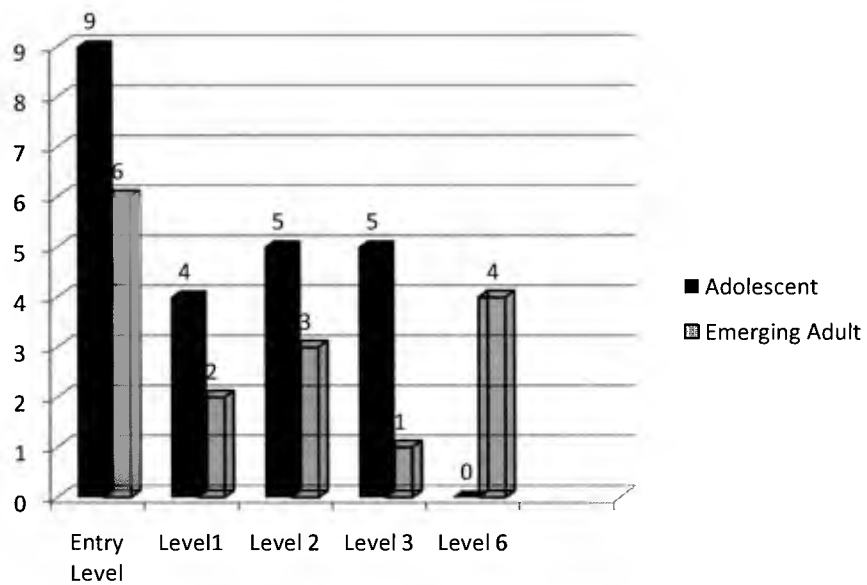


Figure 5.4 Level of courses currently studied (Survey) (N/39)

Exactly half of the participants reported that they found starting their course either 'fairly easy' or 'very easy'. Almost three quarters ($N = 27/59$) of the young people whether in mainstream or specialist settings enjoyed their studies either a lot or a little (Table 5.4). A variety of family members and professionals assisted the young people with their choice of course with parents reported as the most helpful ($N = 17/59$), followed by school/college staff ($N = 7/59$) (Table 5.5).

Table 5.4 Enjoyment of education in relation to provision (Survey N/59)

Enjoy college	Mainstream (%)	Specialist (%)
A lot	63	80
A little	29	13
Not very much	0	7
Other	8	0

Table 5.5 Most helpful person with choosing course (Survey N/59)

	N	%
Parents	17	44
School/college staff	7	18
Connexions	6	15
Other	6	15
Friends	2	5
Other family members	1	3

All but one of the participants had attended some form of post-16 education establishment after leaving school with eight (14%) young people failing to complete their first course and leaving early. These were all courses taken at FE colleges. Various reasons were provided for not finishing the course including wrong choice of course ($N = 2/8$), lack of suitable courses ($N = 2/8$), course was too easy ($N = 1/8$), course was too difficult ($N = 1/8$), peer pressure, the wish to earn money ($N = 1/8$) and poor teaching ($N = 1/8$).

After first leaving school, a specialist placement ($N = 32/59$) continued to be the most common post-16 education destination amongst the whole cohort. In their first placement, just over half remained on the same level of academic course as that completed in Year 11. This was especially true for those participants who had continued onto another specialist placement. As Table 5.6 shows, over the whole of their post-16 academic career up to the time of the survey, more than half of the participants moved up one level based on the NQF. Participants who did not move up a level were all taking Entry Level courses. One common experience of the participants was to repeat the same level of course in the first year out of school and then progress a level in the second year.

Table 5.6 Academic progress across the whole Post-16 education career ($N/59$ & %)

Progress between levels	N	%
Linear movement between levels	23	39
No movement between levels	16	27
Repeat a level & then move up one	12	20
Up and down between levels	8	14

The positive trend in academic outcomes at the time of the survey was also a distinguishing feature of the interviews which took place eighteen to twenty three months later. Four of the young people interviewed were still in the same occupation

and had not participated in any further education. However, the majority of the group who had continued to study for all or part of the interim periods between the survey and interview had advanced their academic careers either in terms of achieving a higher qualification ($N = 10/15$) or completing additional qualifications in different areas, but at the same academic level ($N = 3/15$). The remaining two participants, Ben and Simon, were respectively, on the same course or had left university before completing their degree. Table 5.7 summarises the progress of their academic careers during this time.

Table 5.7 Academic careers of participants from survey to interview (Interview sample)

Young person	Course at time of survey	Course/s undertaken or completed at time of interview
Finn	Level 2 GNVQ Moving Image and video	L3 National Diploma in Moving Image and video
Andrew	Year 1 BMus Hons Popular Music Performance	Year 3 BMus Hons Popular Music Performance
Sandeep	University access course	Year 2 BSc Hons Multi Media Computing
Joseph	About to complete 4 A Levels	Year 2 BSc Hons Computer Science
Wendy	Level 2 GNVQ Performing Arts	Level 2 GNVQ in Health and Social Care Attending adult evening course for Level 1 British Sign Language
Tim	Entry Level vocational access course	Entry Level IT course
Lawrence	Government job training – Entry to Employment	Government job training – European Computer Driving License
Gary	Completing 4 GCSEs and ASDAN life skills	Completing GNVQ 2 in Brick Work

Brandon	Level 1 GNVQ Information Technology	Completing Level 3 National Diploma in Information Technology
Robert	Completing Level 1 GNVQ Horticulture	Achieved Level 1 GNVQ Horticulture
Teresa	Completing 3 GCSEs and ASDAN life skills	Achieved 3 GCSEs
Owen	Completing Level 2 GNVQ in Performing Arts	Achieved Level 2 GNVQ in Performing Arts and BTEC in Information Communication Technology
David	Completing GNVQ Level 2 Modern Apprenticeship in Office Administration	Achieved GNVQ Level 2 Modern Apprenticeship in Office Administration
Ben	Completing Technical Certificate in Plumbing	Completing GNVQ Level 2 Modern Apprenticeship in Plumbing
Simon	Year 1 of BSc Hons in Design	Left after completing year 2 of degree course

The views of the young people at the time of the interview supported this optimistic development with the majority describing how they felt that their academic progress since leaving school had been steady or better ($N = 13/19$). However, outcomes which may have appeared positive had for some young people been a challenge to achieve and their experience had not always been straightforward. Five of the participants described their progress as a series of ups and downs and one felt unable to make any overall judgement and this was despite the fact that all six had gone on to attain higher qualifications after leaving school.

'Um I would say that I have improved quite a bit.'

Andrew

'It is like a roller coaster really up and down all the time.'

Gary

One difference over the time that each cohort left school was in academic attainment, as evidenced by an increase in the average number of GCSE qualifications achieved at sixteen as each cohort left school. In 2000 each participant achieved an average of two GCSEs but by 2004 this had risen steadily to an average of 3.1 GCSEs per participant. Secondly, the first cohort in the study all left school without achieving a Level 1 qualification. However, by 2004 the young people in this cohort were leaving with a range of qualifications from entry to Level 2. However, more participants from the first cohort moved onto a higher level course and a mainstream placement after leaving school, than pupils who had left school five years later.

Finally, the study identified the potential for gender to be associated with more vulnerable educational transitions. In this study, 20% ($N = 12/60$) of the participants were female, which was representative of the male/female ratio of the pupils who had left the school between 2000 and 2004. The data revealed some striking differences in the outcomes between these two groups, especially with regard to current activity, education and certain social outcomes. Female participants were, in comparison, participating less in education ($M = 33/48$; $F = 6/12$) or employment ($M = 14/48$; $F = 3/12$) and experienced comparatively higher rates of unemployment ($\chi^2(1 N = 60) = 8.103, p = .004$). Three out of the four participants not in employment or education at the time of the survey were female.

Figure 5.5 highlights the greater academic attainment achieved by the male participants with females being more likely to attain entry and level 1 qualifications². None of the female participants had achieved a level 3 qualification, compared with nine of the male participants ($\chi^2(1 N = 60) = 2.363, ns$). The average number of GCSEs achieved at sixteen years had also been fewer for females at 1.5 compared with 2.9 for the male participants. Differences in other academic outcomes were also evident in where the male and female participants studied (Figure 5.6), with female participants more likely to have studied in specialist placements as opposed to mainstream educational establishments ($X^2(1 N = 59) = 0.938, ns$). Although not statistically significant, the female compared to the male participants, were more likely to have reported that starting their post- 16 course or finding employment was more

Percentages have been used in Figures 11 & 12 despite the small number of female participants, to more accurately show the differences between the two groups

difficult and that they were less certain about employment or training opportunities ($X^2(1, N = 60) = 0.750, ns$).

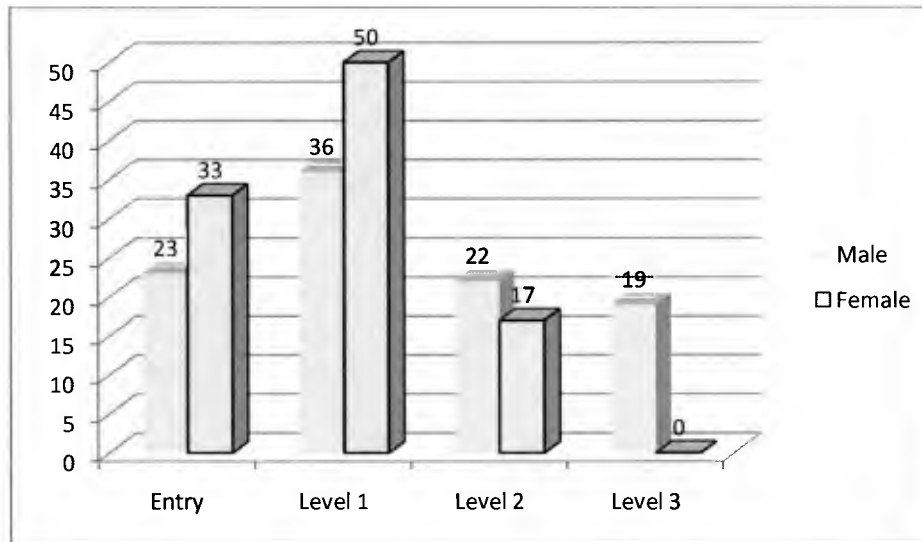


Figure 5.5 Gender and academic attainment (%) (Survey N/59)

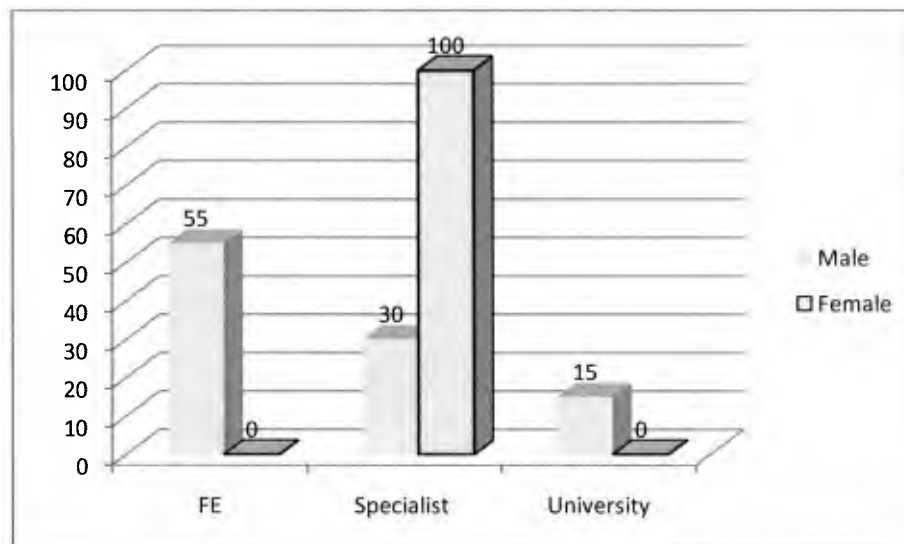


Figure 5.6 Gender and places of study (%) (Survey N/39)

5.2.1. Facilitators of education

The interviews with the young people highlighted seven factors that helped to ensure a more positive educational transition experience which included examples of structure and agency as previously described in chapters 1 and 4. These factors were; the personal characteristics of the young person, college and university staff, family, friends, advice, life skills training and financial support. Each of these facilitators is examined in turn in this section.

The most common factor to assist the academic transition described by the young people was some aspect of their own personal characteristics ($N = 11$). This presented itself in three ways: dedication to their studies demonstrated, for example, through a strong application to their studies and a proactive planning of each stage., Secondly, possessing a certain level of talent related to the academic subject that they had chosen to study and thirdly the ability to encounter and respond positively to significant challenges and even 'failure' which was often as a consequence of possessing clear goals for the future. Finn and Lawrence had both won awards at the end of their first course at local college for being the most hardworking student.

I just worked hard. At the end of the year on the leisure and tourism course I was awarded the prize for highest achiever. And I got a distinction because I was the only person who actually worked hard.

Lawrence

As part of his music degree, Andrew had to spend many hours practising his guitar skills but his written work also required a similar level of dedication.

I just spent most of my time, even my free time, researching and studying and writing a lot.

Andrew

Four of the young people spoke of a talent and/or personal keen interest in their field of study. The notion of a talent or particular interest is one that is a strong feature that was apparent in all three areas of transition as a facilitator for more positive outcomes. Steven had completed a National Diploma in Technical Theatre which involved a substantial amount of set and prop preparation for performances. Later on he was to find himself working as a plasterer and decorator but he recognised that both his academic course and career had drawn on his practical abilities.

I have always been good with my hands so I stuck to that. That was the only thing I knew I would be good at.

Steven

Andrew's musical talent was an ability discovered after leaving school.

I am also perfect pitch as well. That means I hear a note, not just a musical note, but it could be a note from a fire drill or when someone passes wind or a car horn, can say what it is.

Andrew

From a structural perspective, advice and support from different college and university staff was another important facilitator of academic transition ($N = 10$) and was evident in three main ways. The most common form of support was the role played by tutors to assist with the content of a course and by providing additional advice on how to complete tasks and assignments.

It was like if I am stuck in a certain work or something or I didn't understand it I would go to the tutor and ask them how should I do this and they would give me an idea of how to do the work.

Finn

For two of the participants, their tutors had played a key role in helping them to make decisions about future courses and careers such as in the case of Gary following a career in bricklaying. Andrew had not been initially successful when he first applied to university but his music teacher helped him in finding another course which a year later had enabled him to subsequently successfully apply to study for a music degree.

..one of the teachers done construction for us and he took me aside privately and said you could be a great bricklayer so I was thinking that time shall I or shall to a bit more or do ah you know chip work and that but I did bricklaying because he uh built my confidence up and I can do much better.

Gary

Before that I actually applied for the degree course, after the audition I was unsuccessful because they ah said that my guitar playing was not up to the standard they expected me to be at so I was disappointed but then two days later I received a call from *** (*name of teacher*) giving me another option on the one year diploma course and I was like blown away because ah looking at the prospectus it looked really interesting and I reckon that would be the best

way to get onto that particular course.
Andrew

Finally, all those participants who had wanted learning support with their studies had received it. Although views regarding appropriateness and efficacy varied for many, the support had generally been constructive and another feature was the different amounts and ways in which the support was provided. Wendy had received support in lessons and three one hour one-to-one sessions a week at her local college when completing her NVQ 2 course. Simon at university and Finn at FE college had been provided with the option of booking one/two additional support sessions each week and Tim had a Learning Support Assistant in most of his sessions at FE college, who was also there for the whole group. Steven spoke highly of his experience of learning support when studying in the sixth form of a City Technology College.

It was pretty good actually, they had quite good special needs. They actually had someone coming in to write notes for me and actually get hold of a lap top. I was thinking it was going to be state of the art but it was just a spell checker which I never really used but it was provided without too much hassle or grief.
Steven

In addition to personal characteristics, the role of the family ($N = 10$) was another facilitator frequently mentioned by the young people at the time of the interview. Family appeared to help the young person in four key ways: financially, emotionally and with practical support and finally by having some experience, background in or knowledge of a subject being studied by their son or daughter. Whilst in full time education at college or university, the young person was receiving at least implicit, if not explicit financial support from their parents by the sheer fact of living at home. More explicit financial assistance, for example, was provided in the case of Andrew's parents by them paying for his one year course at a music institute. Parents also provided practical support in a number of different ways. Wendy's parents had undertaken the often turbulent process of going to tribunal to ensure that continued residential specialist provision was financed by her LA after leaving school. Owen and Tim both described how their mothers had helped to 'fight their corner' with official sources of support such as Connexions as in the case of Owen and for Tim ensuring that allowances such as Incapacity Benefit were secured. For Brandon, his parents had

helped to ease the transition from specialist to local college in the form of very practical support.

They helped me by ah driving me to interviews and getting me ready, preparing me.... Getting me set up, getting me set up first equipment wise, travel wise and um, what else is there, enrolment....

Brandon

Gary described how his mother would help with coursework and for Sandeep the emotional and moral support offered by his father was invaluable.

I would say the number one person who has supported me throughout is my dad. No one has helped me more than my dad. He always believed in me and never put me under pressure saying that you must pass.

Sandeep

The final role played by parents related to them having some knowledge or experience of the field studied by the young person. In many respects this knowledge may have played a dual function of helping to nurture the talent or interest in the formative years of the young person and for some participants, their parents were closely involved in helping to guide them with their academic choices and subsequent career paths. Gary was studying for a GNVQ in bricklaying, but his father worked as a carpenter and he had acted as a key sounding board when Gary was deciding which specific construction route to take.

Ah well I left school I wanted to be a chippy like my dad but my dad had a little word with me and he was thinking can't you have a little taste of everything like bricklaying, chippy and all that. And I said ok I will do that then suddenly when bricklaying came along I was like really enjoying it and I really wanted to learn more.

Gary

Similarly, Robert had studied for a course in horticulture and was working in a plant nursery, but he acknowledged the role played by members of his family in contributing to this interest.

Well my mum really helped me with my gardening stuff and I learned from my garden at home. And my grandma she helped me as well.

Robert

Andrew, who was studying for a degree in music performance described how his father had been a performer but in a different field.

My musical side came from my dad, he was a dancer, he didn't play an instrument, before my time he was quite a good dancer apparently.
Andrew

After personal characteristics, college and university tutors, and the family, the remaining factors seemed to have played a lesser part and were not present in the accounts of the young people to the same extent. Friends were reported as a source of support ($N = 3$), Wendy and Joseph both described friends as helping them through more difficult times and also practically such as when Gary's friends had helped with his coursework for his college course. Finn and Tim had felt that previous life skills and social skills training had helped with their academic transition. Financial support was another facilitator. Wendy and Robert had both received the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA); a means tested allowance of up to thirty pounds a week available to 16/17 and 18 year olds studying in England. Finally, Mark and Lawrence had received informed and helpful advice when making their first post-16 course choice at their local FE college.

I would say Connexions they helped and I think they were the ones who helped me get into college. After school I went to Connexions and they told me about different courses and they told me what to do.

...they told me what courses I could do at college and they helped me to try and decide. They got me onto C**** Job training which I actually liked.
Lawrence

5.2.2. Inhibitors of education

There were six main inhibitors of education reported by the young people: academic challenges, SLI, lack of encouragement and support, inappropriate advice, social challenges and financial considerations. Each inhibitor is explored in greater depth in this section.

One of the factors most frequently mentioned that sometimes made the educational transition more difficult were the academic challenges experienced by some of the young people when undertaking their studies ($N = 7/19$). Perhaps, and not unexpectedly considering their educational history, most of this group found the written demands of academic study hard at times.

I think on the BTEC National, it was academic as well, rather than practical, the BTEC National Diploma, I was OK, there were a few occasions where I struggled with the academic side of things.

Andrew

But it is just going back to putting words to paper, paragraphs and tying it up and making it look good.

Steven

For others; Simon and Lawrence, the subject content of their courses often felt very demanding.

They were giving me assignments about the sports industry but basically I didn't know much about it and I didn't have a clue what I was doing. I suppose if I had done another year of leisure and tourism I would probably have known more about that.

Lawrence

For Joseph, at a local sixth form college followed by university, the issue was one of juggling and meeting many assignment deadlines at one time.

An equal number mentioned SLI as another inhibitor in their academic transition ($N = 7/19$). Similarly, concerns about the demands of writing were described and some of the young people were able to identify quite specifically what aspects of their history of SLI contributed to this including, difficulties with reading, the use of different tense markers and challenges with memory such as recalling information for examinations.

I did try to do it (*move to Level 2 Horticulture*) but my reading was not high enough so I gave up on it.

Robert

...sometimes I get the words wrong on my, the wrong past tense and what not and normally my special skills tutor helped me out and my mother. Just

redoing a few changes like paragraphs and apostrophes and what not.
Finn

But in the exam it is hard to remember a certain number of voltages and currents, cable and things like that. That is what failed me really, I can't remember it.
Steven

However, the social demands of education and learning, such as the requirement to give presentations could also be complicated by a history of SLI, as well as potential pressures placed on social skills with the desire to establish friendships in different post-16 settings.

Friendships and stuff because I don't understand some friendships sometimes due to my SLI but I am not going to make that an excuse.
Wendy

It was sometimes a challenge for the author, with the academic inhibitors, to distinguish which were as a consequence of a history of SLI, and which was a difficulty experienced by a participant on a course the result of a history of SLI or as a result of a challenge that would be experienced by most students at some point in their studies?

Another reason that contributed towards less positive post-16 educational experiences included a lack of advice or encouragement ($N = 8/19$) or inappropriate advice ($N = 3/19$). Some of the young people felt that Connexions had not provided the advice, especially in terms of courses available in a local area, that might have been anticipated.

...I wished people had shown be other sorts of courses I could have done because I don't think I was really given a wide selection to be honest.

I went to college and I went to Connexions and I just didn't get anything from them. It was all you have to do this, you have to do that and it just, I don't feel that they were helping me enough so that whoa I can actually do that or I can go and do that.

David

As for other professionals, Teresa felt that her tutors at her next specialist residential setting after school had not done enough to support her wish to attend a local college

on returning home. Simon's experience of some of his tutors was that they didn't always provide adequate support if he did not understand a piece of work the first time round. This went a step further for Owen and Sandeep, who both described how tutors, at some point, had informed them that they did not have the ability to progress any further in their studies. Brandon and Simon explained how the learning support they had received at times was not always sufficient or appropriately targeted. Finally, along with a lack of advice, some of the participants ($N = 3/19$) described receiving inappropriate advice, particularly in relation to their first post-16 choice of course; which for all three young people had been to commence a vocational entry level qualification that was well below their academic capabilities at the time.

Perhaps, somewhat surprisingly, very few of the young people spoke about establishing and maintaining friendships as a particular difficulty whilst studying ($N = 3/19$). Joseph had found it lonely and difficult at the start of his university course as he slowly got to know new people. This situation was compounded by studying at a university away from home. As previously noted, Wendy had at times experienced worries relating to maintaining friendships at college. Finally, in terms of their educational transition, just one participant, Simon, mentioned money as an inhibitor when trying to meet the financial demands of studying at university such as paying the rent.

5.2.3. The role of agency and structure in the educational experiences of the young people

As discussed in chapter 4, part of the analysis of the interview findings was to assess the responses and experiences of the young people in terms of how far agency and structural factors and resources had influenced their transition since leaving school. The data display in Figure 5.7 is used to summarise and represent these findings in relation to those young people still in education ($N = 6/19$) at the time of the interview. The x axis represents the role play by agency in education described and demonstrated by the young person, including examples of self-determination and perceived agency. The y axis represents the structural factors reported by the participants as to the factors that had facilitated and hindered this aspect of their transition previously outlined but which included advice from college and university staff, support from family and friends, and access to financial resources.

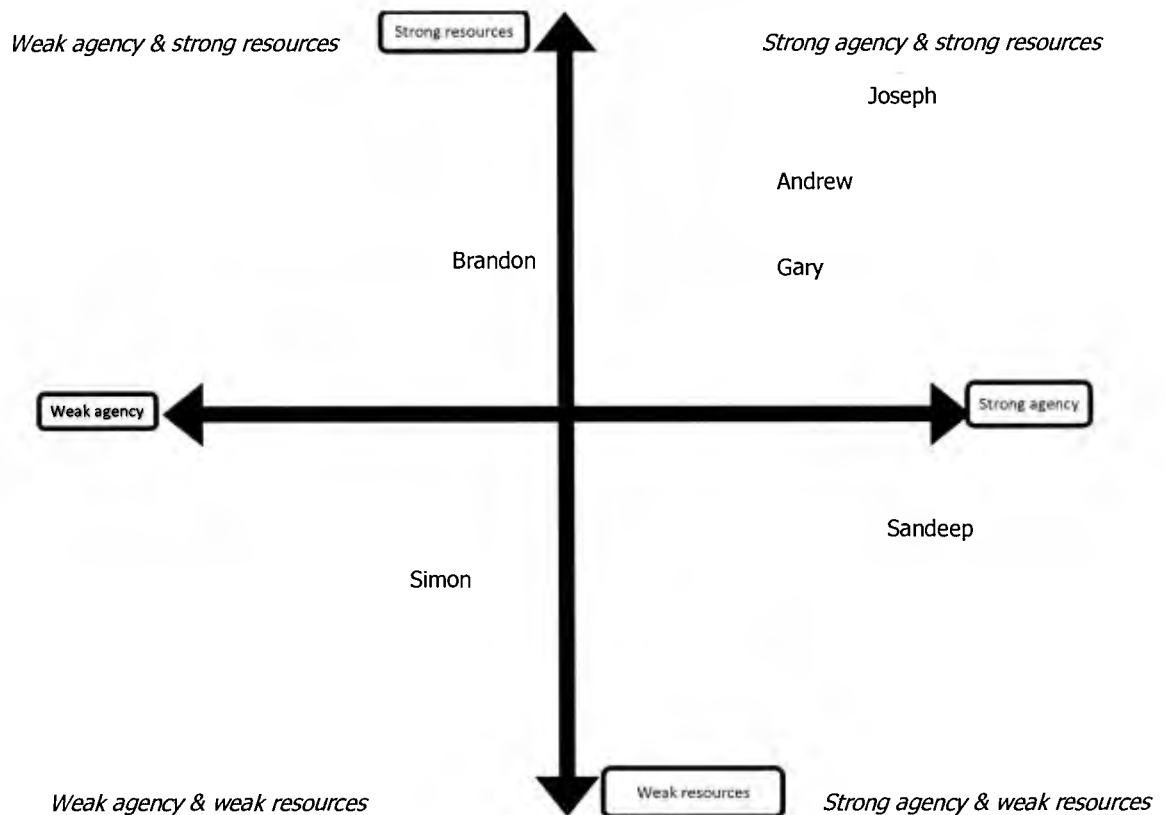


Figure 5.7 Role of agency and structure in education

The experiences of three of the young people in Figure 5.7 are explored in more depth in the next section but the figure does demonstrate the balance between agency and structure in this aspect of their lives. What is striking is the strong presence of agency with respect to education, for four out of the six participants with specific examples presented in the next section. However, exposure or access to resources (structural factors) was more varied, with some participants reporting access to resources, but this was not the experience of, for example, Simon and Sandeep. As might be predicted, Simon, who was placed in the weak agency and resources quadrant, did experience considerable challenges in this aspect of his life and the account of his decision to leave university before his course had finished is explored later. In contrast, the young people in the strong agency and resources quadrant all reported positive experiences with respect to their education.

5.2.4. From special school to university: Joseph, Sandeep and Simon

This section explores how three of the young people made the transition from special school to university. Their accounts highlight the intricate and interconnected relationship between the facilitators and inhibitors of this element of the young people's transition and the contribution of agency and structure to the experience.

5.2.4.1. *Joseph's transition to university*

Joseph's route to university followed a traditional linear route. He left school with five A*-C GCSE passes to attend a sixth form college where he began a combined GCSE and A Level course. By the end of his third year he had completed four A Levels in Mathematics, Art, Computer Science and Film Studies and an AS Level qualification in Media Studies. He then went straight to university to begin a four year BSc Computer Science degree. He was very happy in his second year of study when he took part in the interview.

Figure 5.8 shows clearly that his academic transition was one that encompassed many of the facilitators described by the young people as a whole which included structural aspects and strong evidence of agency and accounts for him being placed in the strong agency and resources quadrant. He described and demonstrated many of the important personal characteristics; hard work, proactive in decision making about course choices, a passion and interest for information technology and art and showed resilience to get through a difficult first year when at times he felt very lonely. The completion of four A Levels and an AS Level with grades at 'A' and 'B' was one testament to his dedication and hard work. His long term interest in developing computer games, had been one of the main reasons for taking a degree in computer science.

The reason I did Computer Science is that I have a keen interest in developing games. And I have been looking at algorithms and stuff from game books and all that stuff. That does help a lot because it means I can code better, I can comprehend it better, I know what storage is and that kind of thing.
Joseph

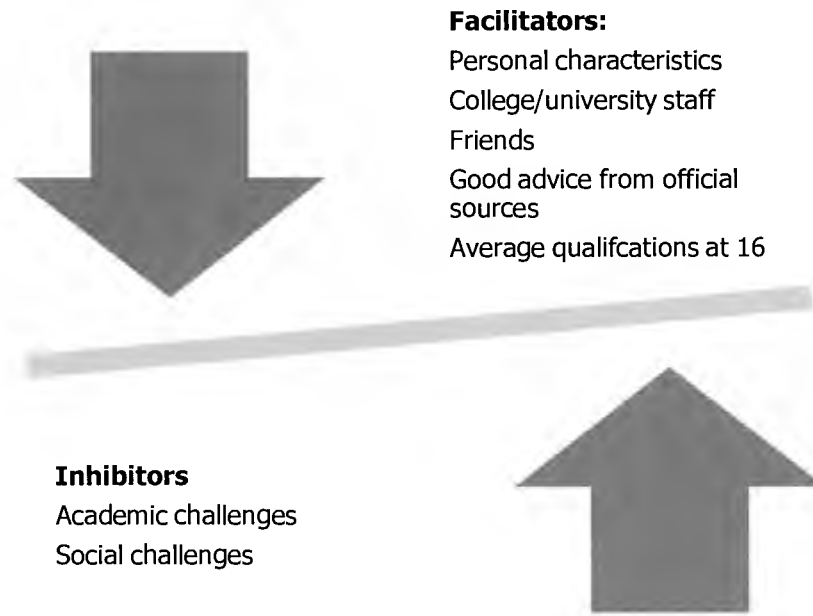


Figure 5.8 Facilitators and inhibitors of Joseph's transition in education

Secondly, Joseph's experience of support from tutors at college and university was encouraging. One of his Film Studies tutors from college had remained in contact with Joseph after he had gone to university to find out about his progress. Joseph reported that this contact had been important to him, especially during his first year when socially, he felt very isolated at times. He recognised that at university students were required to be more independent but additional lecturer support, via email, he described as being very helpful with his academic progress.

I did speak to my Film Studies tutor quite often, I am emailing him. He was very interested in how I got on.
 Joseph

Joseph had also received informed advice from a Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) Advisor about which degree course to take just before completing his A Levels.

She told me to choose a Computer Science course, rather than a games design course. Because if you imagine Computer Science like this (*stretches out his hands*) and you learn all of that, games is this (*smaller distance shown*)

with hands), so you only learn that when you could be learning all of that (*larger distance between hands*). She said that you can basically learn games within it if you are really dedicated.

Joseph

Finally, friends from home and university had been vital in providing moral and academic support respectively whilst at university. He talked keenly of how helpful this contact was in the first year with friends from school.

Quite a lot from S** (*fellow school friend*) because I talked to him every now and then on msn, like three times a week. He may not know but it helped a lot. It means that I can whine about people and he would listen.

Joseph

Despite this level of success, Joseph's experience of transition in this area was not without challenges. In fact, when he was asked to describe his progress since leaving school he expressed it as a series of 'highs and lows' despite 'strongly agreeing' that his courses had generally worked out well for him. There had been academic challenges but perhaps not quite in the same way as experienced by Sandeep and Simon depicted further on in this section. For Joseph, the challenge was more associated with the pressure of meeting so many deadlines, especially when he was completing his A Levels. Perhaps, the more pressing challenge for him had been coping with the loneliness when he first went away to university.

...it can be very isolating at university. Um I did experience in my first year like real isolation like I sat in my room which is more or less like a glamification of a prison cell and I thought to myself god I am so lonely.

...I kind of thought to myself do I actually know anyone in **** (name of university)? But yes it is very isolating when you live in a hall of residence and you don't know anyone.

Joseph

5.2.4.2. Sandeep's transition to university

The journey to university for Sandeep could not have been more different from that experienced by Joseph. His first year at local college after leaving school proved unfortunate as, due to staff illness, none of the students on his course completed the GNVQ Level 1 in Performing Arts. In the second year out of school, he moved to a

different local college to take the same course and achieved a distinction, the highest mark in his class as well as an award for his commitment to his studies. The next year he successfully completed the same subject at Level 2. He was in his fourth year out of school when he took part in the survey and during that year he had started an Access course at a university close to home in media and some shorter courses in computer studies. Once completed, he was sufficiently qualified to begin a BSc degree in Multi Media Computing.

Figure 5.9 shows that compared to Joseph, Sandeep experienced more challenges with his transition and indicates why he was placed in the strong agency but weak resources quadrant in Figure 5.9. One of the most striking features of his account was the lack of support he received in all of his courses leading to university.

Everyone in college told me that I could never get into uni. Everyone in college said that but I made it.

Ah, none of them thought I could get into uni. But then I just had to fulfil my dreams so I went to Connexions, they don't help me that much either so I just took it upon myself, my own initiative to educate myself and I came across an Access course at **** (*name of university*).

Actually no one supported me with the Access course. Everyone thought I was making a big mistake...even my dad even. It's funny how things worked out.

In the beginning I didn't have support at all.

Yeah. No one gave me advice, I had to rely on the internet.

Sandeep

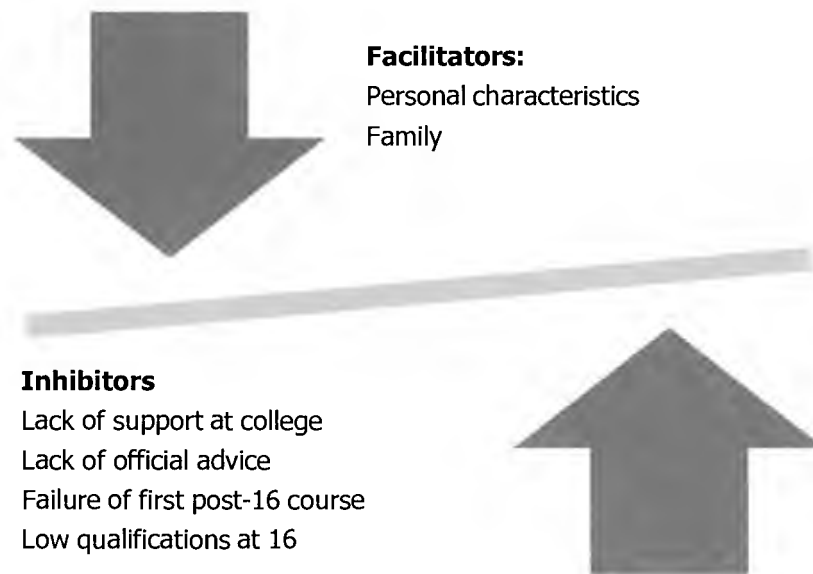


Figure 5.9 Facilitators and inhibitors of Sandeep's transition in education

Nevertheless, Sandeep had managed to overcome the challenge of insufficient support and a complex qualification route and succeeded in getting to university having left school with just four GCSEs with grades C to G. This again was different to the five A* - C GCSEs attained by Joseph on leaving school. As such, his transition in education provided an interesting insight into how one young person was able to overcome considerable hurdles. In Sandeep's case it seems that his personal characteristics and demonstration of agency played a fundamental role. Throughout this aspect of his transition there were clear indications of a strong work ethic, with for example, repeating and gaining a distinction in his first qualification and completing additional computer courses whilst taking his Access course in order to secure a place on a degree qualification. His interview was punctuated with comments reflecting resilience and strong personal agency such as a willingness to take responsibility for his own actions and outcomes.

I want to be the best in what I do.

I was low on confidence (start of Access course) and I had to really get my act together. I didn't really get my act together at the beginning because I wasn't

expecting to pass the course. But then I got my first pass on a module and that gave me motivation. It made me feel like I could do it. As the course progressed I changed the way I thought and I passed that.

Also I think it is my job to take care of my family when I graduate I want to take care of my family.
Sandeep

The importance of family and in particular, the support received from his father, was another feature which helped him meet the challenges at that time. As previously mentioned, Sandeep had always felt that his father had 'believed' in him. Sandeep also spoke about a visual ability he possessed, which he believed helped, for example, with the 3-D modelling part of his studies.

5.2.4.3. *Simon's transition to university*

Finally, Simon's academic career presented perhaps with even further challenges. He left school with five GCSEs between A*- G to attend a local college to complete a Level 2 GNVQ and then a National Diploma in Design Craft and subsequently went straight to university to study for a BSc Honours in Design. In some respects, although vocational in nature, the linear nature of his transition was not dissimilar to that experienced by Joseph. However, after almost two years of degree level study Simon decided to leave university.

Figure 5.10 clearly highlights the extent of the challenges that his time at university presented. The contrast with the figures summarising the facilitators and inhibitors for Joseph's and to a lesser extent Sandeep's transition is quite marked as Simon experienced almost all of the inhibitors described by the young people during the interviews and helps explain his placing in the weak resources and agency quadrant in Figure 5.7.

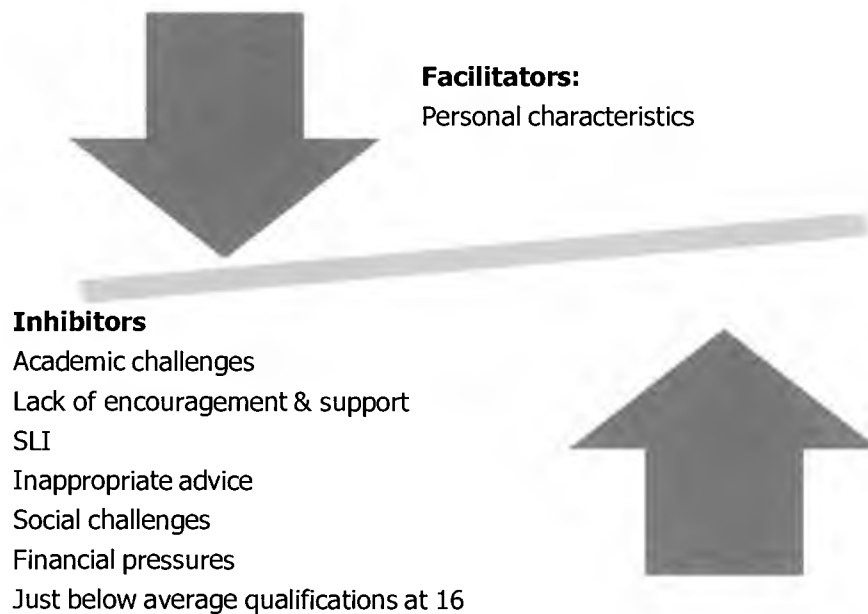


Figure 5.10 Simon's transition to university and beyond

Firstly, the degree course posed a number of academic challenges for Simon. Simon was one of the participants who did see a direct link with his history of SLI as a cause of experiencing barriers in some aspects of his transition. He felt that his language impairment had contributed to some of the difficulties he had faced on the course, particularly when he had to make presentations to his peers and staff which were a regular demand of his design course.

Yeah but I think that I lacked design in my head basically and which was probably the let down and it made me stop going to, stop doing the third year because I was unsure of myself whether to go back. With design I struggled a lot...It was the projects that concerned me....Well a lot of team based work and I didn't feel that this was right for me basically.

...Yeah presentation, yes because the course there was a lot of talk and I lacked that because of my speech and language.....Yeah I think it is all linked my speech and language difficulties.....Well the understanding, getting your own thoughts down.

Simon

The position was made more difficult by a somewhat ambiguous relationship with the Learning Support department and his tutors. Assistance was provided with his written work; a situation where he could book in with a member of staff from Learning Support maybe once or twice a week as needed. However, Simon also needed further support with the practical element of his course from his tutors, which was not always forthcoming. Simon spoke of the dilemma of requiring support from others for his studies within a university culture where the dominant feature was one of independent study.

I was telling them (*tutors*) about it but at the end of the day the connection stopped basically.

I felt actually that there wasn't much support that they could give me because here you are doing this degree course you should know where you basically want to be really.

Simon

Unlike the specific and helpful UCAS advice received by Joseph which enabled him to make a successful and strategic decision with his choice of degree course, Simon appeared to 'wander' into his degree.

Well in careers at college they were pointing us towards going to university basically. There wasn't much of an option like an apprenticeship or that.

Simon

Looking back he also felt that his final 'choice' of degree may not have been the best alternative when he was asked to consider if he would have changed any of the decisions he had made.

At university I would have gone into Fine Art instead because I would have found that it would have been bit more of a strong subject.

Simon

Finally, throughout his interview Simon commented on the financial strains of going to university. Although he had received government funding, he had worked in part time employment in order to alleviate some of the strain.

I feared getting into debt basically.

Simon

Unlike Sandeep, Simon did not seem to encounter or experience sufficient facilitators either in number or strength to 'counteract' the challenges posed by university. In fact, this section of his interview was marked by an absence of the facilitators mentioned by the other participants. This is also demonstrated by Figure 5.16. He did speak of a talent for aspects of his subject; specifically the ability to draw and that his parents had helped with taking him to university at the start and end of term time. However, these references were few. Again, unlike Sandeep, Simon did not use language that suggested personal agency or an active responsibility and involvement in this aspect of his transition. Although currently working in a fast food restaurant, this had materialised as a result of a contact through a friend, as well as working somewhere similar when he had studied as a student. The 'tone' of Simon's interview was also of someone experiencing a great deal of doubt and uncertainty in this aspect of his life as shown by some of the comments made below as the interview progressed.

I am pretty unsure where to be at the moment.

But the main issue is that I am not too sure. I know that it is down to me to what to do but I need to sit down and really need to see what is happening.

I got this far and I want to be absolutely clear with myself that there is going to be a right direction.

Simon

5.3. Employment outcomes

The next section of the chapter explores the employment outcomes for those young people working at the time of the survey and the interview. This is followed by an examination of the inhibitors and facilitators of employment and an account of the experiences of Mark and David's transition to the world of work.

Seventeen ($F = 3$, $M = 14$) of the participants were working at the time of survey, (two positions were part time), with retail being the most common form of employment ($N = 6$). Other occupations included administrative work, skilled trades, unskilled work and the armed forces as shown in Table 5.8 As might have been expected the majority of those working were in the older age group.

Table 5.8 Type of occupation (Survey) (N/17)

	Adolescent	Emerging Adult
Retail		6
Unskilled employment	2	2
Skilled trade	1	2
Administration		2
Animal welfare		1
Armed Forces		1

The majority of young adults ($N = 13/17$) reported that it was 'very easy' or 'fairly easy' finding their position. However, when questioned further about the methods they used to find the post, it was quite often a relative or friend that had assisted them in acquiring the position and very few of the participants had secured their jobs through the more formal process of completing an application form and attending an interview in response to a job advertisement. For most of the participants, parents were reported as being the most helpful source of support when looking and applying for jobs. Although not statistically significant, the female participants were more likely to have reported that starting their post- 16 course or finding employment was more difficult and that they were less certain about employment or training opportunities ($\chi^2 (1 N = 60) = 0.750, ns$).

Almost three-quarters of the participants ($N = 12/17$) expressed positive attitudes towards how much they enjoyed their work. One of the main reasons cited by participants was the supportive relationships they had established with many of their colleagues. All of the participants reported some degree of positive working relationships with their colleagues, with thirteen reporting that they get on very well with their co-workers. Any difficulties expressed about colleagues were often

concerned with management issues and how some of the participants felt that they were not spoken to properly at times.

An examination of the experiences of those participants who were working, revealed that five of the seventeen failed to complete their first post-16 course compared to a total of eight from the whole study. Another appreciable difference compared to the rest of the participants who were studying or not in education or training at the time of the survey was that most of the participants ($N = 12/17$) had moved straight to a mainstream placement from school. All had left school with at least one GSCE. The one participant in the study who went straight into work had a part time unskilled occupation.

Almost two years later, ten of the nineteen young people interviewed were in full time employment. Out of those ten, four had continued to work for the same company as at the time of the survey, one was working in the same field but was about to commence an administrative position with a new company in a different part of the country and five had moved into employment from full time education. One young person in this group, had dropped out of university to work in retail. Table 5.9 reveals that the type of employment was similar to outcomes at the time of the survey with retail, administration and a skilled trade being the most common sources of employment. Apart from the young people working in retail, the occupations were the result of 'career choices' although less than half ($N = 4/10$) were in employment that was directly related to their qualifications.

Table 5.9 Type of occupation (Interview) (N/10)

	<i>N</i>
Retail	3
Administration	2
Skilled trade	2
Catering	1
Horticulture	1
Health and Social Care	1

A common feature for those young people working at the time of the survey was that the majority had found employment through informal methods, predominantly by means of family contacts. This picture was somewhat reversed for the young people interviewed face-to-face, with eight of the ten having applied for their positions using standard, formal procedures including applications forms and interviews. Two of the young people who worked in retail, had worked for their respective employers part-time as students. However, in line with views expressed during the survey, a similar proportion, ($N = 7/10$) talked of enjoying their work. For those who expressed a less favourable view, two participants were working in retail and the third young person enjoyed their work but did not like working with their immediate line managers.

At the time of the interview, the young people were almost two years older and this greater time-span since leaving school exposed more periods of unemployment that were not evident two years earlier. Out of the ten young people working, five had experienced at least one phase of unemployment lasting from three to six months and one had worked part-time for a supermarket for a year whilst looking for full time work, more commensurate to his qualifications and experience. These figures do not include the four young people who were at the time unemployed, who were also

experiencing prolonged unemployment. Incidents of unemployment did not discriminate towards any particular profession or education routes since leaving school; including young people who had moved directly into specialist and mainstream settings. For most of the young people the timing of unemployment occurred after completing full time education and beginning their first full time position.

Finally, the experience of the ten working participants, presents certain limitations in identifying specific trends, nevertheless, it was possible to distinguish four common experiences and patterns relating to employment. Just two of the young people could be said to have followed a relatively straight forward routes from completion of full time education into a related field of employment, these areas of work were in horticulture and catering. Another two young people were happy with their new careers but were not working in an area for which they had specifically trained. The largest set ($N = 3/10$), who all worked in retail, were frustrated in some form either due to little prospect of promotion or that they saw the job very much as a stop gap to when a position in a 'chosen' occupation might be secured. Lastly, two young men had gained employment in a chosen field but only after a number of 'false starts' which included dropping out of courses and army training and undertaking a number of temporary positions such as car valeting. Both these young men, working in plumbing and administration respectively, had at some point gained a modern apprenticeship in their chosen fields which had brought a greater sense of direction to their working lives.

5.3.1. Facilitators of employment

The interviews with the young people in employment highlighted four key factors that facilitated a move into employment: family, personal characteristics of the young person, advice and education. Each facilitator is examined in turn and the experiences of one of the participants, Mark, is used to demonstrate how these factors combined to result in a very positive transition from education to employment.

The only facilitator mentioned by all of the young people ($N = 10/10$) was the support from family which operated in four distinct ways. Firstly, the parents of three of the participants had directly secured the young person a position ($N = 1/10$) or an interview ($N = 2/10$). The most commonly cited method of support ($N = 7/10$) was of

a practical nature such as contacting or accompanying the young person to a Job Centre ($N = 4/10$), looking out for jobs in the newspapers or the internet ($N = 2/10$) and assisting with writing Curriculum Vitae (CV). Others ($N = 2/10$) talked about the importance of emotional and moral support.

Mum was fantastic, the support I get from my mum is unlike any other and she supports me and understands me more than any other.

David

Last year was a bad year at work because my boss just knocked the confidence out of me. But my mum was there about supporting me basically.

Ben

Lastly, it might be said that for three of the young people, their choice of career had a 'keep it in the family' element. Mark's parents; who worked in the catering profession, had recently retired from running a take-away business for twenty-seven years.

Robert, who worked in a plant nursery, told how his mother and grandmother, who were both keen gardeners, had influenced and encouraged his interest in horticulture.

Steven, who was working as a plasterer and a decorator also described the influential effect of his father on his choice of career.

My dad is an architect, he likes doing a bit of building work himself around the place. I got started really young, I learnt how to do quite a lot of things. I think my whole life would be completely different if my dad was not an architect.

Steven

The second most frequent facilitator of transition to work identified by the participants was the active part played by the young people themselves ($N = 7/10$). This was exemplified in four ways: finding their current position, having a talent for or keen interest in their field, ambition and a drive to challenge negative perceptions they believed others held of them. Seven of the young people had found their own job using a variety of methods such as vacancies advertised by the Job Centre, the internet, specialist job agencies and speculative enquiries. Three of the participants talked of having an interest, talent or practical skills in their chosen fields. Although, explicitly mentioned by just two of the participants, all of the young people had shown strong commitment, motivation and hard work on their journeys moving from education to work.

I have always had the right motivation, the right mentality to look for work, look for jobs and go the right way about it. David

Determination to challenge the views of others was mentioned by two participants. Ben who had experienced a number of 'false starts' before gaining his modern apprenticeship recalled that:

A lot of people said to me that you are never going to do it but I just wanted to show people wrong so I did.

Ben

Owen was more explicit:

Mainly my speech and language spurred me on...a lot of people blamed me if I was to get it wrong and it spurred me to think to myself that... I am going to make you look wrong.

Owen

Advice also played an important role in the transition to work. The effectiveness of Job Centres received a mixed review from the participants although five of the young people reported them as making some form of contribution. The most frequent contribution ($N = 3/10$) was as a source of current vacancies usually provided in the form of a list on paper or on computer. Wendy and Owen were appointed a Disability Employment Agent and a Job Counsellor respectively and both reported that this person had been helpful in terms of discussing possible career options. A final way that the Job Centre acted as a facilitator was to place a young person on a work related training course as experienced by Ben. None of the young people in employment reported that Connexions had helped the transition to employment in any way.

Education as a main facilitator was highlighted by four young people. Just Wendy and Robert described how their courses at college and work experience, as part of their courses, confirmed their interest in their respective fields of work, securing positions in a residential home for the elderly and horticulture respectively. Three of the participants also mentioned how various opportunities provided by school, college and work related training courses to practise interview skills and letter writing had been valuable.

5.3.2. Inhibitors of employment

Three main areas were identified by the young people who were working as issues which made finding employment problematic; inappropriate or insufficient advice ($N = 6/10$), lack of qualifications ($N = 5/10$) and concerns relating to the nature of their language impairment ($N = 3/10$). Each inhibitor is examined and as with the facilitators the account of one young person, David, is used to illustrate how such factors affected their particular transition to employment.

Insufficient or inappropriate advice were seen as the most common cause of difficulty when trying to secure employment. The Connexions Service and Job Centres were the two organisations named as potential principal sources of advice. Holly's experience of the Connexions Service had entailed an interview at the local office, an assertion of help for the future, but that this was the last she heard from them. However, for Ben and David, they felt, inappropriate advice from Connexions had contributed towards the wrong choice of college course after leaving school which subsequently had had negative repercussions in terms of delaying rewarding employment prospects. Both had been encouraged to start a vocational access course (Entry Level) at their respective local colleges. Ben, who had decided that he had wanted to start a plumbing course even before leaving school, found that the vocational access course had not challenged him, and as previously described he decided to leave the course before completion. It was another year and a half before he was to secure a place on a plumbing course at another local college.

That made a big dent just getting myself onto the first step again.
Ben

David did finish the course, but his view was similar to that of Ben.

I do look back on that with regret. I did a vocational access course, it was an absolute waste of time.
David

A lack of specific and accurate knowledge about the young person and even a lack of expectation was Owen's experience of the Connexions Service. Criticisms, associated with not being able to access relevant advice were also directed by some of the participants towards their local Job Centre ($N = 2/10$).

..they didn't help me. I didn't know who to talk, didn't know who to see basically, it was pretty much up to me looking at gardening adds and stuff like that, there wasn't much available...I didn't know much about it, it was quite confusing. I couldn't really seek the help when I got there basically.

Simon

in the same way that some of the participants felt that Connexions Officers were not aware of SLI, this was also experienced by some participants with Job Centre staff.

Three of the participants felt that their lack of qualifications had hampered their search for employment. This took the form of wishing that they had undertaken more GCSEs in school ($N = 3/10$) or as in Simon's case needing higher grades in GCSE mathematics and English. Simon was working in a fast food restaurant having left university after just two years before completing his degree. Despite a BTEC Diploma in Design Craft and a higher education certificate in Design, it was his low GCSE grades in mathematics and English, he believed, that were holding back his chances of securing a more rewarding position and one that reflected his level of qualifications.

Finally, just three of the participants discussed how they believed that an aspect of their language impairment had impacted in some way on their employment but there were no similarities between their accounts. Robert felt that his low levels of reading on leaving school had not been an issue during his Level 1 horticulture course but did limit his ability to progress into the Level 2 course. Robert also experienced severe difficulties with his speech which did affect how he had to perform at work.

When I talk to people at work sometimes I have to repeat myself but I don't mind doing that... at weekends I get tired of speaking normally so I let it go down.

Robert

Holly's speech difficulties, she felt, had prevented her from moving into an administration role from retail. Her CV included a reference to her speech difficulties and she believed that employers had telephoned her to discuss a possible interview as a way of ascertaining the degree of difficulty she experienced. She had yet to be formally called for an interview. David had attended basic army training but was medically discharged before completion of the course. However, he did recall that:

I didn't get things quickly, I wasn't accurate with the learning side of it.
David

5.3.3. The role of agency and structure in the employment experiences of the young people

As with those young people in education in the interview sample, for those in employment ($N = 9/19$, which included Wendy who was about to commence her first full time position), Figure 5.11 shows that agency played a key role in their transition to the world of work. As previously described, agency, in this context, took the form of, for example, a keen interest or talent for a specific type of employment, such as horticulture, using initiative to explore many avenues of finding employment, and once again, a resilience to respond positively to challenges such as short term unemployment.

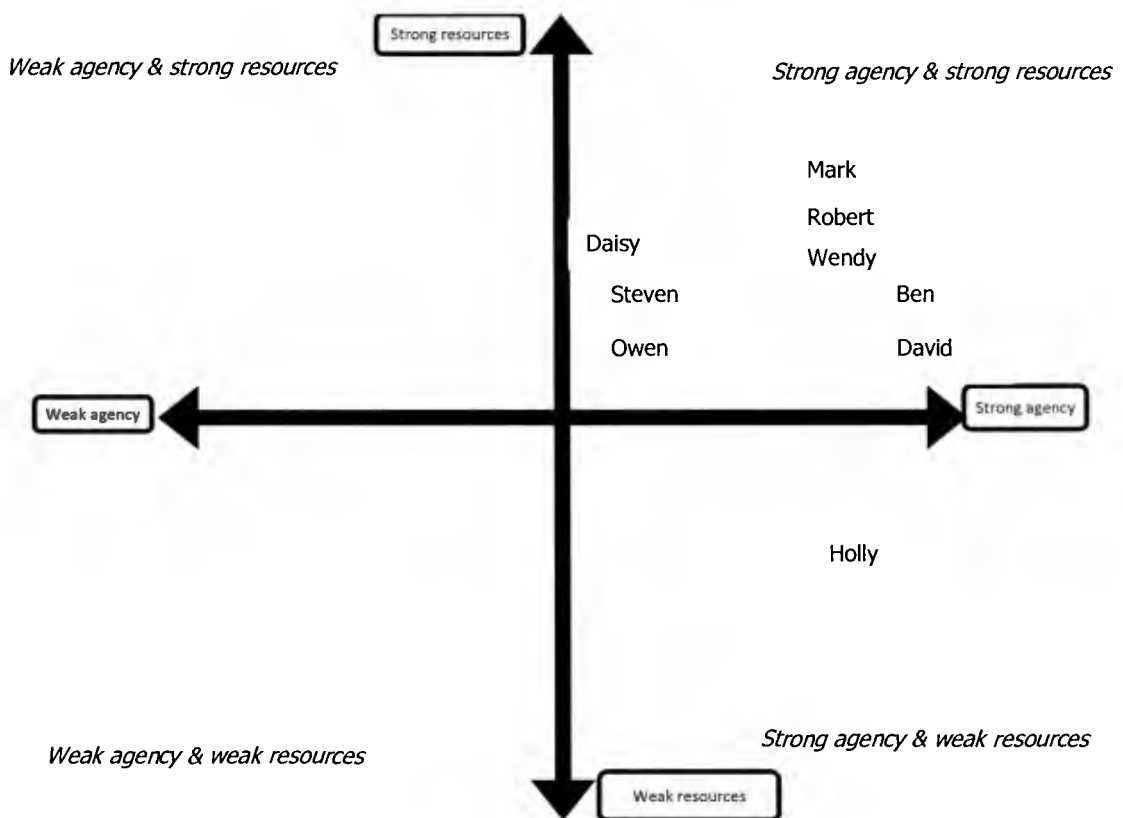


Figure 5.11 Role of agency and structure in employment

Ben and David, perhaps, more than all the others in this group, demonstrated such strong agency as they had both experienced successful, rewarding, yet challenging career paths. Their resilience in responding to set backs was clear including poor choice of early post-16 courses, Ben dropping out of his first college course and 'false' career starts with David when having to drop out of army training and the experience of short term unemployment. This all demonstrated a consistent tenacity to succeed and strong self-belief. Mark and Robert had applied themselves diligently to the task of finding employment and had made the most of resources available to them such as family links with their vocational course choices and subsequent employment routes, but unlike Ben and David, their relatively straight forward paths had meant they had yet to be challenged in the same way. Although, Robert had shown considerable resilience in meeting the many challenges faced in society by anyone with a severe speech difficulty, which appeared to not affect his transition as much as Holly and Teresa; the two other interview participants who had severe articulation difficulties. Finally, Daisy, Owen and Steven were lower on the agency axis as three had found their position of employment as a result of a direct intervention from a parent/s and although they felt that they had exercised control over accepting the position, perhaps this was more an example of perceived agency.

Almost all of the young people had been able to call on a range of resources to help them secure employment including support from family, relevant qualifications and helpful advice at important times. Thus a combination of strong agency and structural factors had resulted in employment and for the majority of this group, it was had been employment that was the result of a chosen area of interest and was rewarding. The one participant who was experiencing particular frustrations with her current employment was Holly, who as previously described, very much felt that this was as a result of her speech difficulties and hence her position lower on the resources axis. Along with having received very little support from the Connexions Service. Like so many of their peers in the study, she had tried a number of routes to finding new employment or promotion at work but for her, none had proved successful. Her current full time position in a supermarket was a consequence of having worked there part time as a student.

The importance of a combination of structure and agency for employment can be seen when the four members of the interview sample who were not in education or employment are added to the data display (Figure 5.12).

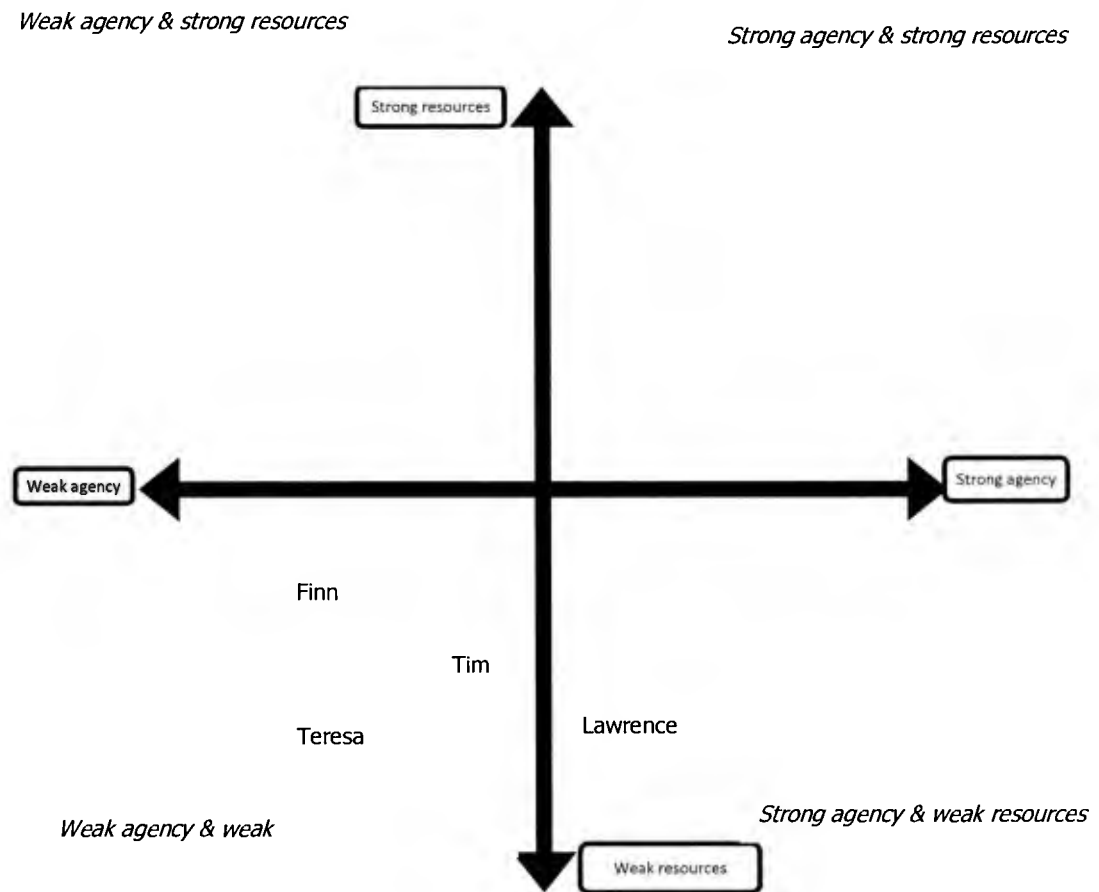


Figure 5.12 Role of agency and structure for young people not in education or employment

Figure 5.12 shows that all of these young people did not have quite the same access to resources as those participants in employment and evidence of agency was less evident in their testimonies. A more detailed account of this group of young people is explored in a later section. The next section compares and contrasts the different experiences of Mark and David's transition to employment.

5.3.4. Mark's transition to employment

Mark's transition to work exemplified very clearly how the interrelationship of these four factors helped to ensure for him a relatively straight forward transition from full time education to work. When Mark left school he went straight to his local college and began a NVQ Level 1 in Catering and Food Service. At school he had completed an Entry Level qualification in Food Studies and taken part in an after school cookery club and had won a school Masterchef competition. His parents had also run a takeaway business for several years.

My mum and dad used to own a takeaway and I used to help out.
Mark

On leaving school Mark acknowledged that both his school and home experiences had influenced his decision to take a catering course. At the same time a local Careers Officer was able to point him in the direction of a suitable course in a local college near his home. In the second year of college he took the same course but at Level 2. At the end of this year, he immediately went with his sister to the Job Centre and applied online for catering positions. He quickly secured a catering role in the staff restaurant of a large retail company. At the time of the survey he had been working there for a year and two years later when interviewed, he was still happily with the same employer, working a 3pm to 8pm shift pattern. He enjoyed his work, but the evening shift often meant working alone which could be stressful at times; being solely responsible for all aspects of service. For the future, he saw himself remaining in the catering industry but at some stage looking for a position in another company, which was the only way he could see of gaining further responsibilities and promotion.

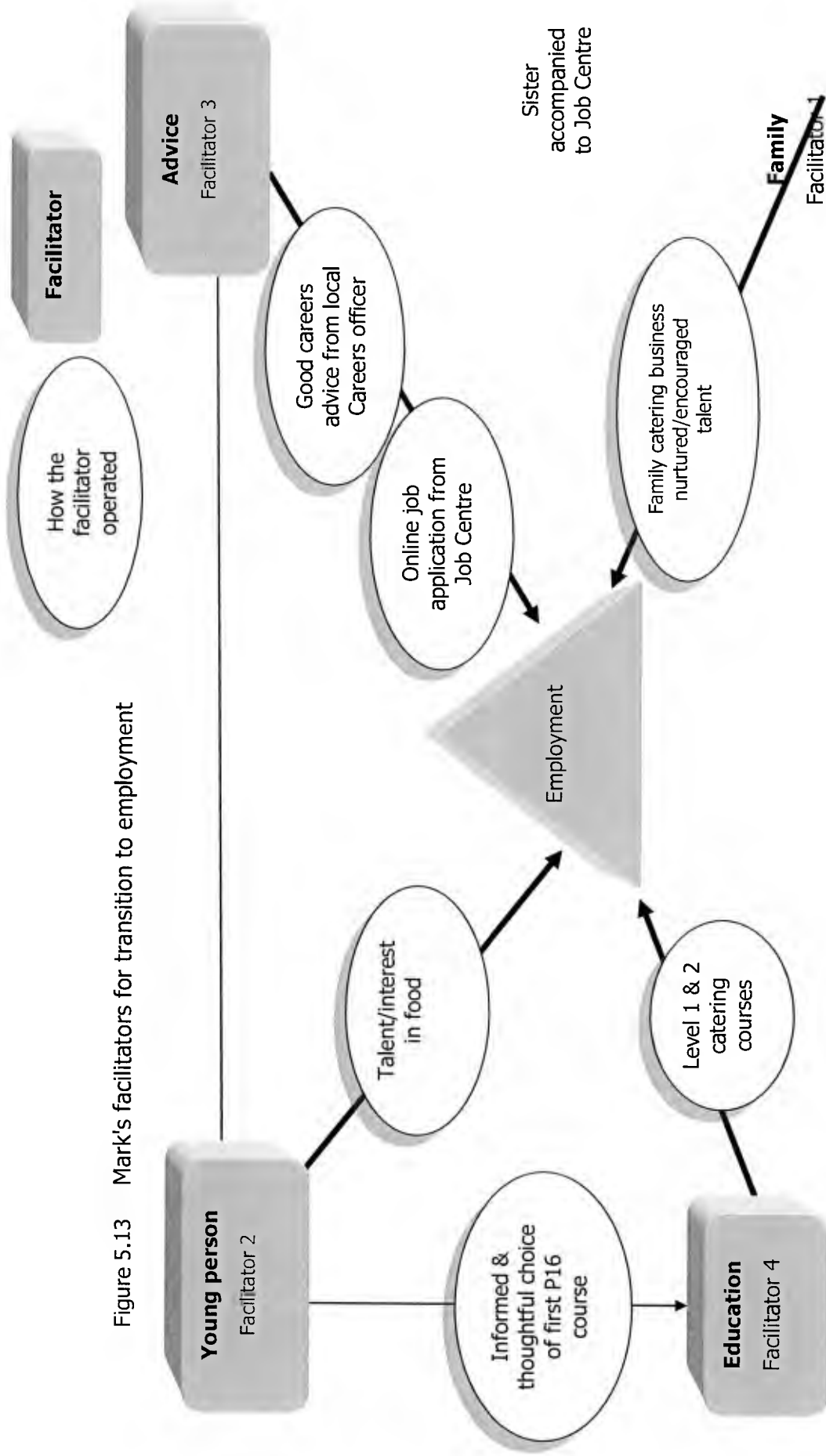


Figure 5.13 Mark's facilitators for transition to employment

An examination of Figure 5.13 which summarises the factors that facilitated Mark's transition to work clearly shows that he had all of the main factors contributing to the process. However, Figure 5.13 shows that it wasn't just the presence of these factors alone, but the way in which they were interconnected, for example, the family not only provided practical support with his sister accompanying him to the Job Centre but they also played a part in nurturing his talent/interest and thereby supporting one of the most important factors for facilitating transition; the personal characteristics of the young person.

A question might be posed as to what extent Mark's transition was the result of good fortune, for example, a local college that had a relevant course, the Job Centre having an appropriate position and his family running a catering business? It may be that good fortune played a part but at the same time it is impossible to ignore the pivotal role that Mark played himself in his transition. Figure 5.13 shows that he did capitalise on his talent and interest in food but that he also demonstrated a commitment to his path when he took part in the cookery club at school, completing two courses at college and immediately visiting the Job Centre on completion of the last course. He did receive helpful advice from the local Careers Officer but he also made what could be described as some shrewd decisions. When he left school he had sufficient qualifications to start the Level 2 course but decided on the Level 1. This was a conscious decision to enable him to make the academic transition to mainstream from specialist residential education with relative ease. Finally, Mark was very clear in the interview that although he recognised the important contributions made by his family, school, college and the Job Centre, he saw himself as key in making the transition to work.

I made my decisions about what I wanted to do.

Mark

5.3.5 David's transition to employment

David's transition to employment was not the linear process experienced by Mark. Since leaving school David had completed a number of FE courses including a modern apprenticeship, experienced periods of part time employment, unemployment and

basic army training before beginning his career in office administration. Figure 5.14 shows his transition routes since leaving school.

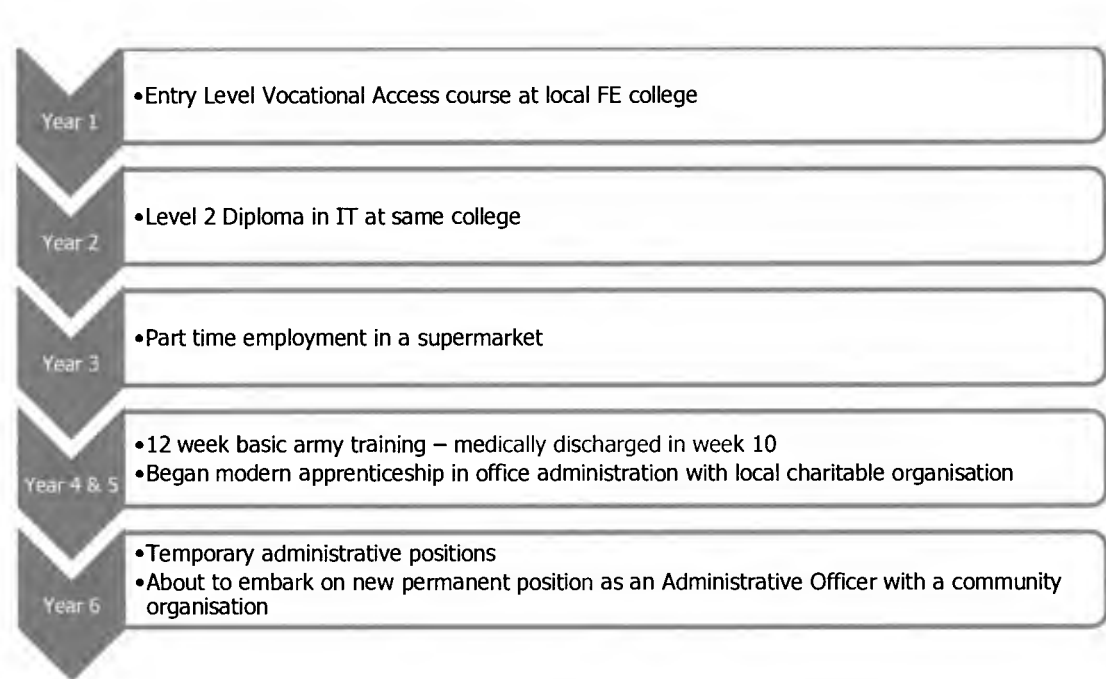


Figure 5.14 David's Post-16 education and employment route

His breadth of experience provided clear insights into the factors which played a role in the transition to employment. Perhaps the most striking feature of his transition in this area was the effect of misguided or insufficient advice, particularly in the selection of inappropriate early post-16 courses, the repercussions of which included a lack of direction, a delay in finding a chosen career path and periods of unemployment or part time temporary work. His first post-16 course was a vocational access Entry level qualification at a local college which he described as a waste of time.

I did finish, but I didn't get anything out of it. It was so frustrating because it was like I was so worried that I might be the worse student there because I have this problem and everyone is going to be normal. And it ended up that I was one of the smartest students there.

David

His next one year course, a BTEC in Information Technology (IT) he described as more challenging but just made him realise that a career in IT was not for him. For the next year he worked part time in a local supermarket whilst he tried to figure out what to do.

I was at the stage where I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do.

David

His decision to sign up for army training originated from a suggestion made by his mother but a medical injury meant that he was discharged just before the end of the twelve week selection course. In some aspects it was a relief as he had not enjoyed the experience. It was during this training that David also felt his history of SLI had had more of an impact. As previously described David experienced difficulties learning some of the new skills.

The fitness side I was better than most of them, but the learning side of it, I struggled.

David

This he felt had contributed to him being bullied by some of the potential recruits.

The other recruits, well it got to the point where it felt like bullying and that was because I was a bit slower at picking things up.

David

Almost four years out of school, David was still struggling to find a secure and rewarding career path. However, his fortunes changed in the form of a modern apprenticeship, working in an administrative role for a local charitable organisation which he had found himself through a Connexions website. During those two years he completed a NVQ Level 2 in Customer Services, which, along with the position, he found rewarding.

It was a fantastic start and because it was a modern apprenticeship as well.

David

Two years later and as might be expected of any young person, he wanted a new challenge.

It got to the point where I had achieved everything I could. I wanted to be a bit more ambitious.

David

Once again unemployed, David spent the next four/five months in temporary administrative positions whilst he looked for permanent employment. Unlike his first experience of employment, this time he was clear about the type of position he wanted and after eleven interviews, he was about to start, at the time of the interview, working for a community organisation as an administrative officer. The position was in a part of the country where his mother and brother had relocated to and with whom David was going to live with again after two years living independently. David found the position himself in a local newspaper.

David's transition to employment followed a complex route to that of the more linear routes experienced by Mark. A comparison of their facilitators of transition to work show that despite some important similarities, there were also key differences (Figure 5.15). David, like Mark had received parental support both of a practical and emotional nature. He also, throughout his years since leaving school, had demonstrated strong determination towards job finding and securing long term employment that was rewarding and of his choice. Indeed, without the combination of a supportive family and such personal characteristics, his transition to rewarding work may have been more protracted and less positive.

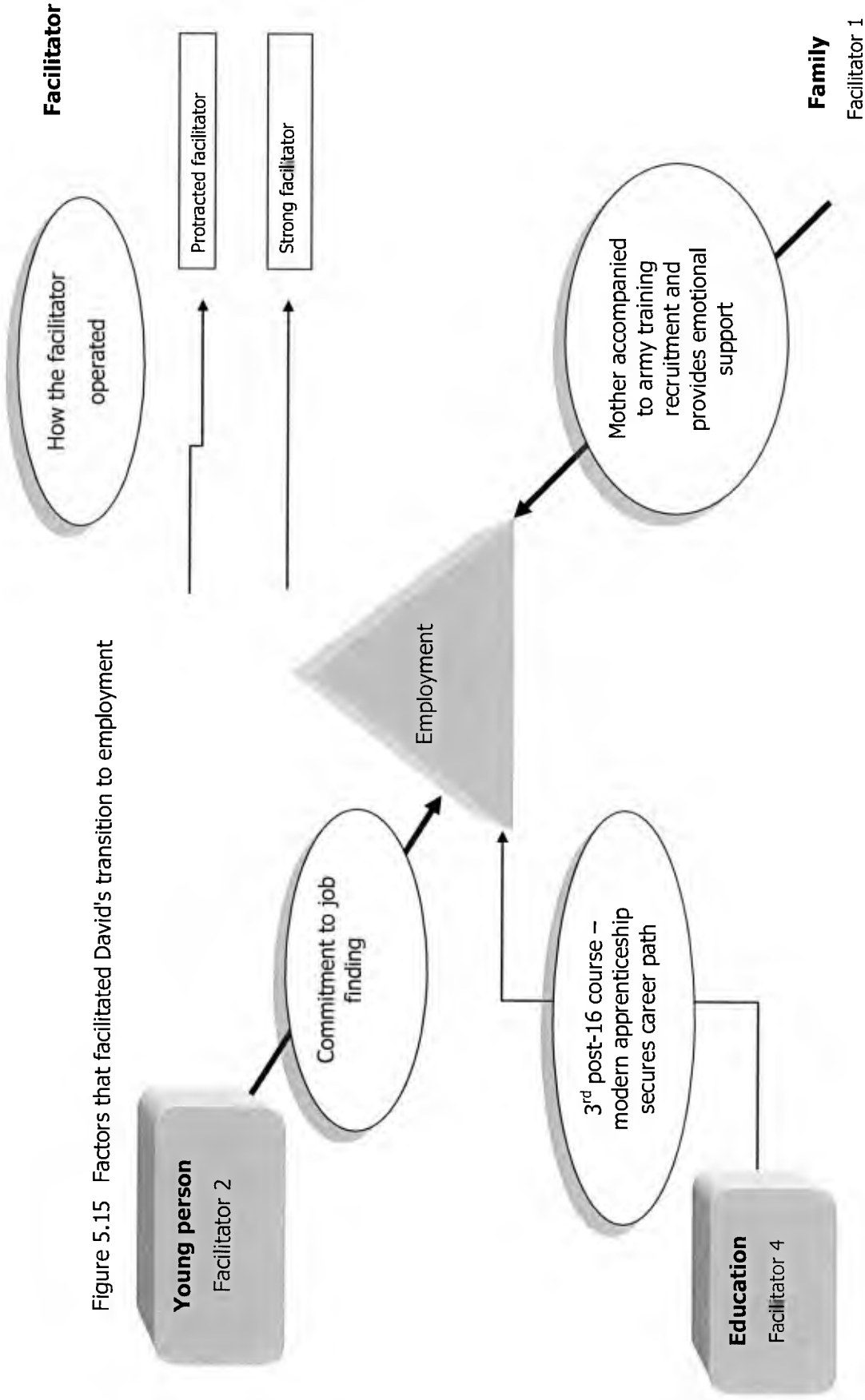


Figure 5.15 Factors that facilitated David's transition to employment

However, a comparison of the differences between the two experiences, show how David's transition did not include all of those factors that had been present in Mark's experience. One of the most striking absences was the lack of informed advice at strategic times in his post-16 career including leaving school and when he had completed his two FE courses. This had implications for another key factor: education, in that he described how neither of these early courses had been instrumental in guiding him towards employment. Contributing to this picture, was the lack of any early identified interest on leaving school that was more evident with Mark's interest in food and cooking. The combination of these missing elements from David's transition was that at times, especially in the first three to four years, it might have appeared characterised by a lack of direction and purpose and yet his self-confidence and drive to succeed enabled him find a route through a more permanent form of rewarding employment.

5.4 Young people not in education, employment or training

At the time of the survey only four of the total cohort ($N = 60$) were not in education or employment, but it was important to look for any similarities in experiences which might have been common for these young people at this time in the study. Of some concern was that three members of this group were female which was a high proportion considering twelve of the sixty were female compared to 48 male participants. Another similarity was that all four of the participants in this group had left school with predominantly Entry Level qualifications, (two participants left with one GSCE) and only one young person in this group went on to complete a Level 1 qualification. One participant was unable to find employment due to ill health and the remainder reported a lack of suitable opportunities but for differing reasons. Geographical isolation, for one young person meant few employment possibilities and limited public transport services to travel elsewhere. Another participant had experienced short periods of employment but could not secure a permanent position. The final young person in this group had yet to get to the interview stage of the job application process. The contribution of structural factors was evident in these situations.

In other respects the experiences of this particular group of young people were quite varied. After leaving school two participants had attended FE college, one a residential special school for SLI and the other a residential FE college for young people with a range of physical disabilities. All reported positively on their post-16 education placements. The participants were using more formal sources of support to assist with transition which included, a Scouts and a Disability Employment Adviser. Only one young person out of the four had seen a Connexions Personal Adviser in the previous year. Nevertheless, all felt that they were receiving sufficient support with finding work whether from family members or official avenues. Finally, the language standardised assessment results taken in Year 11 revealed achievement at different levels when compared with the average for the whole cohort, with two participants with scores below the group average, one similar to the average and one just above (Table 5.10).

Table 5.10 Academic outcomes at 16 for young people not in education, employment or training (Survey)

	TOAL	WR	WS	WRC	GCSEs
	(SS)	(SS)	(SS)	(SS)	(A*-G)
Average for whole cohort	62.6	76.3	79.2	76.9	2.3
Male 1	65	50	52	40	1
Female 1	51	74	101	73	1
Female 2	64	82	87	84	0
Female 3	78	51	54	51	0

In the interview sample, four of the nineteen young people were not in education or employment, all of whom had been in full time education at the time of the survey. Three of these young people had attended a specialist setting as their first post-16 placement and had left school at sixteen with language scores that were below the average score for the whole cohort of sixty (Table 5.11). A difference to those unemployed at the time of the survey was that three of this group were male. However, as with the survey findings, variation between the members of this group persisted as expressed by the range of GCSEs achieved in leaving school which ranged from none to four A* to G passes. The young people had also left school at different times between 2000 and 2004. At the time of interview all four were receiving Job Seeker's Allowance.

Table 5.11 Academic outcomes at 16 for young people not in education, employment or training (Interview)

	TOAL	WR	WS	WRC	GCSEs
	(SS)	(SS)	(SS)	(SS)	(A*-G)
Average for whole cohort	62.6	76.3	79.2	76.9	2.3
Teresa	41	53	53	58	1
Finn	44	68	67	66	3
Tim	46	67	78	66	0
Lawrence	83	90	90	90	4

5.4 Inhibitors of employment for young people not in education, employment or training and the role of agency and structure

Figure 5.12 showed very clearly that for the young people in this group agency and structural factors to assist the transition to work were not as evident as for those participants in employment. To allow for a more searching analysis, the inhibitors to employment for those young people not in employment or education were explored separately. It was also important to ascertain if their experiences differed in any aspects from those who were in employment at the time of the interview but had also experienced unemployment at some point in their post-16 careers. Indeed, there were some similarities to those young people in work, including the finding that no common factor was mentioned by all the young people. Similarly, the three inhibiting factors experienced by those young people in work: inappropriate or insufficient advice, a lack of appropriate qualifications and concerns relating to the nature of their language impairment were also described by those in this group. However, these four young people also identified other issues which acted as an inhibitor to employment.

These young people described six inhibitors which presented challenges when looking for and securing full time employment: insufficient support ($N = 3$), lack of experience ($N = 2$), lack of qualifications ($N = 2$), SLI ($N = 2$), unsuitable nature of work available ($N = 2$) and poor quality of work based training courses ($N = 1$). Insufficient advice was reported as the most common factor which included official sources of advice such as Connexions and for one young person, a feeling that their parents might have been more supportive. Tim and Lawrence described how they would have liked better advice from the Job Centre in addition to providing a list of available positions. This was in spite of the fact that both had received support in the form of either being placed on a job training scheme (Lawrence) or a voluntary placement (Tim). Lawrence and Teresa also described how their lack of the right type and/or level of qualifications acted a barrier to employment.

For most jobs you need more qualifications.
Teresa

Finn and Teresa described how their language impairment had acted as a barrier but in different ways. Teresa's fear of people not understanding her spoken language affected her confidence and Finn believed that including information about his

impairment on his CV may have prevented employers from inviting him to interview. He had sent his CV to a number of retail outlets that sold computer games; an area of interest for him, but had received no positive feedback.

No one even got back to me to say even sorry that you haven't got the job because I was looking at the CV and saying that I have got speech and language, I think they know it might become a bit too difficult.

Finn

As previously stated, this group did describe inhibitors not mentioned by those in employment. Lawrence and Teresa explained how they were often up against people going for the same positions who either had more experience and/or greater qualifications. Teresa discussed how university students were also looking for employment in shops which was the field in which she was interested. Despite applying for jobs in warehouses, offices and as a drivers mate, Lawrence had yet to make it to an interview stage.

I think mainly it was because I didn't have that much experience. They had probably got some other people applying who have worked in those kinds of jobs for years.

Lawrence

For Tim, potential employment opportunities advertised at the Job Centre were dominated by part-time vacancies whilst he was searching for full time employment. However, both David and Owen had taken part time positions in supermarkets whilst they were considering more chosen and permanent employment options.

As with access to resources, it was also more difficult to find obvious examples of agency or perceived agency within the accounts of this group of young people that have been described for those in employment. All were keen to find employment and in this sense agency was evident. As they were all receiving Job Seeker's Allowance they would have been demonstrating that they were actively seeking work. Lawrence and Tim had completed employment training courses in the hope that it would have improved their chances of gaining employment. Finn had completed CVs and sent them to companies he was interested in working for, was about to answer a job advertisement in the local paper. Teresa described looking in shop windows to see if there were any vacancies advertised and Lawrence was volunteering in a charity shop

to gain work experience. They were all at a loss of what more they could do to try and find suitable positions. However, this searching seemed to lack focus, direction and without thought for any long term career plan.

For those young people placed towards the weak agency and weak resources end of the spectrum it was quite difficult to discern just how the two elements combined to affect the transition of an individual. For the young people within this particular context, their transition did not include some of the facilitators and advantages experienced by those in employment. None of them, for example, had a family member with contacts to find them a position or a family business that had nurtured a talent or interest. They had completed courses that did not seem to open up an obvious career path even if that qualification was at a high level as in the case of Finn who had completed a Level 3 qualification in moving image and video, a notoriously competitive industry. They were not able to provide specific examples of when a professional from an agency such as Connexions or the Job Centre had provided helpful guidance or advice and finally all saw their history of SLI as a barrier to finding work. However, it was possible to find young people with equally low levels of qualifications (Robert), severity of language impairment (Wendy) and who had completed post-16 courses that were unrelated to their occupation (Steven) but all of them had one of the key structural facilitators that when combined with a strong sense of agency increased the chances of gaining employment. The next section examines Lawrence's experience of unemployment.

5.4.1. Lawrence's experience of transition and unemployment

Lawrence's experience of transition was selected for detailed examination as he was currently not in paid employment at the time of interview but unlike the other three young people in this group, his academic outcomes on leaving school were more typical of those in employment and education. His experience included three government sponsored employment training schemes and at the time of the interview he was working unpaid, part time employment in a charity shop. Thus his routes since leaving school offered insights into many different aspects of the transition process. Figure 5.16 shows the complex routes followed by Lawrence since leaving school.

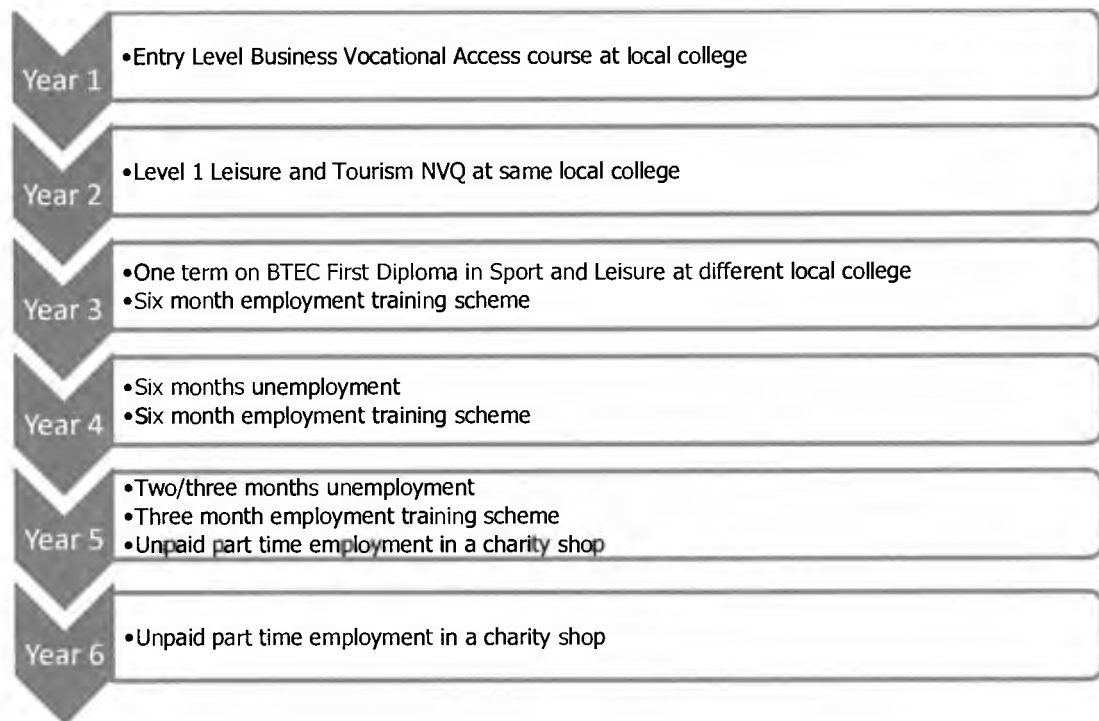


Figure 5.16 Lawrence's Post-16 education and employment routes

His post-16 educational career was characterised by uncertainty and a lack of thoughtful or strategic advice which contributed to a rather haphazard and predominantly unrewarding educational experience. Not unlike David, his first post-16 course was an Entry Level business vocational access course, despite the fact that he had left school with four GCSEs.

Well originally I wasn't sure what I wanted to do so. I didn't actually choose business I just went to the college and I said to them I wanted a course which you could try different things and that was the nearest one to it. So you are doing that but you are doing other stuff with it as well. You only did business once a week, you did maths and English, IT, health and safety. It was kind of pointless. The whole year I was tempted to just drop out but then I thought that I want to get some good qualifications so I can get somewhere.

Lawrence

After completing the course, Lawrence was still unsure of his direction.

Originally I wanted to stay on a college another year but I didn't know what to do and I thought to myself that I wanted to try and do something instead of business. And one of the tutors mentioned about leisure and tourism, it seemed interesting so I thought that I would try that.

Lawrence

Despite some early concerns, this second course proved successful for Lawrence and like Mark, his quick academic progress proved an effective motivator resulting in a distinction for his final qualification and in receiving an award from the college staff for the hardest working student on the course. During this period, a work experience placement was to influence his third choice of course.

...on the Leisure and Tourism course they put me on a work experience placement where I spent two weeks working in a leisure centre. And after that I could see myself working in that area.

Lawrence

He decided that a Level 2 sports course might help with this path, but it meant attending a different local college. However, Lawrence dropped out after a term, explaining how the jump in academic level, lack of support and insufficient prior knowledge of the sports industry combined to make the course too challenging. During this time, he had also missed periods of college due to illness.

I stayed from September until Christmas. I was getting kind of fed up. I was getting stressed with all the work they were giving me to do at once. It was quite a lot harder than the Foundation Level. But that's not the reason, I thought to myself I knew more about sports than I actually did. When I started the course I thought that this is actually really difficult, I don't know a great deal about the sports industry so I realised it was a mistake.

Lawrence

Two years and a term out of compulsory schooling, Lawrence had expanded his number of qualifications but not the level of academic attainment and perhaps more importantly, he was still no clearer about his career route.

Unlike any other of the young people interviewed Lawrence had participated on three government training schemes with a different provider each time. His account of their impact was mixed.

It was supposed to like help you work on your skills and prepare you for work and also to help you look for work except the reason I found it useless was that it was a 13 week course and the only time I actually had a classes was on the first week and where we did like interview skills. And most of the time you were looking for work. First of all there were only a certain amount of computers and there were lots of people so half the time you couldn't get onto a computer. And when you got onto a computer you were expected to find jobs and find them by yourself. You could ask someone to help you and also you go there from 9.30 in the morning until 4.30 in the afternoon. And all it really takes is like half an hour to just look for jobs and then you spend the rest of the day just sitting around doing nothing. It was pointless. (*First scheme*)

They were actually good even though I didn't get a job. They actually sat down with people and helped them look for jobs on the internet and then they would help them apply for it. And they would go though application forms with people, interview techniques and they give them practice interviews. (*Second scheme*)
Lawrence

However, none of the training courses, whether positive or negative, had assisted Lawrence in securing full time, paid employment. Neither was there evidence that they had helped to guide him towards a more certain vocational route. He was, at the time of interview, looking for positions in either a warehouse, office or as a driver's mate, despite having failed his driving test on a number of occasions. But once again one of the main influences for these roles was that his work experience during the training schemes had taken place in these type of work places.

This tendency to roll along with events rather than proactively take control of the process was a feature that was not evident in the interviews with Mark and David. As previously highlighted, it was possible to find in their testimonies, comments showing their own personal determination and ambition. This was not a theme in the account provided by Lawrence but was one more of ambivalence and uncertainty. There was not such an obvious continuous commitment to finding employment, perhaps demonstrated by the fact that he frequently decided to take time off after a course.

Afterwards I left and took six months off. I just wanted to relax for six months and spend my days at home. (*After first training scheme*).
Lawrence

And after his second training scheme he mentioned taking more time off.

And then I finished and took another couple of months off.
Lawrence

And at the time of the interview, real purpose in his search for employment was not clear.

...I still work there now (*charity shop*) just doing two days a week just because it gives me something to do and to gets me more experience.

Are you looking for other work? (Interviewee)

I am supposed to be looking for other work.

Are you? (Interviewee)

Most of the time yeah.

Finally, a previous section identified four main facilitators that supported the transition to work: the family, characteristics of the young person, advice and education. None of these factors were particularly evident in Lawrence's transition. He talked very little of any part played by his parents or family in this aspect of his life. The testimony above revealed perhaps, a certain lack of ambition or drive that was more obvious with other participants. It was very difficult to identify when he had been the beneficiary of effective advice or even the presence at any point of a critical advice giver that was present for many of the other young people who were interviewed. The additional qualifications he had gained since leaving school lacked focus and progression towards a clear career path. At the time of the interview and almost six years out of school, it was not certain how his career routes was going to develop and he had yet to achieve a paid employment position.

5.5. Conclusion

The outcomes and experiences of the young people in relation to their academic and employment transitions revealed a generally positive trend. All but one of the participants had continued onto further education after leaving school and over half went on to gain higher qualifications, with some studying at university. Those who were in education two years later continued to show the trend for increasing and developing their levels of qualifications. As would be expected there were more participants in the AD group of the survey sample who were still studying compared to the EA group. Specialist educational settings continued to play a substantial part in post-16 education, although at the time of the survey over half were in mainstream settings. The majority of young people were or had enjoyed their post-16 education experience. The young person themselves and their families were by far the most common and important facilitators for education outcomes. The findings were not as conclusive for inhibitors but a history of SLI and academic challenges presented by a course were reported factors.

For those young people in employment, retail, administration and a skilled trade were the most common occupations. The majority had reported that finding their job had been relatively easy, although at the time of survey the family and informal methods had been the most common way of finding employment. Interestingly, this picture was reversed for those young people who took part in the interviews who, for the most part, had completed application forms and attended an interview. Almost three quarters of the young people were positive about their work. As with education, the most reported facilitators of employment were the young person and their family. As for inhibitors findings were not as unanimous but a lack of advice and qualifications were the most reported factors.

Despite, the generally optimistic findings, there were two areas of particular concern. The first was the relationships between gender and outcomes, with the female participants, as a group, not attaining the same level of qualifications as the male participants. The second was the group of young people at the survey ($N = 4/60$) and interview ($N = 4/19$) stages who were not in education or employment and for many of them there appeared little prospect of any imminent change in their situation.

As a group, the findings showed that a history of SLI, low qualifications on leaving school, poor choice of post-16 course, a period of unemployment or limited support and advice from official resources did not, on their own, automatically act as a constraint to more positive experiences of education and employment transitions. Even a combination of two to three of these structural barriers could and were overcome by many of the young people. What the young people not in employment at the time of the interview showed, however, was that the presence of a significant number of these inhibitors, with few mediating facilitators, did make positive experiences in these aspects of transition less likely. From an agency perspective, all of the young people interviewed demonstrated to a lesser or greater extent agency in this aspect of their lives. For those with access to many and strong resources, and who had experienced relatively straight forward transitions, it was difficult to accurately assess the depth of their agency which was not the case for those where it was evident that a number of challenges in the years since leaving school had been met. What was also evident was that even when a young person demonstrated considerable agency it was not always sufficient by itself for them to attain their goals, particularly if the language difficulty experienced by a young person, such as speech articulation, was immediately obvious to an observer. These findings are contrasted and compared with wider populations in chapter 8 but the next chapter explores the transition of the young people in terms of their social and leisure activities and their independence.

Chapter 6 Results II: Outcomes, facilitators and inhibitors of transition for independence, social and leisure activities.

6.1. Introduction

The previous chapter mapped transition outcomes and experiences from the survey and interview data with respect to education and employment for the young people. The following chapter presents the findings from the survey and the interview data relating to social, leisure and independence outcomes and experiences. The experiences of the young people will be explored, using both the survey and interview data followed by a reporting of their views as to the factors which they believed had helped and hindered the transition experience in these areas.

6.2. Social and leisure experiences of the young people

Table 6.1 shows that the young people in the survey sample, reported taking part in an extensive range of leisure activities including socialising with friends and visits to the cinema. These positive findings was also reflected in their responses to how easy or difficult they found it to take part in leisure activities, with the majority of young people finding it 'very' or 'quite easy' to take part ($N = 47/60$) (Figure 6.1).

Table 6.1 Leisure activities (Survey $N = 60$)

	N	%
Watch TV	56	93
Shopping	50	83
Internet	50	83
Listen to music	47	78
Reading	45	75
Socialising	44	73
Playing a sport	42	70
Computer/video games	42	70

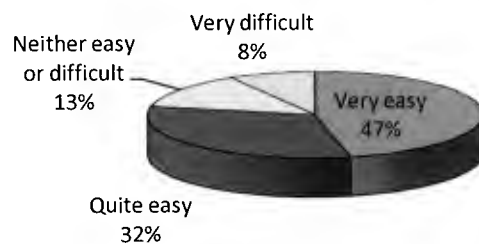


Figure 6.1 Ease of taking part in leisure activities (Survey $N = 60$)

Over half of the participants ($N = 38/60$) reported that it was 'quite' or 'very easy' for them to make new friendships. However, this still left over a third of the young people who experienced some degree of difficulty in this area, although most of the

participants ($N = 54/60$) stated that they had two or more good friends (Figure 6.2). Female participants did describe greater difficulties in taking part in leisure activities ($X^2 (3 N = 60) = 3.358, ns$), making friends ($X^2 (3 N = 60) = 4.165, ns$) and the amount of leisure time spent with friends at the weekend. Nevertheless, these differences in outcomes were not statistically significant using a chi-square test.



Figure 6.2 Ease of making friends (Survey $N = 60$)

Almost two years later, at the time of interview, eight of the young people reported that it was very easy to take part in leisure activities, six said it was quite easy, three reported experiencing some difficulties and one said it was something he never thought about. The three young people who spoke of difficulties felt it was associated with concerns about talking to people which is explored in Section 6.4. None the less, the young people interviewed continued to be involved in a wide range of past times with sporting activities ($N = 11/19$), such as playing football for a team and going to a gym ranking as some of the most popular.

I play football twice a week...Yes every Saturday. I do go out most Saturdays after the game. We decided to go on tour this year in the same place as last year in Newcastle. It was really good last year.
Tim

Five of the nineteen interview participants had a keen interest in music; with three were members of a band and one sang in a local choir.

I started to pick up the base a few months after leaving here at college. I knew the bass player in this band and I always wanted to learn the guitar and the bass. I started learning bass. I got a few lessons at the college actually, you get like half price tuition and mostly I taught myself. I joined this band, we have been on and off during the years because people come and go. We started doing a few tours, a few shows. Last year I done three with this band.
Steven

Both Wendy and Daisy attended evening classes in British Sign Language and quilting respectively. Some other activities and interests included martial arts, lawn green bowling, leadership training for the Guides, membership of a university sci-fi club and dog walking.

Yeah ah been helping out at Brownies and Guides for a couple of years now and I am singing two nights. I am actually qualifying for leadership so I will actually be able to help out more.

...Brownies two nights and guides one night. Yeah and singing on Wednesday in a big group and Friday's it is a choir. At the moment I am doing a quilter's course on Thursdays.
Daisy

Many of the young people also enjoyed an active social life; spending time with friends such as going to pubs and clubs ($N = 9/19$) or meeting in town to go shopping ($N = 3/19$).

I am enjoying going clubbing with my mates....
Gary

The majority of the young people ($N = 12/19$) saw their friends regularly at the weekends and sometimes during the week as well.

I go out on a Friday and Saturday with the others, pubs, clubs whatever, food, restaurants. My friend called to say that they were arranging a bowling night tonight.
David

Exposure to some of the more testing features of youth culture such as alcohol, drugs and violence were also evident in some of the testimonies.

I dunno, I see them doing a line of cocaine. I don't want to do that, I don't want to spend 60 quid. That's not my drug. My drug is like drinking, I get bladdered basically, most of the time. I know it does harm you in a way but I am not an alcoholic. I only get proper bladdered one night of the week and the following night I take it easy.

Ben

Nevertheless, there remained a small number in the group ($N = 4/19$) who expressed dissatisfaction with aspects of their leisure activities and/or social life such as not 'getting out' as much as they would have liked.

I wish I could get out more as well.

Teresa

I hardly go out a lot. I am more stopping here...Actually I would say I wish I went out more. I wish I went out and probably have a laugh or a job or something.

Brandon

Of this group of four young people, two were unemployed and Simon was unhappy with his job in a fast food restaurant after having left university early.

Friendships formed a key part in the lives of the participants, with the majority ($N = 16/19$) experiencing rewarding friendships. Once again, the three young people who expressed less encouraging comments in this area were not in employment. However, most of the young people were positive about their friendships and had met friends after leaving school when they went to college, university and work.

Sometimes I just go to town with friends... The other thing that is going well is I suppose I am beginning to know more local people.

Wendy

I am getting friends at work, there is good interaction, it's good fun, it's a nice chat.

Owen

Um I think quite a lot. I have been keeping up with people from school and I am in contact with A** and G*** my huge friends...Yeah and also I keep up my friendships with people through friends or who I have met randomly pretty much so I am more a sociable person pretty much....Well I would say that I have quite a lot of good friends because I usually get on with people quite

easily and you know the saying what goes around comes around so. I would say quite a lot to be honest I mean quite a lot of good friends and I get on with them, they get on with me.

Andrew

If it was a normal week we would see each other almost every day, mostly at night time. Me and my friends mostly like going out late drinking. They are near my house, my old house. They also, some of them went to my college... And also I do know quite a lot of people they are not all my friends but through them I make good friends.

Sandeep

Five of the participants spoke of how the internet, such as email and social networking sites played an important role in contacting friends and maintaining friendships. Joseph described it as a vital support link with friends back at home during his first year at university before new friendships there had been established. Simon experienced the a loss of friendship after leaving university early.

Well it has kind of gone like quiet since I have left and since they left. It has been quite annoying really, knowing people and then having to move away and thinking of having to start a new life. It is quite harsh as well. But I have got them on my Facebook as well.

Simon

Some of the young people had used these sites to get in contact with old friends from school. Mark had used it to organise regular reunions with a group of old school friends in central London during holiday periods. However, experiences of these forms of communication were not always positive and Finn described how some of the problems he encountered with face to face communication were also present when communicating on the internet.

..sometimes you might say the right, no not right that's a bit ...you might say the wrong type and the right things and yet due to delay like one time I was trying to wait for one of my friends to reply back about going to somewhere...one of the things with the internet is the language which is a bit of a horror.

Finn

However, friendships could also be problematic for a few of the young people and tended to focus around three main issues. Firstly, an interesting theme running

through the accounts of the some of the participants ($N = 4/19$) was the difficulty some had experienced in establishing relationships of the same depth and intensity of those that they had formed with friends from their residential special school. When Mark had left school to attend a local college, he had made new friends on his course but these friendships had not continued after he had left and yet he had worked hard to maintain friendships with old school mates.

I was with the same people for two years (college friends) but um it was really different to friends I had back then at school as I grew up with them and that is how I knew them more. I think that was the main factor which really helped me to keep in contact.

Mark

It was probably because I was closer with them because I was at school a lot longer, five years, and I was living with them as well. That's why I had more closer relationships at school.

Lawrence

Similar sentiments were expressed by Daisy, Andrew, Brandon and Owen although they perhaps had been more successful at building new friendships since leaving school. Secondly, two of the participants; Tim and Teresa, did train and play each week for local sports teams which brought regular and much appreciated social contact. But this contact had not necessarily extended into friendships which moved beyond the activity, which still left both of them without people that they might have called good friends. Finally, a few of the participants ($N = 5/19$), talked of the tensions that sometimes arose, such as being let down by friends or matters related to trust.

It's like some, I am just saying this but some people that are good to you and then they let you down or something like that. Like one of my mates I text them saying that my friends you know are they coming and they say yeah, yeah, but then at the last minute they text back saying oh sorry mate can't do it because I am out cause we were going to go in a big group but then at the last minute one of my mates texted me saying I can't do it.

Gary

I met a lot of people who I thought were friends and they stabbed me in the back, let me down. It was quite hard to take because I believe that I am a genuine person.

David

Although at the time of interview only one participant was in a relationship, three others spoke of relationships with girlfriends they had met in the past; (11/60 at the time of survey) with relationships lasting from anything between four months to a year. Joseph had met his current girlfriend at university and they had been together for eight months. Almost all of the young people expressed a desire to meet someone then or in the future but for some of the participants, awkwardness when talking to the opposite sex was in fact their main frustration with their social life.

...when it comes with getting on with ah the opposite sex, girls. I mean ah I think at one point I felt sociable and the next I just felt a little bit nervous. I think not just with girls but with a girl I actually like. When it is a girl I like I tend to lose it a little bit. It is something I should overcome and I reckon I will overcome.

Andrew

Finally, despite the many challenges presented by finding friendships and establishing social lives, sixteen of the participants described their progress in this area as steady and the remaining three as up and down. For those who described it as up and down, there were no common themes between them although for Sandeep it was related to relationships he had had in the past.

Because I have had some good relationships and some bad relationships and also some relationships have a really good start and that makes you feel really good but the way it ended is like horrible and I don't want to know.

Sandeep

And for the remaining two young people; Tim and Owen, it described how since leaving school they considered that some periods had been better than others. What was common for all of the young people however, was how they believed that they were the ones mostly, if not fully, responsible for these outcomes, a prevailing attitude that was evident in all areas of transition.

I had to get the confidence. I have the feeling that most of the things I need to do, I need to do myself. I can't have anybody hold my hand.

Owen

6.3. Facilitators of social and leisure lives

Five key factors played an important role in facilitating more positive social and leisure lives. These factors included; personal characteristics of the young person ($N = 14/19$), a specific talent or interest ($N = 8/19$), the locality in which the young person lived ($N = 8/19$), the family ($N = 8/19$) and money ($N = 7/19$). Each is explored further in more depth.

As with education and employment, the personal characteristics of the young people themselves were a leading factor within this area of transition ($N = 14/19$). This was articulated by them as being prepared to make the effort to participate in activities and to get to know new people; even if this presented personal challenges for some of them.

I suppose just the willingness to get out there and make friends.
Steven

It is mostly that I just keep at it, it is nerve wracking at the beginning.
Tim

I like meeting new people, I just find it hard.
Wendy

A few of the participants were in the fortuitous position of having what seemed like a natural disposition towards meeting new people.

Yes I don't find it difficult to meet new people.
Robert

I have never had a serious problem with making and meeting new people. I have been quite fortunate like that.
David

Another personal characteristic related to how a young person's interest or talent often contributed to more positive experiences in this area of their transition ($N = 8/19$). As indicated in the previous section, many of the young people drew on a wide variety of interests and talents particularly in the fields of sport and music. The implications for the young people were that apart from something to do outside of study or work, it afforded them an opportunity to meet new people and develop existing and fresh

skills. Tim and Teresa both trained for their respective sports clubs which provided a much needed focus to balance the negative experiences of unemployment. Lawrence was learning to play the guitar and he had started to perform publicly with a friend's band which again, being unemployed, gave him a regular positive experience during the week. It was noticeable that Finn, the fourth unemployed participant, did not at the time, have a particular focus in his social and leisure activities and perhaps, not surprisingly combined with his unemployment, he appeared to be the young person of the nineteen who most struggled with this aspect of transition to adulthood.

I rarely get out of the house most of the time.

Finn

The ability to develop interests and talents requires opportunities and facilities to be locally available and a similar number ($N = 8/19$) reported positively about facilities where they lived, including different sports venues, good shopping outlets and easy transport links.

Once again the family played an important role in supporting the transition of the young people with their social lives and leisure activities and this support was provided in three ways. Firstly, it took the form of continued advice and encouragement as highlighted by Gary.

Because she (mother) carried on saying go out, go out. I need to go out and meet people.

Gary

Secondly, siblings of some of the young people ($N = 3/19$), notably brothers of male participants offered a much appreciated role in inviting the young person out on social occasions thus allowing them to make new friendships and enjoy a more active social life.

Um I suppose quite a lot of my mates were my brother's friends because I had such a weird school experience because I had been in and out of so many schools before I even got here (home). And when I got here not many of them lived in London. A few sort of old childhood friends of mine, I would say maybe ninety per cent through mates of my brothers or a neighbour.

Steven

Through my brother. ..my brother has been fantastic... He has introduced me to all these people and I am making good friendships with some of them and I am getting on with them well and it was really nice of J*** to do that. I mean me and J*** have never had the best brother/brother relationship and never will but for him to still want to help me out anyway I am extremely grateful. It has helped me out quite a lot. I feel like part of the group now which is nice.
David

Lastly, the fathers of Tim and Teresa had been pivotal in setting up the link with their football and rugby teams.

Perhaps an obvious facilitator mentioned by only seven participants, was the need for money to support their leisure and social activities. The income from their part or full time employment allowed for the pursuit of a range of activities including going out at the weekends, and other related items such as paying for evening classes or car insurance. Owen thoughtfully summarised again probably for most, the benefits of receiving a personal income:

I think money did help. I have got the money now to expand my horizons.
Owen

Finally, a number of other facilitators were reported by one or two participants which included driving ($N = 2/19$), social skills training at school ($N = 2/19$), the internet ($N = 2/19$), dating ($N = 1/19$), course at university ($N = 1/19$) and simply the passing of time ($N = 1/19$).

My social life, which I understood and know because I have done it all before and it is easier to handle because I am older and wiser. I say myself, remember the first three years it was difficult then, you'll be fine. I have got a better understanding for how things go down for the time being.
David

6.4. Inhibitors of social and leisure lives

The young people reported a variety of challenges in this arena of transition to adulthood. These inhibitors included, meeting and taking to new people ($N = 7/19$), SLI ($N = 6/19$), the effect of having attended a residential school setting away from

home ($N = 4/19$), managing friendships ($N = 5/19$) and a lack of money ($N = 4/19$). Each factor is explained in turn.

The challenge most expressed by the young people was a concern about meeting and talking to new people ($N = 7/19$). This concern focussed for some around lacking the confidence to start a conversation.

I am still not good with meeting new people and really have good conversation. I think I am getting better. I think it helps if they start talking and I just join in because I am quite good with conversation when it gets going but if it is me who is starting it I probably wouldn't be able to get anywhere.

Daisy

For Gary the unease was more around maintaining a conversation.

It is like meeting new people, I like meeting new people but not, I don't know what to say and I don't know what they are going to say back to me and carry on in the subject.

Gary

And some of the young people spoke more generally of experiencing shyness in a new social situation.

Well partly at college, I felt too shy to talk to people and to try and make friends. I noticed for the first few days I would be hanging around by myself but then after a while people would come up to me and start talking and I would talk to them.

Lawrence

I am still a little bit shy.

Teresa

Perhaps linked with this issue of confidence, was the part that their language impairment played in their social interactions, reported by some young people ($N = 6/19$), although again this was experienced in different ways. For Finn and Steven the main concern was of the challenge of social communication at times and the potential to for misunderstanding.

I suppose I can maybe make the wrong impression with some people at the beginning.

Steven

Holly described how her difficulties with speech production often meant that people did not understand her on first meeting and that this was especially disheartening on some social occasions such as meeting a man in a club or pub.

Talking and when a man comes over and asks me to dance and they hear me speak and go away...When I go out sometimes and just have to ask for things and they say 'what' it really hurts me.

Holly

Expressive language seemed more of a concern for Simon.

Sometimes that is a rare occasions with me, speech and language...I can't have a conversation sometimes, I mix up my sentences or it doesn't come out properly. Simon

And for Owen, the overall effect of a history of having a language impairment, which he described as dyslexia, was that for him it could affect his confidence in all areas of his life.

Four of the participants spoke of how attendance at a residential school, away from the home community had affected issues related to friendships. For some of them, the intense experience of a residential setting meant strong friendships, which had not always been replicated later in life after leaving school. This was compounded by returning home which left some of the participants feeling that they had to start from scratch with establishing friendships within their local environment. Their friends from school were often spread out across a wide geographical area, if not in different parts of the country.

Maintaining friendships over a period of time was a theme of some of the interviews. Five of the participants spoke of this as a potential inhibitor to experiencing a more rewarding social life at times. Trust was discussed by three of the young people and how, in many respects, they had learnt to overcome this when friends let them down in different ways.

You do meet those people who are bitchy and they do come out with a load of stories about people which are not true. And there are always arguments going about that but I usually get aggressive when people used to be like that but now I kind of, now that I got a bit older, if they are going to make stories, I don't care, it is your problem not mine.

Ben

Simon found it difficult at times to find people to join in the activities that he was interested in and lastly for Steven, there was the questioning of one's popularity.

I suppose sometimes I get to a point, if my brothers are busy, that Friday night no ones called me and you get the feeling like where are my mates?

Steven

Finally, an obvious inhibitor, although just mentioned by four participants, was a lack of employment or money. Finn felt that not having a job reinforced his difficulties with communication.

I think it is like uh, without getting a job in the mornings, I am still in this house waiting and getting no replies which is just becoming more difficult to communication...

Finn

But for the others, the lack of employment and subsequent loss of greater financial independence mean that social and leisure activities had to be restricted. One of the reasons Brandon had explained for giving up his gym membership and fees for martial arts classes was that he felt he was 'mooching' off his parents as he didn't have a part time job whilst at college and relied on them solely for financial support.

6.5 Role of agency and structure in the social and leisure experiences of the young people

Many of the reasons for the positive findings for the interview participants in this aspect of their lives are clear from Figure 6.3 as the majority of the young people were in the strong agency with strong support quadrant.

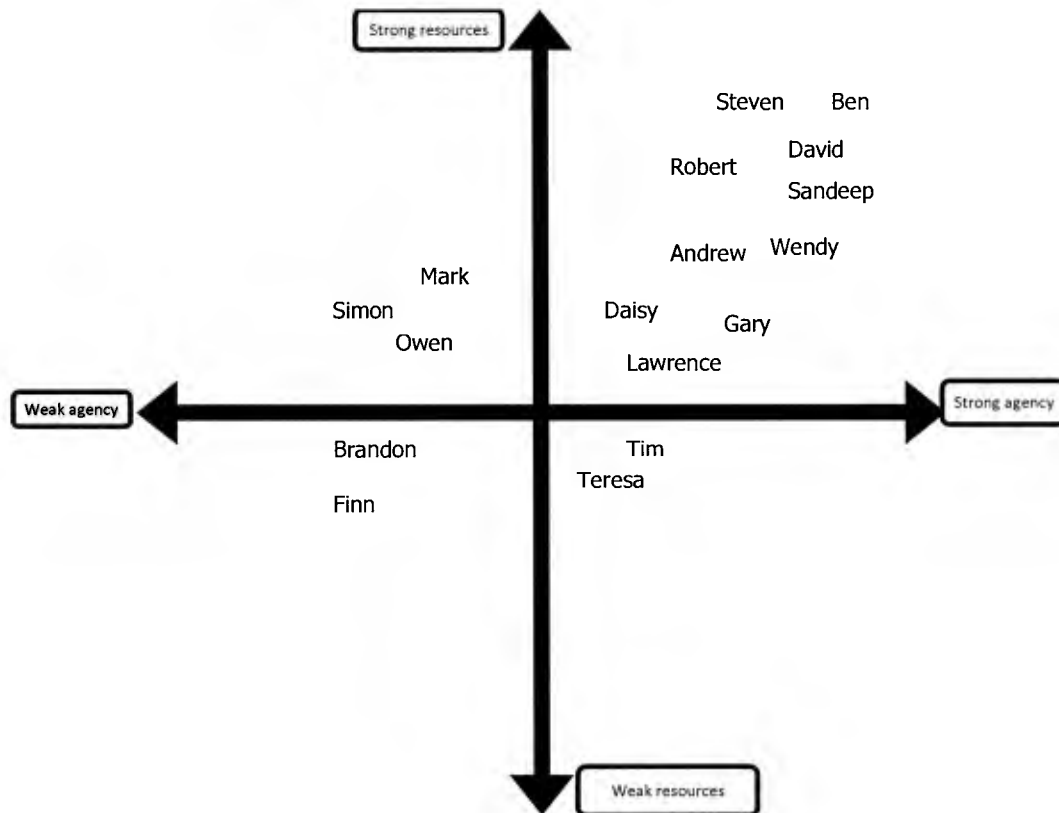


Figure 6.3 Role of agency and structure in social and leisure experiences

Agency in this context was exhibited by having an interest in one or more specific leisure/hobby interests, a certain degree of confidence and willingness to 'create' different opportunities for this to happen. Wendy and Holly, for example, were high on this axis as both took an active role by signing up for an evening class (Wendy), joining a local gym (Holly) and regularly organising to meet up with friends in the week. This was in contrast to those at who demonstrated less agency such as Mark and Finn who did not report having any regular interests or hobbies and or as in the case of Simon and Owen heavily relied on work 'occasions' for social contact.

No one factor acted as a universal constraint to positive experiences including attendance at a special residential school or a history of SLI which might have been expected, as documented in the relevant literature in chapter 2. Favourable conditions for those enjoying very active social and leisure lives, such as Ben, David and Sandeep included the same combination of agency and structural factors. In this context the

structural factors included the ability to drive and an income which allowed for more choice with social and leisure activities, a local community that offered various opportunities with good public transport links and active support from family members such as parents and siblings who facilitated the participation of the young person in social and leisure interests.

6.6. Developing Independence

At the time of the survey, nearly all of the participants ($N = 57/60$) felt more independent than they had in Year 11. Fifty-four of the young people were living with their parents and eleven reported having a regular partner. One of the participants was married with children and a small number ($N = 8/60$) had passed their driving test. Along with a growing sense of independence, the majority ($N = 55/60$) reported feeling more confident since Year 11, reasons for which included, college courses, friendships and leisure activities. Fifty-four young people reported that they had enjoyed their time since Year 11 and that their courses, training or jobs had generally worked out well for them. The majority ($N = 51/60$) were hopeful about the future and those that were more apprehensive mentioned concerns relating to find appropriate employment, or that the future was something they tried not to think about or that it was something generally viewed with fear. Figure 6.4 shows the difference in views between the adolescents and the EA with respect to independence, with the EA reporting higher levels of confidence and independence. Finally, when asked about their next activity, just half ($N = 29/60$) of the young people currently in education at that time wanted to continue and gain further qualifications or training and eight in employment were looking to change jobs.

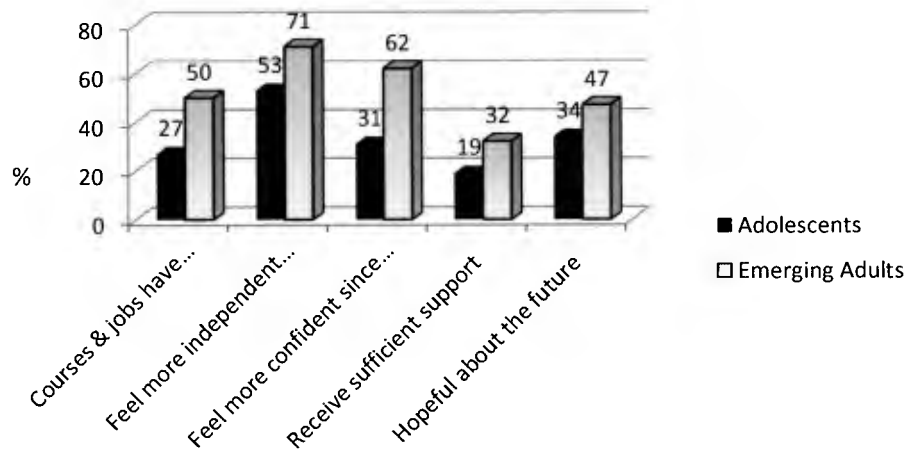


Figure 6.4 Comparison of views on independence between adolescents and emerging adults (% that reported strongly agree)

Two years on this sense of growing independence continued in the interview testimonies with the young people. Fifteen of the nineteen interview participants described themselves as more or less independent, just requiring some support on occasions and four young people felt they were fully independent.

I would say that I am very independent to be honest. I still live with my parents at the moment but ah it's cheaper than paying rent like over £100 a week for rent, the last thing I want to be in is debt.

Andrew

All of the participants ($N = 19/19$) at this time were living at home, although Joseph was away at university, David had recently lived independently for four years and Simon had also lived away from the parental home whilst studying. The fact that they were all living at home raises the complex issue of how independence is defined which is explored in more depth in Chapter 8. The reasons the young people provided for such feelings of independence ranged from every day events such as being able to ask for a pint in a pub (Gary), ordering a pizza over the telephone (Brandon), travelling independently on long journeys by train (Teresa and Daisy), to the benefits of setting up a home with a partner described by David.

Last year I was living with my girlfriend that was nice, good, you know to be your own man, to know that you can look after yourself and that you don't need that much support anymore, I get a lot of satisfaction out of it.

David

For six of the participants ($N = 6/19$), learning to drive had brought a much desired sense of freedom and independence.

You can go anywhere you want to. You don't have to rely on buses, even though trains are quite good. But just having the experience of your own vehicle and also dealing with the knowledge of it breaking down.

Simon

Learning to drive was a considerable financial commitment for the young people and their families. The parents of Lawrence, for example, had spent over two thousand pounds on lessons and he had yet to pass his test after five failed attempts.

Living at home did not necessarily mean complete financial dependency, especially for the young people who were working as described by Ben and Owen.

I did get a little bit of support but again my mum did lend me a grand, but everything else I do pay for like the car insurance, contact lenses, I pay house rent, pay of my clothes.

Ben

Most of the time now I look after my own finances, it doesn't mean I have a lot of money.

Owen

However, many of the young people also acknowledged the additional financial support, over and above providing a home, received from their parents either in the lending of money or paying for larger items, to helping with advice on financial matters.

Finally, the descriptors and explanations of their levels of independence provided by the young people, very much reflected their responses to how they described their rate of progress with independence since leaving school. Fifteen ($N = 15/19$) of the young people described their progress in this aspect of their transition as steady or even better. For the others, the road to independence was depicted as a series of ups and

downs. Ben, for example, felt his employer at work was not assisting him in qualifying as a plumber as quickly as he might have done and consequently he felt that this was hampering his progress with independence. Sandeep and Steven had both encountered hurdles in their educational transition that had resulted in extending the period before securing full time employment or an occupation of their choice.

6.7. Facilitators of Independence

The young people described ten factors that helped with the journey towards independence. These factors included the family ($N = 18/19$), personal characteristics of the young person ($N = 15/19$), education ($N = 12/19$), employment ($N = 8/19$), friends ($N = 7/19$), travel skills ($N = 3/19$), driving ($N = 2/19$), the Disability Living Allowance ($N = 1/19$) and the passing of time ($N = 1/19$). Each facilitator is examined in more detail in the rest of this section.

As with the transition to work, the support from family ($N = 18/19$), usually the parents of the young person, was reported as the most common facilitator for independence. The nature of this support was wide ranging and included financial support, making medical and other appointments, helping with planning of new and extended journeys by public transport and assistance with completing official forms. However, it was in providing moral support and direction that parents were described as having the greatest influence.

My mum has put me in the right direction.
Owen

Well they have said what you need to do in life and what is going to happen next and um basically what I am going to be doing in the next five years.
Brandon

They made me get out of the house and do things.
Holly

Apart from parents, three of the young people acknowledged the role played by other members of the family; Steven described how his brothers had helped him to become 'street wise' and Sandeep had a cousin who was very encouraging, supportive and was

someone he could talk to. Another supportive relationship which helped with independence was that of friends ($N = 7/19$). They were described as helping to build confidence by Gary, helping with travel by Owen but for the majority it was simply the opportunity to discuss the issues affecting all young people with the transition to greater independence and adulthood.

Education, whether that was at specialist school, specialist college, local college or university, was another of the more influential facilitators described by twelve of the young people. The important part played by residential special schooling included opportunities provided by the life skills curriculum and within post-16 residential settings and the growing independence afforded by living in a house with other students but supported by staff as necessary. The experience of university for Sandeep and Simon was that it actively encouraged independence from a study skills perspective and for Simon, more personally, by having to learn to share the responsibilities of living in a house independently with other students.

Well, at uni every decision you make is up to you, when you do your work, when you submit work, no one is going to come after you, it's your own responsibility.

Sandeep

Yeah you got a chance to mature. Yeah, yeah, it is very important. You can get on with something and you can be left to it basically. You're confident and they're confident that you can get on with the task.... You have to think of everything yourself basically.

Simon

As with the transition to education and work, the personal characteristics of the young person themselves were an important facilitator of independence ($N = 15/19$). One of the two main characteristics was a growing sense of self-confidence to attempt new experiences such as using public transport and speaking to people

I don't know how but just being able to give myself confidence to do more things than I used to and feeling comfortable when I am actually doing it.

Daisy

But the desire of the young person to take an active responsibility for the development of their own independence was even more evident in their testimonies as highlighted by the following excerpts from various interviews.

Well lately I have been learning to stand up for myself.
Brandon

I am prepared to try things.
Holly

I don't know um, I just want to do stuff on my own.
Ben

I think it has mostly been me to be honest because I felt as if I can mostly do things on my own and I did at the end.
Andrew

Also me as a person I have changed as well. I just go out and be independent and also my stubbornness as well.
Sandeep

How did you cope with more freedom once you got home? (Interviewer)
I embraced it, I took advantage of it straight away. I was allowed to travel home by myself when I was 16.
Steven

Full time and part time employment mentioned by eight of the young people, facilitated independence in different ways. One of the more obvious benefits; a regular salary, allowed for greater freedom especially in respect to social and leisure activities discussed by Mark and Ben. For three of the participants, the work place provided an opportunity to meet new people and develop friendships. Robert described how his work required him to become more familiar with different modes of public transport throughout London. Finally, Simon, spoke of a self-discipline work helped to instil such as the importance of consistent punctuality.

The previous section highlighted how many of the young people felt that the ability to travel independently as an indicator of their developing independence. For some young

people it was actively embraced as the extract from Steven above demonstrated but for others it was a skill developed as a consequence of travelling to college or work.

When I first started at college I took two buses every day there and back again so I got used to that...I practised the journey once before... And when I started at job training I started to get used to using the underground. At first I found it a bit confusing knowing where to change and where to go to get a different line. But after I did it a few times I didn't have a problem getting anywhere in London.

Lawrence

Ben and Simon described how the ability to drive and ownership of a car afforded further freedoms and independence in terms of work.

Finally, three other facilitators of independence mentioned by a small number of participants included leisure activities ($N = 3/19$), the Disability Living Allowance ($N = 1/19$) and the passing of time ($N = 1/19$). Teresa's participation in a local women's rugby team had meant attending training every week, weekend matches and meeting new people. Steven's pursuit of a music career alongside his 'day job' involved considerable travel around the country to get to gigs as well as arranging the practicalities such as hiring rehearsal studios. For Wendy, the Disability Living Allowance had meant the freedom to buy things for herself and finally Lawrence in many ways aptly summarised the road to independence travelled by most young people:

I guess over the years you just get better. Maybe in a couple of years I will just be more independent than I am now.

Lawrence

6.8. Inhibitors of independence

Similarly to facilitators, there were also a number of inhibitors of independence, although unlike any other area of transition, there was no factor that appeared to be common to the majority of the participants. The challenges mentioned by the young people included financial restraints ($N = 5/19$), parents ($N = 4/19$), SLI ($N = 4/19$), a lack of confidence ($N = 4/19$), residential school ($N = 3/19$) and the following which

were all mentioned by just one participant: location, unemployment, a lack of support and not being able to drive. Each challenge is explained in more detail in this section.

Financial concerns were the most commonly mentioned inhibitor of independence by just five ($N = 5/19$) of the participants and these concerns were experienced differently by the young people. Three referred to perhaps the most obvious effect, in that a lack of money prevented them from doing all that they wanted. Finn and David spoke of how they did not fully understand all of the financial knowledge and understanding required for greater independence, for example, with banking.

I think that to this day I am still confusing interest and what's that but I still know what a branch is and but the more complexity, you get this much money and you get an allowance on this and this and that, which is very complex for me.

Finn

For Joseph at university, the challenge was more about how to manage on a tight student budget and for Simon; a strong desire to get into the property ladder seemed a very remote outcome despite his attempts at saving money from his salary.

Parents were described by some of the young people ($N = 4/19$) as sometimes acting as an inhibitor in their transition to independence. This generally took the form of parents being over protective as described by Owen and Andrew:

Also I think my mum because she molly coddles me but that is because she is your mum.

Owen

..the only thing that got to me at times was the over protection from my mum, that was basically what it was and at the end of the day as soon as I ah felt so independent she backed off a little bit.

Andrew

Two other young people in this group described how their parents went a step further in some respects. Teresa and Sandeep both felt that their parents and step mother respectively prevented them from making their own decisions at times.

..she (step mother) didn't want me to be independent, she thought that I couldn't make decisions.

Sandeep

Four of the participants expressed that their SLI presented challenges with independence but for at least two of them this appeared to overlap with issues of lacking confidence ($N = 4/19$). For those four young people, the experience of it as an inhibitor varied for all of them. Sandeep was concerned that his stutter would prevent him from getting part time work to support his university studies. Finn felt his language impairment prevented him from going out as much as he would like.

Yeah just like communication and getting out, but I really am trying to go out and do something but I just know, but the problem is I really, really want to conquer fear of the speech and language but I really do need that sort of extra help with it.

Finn

Apart from a concern of talking to people at times, Wendy felt that some people who knew her history of a language impairment, didn't fully understand the nature of the impairment and this subsequently affected her confidence with respect of independence.

I do feel it has affected my independence...Like I can't even ask people sometimes for help. ..I don't know how to talk to people that much, they usually confuse me with autism. Because the college thought I had Asperger's. I don't have Asperger's I have SLI. I had to correct them.

Wendy

Tim found it difficult to ask questions at times in public for fear of not understanding the reply the first time around.

Yes if it is a long explanation I might not understand the situation quite well especially if you have not done that before.

Tim

Similarly, talking to people was an anxiety for Lawrence, but he ascribed this as a lack of confidence as opposed to his language impairment.

Even now I still have a problem to go up and talk to someone.

Lawrence

For Sandeep and Teresa, their lack of confidence at times was clearly ascribed to other reasons rather than SLI. Lack of any employment for Teresa since leaving school had not helped her transition to independence and Sandeep was sometimes fearful of going out in his local community which he described as 'rough'.

Interestingly, although residential school was mentioned by many of the young people as assisting with the transition to independence, three of the young people simultaneously also depicted it as a barrier to becoming more independent. It seemed that the permanent return to living in the home environment was more of an adjustment for Daisy and Wendy both in terms of losing the support of staff and friends.

When I was travelling at school that was with my friends but when I did it at home it was on my own it just made it uncomfortable. It took me nearly a year just to actually go anywhere.

Daisy

6.9. Role of agency and structure in the development of independence

The feelings of independence reported by the young people during the interviews can partly be accounted for in the findings shown in Figure 6.5. The majority of the young people demonstrated agency to a greater or lesser extent which in the context of independence was typified by a strong will to achieve independence, and a willingness to overcome obstacles such as a lack of confidence or the fear of trying something new. There was an awareness by the young people that this was an aspect of their lives that was on-going in terms of development and that the skills required would need to be continually developed. Ultimately, those participants such as Sandeep, Holly, Joseph and David who demonstrated a high degree of agency understood that whilst accepting and acknowledging the support of others, progress with independence was very much their own responsibility. However, as with the other aspects of their transition, a strong sense of agency combined with the capacity to draw on resources afforded the participants the optimum conditions for development with their independence.

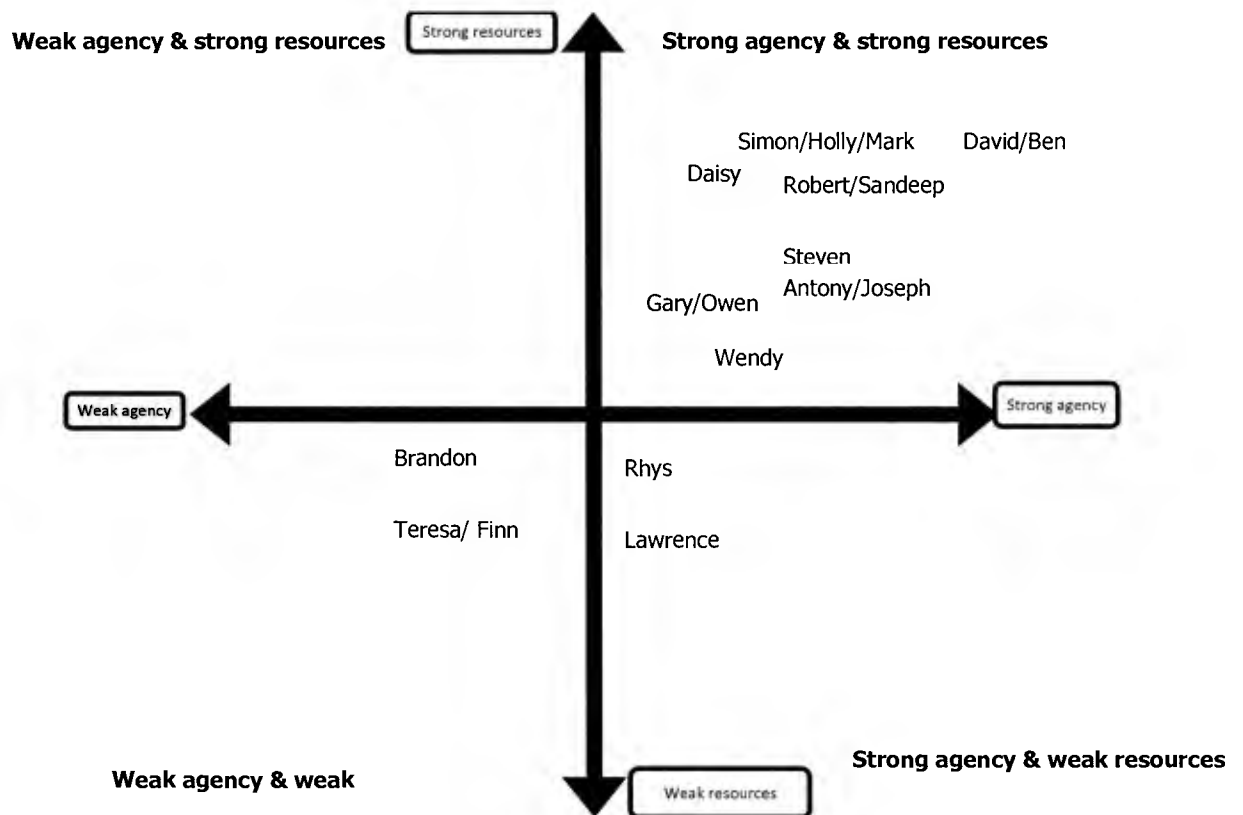


Figure 6.5 The role of agency and structure in the development of independence

Apart from agency, the resources or structural factors that created the most favourable circumstances for growing independence included family support, financial resources and the experience of being in education or employment. Employment or completion of further studies ensured not just greater social opportunities and financial independence but brought regular, even if relatively small at times, new challenges, for example, dealing with the public, which enabled the young person to personally develop and build up life experiences. These were just such opportunities not readily available for those young people who were unemployed and concerns over confidence were evident in their interviews. Nevertheless, for two of the young people in this group in particular; Tim and Lawrence their leisure activities and interests were acting as somewhat of a balance and helped to 'boost' feelings of self-confidence and independence. Lawrence, for example, had recently started to perform in public

playing guitar with a friend. Finally, as with many young adults of this age (average age at interview was 21), their independence was constrained to a certain by living at home which were for reasons common to many young people in their early twenties and which are explored in more detail in Chapter 8.

6.10. Conclusion

This chapter has shown that in the main the young people were experiencing positive transitions in the areas of their social life and independence. The majority had found it quite or very easy to take part in leisure activities and they were involved in a range of social and leisure activities including activities outside of the home such as playing for various sporting teams and meeting up and going out with friends. Over half reported that they had found it quite or very easy to make friends. The personal characteristics of the young people, along with an interest or talent had contributed to more favourable outcomes.

Almost all of the participants were still living in the family home but reported feeling more independent and confident since leaving school. Some of the participants were in long term relationships and almost all wanted to be in an intimate relationship at some point in the near future. Overwhelmingly, the young people were happy with their experience of transition, in general, at the time of the survey and were hopeful about the future. Once again, the family and the personal characteristics of the young person were the most reported facilitators of transition with respect to independence.

Chapter 7 Transition of the young people - bringing it all together

7.1. Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of all the three elements of transition; employment/education, independence and social and leisure experiences at the time of the survey and the interview. The experiences of the young people and what they reported as facilitators and inhibitors of transition are examined in the light of the sociological theories of structure and agency and from a psychological perspective through Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory.

7.2. Identifying common transition experiences at the time of survey

At the time of the survey, Figures 5.1 and 5.2 in chapter 5, highlighted how the young had taken many different education and employment routes since leaving school. The findings in chapter 6 presented evidence to show that the majority of the young people were experiencing rewarding social and leisure activities and felt they had grown in independence and confidence. At this time in the study it was possible to identify patterns in the data from the different aspects of transition which revealed three different experiences of transition.

The largest group of young people at the time of the survey, were 'establishing firm foundations' with regard to their transition. Here the young person was building upon achievements at the end of year 11 in all three aspects of their lives. Despite a similar impairment history and secondary education, the young people were studying for a full range of academic level of qualifications from entry to degree level were being studied. A range of choices were being made with respect to courses and education establishment. Those young people in employment were entering at different ages and took positions in different sectors but with an emphasis in retail, administration and skilled trades. They enjoyed active social lives, engaged in a range of leisure activities and were proactive in developing their own independence.

Almost a quarter of the young people in the study were experiencing a 'fragmented' transition. Many of this group were experiencing very positive aspects as part of their transition such as higher academic attainment as a result of extended periods in post-16 education. However, for the young people in the fragmented group, each individual was facing challenges in one key area of transition. This could be connected with lack of a progress with their college course, a less rewarding employment experience or perhaps they encountered social isolation, with few friends and a restricted range of leisure activities.

Finally, a very small proportion of the participants were experiencing a form of suspended transition: a 'transition in standstill'. In these instances, for example, the young person had usually been in education for an extended period of time, often as a lack of suitable employment opportunities. They were completing a succession of entry-level qualifications with an emphasis on life skills and generic employment skills without evidence of tangible benefits or progress. This picture was repeated in other aspects of their lives; accompanied by limited social interaction with peers during the evenings or at weekends and an over-reliance on parents for support to participate in any leisure activities. Those young people who were unemployed were also experiencing a 'transition in standstill', characterised by little imminent prospect of a change in their employment or more personal circumstances.

7.3. Identifying common transition experiences at the time of interview

Using a similar analytic approach, Table 7.1 shows how the young people in the interview sample were experiencing transition almost two years later. Although over half of the young people could still be described as experiencing a transition based on 'firm foundations', seven of the participants had changed group since the survey. The method of interviewing the young people as opposed to the telephone survey allowed for a deeper, more nuanced understanding of their experiences.

Table 7.1 Experience of transition for the interview participants (*N* = 19)

Firm foundations	Fragmented	Standstill
Ben	Brandon	Finn
Daisy	Holly	Lawrence
David	Mark	Simon
Gary		Teresa
Joseph		Tim
Robert		
Wendy		

Brandon and Mark who previously at the time of the survey were establishing 'firm foundations' with their transition, were at the interview stage, experiencing more of a 'fragmented' transition, as their interviews showed that their social and leisure lives were restricted. Mark, for example, relied very much on university holiday reunions with old school friends to go out and could not mention any other friendships. Finn, Tim and Teresa at the time of the survey had been in full time education which had brought with it increased leisure and social opportunities. They were looking forward to the completion of their courses and the expectation of employment; a prospect that looked somewhat different two years later after experiencing many months of unemployment. Similarly for Simon, his subdued outlook at the time of the interview was in contrast to the optimism two years before. At the time of the survey, he had completed a Level 3 qualification and he was understandably proud of having made it to university to study for an honours degree. Almost two years later, he had left university before completing the degree, was frustrated with his employment in a fast food restaurant and had no clear plan as to what steps he might take next.

The findings in Table 7.1 were interesting for a variety of reasons. This related to the nature of transition, methodology and the way in which judgements and terms which are used to describe that transition. From the perspective of some of the young people, two years later into their transition, their experiences were not as positive either due to unemployment/unrewarding employment or social and leisure lives that they wanted to see change. These young people had previously been seen as 'establishing firm foundations' and does raise a concern as to whether, at an average age of nineteen, it may have been too early to make such a judgement or perhaps that transition between sixteen to nineteen remains stable but that there are challenges in the next phase of young adulthood. At the very least it does demonstrate the need for caution and reserve when making summary judgements concerning transition 'outcomes' for young people, particularly in the early years after compulsory schooling. Further research with greater numbers of young people, would facilitate reaching firmer conclusions as to whether this was a trend across the cohort.

7.4. The role of structure and agency in the transition of the young people (Interview N = 19)

The main focus of the interview stage of the research design was to identify the facilitators and inhibitors of transition from the perspectives of the young people, and the role played by agency and structure in that process. Figure 7.1 highlights how that relationship operated across all aspects of transition; education, employment social and leisure and independence. These findings provided an insight into how the young people were meeting the challenges of transition overall, by showing which participants, for example, were succeeding beyond expectation in light of the lack of resources and/or obstacles they had faced and others who perhaps were not or unable to make more of their situations. This analysis revealed five different groupings as shown in Figure 7.1.

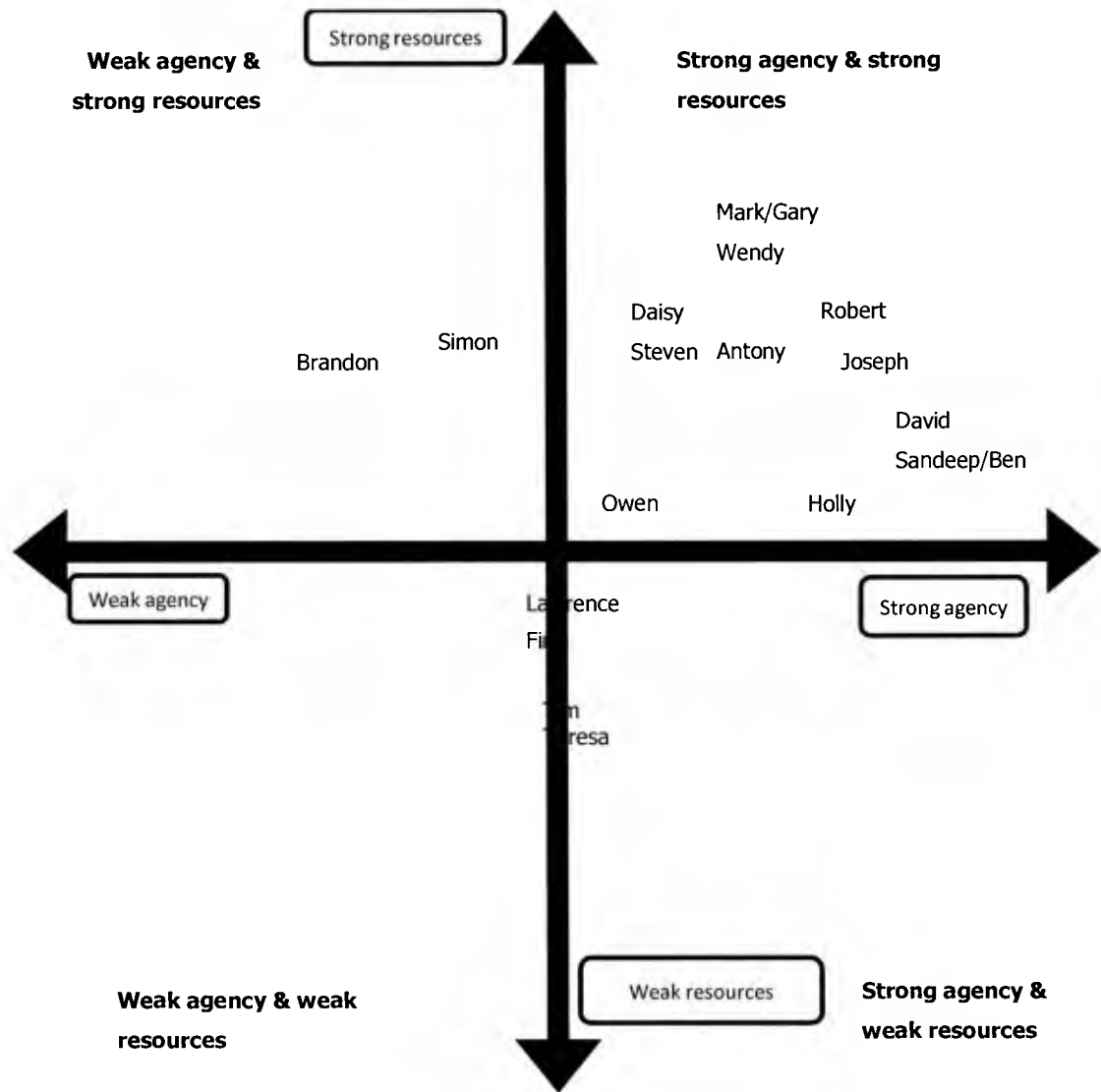


Figure 7.1 Part played by agency and structure in the transition of the interview participants

In the lives of five of the young people, agency played a prominent role in their transition to date and in many ways they might have been described as succeeding 'above and beyond' what might have been expected with respect to some of their earlier transition experiences. Ben, David and Sandeep had overcome some of their initial disruptive experiences of education and employment after leaving school to remain proactive in securing places on other courses and for David investigating new avenues of employment after leaving army training early. Holly and Robert, also in this

group, despite continued experience of severe speech difficulties and very low qualifications on leaving school, had secured employment and enjoyed rich social lives and strong friendships. Nevertheless, despite such strong evidence of agency, all of the members of this group acknowledged the part played by their family in their achievements and successes. However, a distinguishing feature of this support from that of some of the other groups, was that the family had also 'facilitated' the development of agency on the part of the young person as opposed to acting independently on behalf of the young person to secure more positive outcomes. All of them in this group, for example, had received support from their parents in looking in employment, but the young person had taken primary responsibility for the finding their current positions.

For a second group including Mark, Gary, Wendy, Antony and Joseph, they seemed to experience structural resources and exhibit agency almost in equal measure and in many respects were 'making the most of available resources'. Unlike many of the members of the previous group, their transition to date had been relatively straight forward. However, this masked a group of young people who, from very early on after leaving school, who were clear about their employment goals and how they could be achieved. They had worked with great determination towards these goals despite leaving school in the main, with generally low GCSE results and finding their studies challenging at times. However, they too had benefitted from strong family support and effective advice from professionals.

A smaller group which included Daisy, Owen and Steven were also experiencing a positive transition, their accounts showed many examples of agency and they could also report how other factors has supported that process. However, what distinguished them from the first two groups was the exact nature of the support that they had received; especially from their families. All three had secured their employment through the direct intervention of a parent. Steven's father, as an architect, for example, had used his contacts with a building company to secure his Steven's job as a plasterer. Yet their interviews included some very clear examples, of perceived agency at least and Daisy and Steven both felt strongly that they had exercised control and choice over whether they took up the offer of employment. In these circumstances it was difficult to assess the strength of agency on behalf of the young person and there was a sense that this was a group who were yet 'to be tested' in their transition which

might well have been different if their parents had not played such an interventionist role.

If some of the participants were 'making the most of available resources', the reverse might have been said of Brandon and Simon who both demonstrated 'fragile agency' despite the availability of various resources. Both young men, for example, had left school with higher qualifications than most, family support had been available, they had both successfully made the transition to their first post-16 course and the extent of their language impairment was not as severe as many of the other participants. Yet it was hard to find them speaking as positively or with the same sense of agency about aspects of their lives as the rest of participants. No doubt, in Simon's case, this was partly explained by the effect of his decision to leave university earlier. It was hard to discern the full nature of the role of agency and structure in this decision. He spoke of the academic challenges yet, this had been the case for all of the participants at university. He had also received support both from tutors although Simon did not think this had always been helpful. At the time of interview he was unhappy with his work in the restaurant but in reality was doing very little practically, if anything, about addressing this concern. It is possible that this lack of agency in terms of taking responsibility and being proactive when faced with a challenge may have also contributed to his decision to leave university earlier.

Finally, for those young people not in employment, the relationship between structure and agency in their lives were again somewhat matched but in a less positive direction compared to the group who were 'making the most of available resources'. The balance between the two elements could almost be described as a stalemate situation and this group were experiencing the 'frustrated agency' described by Evans (2007). A sense of agency had been present in their interview accounts but the experience of unemployment, coupled with never having experienced any paid employment since leaving full time education; had left them more uncertain as to the direction of their future and what else they might do to change their current circumstances.

7.5. Bronfenbrenner's Model of Human Development

Many of the authors concerned with the agency and structure debate have called for a holistic approach to the study of youth transitions and the explanation for the outcomes and experiences of young people (Bynner, 2001, Shildrick and MacDonald, 2007). One model taken from psychology which provides a systemic and complementary explanation of transition is the bioecological theory of Bronfenbrenner. This section will present the elements of Bronfenbrenner's theories that are relevant to the transition context and demonstrate how it applies to the findings of this study. Chapter 1 presented an overview of his theory. The three elements of his theory that will be focussed on in detail include; his emphasis on the importance of reciprocity within the model, including the importance of how the individual perceives their environment, his model of interrelated, hierarchical bioecological levels and finally his theory of developmentally generative personal characteristics (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998).

The relevance of Bronfenbrenner's approach to human development has been acknowledged within the SEN and disability research field (Howie, 1999, Sontag, 1996). If the young person, with or without a history of SEN, undertaking the transition to adulthood is placed at the centre of the model, it is apparent that each of the other levels include many of the traditional structures from a sociological perspective, such as family and locality that have previously been shown to influence transition. In one model, all of the potential environments that affect transition are not just accounted for but also allow for investigating the very complex, multi-dimensional nature of transition in the 21st century. The exploration of whether any of these environments within each level are particular for a young person with a history of SEN is also offered by the model.

For development to take place whether, for example, cognitively or socially, continual interaction between the individual and the environment must take place over the life span (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998). Sontag in her account of the relevance of Bronfenbrenner's approach as a theoretical framework for the study of disability emphasised his views on the reciprocal nature of the interactions and the importance of the two-way direction of the interaction of the young people in and with their different environments (Sontag, 1996). In addition, Howie (1999) in her examination of the contribution of the bioecological model to SEN research argued that:

Such environmental aspects are not to be studied only by observation, but by exploring the ways in which the individual uniquely perceives the properties of the environment. (Howie, 1999, p. 17)

This provides powerful support for the importance of asking young people, including those with a history of SEN to articulate their perspective on their transition. Evidence of this reciprocity and the ability to make informed judgements relating to the nature of the interaction with their environments was visible in the lives of the participants. This was demonstrated by the fact, for example, that the majority saw themselves, in conjunction with others, as responsible for the progress made in their transition to date. The importance placed on an active engagement with the environment seems to hold a positive message for how a young person might engage in the transition process rather than it just being seen as determined by structures such as a history of SLI, in society and particular environments. The findings showed that so many of the young people had the ability and willingness to engage in a reciprocal relationship between the self and their environments which is so important for development (Sontag, 1996).

Figure 7.2 has adapted Bronfenbrenner's model to include the specific structures and resources that they young people reported and thus illustrates the particular environments that influenced the transition of the participants within the hierarchical systems of human development. It is possible to identify from their responses examples of resources at the different levels.

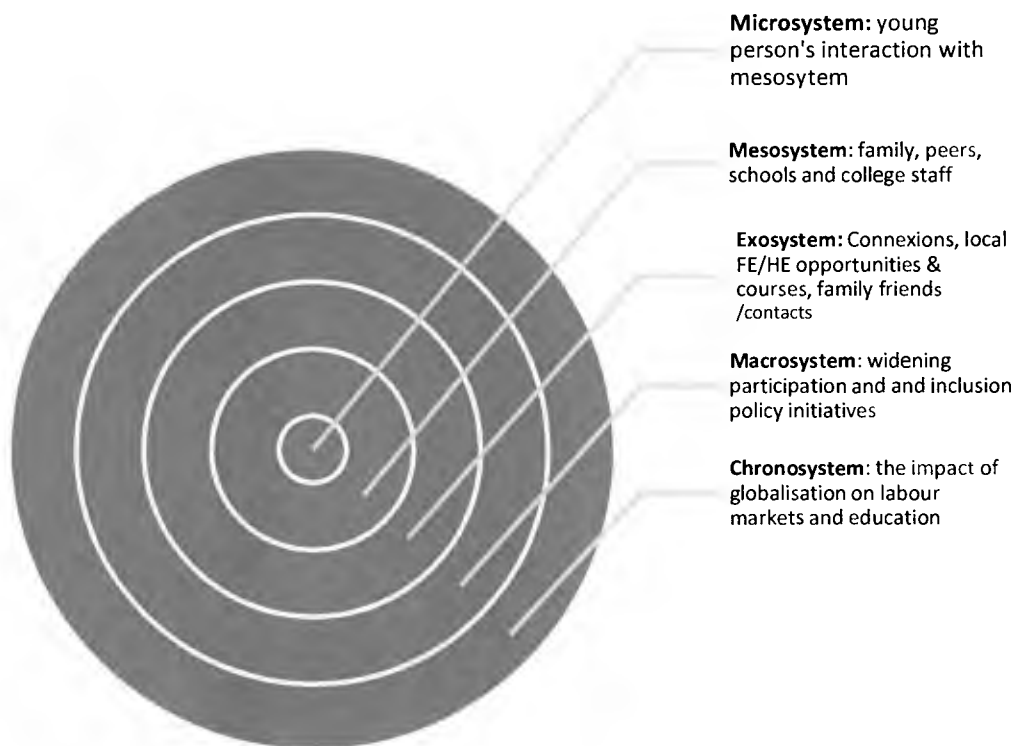


Figure 7.2 Bronfenbrenner's model of bioecological development and transition

At the microsystem level, the testimonies showed that the 'setting' of most importance and with the greatest influence on transition was the relationship of the young people with their parents and siblings, followed by those with professionals such as academic staff, Connexions advisors and Job Centre staff. At the level of the mesosystem, families were seen to work effectively with other microsystems on behalf of the young person to ensure more positive outcomes. The families of Wendy, Mark and Holly, for example, had helped to facilitate meetings with Connexions and Job Centre advisers to support them in their search for employment. Families also played a key role in supporting the young people in education. Gary, for example, spoke at length of how his family had assisted him in the decision making process as to what skilled trade to specialise in at college, but crucially without deciding for him. Figure 7.3 shows these relationships between and within the different levels and how strong these relationships were. The differences in the width and direction of the interconnecting

lines between the settings indicate evidence from the interviews of the strength of the relationship and the impact on the experiences of the young people.

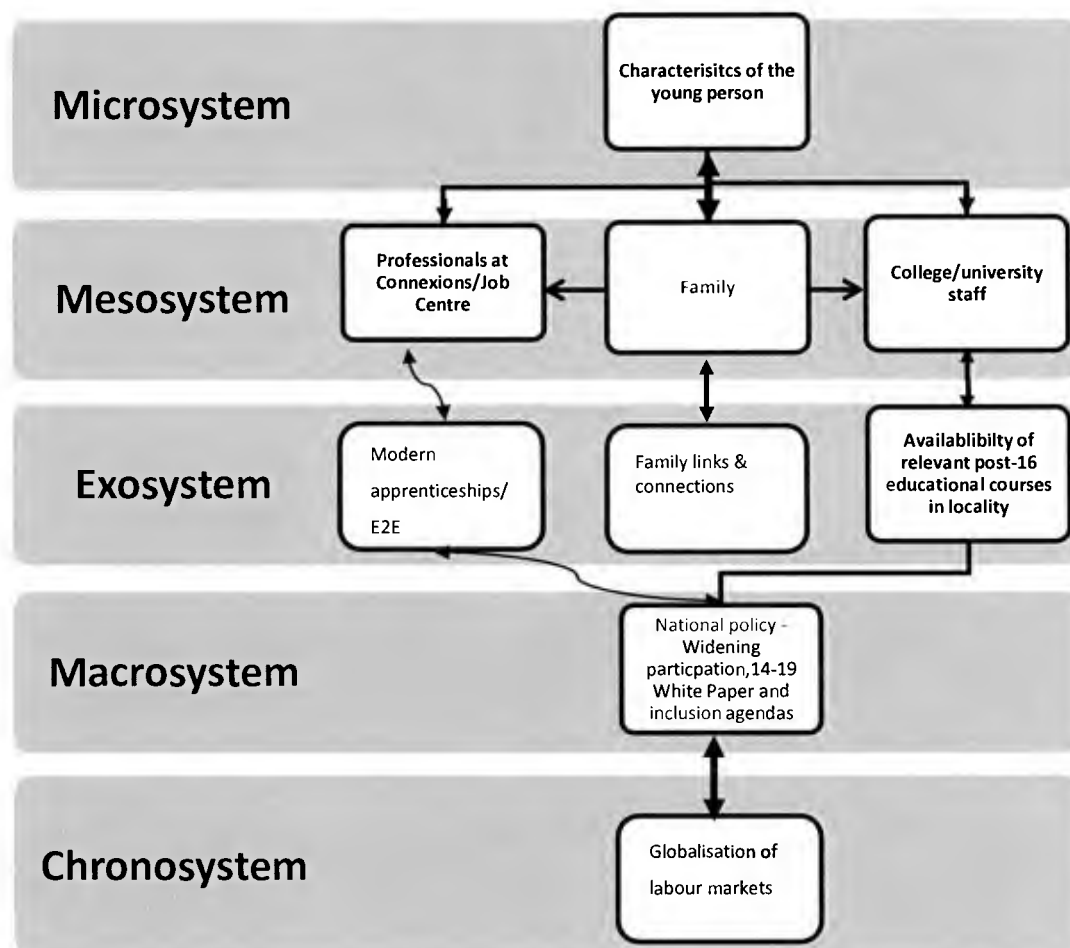


Figure 7.3 Links which support transition across Bronfenbrenner's ecological levels

Moving out to the further levels, where the young person was not directly involved in a 'setting', it was also possible to identify examples of links across the levels that contributed to the potential of more positive outcomes. Legislation and policy developments, such as the 14-19 Education and Skills White Paper (DfES, 2005a) have enabled more young people with SEN and disabilities to take up post-16 courses from

which many of this group appeared to have benefitted. Particularly, when compared to the academic outcomes of the participants in the Clegg et al. (2005) study of two generations earlier. What was less apparent from the responses was evidence of constructive interactions across the levels for those young people in and seeking employment. Here, the young person had to draw far more on resources from the micro, meso and exosystem levels.

Perhaps the strongest way in which Bronfenbrenner's model complements and adds to the theories of structure and agency is the insight it provides into the personal attributes that allow for an individual to engage effectively between their different environments. He maintained that some personal attributes were more important for psychological and social growth of an individual which he described as 'developmentally generative characteristics' (Sontag, 1996, Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998).

...developmentally generative characteristics involve such active orientations as curiosity, tendency to initiate and engage in activity alone or with others, responsiveness to initiatives by others, and readiness to defer immediate gratification to pursue long-term goals. (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 810)

Many of the characteristics described in the above quotation could be identified in the actions and responses of the participants in this study within their academic, employment, independence, social and leisure activities. Initiative, for example, could be seen by those young people who took the lead in their employment searches. It was also evident in their social lives as so many had 'joined up' to so many group activities whether sporting or music in nature. In terms of responsiveness to others, many of the young people spoke of how valuable advice at times had been in the decision which had faced them, such as when Joseph had to consider which course to take at university. Finally, a number of the young people, such as Sandeep, Ben and Wendy to name just a few, had deferred immediate gratification to attain their goals and it was very hard to find examples of any of the young people who were not in some form or other planning their futures and as such willing to take all of the necessary steps to do so. There was very little evidence of 'living for the moment'.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated that despite evidence of the complexity of the transition routes since leaving school, it was possible to identify common transition experiences at the time of the survey which included; 'establishing firm foundations', 'fragmented transitions' and 'transitions in standstill'. The trend in positive experiences at the time of the interview was not quite as evident as at the time of the survey, but the smaller sample number would prevent firm conclusions being drawn from this study. However, there was sufficient evidence to highlight the need for further investigations in transition for young people with a history of SLI in their early twenties.

Using the sociological theories of structure and agency to analyse the perspectives of the young people as to the factors that had supported and hindered their transition revealed higher levels of agency than associated findings from previous literature might have predicted. However, for those young people that exhibited relatively strong agency with high levels of resources to call, it was still possible to identify subtle differences at play such as the nature of the intervention provided by parents. Finally, the use of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model complemented these findings by further illuminating the relationships and settings that supported the transition of a young person.

Chapter 8 Discussion

8.1. Introduction

Current investigations of the post-16 outcomes for young people with SLI are limited in scope. This thesis set out to contribute to this body of knowledge by examining the academic, employment, independence and social transition experiences and outcomes of a cohort of pupils who had attended a residential special school for pupils with SLI and the explanations provided by the young people for these outcomes and experiences. This final chapter examines the findings in reference to two main bodies of literature. The first comparison is with the literature of the transition experiences of other groups of young people with language difficulties, wider SEN populations and the general population of young people in order to explore the extent to which the experiences of the participants in this study reflected those of other young people. The second comparison is with theories taken from sociology and psychology. The chapter continues with suggestions for further research, a reflection on choices made by the author throughout the research process as part of wider analysis of the limitations of the study. The chapter ends with a summary of the unique and important contributions of the study to the field.

8.2. Implications of the findings within the current transition context for all young people

Chapter 1 described transition for young people into adulthood today as being extended in time, more complex and with evidence of greater polarisation of certain vulnerable groups compared to previous generations. This section examines the findings of this study in relation to each of these three national and international trends.

8.2.1. Evidence of extended transition

As shown in chapter 1 the extension of the period from adolescence to adulthood has been widely acknowledged in the literature (Arnett, 2004, Evans and Furlong, 1997, Shildrick and MacDonald, 2007, Fussell et al., 2007). In 2000, the thematic review of the transition of young people aged sixteen to their late twenties in fourteen countries by the OECD reported that the average length of the transition from school to work had extended to seven and a half years in 1996, compared to five and a half years in 1990 (OECD, 2000). Higher staying on rates in post-16 education in response to globalisation of the economy and a changing labour market has been the primary drive of the extension in time of the transition from school to work (Maringe and Fuller, 2006, OECD, 2005, Henderson et al., 2007). There was some evidence of an extended transition for the young people in this study in relation to participating in further education. At the time of the survey, 59 of the 60 participants continued in education post-16 and with five of the young people at the time of the survey in higher education.

An examination of the length of time from school to work, however, demonstrated a need to observe with caution the staying on rates in education for this group of young people. The participants in this study who had made the transition from school to employment at the time of the survey ($N = 17/60$), took on average just under two years. By the time of the interview, two years later, the average time had risen to just over three years. This increase in length might have been expected as the participants were two years older (average age 21) but an average of three years from school to work still falls considerably short of the seven and a half years reported by the OECD. It is important to note however that the OECD study included participants who were up to five years older than those in the current study and from different countries with different education systems which has been recognised as a factor that can account for variations in the length of transition (Fussell et al., 2007). Recent literature has started to challenge the notion that the school to transition has extended for *all* groups of young people (Smith, 2009, Hendry and Kloep, 2010). Nevertheless, a question remains as to whether some of the young people in the study were experiencing transitions different from the general trend and which will remain to an extent unanswered, until follow up studies are conducted with young people with SLI into their late twenties and thirties.

8.2.2. Evidence of complex transitions

As well as extending in length, the transition experience over the last thirty years has been described as an increasingly complex process. This complexity is evident in the different options available to young people post-16 including; a variety of vocational and academic education routes, different places and modes of study (EGRIS, 2001, Raffe, 2003), as well as opportunities for retraining and changing direction in courses described by the OECD as 'double dipping' (OECD, 2000). The thirteen different routes on leaving special school shown at the time of the survey and further expanded at the time of the interview would seem to indicate that the young people in this study were experiencing a similar process.

However, a recent development in the literature with respect to the notion of more complex transitions has been to examine in more depth as to what is actually understood by the term 'complex'. One perspective is that although there may be greater complexity in relation to the number of potential choices post-16, the actual *experience* of these various routes may not be as complex as originally considered (Gauthier, 2007). The fact that the majority of the young people were happy with the progress made in their transition to date, that they mainly enjoyed their time since leaving school and said that their courses and employment had generally worked out well for them may support this conclusion. Similar responses were also reported to the same questions in the Manchester SEN longitudinal study (Dewson et al., 2004).

8.2.3. Transition and the polarisation of some groups of young people

The polarisation of certain groups during post-16 transition has increasingly been documented, including those young people from families with low social and economic status and disabilities (Oppenheim, 2007, Webster et al., 2004). This study identified two groups relating to gender and low academic attainment who were experiencing more vulnerable transitions. In this study, 20% ($N = 12/60$) of the participants were female, which was representative of the male/female ratio of the pupils who had left the school between 2000 and 2004. The data revealed some striking differences in the outcomes between these two groups, especially with regard to current activity, education and certain social outcomes. Despite the recognition that education and employment outcomes for women have improved overall, young women with a

disability and/or low levels of academic attainment experience less secure transitions into employment, including higher levels of unemployment and lower earning potential (Biggart, 2002, Hogansen et al., 2008, Lindstrom et al., 2004, Doren and Benz, 1998, Coutinho et al., 2006). National longitudinal data from the US similarly shows that outcomes for female students compared to male students leaving special education are also less favourable. As a group, the outcomes, experiences and responses of the female participants in this study reflected all of these trends found in the literature. They did not achieve academically as well as the male participants as shown by their lower GCSE average score, lower level of qualifications attained post-16 and the fact that they were more likely to attend a specialist setting post-16. They reported that finding employment was more difficult than the male participants and at the time of the survey were over represented in the group that were not in employment or education. Generally, this group also experienced more levels of social isolation demonstrated by reporting greater challenges with taking part in leisure activities, making friends and spending less time with friends.

The small number of females in the study means that the results for this group should be treated with caution. But the trend towards less positive outcomes mirror wider findings and concerns in the literature for females with a disability and/or learning difficulty (Trainor, 2007; Hogansen et al., 2008). Such findings are important because they raise concerns as to which factors might have contributed to these less positive outcomes for many of the female participants. Studies that explore and attempt to provide insights into this situation are limited, but those available focus particularly in two areas; the first, on the level of impairment and secondly, the career development opportunities for young women with a disability and/or learning impairment. Each is addressed in turn.

Both nationally (DCSF, 2009b, Daniels, 1999, Wilson, 2000) and internationally (Skarbrevik, 2002, Hill, 1994), more boys at pre-school and school age are identified with SEN. As shown in Chapter 2, this over representation of boys is also reflected with children identified with speech, language and communication needs (Bercow, 2008, Meschi and Vignoles, *in press*). One suggestion for this disparity is that girls with a learning difficulty can present differently in relation to behaviour at school, often internalising, rather than externalising their difficulties, and thus are not identified in the same numbers as boys (Biederman et al., 2002, Hill, 1994). This has led some

researchers to contend that the degree of difficulty experienced by girls with a learning difficulty often needs to be more severe before they are identified. Wagner and his colleagues (1992) reported a similar finding in their US National Longitudinal Transition Study of Special Education Students.

Females in secondary special education represented a different combination of abilities and disabilities than males. As a group, females were more seriously impaired; even among males and females with the same disability category, females had marginally greater functional deficits than males. [Wagner (1992) cited in Daniels, 1999, p. 190].

This explanation, might have accounted, in some part, for the differences in at least academic outcomes between male and female participants in this study, although there were no statistically significant differences in their language scores compared to the male participants.

Explanations for variations in employment outcomes between male and female young people with learning difficulties have used career development theory, involving the intricate relationship of factors that influence employment aspirations and career choice (Lindstrom and Benz, 2002). Lindstrom and Benz (2002) in their case studies of young women with learning disabilities in the US found that exposure to opportunities within the school and work environments that influenced career choices were not the same for girls as they were for boys. These opportunities included participation on vocational courses and work experience. This study did not investigate these parts of the school curriculum but does provides an important avenue for further studies to identify possible explanations for differences in outcomes between the two groups.

The second group that was identified as being at risk of possible isolation was a relatively small group who had left school with very low levels of qualifications. Over half of the participants when surveyed ($N = 35/60$) had made continued progress with respect to academic performance by improving upon the level of their qualifications on leaving school at sixteen. Nevertheless, a group of young people ($N = 16/60$) had not been able to move onto the next level of qualification despite the fact that they had participated in FE for four years. This entire group had left school having achieved entry-level qualifications, but after leaving school, had completed various life skills and basic skills courses but at the same level. In addition, their first post-16 placement had always been in a specialist setting. The presence of a similar group in other SEN

studies has also been identified where young people take a number of courses which often do not result in any tangible progression of knowledge and skills. These courses are often taken because of a lack of other viable routes or alternatives (Aston et al., 2005, Dee, 2006, Caton and Kagan, 2007, Dewson et al., 2004) or simply serve to cover up longer term unemployment experienced by some young people (CERI, 1985).

To summarise, these findings challenge our current understanding about transition routes for young people with learning difficulties as they demonstrated that the experience of transition for the participants actually reflected many of the current national and international general trends for post-16 transition identified in the literature with respect. These included increased and longer staying on rates in further and higher education, evidence of more complex transitions in terms of the possibility of taking a variety of routes after leaving school and polarisation of certain groups, most notably to the disadvantage of the female participants.

8.3. Transition outcomes of participants compared with the findings from other SLI, SEN and national cohort studies

Having examined the three general transition trends, this section discusses more specific outcomes of the study with a comparison to findings from other SLI, SEN studies and national data in order to establish the similarities and differences of the activities and experiences of the young people in this study. The outcomes compared include academic outcomes, experiences of employment and social and leisure activities.

8.3.1. Comparison of academic outcomes with SLI, SEN and national cohort studies

8.3.1.1. Comparison of GCSE results

When comparisons are made with examination results at sixteen with the very early studies of young people with SLI, the participants in this study achieved greater academic success with the majority gaining at least one or more GCSE passes, unlike those young people in the Clegg et al. (2005) study where just one of the seventeen

participants attained just one qualification on leaving compulsory schooling. This success and progress must be recognised, but at the same time these findings should also be considered in context; for example, the participants from the Clegg et al. study (2005) were educated within a different examination system to the one currently in place in England and Wales and therefore made direct comparisons problematic.

This is concerned with the thorny nature of making direct comparisons of findings between the various SLI studies which relate to three issues in particular. The first relates to when the research was carried out, secondly, the heterogeneous nature of the populations studied, and, finally, the different ways studies have reported examination results at sixteen. Comparisons of, for example, GCSE results between more recent studies (Snowling et al., 2001, Dockrell et al., 2007, Durkin et al., 2009, Conti-Ramsden et al., 2009) have to some extent overcome the problem of long periods of time between studies, but populations with heterogeneous samples within and between studies and the reporting of examination results in different ways have complicated what might have been imagined as one of the more straightforward comparisons to make between findings from different studies. The principal issue with heterogeneity is concerned with the range of severity of the impairment experienced by the young person. In this study, all of the young people attended a residential specialist placement and had received a statement of SEN. The cohorts of the other SLI studies included young people with and without statements, educated in a variety of settings including mainstream with different degrees of support, language units and specialist settings. Studies also have made distinctions within their cohorts of participants with resolved and persistent SLI (Snowling et al., 2001, Durkin et al., 2009). All these factors need to be considered when evaluating results between studies, as it might well be argued that like for like comparisons are difficult to make. Nevertheless it is still possible to identify some common ground when comparing GCSE results across some of the studies as highlighted in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1 shows that with a 7% five A*- C GCSE pass rate, the young people in this study did not perform as well as those in the Dockrell et al. (2007) and Durkin et al. (2009) studies (13% and 16% respectively). However, the participants in the current study were more likely to be entered for examination at Level 1 and 2 compared to, for example those from the Durkin et al. (2009) study where nearly a quarter of the young people were not entered for examination at sixteen. Greater similarity is found with the

group of young people identified with persistent SLI in the Snowling et al.(2001) study who achieved a pass rate of 8.3% based on four A*- C passes. Explanations for this similarity might relate to severity of impairment and that the participants in this study had a profile of more persistent SLI as opposed to one of resolved SLI. Findings from the Durkin et al. (2009) study revealed that almost twenty five per cent of the participants were not entered for GCSE examinations and that almost all of these young people ($N = 26/30$) were in a specialist setting. This study presented a similar finding with twenty per cent of the young people not having taken a GCSE qualification at sixteen. The current group also achieved fewer A*- C GCSE passes compared to national data for all young people with a statement of SEN.

Table 8.1 Comparison of GCSE results with SLI, SEN and national studies

Study	Number in study	Five A*-C passes (%)
Snowling et al. (2001)	71 (Total)	-
	Resolved: 22	-
	Persistent: 24	8.3 (4 A*-C passes)
Dockrell et al. (2007)	69 (2005)	13
Durkin et al. (2009)	120 (2004)	16
Current study	60 (Total)	7
DCSF (2006)	National average for all 16 year olds	59.5
DCSF (2006)	National average for 16 year olds with SEN without a statement	23.1
DCSF (2006)	National average for 16 year olds with SEN with a statement	9.2

Source: National Curriculum Assessment, GCSE and Equivalent Attainment and Post-16 Attainment by Pupil Characteristics in England 2006/7 (DCSF, 2007)

8.3.1.2. Comparison of Post-16 destinations and further academic attainment

The results from this study also provide evidence to compare post-16 destinations after completion of compulsory schooling. Reflecting the literature on the higher participation rates of young people in education post-16 (McVicar and Rice, 2001), Table 7.2 shows that the participants in this study remained in education or some form of training ($N = 59/60$). This is one of the few outcomes that can be found across all of the SLI studies, including the earlier study of Clegg et al. (2005). One of the differences between this and the other SLI studies was that fewer of the young people began employment directly after leaving compulsory education; 2% ($N = 1/60$) compared to the 7.8% and 8% in the Dockrell et al. (2007) and Durkin et al. (2009) studies respectively.

Table 8.2 Post-16 destinations for young people with SLI

Study	Full time education and training (%)	Employment (%)
Dockrell et al. (2007)	83	7.8
Durkin et al. (2009)	91	8
Current study	98	2

Despite what might be perceived as a very low GCSE pass rate at sixteen, many of the young people were able to use the time in post-16 education to increase their academic attainment. Respecting the previous comment concerning the relatively small number of young people 'churning' between somewhat repetitive courses, the fact remains that 40% ($N = 24/60$) followed a clear, linear trajectory with their courses, moving up between the hierarchy of qualifications. Another 20% ($N = 12/60$), who initially continued on the same academic level after leaving school, also went on to

study at a higher academic level. For many young people in this group it was a conscious decision on the part of the young person and their parents to repeat a different subject qualification but at the same level, to assist with the transition to a mainstream setting. All the young people who had taken these particular routes were happy with their decision when looking back.

Although 93% ($N = 56/60$) of the young people in the study left school with qualifications at Level 1, by the time of the survey a further 23% ($N = 14/39$) of the participants were on Level 2 courses and a quarter ($N = 10/39$) of the young people in education were studying at Level 3 or above; indicating considerable progress. This group included the four young people studying for a degree at university at the time of the survey. Only one of the young men in this group had left school with five or more A*- C GCSEs and of the two participants who had moved on to university at the time of the interview, one had left school with the five or more A* – C pass rate. Whitehouse (2009) and his colleagues also found three participants studying at university level in their research and with the findings of this study would also reflect the modest increases in participation of students with disabilities in HE (Tinklin et al., 2004) and in developments in targeted provision at that level (Goode, 2007). Compared to the YCS and with the young people with a communication and interaction difficulty in Aston et al.'s (2005) longitudinal transition study of over one thousand young people with a history of SEN, proportionally more young people in this study remained in education at age eighteen to nineteen (65% compared to 47% and 32% respectively) but was fewer than the participants at age nineteen in the Ottawa study (75%). The overall academic attainment of the participants was lower compared to national data for eighteen year olds (65% at Level 1 or below compared to 48% with and 28% without a disability in the YCS) (Burchardt, 2005, DfES, 2006a). The finding in this study that academic attainment at sixteen for pupils with SLI should not necessarily be seen as an indicator of further academic attainment is one supported by other studies which have demonstrated that:

....formal qualifications at 16 in themselves do not predict later outcomes, at least not among the poorly qualified. (Webster et al., 2004, p. 38)

8.3.2. Comparison of employment activities

A unique aspect of this study was the insight it provided into outcomes for young people with SLI beyond the age of nineteen in the UK. Currently, there is just one other published study conducted by Whitehouse and his colleagues (2009) which involved nineteen young adults with SLI, with a mean age of 24.8 years based on varying ages but which also included, for example, three participants still at school (Whitehouse et al., 2009). Internationally, the Ottawa longitudinal study in Canada has recently published family, education, occupation and quality of life outcomes for 244 adults (aged 25) with language impairments that have been followed up at four different time points since the age of five (Johnson et al., 2010). Results from both these studies are referred to in the rest of this section in order to compare findings with older participants.

At the time of the survey (average age 19), 28% ($N = 17/60$) of the young people were in employment, compared to 14% at the same age for the Ottawa study and seven of the nineteen young adults in the Whitehouse et al. (2009) cohort and just three of the seventeen participants in the Clegg et al. (2005) study who were able to remain in employment for any length of time. Explanations for this variation in findings might include the effect of different sizes of population. In addition, there are institutional differences between the education systems in Canada and the UK which might account for variations in numbers in employment at nineteen. Yet Canada has a higher rate of pupils who do not complete their compulsory education (Clark, 2009, Oreopoulos, 2005).

A comparison of the nature and type of employment revealed more similarities between the three studies with manual, retail and service sector positions dominating employment outcomes as shown in Table 8.3. The fact that the field of retail was the most common form of employment is similar to trends of employment for all young people in national surveys in the UK (Barham et al., 2009).

Table 8.3 Comparison of most common employment outcomes between language studies

Johnson et al. (2010)	Whitehouse et al. (2009)	Current study – Survey	Current study - Interview
Trades	Manual	Retail	Retail
Food Service	Service industry	Manual	Administration
Sales/Retail		Skilled trade	Skilled trade
Administration		Administration	
Information Technology			

Compared to the participants in the Clegg et al. (2005) study, the majority of young people in the current study who wanted to begin their working lives had been able to gain and maintain employment. The table shows that the young people were in low income positions with the potential for the gap between their earnings and those of their peers with higher qualifications, to widen as they move further into their twenties and thirties. Nevertheless, findings from this and the Ottawa study found that the young people were generally satisfied with their employment outcomes to date. This was also reflected in the current study with over three quarters of the participants ($N = 13/17$) at the time of the survey and the interview ($N = 7/10$) who reported being happy in their occupation, although it was the young people in retail who reported least satisfaction and wanted to change career paths. The Ottawa researchers found no significant differences between the language group and the control group relating to job satisfaction.

A unique contribution of the present study is that it also investigated the methods used by the young people to find work, which were not reported in either of the two other language studies. As previously documented, at the time of the survey, the majority of

the young people in employment had found their work through informal channels; predominantly family and friends. This is in keeping with other transition studies of populations with SEN (Aston et al., 2005) and research related to the general population of young people especially in less well paid employment (Green and White, 2007, Meadows, 2001). What is more difficult to explain, apart from the role of chance, was why this had changed at the time of the interview where eight of the ten young people in work had used formal methods to apply for their positions, involving application forms and interviews.

Finally, chapter 6 presented findings for those young people in the study who were not in employment or education/training. At the time of the interview, this included four young people ($N = 4/19$), all of whom had been in education when the survey was conducted. Two of these young people had also taken part in vocational training courses after leaving school and they, along with other participants, who had experienced this training at some point after leaving school, reported a mixed response in terms of effectiveness of these courses to secure employment as outlined in Chapter 1. Similar findings have been reported in Australian studies where non-disabled young people (77%) were more likely to gain employment after this type of training compared to young people with a disability (51%) (Winn and Hay, 2009, Lamb and McKenzie, 2001). In the Whitehouse et al. (2009) study, two participants ($N = 2/19$) were unemployed and similar to those not in employment in the current study, they had never experienced any paid employment. By the time the participants in Aston et al.'s longitudinal study had reached 19-20 years of age, just over a quarter (27%) were unemployed. In the UK in 2006 the Select Committee on Education and Skills reported that at sixteen, young people with a disability were twice as likely to be unemployed (DCSF, 2006). Within this wider context, it would appear that the young people in this study were doing somewhat better in terms of finding employment and remaining within education. However, this is of little comfort to those in the study who were frustrated not just by the experience of unemployment but also the limited opportunities they perceived to be available for them in the near future, especially those that had completed employment training courses and had still been unable to secure paid employment at the end.

8.3.3. Comparison of leisure and social outcomes

This section discusses the leisure and social outcomes of the young people including their leisure activities, friendships, relationships and a reflection on links in the literature relating SLI with affective disorders. Outcomes in this area of transition were perhaps the most problematic to analyse. Firstly, as with the academic outcomes, the characteristics of the different populations in the various studies, in particular the variation in ages, made direct comparisons difficult at times. It was not surprising for example, that proportionally more of the Ottawa participants were married, as this was the study with the eldest cohort. Secondly, there existed the common frustration of studies approaching the same area but with a different focus for the questions or research tools. Finally, and in many respects the most pressing dilemma was the greater subjective nature of these outcomes. It was relatively straightforward to record and document many of the outcomes relating to education and employment. This is not quite the case when it comes to researching an individual's social and leisure life, for example, how is a 'good' friend defined and what might be the qualitatively different experience of having one good friend compared to a number of acquaintances? Studies on friendship have identified common themes including emotional support, its communal nature and compatibility (de Fries, 1996). However, this study sought to avoid the approach of many studies, particularly in the field of disability, where the researcher makes the judgements as indicators of quality friendships but to gain understanding from the participant's perspectives (Knox and Hickson, 2001).

8.3.3.1. Leisure activities

The activities undertaken by the participants as part of their leisure time were quite similar to findings from other SEN studies with television, listening to music and seeing friends as being some of the most popular activities (Aston et al., 2005, Dewson et al., 2004). Recent national data showed that over 80% of young people between sixteen and nineteen take part in a leisure activity outside the home once a week with sports and youth clubs being some of the most common venues (DCSF, 2007c). The young people in this study were similarly engaged in a range of formal and informal social

and leisure activities with, for example, 70% ($N = 42/60$) regularly taking part in a sporting activity such as football, rugby or attending a local gym.

The leisure activities of the young people were also a window on the many talents they possessed, including those who played a musical instrument, were members of bands or in a choir and played for a local sports team to name a few. These types of activities and achievements are often not found in associated studies but they were spoken of very enthusiastically by the participants and the pleasure gained from having such interests. Perhaps, somewhat unexpected was the finding that 79% ($N = 47/60$) of the participants at the time of the survey had found it very or quite easy to take part in leisure activities outside of the home. This once again, along with the generally positive transition to mainstream education was another indicator of how many of the young people had been able to meet some of the challenges of adulthood. Additionally, making the transition back to living in their home community, another concern for young people who have attended a residential placement was not reported as problematic for the vast majority of participants.

A few young people in the current study reported that adults played a key role in facilitating their leisure activities; a finding also featured in the Aston et al. (2005) SEN longitudinal research study. For three of the young people interviewed, two were playing in local sports teams where the initial contact was established by parents either because a parent had played for the same club or they knew people there. Other parents had provided support in terms of finding specific evening courses for their son/daughter or with lifts to activities if the young person lived in a rural area or one with poor transport links. This form of social exclusion for rural youth, often as a result of inadequate public transport, has been identified as a concern for all young people in this context, regardless of whether they have a learning difficulty (Pavis et al., 2000).

8.3.3.2. Experience of friendships

Evaluating findings with respect to friendships revealed similarities and differences with the results from other studies. At the time of the survey and the interview, the majority of the participants were enjoying positive friendships but which also included many of the ups and downs experienced by all young people. At the time of the survey, 64% (N

= 38/60) found it quite or very easy to make friendships. This figure was close to the 68% of participants who responded similarly to the same question in the Aston et al. (2005) SEN study. These positive findings contrasted to some extent with those of Clegg et al. (2005) and Whitehouse et al. (2009). Clegg et al. and her colleagues reported that almost a half of the men in their study experienced persistent difficulties in establishing and maintaining relationships. Almost a quarter in the Whitehouse et al. (2009) cohort reported difficulties in this aspect of life and additionally felt that they did not have any close friendships. Aston and her colleagues (2005) found that those young people in their study who had attended a special school or had communication and interaction difficulties were less likely to see friends in the evenings and weekends. A recent Norwegian study also reported special education classes as a risk factor for social isolation (Kvalsund and Velsvik Bele, 2010). Although the young people in this study had a history of language and interaction difficulties and received what might be seen by some as a very isolating form of special education in a residential setting, there was no evidence of extensive social marginalisation.

Nevertheless, there existed a small group in this study who reported that their experience of friendships was not always positive and certainly for the four ($N = 4/19$) young people who expressed such views in the interviews, seeing friends and getting out more was an element of their life in which they wished to see change in the near future. In Chapter 6 it was described that of these four young people, two were unemployed and one had recently left university early and was unhappy working in a fast food restaurant. Similarly, the longitudinal SEN study (Aston et al., 2005) found that those with the least social activity were not in education or employment and long term unemployment was also a feature of the Clegg et al. (2005) study. The potential negative effects of unemployment on emotional and physical health have been documented (Linn et al., 1985) including for young people with a disability (Winn and Hay, 2009). This raises the question as to what extent was the social isolation experienced by some of the young people in the language studies associated with the history of their difficulty or unemployment or a combination of the two factors?

8.3.3.3. Experience of relationships and family life

The older age range of the Johnson et al. (2010) and Clegg et al. (2005) studies meant that they were able to report more comprehensively on relationships, marriage and children for adults with a history of language impairment. At the age of 25, 14% of the Ottawa participants were married, 43% were living with partners and 35% had children, whether or how any of these figures overlap was not reported. At age 24 in the Clegg et al. study (2005), 24% of the men were married (Howlin et al., 2000), Whitehouse et al. (2009) reported that eight of the fifteen participants in their study had experienced a romantic relationship which had lasted longer than three months, five had children and four were married. The current study, with an average age of nineteen at the time of the survey and twenty-one at interview, was only in a position to report tentative findings in this area. At the time of the survey, just one ($N = 1/60$) participant was married with step children and eleven (total 20% with the married participant, ($N = 11/60$) reported being in a romantic relationship at the time. At interview, just one of the nineteen was in a relationship, although three others talked of just coming out of one. The Ottawa study found that rates of marriage/permanent relationships were similar across all three groups in their study which included participants with language difficulties, speech difficulties and typically developing language. It would be interesting to find if similar findings were replicated in a follow up of the young people in this study into their twenties and thirties.

8.3.3.4. Experience of affective disorders

Finally, this study did not directly investigate the subject of affective disorders such as anxiety and depression of the young people. But in neither of the sixty survey responses or the nineteen interviews did any of the young people explicitly mention experiencing difficulties related to any form of affective disorder, although not directly asked. Two of the nineteen interview participants did mention having previously seen a counsellor over the effects of relationships that had not worked out very well.

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that the Clegg et al.(2005) and Whitehouse et al. (2009) studies both found a higher rate of affective disorders than would be expected amongst the general population. However, both researchers

acknowledged the small number of participants in their studies which would prevent generalisation to the wider population of young people with SLI, evidence of affective disorders even in such small groups might still raise concerns. Some considerations in this area for the current study might be that this had been an experience for some of the participants but the personal and sensitive nature of the subject prevented them from raising it. Furthermore, although the language and educational history of the young people who did not take part in this study was not different in any significant way to those that did, perhaps this might have been an area of difference and may have meant a greater reluctance on the young people's part to participate in the project. However, it remains the view of this author that any future research in the area of affective disorders and SLI should take into account life experiences such as unemployment. Moreover, a focus on affective disorders may also pathologise and even creates false self-fulfilling prophecies for these young people and their families.

To summarise, as with the general trends documented in the literature, there were many similarities but also some important differences in terms of specific transition outcomes and experiences to findings in related studies. The young people in this study had achieved greater academic success at sixteen compared to much earlier SLI studies but were below those identified with SLI in some of the current longitudinal studies. However, what was also encouraging to find was how many of them were able to continue to make progress with their academic careers. Those in employment were working in fields similar to other young people of this age in the general population, but the majority were currently enjoying their positions. By contrast the experience of those who were unemployed was a cause for concern as they had never experienced any paid employment which was also a feature of young people in the Clegg et al. (2005) study. In terms of their social life, the young people were engaged in activities common to all young people of this age and many of them had particular talents that were enriching this aspect of their lives. They spoke positively of friendships, a major concern raised in the literature and just a small group reported experiences that might suggest that they were socially isolated.

8.4. Factors that support transition

Despite the wealth of data and associated literature which demonstrates poor post-16 outcomes for young people with disabilities and learning difficulties, youth with disabilities do have positive post-school outcomes (Murray, 2003). Both at the time of the survey and the interview, many of the young people in this study were also enjoying positive experiences. The reasons for such outcomes, within the context of this study, were answered by the participants themselves through gaining their views, most notably during the interviews. The outcomes revealed a majority who generally were responding well to the increasing demands of adulthood despite a history of at least one significant risk factor; that of a history of a language impairment. The concept of a risk factor forms part of the theory of resilience, which has been defined as 'positive adaptation in the face of adversity' (Cassen et al., 2008, p. 73). It could be maintained that this accurately described the lives of many of the young people and this section includes a discussion of whether it was possible to identify any of the protective factors, in other words, those factors that have been documented as creating resilience including for example family and school (Murray, 2003, Cassen et al., 2008).

The following section summarises the main findings with respect to the factors that supported transition to adulthood as reported by the young people. These findings are then compared with SEN and whole population studies that have addressed factors that can affect young people's transition to adulthood, including reference to the literature on resilience for young people with disabilities. The results in this area revealed four essential points for discussion. Firstly, the commonality of certain reported factors that facilitated transition by the young people across different aspects of transition. Secondly, the importance of the young person themselves and the family in the transition journey. This is also discussed in relation to the third point which is the typicality of the facilitators compared with the literature from other transition studies. Finally, a discussion is included of what might be concluded as to how a history of SLI might affect the experience of transition.

8.4.1 Factors that supported and inhibited transition

The responses from the young people showed that the family and the characteristics of the young person were consistently important in the different areas of transition. However, such commonality was not evident with the inhibitors. In particular, no one factor was referred to by a majority of the group for any one area. Secondly, although SLI is the one factor that consistently appears as an inhibitor, the number of participants that referred to it in any one area is relatively small. Thus a picture is presented where the factors that can help with a transition are to a certain extent common. By contrast what might act as a barrier is a more individual experience. The commonality and typicality with the experiences of young people in general, of what helps and hinders transition is addressed in the first instance.

8.4.2. Characteristics of the young person as facilitators of transition

The importance of the personal characteristics of the young people as a key facilitator in this study is also one which has been reported in many other SEN and wider transition studies (Aston et al., 2005, Shildrick and MacDonald, 2007, Heal and Rusch, 1995, Ward et al., 1994). Two important elements of the Master Motivation System (Masten and O'Dougherty Wright, 2009); resilience and 'perceived agency' operating at varying degrees of strength was evident in the behaviours of the young people from their interviews and through, for example, their responses to more challenging events in their lives. They displayed many of the key personality traits such as 'initiative and motivation' and 'determination' terms used by Furlong et al. (2005) and Ward et al. (1994) respectively which have also been used to describe the personal characteristics of young people who experience positive transitions to adulthood. Almost all of the participants possessed the key trait of 'self-determination' identified as important for young people with disabilities in their transition (Pierson et al., 2008).

Self-determination can include the acceptance and understanding of a disability, including an awareness of strengths and the ability to advocate for oneself (Mooney and Scholl, 2002). In the testimonies of the young people, this study identified many examples of the young people being able to talk with clarity about the nature of their history of language impairment and if it continued to play a part in their lives at the time. Many of the young people saw little problem in informing their employers, tutors

and friends of their SLI history, being aware of how sharing that knowledge may help in certain situations. Many were equally happy not to discuss their history of SLI as they felt it had little or no relevance. In their discussions around times of decision making, whether that be for college or employment, whilst acknowledging the support received from other sources, such as the family, the young people perceived, that final decisions rested with them.

However, this study extended the emphasis on the characteristics of the young person to include their interests and talents. Whether it was in choosing a post-16 course, employment route or leisure interest, it was possible to identify how, for example, an interest/talent in music could be seen to enrich many transitions and often in more than one area of a young person's life. The level of talent did not seem to be as important as identifying a talent. It would be a recommendation of this study not only to focus on young people's transition to education and employment but to adopt a wider perspective which seeks to take a holistic view of the young people's well-being and their talents and interests as a means of preparing a young person for a more rewarding experience of young adulthood.

8.4.3. Family as supporter of transition

The young people also identified their family as one of the most important and influential elements on the journey to adulthood. This finding reflects those of other SEN studies over the past twenty years, both in the UK (Aston et al., 2005, Dewson et al., 2004, Winn and Hay, 2009), internationally (Heal and Rusch, 1995, Roberts et al., 1994, OECD, 1994) and for other potentially vulnerable groups of young people such as those living in economically deprived areas in the UK (Meadows, 2001, Green and White, 2007) and general population studies (Ball et al., 2000, Furlong et al., 2003, Evans, 2002). Ball (2000) and his colleagues found that the role of the family was more influential than they had anticipated. Such findings also reflect the importance of the family, and relationships with close others, as a fundamental protective factor, as identified in the resilience literature (Patterson, 2002, Masten and O'Dougherty Wright, 2009). Luthar and Brown (2007, p. 938) described healthy relationships as '...critical if not indispensable for overall resilient adaptation.' For families of children with a disability or learning difficulty, resilience has manifested through an acceptance of the

disability, combined with a positive and realistic outlook for the future (Bayat, 2007, Heiman, 2002). Testimonies from the participants showed time and again how they valued the support of their parents and how they relied on their assistance in many aspects of their lives.

What is evident from many of the accounts of the participants is the specificity of the support provided by members of the family where they acted as 'advocates', seeking out particular employment opportunities and setting up interviews for the young person or investigating leisure activities that might have been of interest to more general assistance such as helping to check a CV or application form for a course or employment opportunity (Lindstrom et al., 2007). Aston and her colleagues in their SEN longitudinal study similarly described how the 'purposefulness' of the assistance provided by the family was a key feature towards ensuring positive transition experiences (Aston et al., 2005, p. 102). The second element that permeated through the reflections of the young people was the emotional support offered by their families, which was often described as one or both of their parents 'just being there for them'. This is an aspect of the support provided by the family which is not as well documented or receives as much commentary in the literature and although it presents somewhat of a challenge in terms of quantifying or specifying what it might mean in detail, it remains a fundamental element of a more secure transition journey, highlighting again the importance of close relationships (Luthar and Brown, 2007).

8.4.4. The experience of special school and transition

A national survey of LAs revealed that educational provision for children with SLI varied by age group with provision through mainstream settings more common at KS1 and 2 (91% and 84% respectively) than KS3 and 4 (29%) and that less than ten per cent of all children with SLI attended a special school (Lindsay et al., 2005). All of the participants in this study had attended a residential special school and although not a specific focus of the research, the findings do contribute to discussions concerned with special school education. The particular areas addressed in this discussion include a lack of knowledge concerning outcomes for young people who have experienced out of authority education, the content of specialist curriculums and the challenges of investigating and making judgements concerning the efficacy of special schools.

Fletcher-Campbell and Pather (2003) experienced great difficulty in gathering data from a national study of LAs regarding post-16 outcomes and destinations for young people who had been educated in out of authority placements, with 42 from one hundred and fifty LAs unable to respond, with reasons cited, such as data not readily accessible or just not available. The results of this study contribute in some part to addressing that gap in important knowledge. The fact that a majority of the participants reported positively on their transition, experienced progress with respect to qualifications and with the exception of an important minority, were able to gain secure employment, also presented an improved picture from recent and earlier special school studies (Dyson et al., 2002, Abbot and Heslop, 2009).

Despite the criticisms of the place of special schools within the wider context of inclusion, studies have shown that parents of children in special settings value and report greater levels of satisfaction with the educational and transition planning provision than parents of children with SEN in mainstream settings (Parsons et al., 2009, Mitchell, 1999, Polat et al., 2001). Studies that have compared the attitudes of young people have also found that young people in specialist settings report more favourably on their education experience (Dyson et al., 2002, Polat et al., 2001). However, the efficacy of specialist schooling, particularly in comparison to mainstream schooling of young people with SEN, has proved complex to investigate. The findings from large scale literature reviews remain inconclusive today (Lindsay, 2007) as they were conducted almost thirty years ago, before initiatives to provide more inclusive provision (Carlberg, 1980). This study is not in a position to make conclusions about the relationship between the special school education received by the participants and their transition outcomes and experience. However, it was possible to identify that the young people had received provision that included many of the most important variables identified by Test and his colleagues in their recent meta study of evidence based secondary transition predictors for improving post-16 outcomes for students with disabilities (Test et al., 2009). For the young people in this study, this included, strong support with transition planning, instruction in independent living and self-care and opportunities for vocational experience.

Finally, as previously stated, research comparing the efficacy of the special school has experienced many limitations which includes issues relating to methodology and generalising findings due for example to issues such as sample size. The same

observation is also a feature of this study. A further complexity is the individual nature of special schools and the pupils that attend them which makes comparison between studies problematic. The special school study by Dyson and his colleagues in 2002 outlined in this section was actually concerned with young people who were 'disadvantaged' as opposed to having a disability. The literature does not provide a coherent picture. Studies of special schools have different cohorts of pupils and young people differ in their abilities and difficulties with learning. When concluding their study of parental views of educational provision of children with SEN and disabilities, Parsons and her colleagues echoed others in the call for '...the importance of recognising both social and individual factors in discussing needs, opportunities and aspirations ' (Parsons et al., 2009, p. 43). This study would also therefore advocate that what has been termed as a social relational model of disability (Reindal, 2008) be considered when investigating outcomes for young people with SEN and disabilities.

8.4.5. Transition and SLI

The background to this study was a concern that young people with a history of SLI were at risk of making insecure transitions. It was not without some surprise to find in the current study that SLI did not dominate the accounts when the young people were asked to discuss what might have made their transitions more difficult. As might have been expected with the nature of this impairment, where it did have more of an impact was in the area of education and in aspects of the social lives of the young people. Where SLI was described as an inhibitor, it was always described in the same not in the same way or with the same impact by the young people. For example, Holly, had difficulties with speech production which could make it uncomfortable at times for her to talk to new people in bars. For Steven it affected whether he was making the 'right impression' with people at times. The young people referred to their SLI less in terms of employment and independence outcomes and experiences. This raises the suggestion as to whether a language difficulty might present more of a challenge at school and further education, while later in life, once established in employment and with friendships the effects may dissipate to some extent. The Ottawa (2009) study (average cohort age of 24) did find that the participants perceived their quality of life no differently to the comparison groups which included a general population sample.

This is an area for further investigation, and in particular calls for extensive and longitudinal studies with older cohorts.

8.5. Facilitators and inhibitors of transition within a theoretical context

Chapter 2 examined the theoretical context for transition with an emphasis on the possible sociological and psychological explanations for the transition experienced by young people today. This section begins with an exploration of the sociological factors including the role of structure and agency, followed by a psychological perspective and in particular a focus on the work of Bronfenbrenner. Findings from this study found important evidence of agency and structure operating in the lives of the young people and subsequently affecting their transition to adulthood.

8.5.1. Evidence of structure and agency in the lives of the young people

Structures within society were operating positively and negatively in the lives of the participants. The family acted as a positive structure in the lives of the young people as discussed in a previous section. This section will comment on the part played by gender and level of qualification which for some of the young people did present certain challenges to their transition.

Perhaps the most obvious example of a structure that may have negatively influenced the experience of some of the young people in this study was that of gender. As described at the start of this chapter, the female participants attained fewer GCSEs, were more likely to attend a specialist setting after leaving school, gained no higher than Level 2 qualifications and were disproportionately represented on those young people not in education or training at the time of the survey. As a finding it might have been anticipated as gender is closely associated with transition outcomes and experiences in many of the follow up studies related to the wider UK and international populations (Furlong et al., 2005, Bynner, 2001, Roberts, 2009, Shildrick and MacDonald, 2007, Webster et al., 2004). Despite the recognition that education and employment outcomes for women have improved overall, young women with a disability and/or low levels of academic attainment, continue to experience less secure

transitions into employment, including higher levels of unemployment and lower earning potential (Biggart, 2002; Hogansen et al., 2008; Powers et al., 2008). Generally, this group also experienced appreciable levels of social isolation demonstrated by having, for example, fewer friends than in Year 11 or relying on parents to take part in leisure activities. Interestingly however, no reference to differential outcomes or experiences based on gender could be found in the SLI related literature or the SEN longitudinal studies.

Lower academic qualifications are another frequently cited structure in the literature, often acting a barrier to gaining regular and stable employment (Nilsen and Brannen, 2002, Roberts et al., 1994, Ball et al., 2000). However, the impact of low qualifications in this study presented a more complex relationship. Despite academic qualifications below the national average at age sixteen, many of the young people went on to achieve higher levels of academic success including university study. As with the findings of the transition study by Webster and his colleagues (2004) it would seem that qualifications can have less of an impact on transition for those young people with lower qualifications. On the other hand, five of the nineteen young people interviewed felt that their qualifications were not sufficient in helping them to secure employment or achieve a position in an area of interest. Simon, for example, after leaving his degree course in design before completion, had considered that there might be a need to improve his GCSE results in maths and English if he was going to be able to secure more rewarding employment than his current position in a fast food restaurant.

Those young people not in education or employment also presented a complicated picture with respect to the role played by qualifications in transition outcomes and experiences. Finn for example had a NVQ Level 3 qualification and Lawrence a qualification at NVQ Level 2 and yet could not find work. However, Teresa, who was also in this group at the time of the interview, felt her entry level qualifications were not helping in securing an interview for any position. As the young people acquire longer employment careers and seek to move between positions, it would be interesting to see if lower qualifications have any continued influence or if the building up of an employment career can mitigate against low qualifications.

The place of agency in the transition to adulthood is one that is accepted within the research community as Robert's comment in 2009 demonstrates:

Western youth researchers are unanimous that individualisation has indeed occurred. They are also agreed on the processes that have been responsible, and how individualisation can be recognised in young people's lives. (Roberts, 2009, p. 74)

However, what is more contentious is the extent of the contribution of agency to the process and whether it may be for just some groups of young people and not for all (Ball et al., 2000, Brannen and Nilsen, 2002, Heinz, 2009). Despite evidence of structural influence, this study also found many examples of agency with the young people often exercising choice and personally constructing aspects of their transition as discussed previously in the Chapter. At the time of the interview almost all of the participants named themselves as the person most responsible for their transition to date, whilst also acknowledging the support of others. This form of agency was evident in different aspects of their lives including education, employment and social activities.

I got myself onto the course, taught myself basically all the stuff that I needed to learn, just like determination basically. A lot of people didn't pass the course.

Ben

As for the future the young people were full of plans that would be the same for any young person of a similar age, and which showed some degree of forward planning along with what the young person themselves had to do to work towards and achieve their ambitions. Even those young people not in education or employment saw themselves as active and responsible for their transition and as with the young people described by Evans (2007) in a comparative study of young people in Germany and the UK, were more likely to exhibit 'frustrated agency' rather than one of 'fatalism'.

I would like to see myself in a good working job earning a decent amount of money to a point when I can think about getting a place of my own maybe, with a nice car and I am going on holidays and things like that. Just doing a bit more with my money and saving up as well.

David

8.5.2. When agency and structure combine: bounded agency

With evidence of agency and structure in the lives of the participants, the findings of this study would support those researchers and studies that have sought to recognise the interrelationship and interplay of both theories in the lives of young people (Evans, 2002, Catan, 2004, Roberts et al., 1994, Henderson et al., 2007). Daisy's explanation below of how she gained her position as an administrative assistant in a firm of solicitors revealed the close relationship between the two theories and just how inappropriate it is to draw distinctions between the two theories in everyday life examples.

Um I would say it would mostly came down to me. I have had a push towards it but I think it was me who actually guided and progressed through it because my parents did get the interview but it was me who actually said yes I will go for it. I could have said no but I went for it.

Daisy

Daisy described her role as one of decision maker, yet without the intervention of her parents, her employment history post-16 might have been quite different. It also raises a discussion as to how judgements are made about the nature of the interventions made by the people close to the young people and whether they are the same in nature and frequency for parents of young adults without a history of SEN.

The example of Daisy's perspective towards gaining employment highlighted the element of choice and control that many of the young people felt that they had exercised over opportunities and decisions made in their lives. Evans (2002, 2007) used the term 'bounded agency' to capture what was happening in the lives of the young people and how they demonstrated:

.... socially situated agency, influenced but not determined by environments and emphasising internalised frames of reference as well as external actions. (Evans, 2007, p. 93)

Chapter 7 identified five different examples of the relationship between agency and structure in the lives of the young people classified as 'above and beyond', 'making the most of resources', 'yet to be tested', 'fragile agency' and 'frustrated agency'. One of these examples included a group whose strong sense of agency, despite less resources than some of the other participants, had enabled them to overcome a number of

challenges and not allowed the experience of difficult early post-16 environments to prevent them from considering that there were other options available to them which indeed there had been. Furlong and his colleagues (2003, p. 3) described the potential for the young person acting as 'a mediating link between resources and outcomes' and in particular identified that determination and persistence, with family support could improve outcomes which accurately described this group in the study.

Another group was characterised by a series of options which were commensurate with their academic and employment ambitions and the agency that they demonstrated. Mark, for example, with a long family tradition in catering, completed two catering qualifications successfully at his local college and immediately moved into employment in a catering role, a long held ambition, all with relative ease. Mark, and others at the time of the interview including, for example, Daisy, Gary and Antony to name just three, displayed a strong sense of agency but also benefitted from other resources; which supported their transition journeys, as Nilsen and Brannen described:

When structural forces and personal resources, such as gender and class, support one another, there is a tendency for the structural resources to take on an 'invisible' quality. (Nilsen & Brannen, 2002, p. 42)

This was very much the case with this group and in many respects were a group 'yet to be tested' in their transition to date.

There were young people at the time of the survey and interview whose options and autonomy to make decisions at that particular time were not as evident as they were for other participants thus, perhaps, echoing the findings and concerns of other studies that agency might not be experienced by all groups of young people (Heinz, 2009, Ball et al., 2000) or that their sense of agency at this time was frustrated (Evans, 2007). As might have been anticipated, those young people not in education or employment were examples of this phenomenon. For Tim and Lawrence, employment training courses had not resulted in securing any paid position. Tim's options were further constrained as a result of living in a part of Wales where traditional employment roles, which his father and previous generations had enjoyed, had almost disappeared. The Job Centre only offered him part time employment opportunities and his qualifications prevented him from applying for other opportunities available at the time. Thus, structures such as geographic location, low qualifications and a restricted job market

would challenge the notion of a 'choice biography' for Tim. One of the potential dangers of unemployment in the early years of transition is a reduced sense of feeling able to exercise control over the events in one's life, which is so important to the concept of personal agency (Evans, 2007).

Finally, perceived decision making exercised on the part of the young people has also been described as a potentially false misconception of the reality and that despite a genuine belief in the choice they exercise, this is not a full assessment of the situation (Ball et al., 2000, Brannen and Nilsen, 2002). The extent and force of this illusion, it is maintained, is demonstrated by the fact that many young people despite evidence of significant inequalities in their lives will tend to blame themselves for the outcomes and milestones in their transition which they have failed to achieve. It was possible to find responses in this study to exemplify this notion. When Mark, for example, was asked if anything had posed a challenge in his transition to employment his response was showed how he tended to blame himself for any 'shortcomings' in his transition to date

Um I think the most difficult part is myself really. I have got to use myself, use myself initiatives...

Mark

Although such a perspective, especially when looking at the life of a young person from a distance, might well be an accurate assessment, it could also be argued that any immediate and short term changes to the life of a young person might require them to look to his or her self to initiate any change despite the inequalities that might exist.

8.5.3. Bronfenbrenner's model of human development and transition

Bronfenbrenner's model of bioecological development complemented that theoretical analysis using structure and agency in two specific aspects and in doing so facilitated a more comprehensive understanding of what was happening in the lives of the young people. Firstly, his theories of 'reciprocity' and 'developmentally generative characteristics' (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Sontag, 1996), allowed for a deeper exploration of the concept of agency both in terms of the personal characteristics evident in their interviews but also an explanation of the benefits of the young person establishing strong relationships and connections in their lives. Secondly, the systemic

approach of his bioecological theory combined the personal characteristics with the structures in society that had facilitated transition but at different levels in order to explore the links between the different structures and resources. In one model some of the complexity of the transition process and the multiple routes and influences that can affect development transition were brought together demonstrating that transition outcomes can be explained as a consequence and combination of genetic, biological, environmental and social mechanisms. In this study his model also demonstrated which aspects of transition for young people with a history of SLI required further research.

8.6. Recommendations for further research and policy development

This section addresses propositions for further research and recommendations for practice using Bronfenbrenner's hierarchical levels as a tool to analyse and present the suggestions. The recommendations focus on possibilities for further research of young adults with a history of SLI (microsystem), the role and contribution of their families to transition (mesosystem) and how provision at the exosystem and macrosystems, such as those agencies involved in supporting transition planning, might be developed.

The results of the survey and responses to the interviews showed that the majority of the young people were adapting well in the transition to adulthood. However, longitudinal studies that extended into the late twenties and thirties would provide more informed accounts about the academic, employment and social outcomes of transition for this particular group of young people. Explanations for some of these green shoots of success in this study are many and varied, but they suggest that the young people saw themselves as one of the key drivers of success, studies should in future start with the young person and investigate in more depth their role in practice. In addition, research to date into the personal characteristics associated with young people's in the context of a history of SEN and/or disability has established self-determination as a key aspect of personality (Ward et al., 1994, Wehmeyer and Schwartz, 1997). Further investigations focussing on extending our knowledge in the area of personality and how, for examples, professionals might contribute to developing these characteristics would prove beneficial. This study also illuminated the

multifaceted role that talents and interests on transitions; specific enquiries into how these might be addressed more strategically in schools and later in early adulthood would be an interesting field to examine in more detail.

in many transition studies of young people with SEN and/or a disability, the aspirations of the participants mirror those of all adolescents and young adults (Ward et al., 1994, OECD, 1994, Burchardt, 2004). This was also a very important finding of this study. Further follow up studies of young adults with a history of SLI into their late twenties and thirties would help to establish if these early positive outcomes and experiences were maintained and if their ambitions and aspirations were, in the main, fulfilled. Data and findings collected across the life span would allow for more informed judgements on a collection of issues highlighted by this study including the long term impact of gender, low qualifications and early and protracted periods of unemployment.

The young person described how their families were crucial to their transitions. As with the voice of the young person with SLI and other SEN, increasingly the voices of parents have been included in studies (Dockrell et al., 2007, Palikara et al., 2009, Lewis et al., 2007a, Dewson et al., 2004). Regrettably, resource constraints prevented parents from contributing to this study, as a comparison of the views of the parents with those of the young people would have been invaluable. As parents played such a key role, an investigation of what assistance was available to them and what they would have liked to have been able to access would help to contribute to knowledge in respect of what might constitute more robust and relevant support systems for transition. As part of this investigation it would be of interest and value to know for parents of young adults with a history of SLI, how the experience of parenting and supporting their son/daughter into adulthood was similar or appreciably different to that of parenting a young person without the same SLI history.

Finally, at the exosystem and macrosystem levels, much has been written in the past twenty years on the elements required to assist at policy level, the transition of young people with SEN (OECD, 1994, Winn and Hay, 2009). In many respects, the elements have not substantially changed in that time. In 2003, Bob Hudson ably described how new transition partnerships set up in the UK could help to ensure more coherent and comprehensive transition planning focused around the required 'inputs', 'processes' and 'outcomes' (Hudson, 2003). However, what continues to remain a challenge in the

UK is the ability and effectiveness of these transition partnerships, and the schools, professionals and agencies that make up the various partnerships, to ensure better outcomes for young people. Six years on from Hudson's paper in 2009, Kaehne and Beyer investigated these partnerships in six LA where transition partnerships had been well established (Kaehne and Beyer, 2009). They found that difficulties with communication between the LA, schools and parents and the failure to identify explicit outcomes of transition for the young people, were two areas that were a cause for concern. They described transition for young people with learning disabilities was found 'at the intersection of many organisations' (Kaehne & Beyer, 2009, p. 117) which accounted for the difficulties with communication.

Consistent with findings from other UK SEN studies, there was no evidence in the lives of the young people in this study of one agency being charged with the responsibility for supporting transitions. As demonstrated by the young people's the findings relating to experiences of Connexions and the Job Centre, to name just two of these agencies, were inconsistent and conflicting. Further attention needs to be addressed to how to ensure that that some young people with SLI, especially those with limited family support, are not lost at the 'intersection'.

8.7. Reflections on the role as researcher and limitations of the study

In their study of some of the leading researchers within inclusive education, Julie Allan and Roger Slee (2008) recommended to the doctoral student to take an opportunity, as part of the thesis, to consider and comment on the many 'choices' that were made by the researcher during the study, their suitability and what learning could be taken from making those choices (Allan and Slee, 2008). The following section uses their study and that of Lewis and Porter (2004) who developed guidelines for interviewing children and young people with learning disabilities to structure and provide a context for this author to reflect on the research experience. The 'choices' discussed include, the prompts and motivations that influenced the decision to start the investigation at a doctoral level, in other words the 'why' of the research. Secondly, the choices around 'who' was selected for the study are examined and finally the 'how' in respect to the methods adopted and how the data was analysed.

As researchers designing a project we bring our own personal and intellectual histories. (Allan & Slee, 2008, p. 11)

For this researcher her own personal history as described by Allan and Slee (2008) was, as outlined in Chapter 3, her experience as a KS4 teacher in the school that had been attended by the participants. The interest in the study arose out of a lack of knowledge about outcomes for young adults with SLI and an awareness of how such knowledge would have assisted the young people and their families to make informed decisions during the transition process and have allowed staff to consider what might have been a more relevant curriculum. Nevertheless, it was a single piece of research, that of Clegg and her colleagues (2005) that instigated the decision to investigate the concern through a more academic approach. This study documented very poor outcomes for a group of adults in their thirties with shared similarities in terms of language profile and the author keenly wanted to investigate whether the case remained the same for a successive generation of young adults with a history of language difficulties. What this particular choice highlighted was the impact of one study beyond the immediate and interested research community to link with a practitioner in the field. Despite the clear reasons for the study, making choices around the final research questions proved a lengthy process. Again, this was in part due to concerns raised by the Clegg et al. (2005) study, as the extent of the negative findings led to immediate questions as to the reasons for such outcomes. The motivation for the study was also influenced by the wider context of the inclusion debate and in particular the place and efficacy of special schools, which was also of interest to the author. As a self-funded doctoral student, resource limitations were a practical consideration and constraint, on the final choice of research questions. However, a concern of the author that the research 'spoke' to the young people, their families and the professionals who worked with them influenced the final choice of research questions.

The interest in and increasing number of studies that seek to gain a greater understanding of the experiences of children and young people is a consequence of changes in the wider context including political and policy initiatives such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989), and from a theoretical perspective there is a growing interest in the social sciences in how children and young people are viewed and view their lives (Tangen, 2008). One limitation or perhaps observation of the study was that although it did attempt to capture the 'voice' of the

young person and their perspective the author would also recognise that quite often it was 'abstractions' from voice particularly in relation to the inhibitors and facilitators of transition.

An emancipatory approach to research calls for the need and importance of people with disabilities to take a greater role in research relating to their lives than simply being the 'subjects' of an investigation (Walmsley, 2001). In terms of participation and what has been described as the 'continuum' of level of participation of people with disability in the research process (Lewis and Porter, 2004), this study would appear to be at the lower end of the continuum and at the very least would have benefitted from a steering group which included young people with a history of SLI to have informed the direction of the project at the beginning. The author is grateful, however, to those young people who took part in the pilot and helped to inform the items on the interview schedule. Also, in line with the guidelines suggested by Lewis and Porter (2004), even before the completion of the thesis, initial findings were presented to parents and staff from the school concerned. This has initiated a dialogue for change. Also, as the author continued to teach at the school for the early part of the study, she was able to initiate developments in her role, particularly in relation to the provision of vocational education.

The final choices discussed in this section refer to how the data were collected and analysed. Chapter 4 includes a detailed account of steps that were taken to ensure that the data were collected with the needs of the young people in mind. A number of steps were taken to ensure that the full consent and as Lewis and Porter (2004) note, ongoing consent was sought from the young people over the course of the project; including pre-survey and interview letters, telephone calls and accessible additional information about the content of the interviews. The fact that nineteen of the original group agreed to take part in the second phase indicated a positive response in terms of their experience of the survey. Choices about the reporting of some data was considered carefully to ensure the anonymity of some of the young people as small details such as a hobby could potentially compromise anonymity amongst such a small group of individuals. Although, a limitation of the study was that it did not allow for a triangulation of people, with, for example, the inclusion of the parental perspective, it did include a triangulation of methods, through the use of a survey, semi-structured interview and comparison with data from related investigations. This did illicit different

as well as confirmatory responses, thus enriching the findings (Lewis and Porter, 2004).

As documented in chapter 4, the use of mixed methods was less of a choice, rather a logical response to the demands of the research questions. However, two very deliberate choices were made which were to not collect data from the young people regarding their SES and not to include an explicit question about any long term impact of a history of a language impairment, although this topic did appear as a prompt along with a range of possible suggestions. The influence of class and a disability on post-16 transition outcomes have been clearly established, as described previously in this chapter and in chapter 3. This study wanted to look beyond these influences and it was not a study designed to establish direct associations with outcomes but to examine perspectives, so if the subject was brought up during an interview it was discussed. The subject of class was not brought up by any participant during either phase of the study and the potential impact of a history of SLI far from dominated the narratives of the young people. However, these were two decisions that could be questioned.

8.8. Contribution of the study to the field of post-16 transition for young people with a history of SLI

The present thesis made important contributions in three areas which included original findings with respect to the post-16 transition experiences of young adults with a history of SLI, theoretically, through examining these experiences from a sociological perspective and finally methodologically. Each area is examined in turn in this section.

The study has made original and significant contributions to what is known about the post-16 transitions of young people with a history of SLI. The cohort included the most number of participants older than any of the specific studies relating to post-16 transition and SLI in the UK (Dockrell et al., 2007, Conti-Ramsden and Durkin, 2008, Whitehouse et al., 2009). The findings showed more positive experiences than might have been expected from previous transition studies (Clegg, et al. 2005; Whitehouse et al. 2009) and for a group of young people who had attended a residential special school (Fletcher-Campbell and Pather, 2003). The young people in this group were:

- i. Staying in education for longer and following many different routes after leaving school, which included further study, training and employment.
- ii. Achieving greater success at GCSE level at sixteen and that as a result of continuing into further and higher education they were able to increase their level of qualifications including for some young people commencement on degree level courses.
- iii. If employed, working in the retail, manual and service sectors and, in the main, were enjoying their work.
- iv. Participating in a range of social and leisure activities in and outside of the home, many of which were based on interests or talents they had developed and followed.
- v. Enjoying their friendships and spending time with friends socially, although some did experience social isolation and would have liked to established and enjoy a more regular social life with friends.
- vi. Although the majority were living at home, the majority reported experiencing greater levels of confidence and independence since leaving school.
- vii. For those young people not in education, training or employment, gender, and very low levels of qualification were two of the most common factors that were associated were less positive transition experiences.
- viii. There were tentative findings of the possibility of less positive outcomes for some young people as they left full time education at nineteen and twenty years old to seek full time employment.

The current thesis also provided original data with respect to what had helped and hindered transition as reported by the young people themselves. The majority were very active participants in steering their own transition whilst acknowledging the important role played by their parents to assist in that transition. The strong evidence of agency in their lives was striking and again might not have been expected from the findings of studies of children and adolescents with SLI with concerns, for example, relating to self-esteem (Snowling et al., 2006, Conti-Ramsden and Botting, 2006).

Apart from addressing limitations of previous research on empirical grounds, the approach of the study to investigate the transition of this particular group of young people from a predominantly, sociological perspective, was unique. In doing so, the achievements and experiences of the young people were analysed within a wider

context. The findings from the application of agency and structure to the testimonies expanded and complemented the psychological theoretical analysis including Bronfenbrenner's model of human development.

A 'transdisciplinary' theme was also evident in the decision to use a mixed methods research design. Chapter 4 described how the study sought to investigate how the integrity and 'integration' of a mixed methods study could be achieved. This thesis showed that steps can be taken to ensure greater rigour, for example, with thoughtful choices of research questions, methods and analysis of findings which help to prevent a design 'falling' into two parallel studies. In particular, this study genuinely sought to integrate findings from the different methods, which is an area that has been neglected in mixed methods research (Bryman, 2007, Greene et al., 1989). However, this experience has not yet convinced the author that mixed methods is a separate research paradigm from that of the qualitative and quantitative traditions.

Finally, this study contributed to knowledge and understanding of how young people with a history of SLI might be supported to take part more effectively in a research process involving different forms of interviews. The findings demonstrated that the young people were able to report with confidence and consideration on different aspects of their lives when supported with strategies that took into account the potential impact if a history of SLI on the interview process. Although no formal data was collected from the participants as to the quality of the strategies used, the study does highlight the types of approaches that could contribute to research that set out to investigate relevant and effective methodologies for research with young adults with SLI.

8.9. Conclusion

Stephen Ball (2000) and his colleagues in their post-16 transition study spoke of a feeling of an 'exercise in betrayal' when attempting to pull together themes and issues from their research in order to communicate their findings to a wider audience. Allan and Slee's (2008) advice for those seeking to participate in inclusive research was to exercise caution with respect to conclusions. The author would support such comments in relation to the findings of this study. Investigations in this field are further

complicated by an appreciation of the on-going nature of transition and that the findings in this study were in many respects cover just one moment in time for the young people. Six months on again the perspective they held of their lives might have been different, with subsequent implications for reaching conclusions with findings. Hence, the concern on the part of the author to use the term 'transition outcome' with caution and reservation throughout the findings. However, the study has shown that in the main, the young people were enjoying their time since leaving school, were happy with the progress they have made in their education and employment careers and were hopeful about the future.

Although outcomes and experiences of the young people had improved compared to the limited number of earlier studies, there remains much that is yet unknown about the long term outlook for this group of young people that would necessitate further follow up research. A question that became of increasing interest to the author as the study progressed, concerns the similarities rather than the differences with the transition experiences of this group with the wider population of young people. This in turn raises the question; at which point, do young people such as those in this study cease to be 'researched' as a separate entity and instead are treated as members of the wider youth community; what has been described as the collective 'choir' of young people with and without disabilities (Lewis and Porter, 2004).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: Longitudinal SLI studies

Study	SLI No. In sample	Setting/ Provision	How sample initially recruited	Age at time of study	Time points of studies	How data collected for study
Johnson et al. (2010)	112 (69 male/ 43 female)	Not reported	Three stage epidemiological survey of 5 year olds in Ottawa-Carleton region of Ontario, Canada	24-26	Age 5 Age 12 Age 19	(i) Cognitive & academic assessments (ii) Structured interviews (iii) Self-assessments of quality of life
Snowling et al. (2001)	60 (22 male/2 female resolved SLI) (18 male/6 female persistent SLI) (12 male/2 female general delay)	Not reported	Through speech & language therapists & paediatricians	16-17	Age 4 Age 4.5 Age 5.5 Age 15	Postal questionnaire at age 15
Clegg et al. (2005)	17 male	11 mainstream 3 language units 1 in specialist language school 2 in MLD special school	Through 6 special units attached to hospitals & 6 special schools	33-38 (Mean age of 36)	Age 4-9 Age 6-11 Age 23-24	(i) Cognitive, language and literacy standardised assessments (ii) Standardised interviews with participants & informant (iii) Self-report assessments
Dockrell et al. (2007)	69 (52 male)	59 from mainstream 10 from	Children recruited in Year 3 through SLTs, EPs and SENCOs from two	16-17	Sd Age 8 Age 10 Age 11 Age 13 Age 15-16	(i) Assessments of language/literacy/numeracy/ Self-esteem/behaviour/emotional

	specialist language schools	LAs	Ag	intelligence & coping strategies
17 female)				
Conti-Ramsden & Botting (2008)	Not reported	Children recruited at 7 years from 118 language units Initial cohort of 242 children	Age 7 Age 8 Age 11 Age 14 Age 16	(ii) Interviews with teachers, parents, college tutors & other professionals (ii) Teachers & parents completed behavioural rating scales & questionnaires (i) Self-report (by young people) and parental measures on standardised assessments (ii) Interview with family
Conti-Ramsden & Durkin (2008)	29 in mainstream 54 in mainstream with support 37 in specialist placement	Children recruited at 7 years from 118 language units. Initial cohort of 242 children	Age 7 Age 8 Age 11 Age 14 Age 16	(i) Parental and self-report measures
Conti-Ramsden et al. (2009)	29 in mainstream 54 in mainstream	Children recruited at 7 years from 118 language units. Initial cohort of 242	Age 7 Age 8 Age 11	(i) Education results at KS 2,3 & 4 (ii) Cognitive and language standardised assessments

		with support children		Age 14	
		37 in specialist placement		Age 16	
Durkin et al. (2009)	120 (81 male 39 female)	29 in mainstream 54 in mainstream with support 37 in specialist placement	Children recruited at 7 years from 118 language units. Initial cohort of 242 children All had SEN statement	Age 7 Age 8 Age 11 Age 14 Age 16	(i) Education results at KS 2,3 & 4 (ii) (ii) Interviews with young people
Whitehouse et al. (2009)	19 (14 male 5 female)	14 in specialist language school 3 in mainstream with support 1 in mainstream with no support 1 left school at 14	Through special speech & language schools	Mean age 24 Mean age 11	(i) Caregivers received a standardised interview & questionnaire (ii) Cognitive and language standardised assessments

APPENDIX II: Pen portraits of interview participants

The Young People

The following is a brief description of each of the nineteen young people who took part in the second phase of the study; the face to face interview. The profile outlines their current activity at the time of the interview and a summary of what had happened in their lives between the survey and the interview. The names of the young people have been changed and are presented in alphabetical order.

Andrew

Andrew was 21 and living at home with his parents in the Home Counties. He continued onto a specialist residential placement for two more years after leaving school in 2002. During this time he completed a GNVQ in Performing Arts and at the time of the survey he was attending a guitar institute in London to complete a one year foundation diploma. He had started to teach himself the guitar in his last year before leaving school. Currently he was in his third year at university and hoping to complete a BSc Hons in Popular Music Performance. Music was a passion for him and much of his free time was spent playing in bands and writing his own music.

Ben

Ben was 20 and living at home with his parents and sister in the south east of England. ON leaving school in 2003 he had gone to a local college to start a vocational access course but left after one term. At the time of the survey he had experienced a chequered transition which had included a spell valeting cars and then a government sponsored employment training scheme. He had worked tenaciously to secure a position on a plumbing course at a different local college, the type of course he had wanted to start when he first left school. He was currently working and completing a modern apprenticeship in plumbing at Level 2. He enjoyed a very active social life having built up a strong network of friends in the local area.

Brandon

Brandon was 19 and living with his parents and brother in the south east of England. He left school in 2003 to attend a local college and start a Level 1 course in Information Technology. At the time of the survey he was in his second year at the local college, retaking some of his GCSEs in order to gain access onto the Level 3 National Diploma in Information Technology having successfully completed the Level 1 course. Currently, at the time of interview he was in his second year of the National Diploma. Although not currently participating, he had since returning home attended a local gym and was close to achieving his black belt in Mu Tai a form of marshal arts.

Daisy

Daisy was 21 and living with her parents and three younger siblings in the east of England. She left school in 2002 and continued at a specialist placement for two years gaining a GNVQ level 2 in Information Technology and Business Studies. She returned home to immediately begin an administrator position in a firm of solicitors in her village, which is where she was working at the time of the survey. Almost two years later, she was still happily working at the solicitors and took part in a number of different activities in her leisure time including singing, quilting classes and helping with the local Brownies group.

David

David was 22 and had recently moved to the Midlands to live with his mother and brother. When he left school in 2001 he and his family moved to the south west of England and he began a pre vocational course at a local college. This was followed by a Level 2 GNVQ in Information Technology. At the time of the survey he had secured a modern apprenticeship working for a local charitable organisation whilst completing a Level 2 GNVQ in Customer Services. This was following a period of unemployment and an attempt to join the armed forces. At this time he was also living independently with friends. When he was interviewed, he had completed his modern apprenticeship but had wanted to look for a new challenge so he had completed a number of temporary positions whilst looking for permanent work. He had decided live with his family again

(who had since moved to the Midlands) and had just secured a new position was with a community organisation in the Midlands as an office administrator.

Finn

Finn was 22 years and living at home with his parents and a younger brother in the Home Counties. ON leaving school in 2000 he had attended a specialist residential setting for two years and then a local college which is where he was at the time of the survey. Almost two years on, he had completed a National Diploma in Moving Image and Video. He was currently unemployed and looking for work in retail games outlets but was also thinking about applying for a media technician position in a local sixth form college. He was looking forward to travelling to Japan with his brother later in the year.

Gary

At 19 Gary was living at home with his mother and two brothers in the south of England. He left school in 2004 for two years at a specialist residential placement. This was where he was studying for four GCSEs and literacy and IT courses at the time of the survey. Between the two interviews he had gained his GCSEs and started a Level 2 GNVQ course in Brick Laying at a local college. He was currently working three days a week whilst studying at college to complete the theoretical side of his course. He was an avid football supporter and regularly met up with friends at the weekend to go to local clubs and pubs. He was also a member of a local bowls club which he played with his grandfather.

Holly

Along with Steven, Holly left school in 2000 and as so was one of the oldest participants at 23. She lived with her parents and two siblings in the Home Counties. She returned home straight after school to attend a local college for two years. During this time she completed a Level 1 and then a Level 2 GNVQ in Business Studies and Information Communication Technology. At the time of the survey she was working full time in a large supermarket having worked there as a student. Almost two years later she continued to work at the same store but was very keen to find work in office administration which she felt was more appropriate to her qualifications. Despite a

number of applications she had yet to make it to interview. She enjoyed an active social life, going on holidays with friends from her home town and was an keen supporter of Arsenal and attended many of their matches with members of her family.

Joseph

At 21 Joseph was living away from home at university but during the holidays returned to his family home in London with his mother. He left school in 2003 to attend a local sixth form college and followed a traditional A Level curriculum. At the time of the survey he was in his third year of college and was on target to leave with four A Levels and one AS Level. When interviewed also most two years later, he was in his second year at university in the west of England completing a four year BSc Hons in Computer Science. At this time he was considering where to work the following year which was his career placement year. He was one of the few participants to be in a relationship at this time and he enjoyed his role as Chairman of the university Sci Fi Fantasy Club.

Lawrence

Lawrence at 22 was living at home with his parents in London. He left school in 2002 and attended a local college completing, in his first year an Entry Level vocational course in Business Studies. At the time of the survey he was unemployed but on a government sponsored training scheme having completed a Level 1 GNVQ Leisure and Tourism course followed by one term of a First Diploma in Sports and Leisure at another college having made the decision to leave early. At the time of the interview he remained unemployed but had attended another two training schemes which had not resulted in paid employment. He was working unpaid two days a week at a charity shop and was having guitar lessons and recently had played with a band at a university talent contest with a friend.

Mark

Mark was 21 and living at home with his parents and older sister in the Home Counties. He went straight to a local college after leaving school in 2001 for two years during which time he had completed a Level 1 and 2 GNVQ course in Catering. At the time of the survey he was working in a catering role in the staff canteen of a large retail outlet. He was still happily in this role when interviewed two years later but had

taken on more responsibilities with a change of shifts. In the previous six months he had played a pivotal role in bringing together a number of ex school friends who were regularly meeting up in London during the holiday periods.

Owen

Owen at 19 was living with his mother in the east of England having left school in 2003. He spent the following two years at another specialist residential setting and was in the first year of the course when interviewed for the survey. He left with a GNVQ Level 2 in Performing Arts and returned home to attend a local college and start a physiotherapy course. He left after two weeks which was followed by a spell as a gym instructor at a local gym which was part of a Further Education college. When interviewed he was currently working part time in a local supermarket which he was hoping would become full time. He was gradually building up friendships in the area having been away for so long and had played for a local rugby team.

Robert

Robert was living at home with his parents and sister in London having left school in 2002. His first post-16 placement was at a residential specialist setting where he was able to increase his number of GCSEs over a two year period. At the time of the survey he had returned home to attend a local agricultural college and was studying for a Level 1 GNVQ in Horticulture. Currently, he was working in a plant nursery in London after a short phase of unemployment. Despite his long periods away a residential schools, he had kept long term friends in the neighbourhood and enjoyed going swimming and was considering training as a football referee.

Sandeep

Aged 21 and living at home with his father, step mother and younger step sister in the Home Counties, Sandeep had gone to a local college after leaving school in 2002 to start a GNVQ Level 1 in Performing Arts. When interviewed for the telephone survey he was completing an access course to get into university. However, his transition had been a challenge having had to repeat his first post-16 course again after all the students on the course had failed. Nevertheless, he persevered and repeated the same course again at a different college, followed by a First Diploma. Currently, he was in his

second year at university studying for a BSc Hons in Multi Media Computing. He regularly attended a local gym which he enjoyed very much, as well as spending weekends with friends at various shisha cafes.

Simon

Simon was 22 living at home with his parents and brother in the south of England. After leaving school in 2001 he went to a local college to follow a Level 2 and then a Level 3 course in Design Craft. At the time of the survey he was living away from home at university studying on his first year of a BA Hons course in Design. However, Simon left university after the second year and returned to live at home. At the time of the interview he was working in a fast food restaurant and considering what career options were available to him in the future. He had a particular interest in car racing and liked to attend rallies with friends.

Steven

One of the oldest of the participants, Steven was 23, living at home with his parents and two brothers in London. He had left school in 2000 to attend the sixth form of a local school and where he studied for a Level 3 National Diploma in Technical Theatre. He was also one of the few participants to have been working in the same position as a plasterer/decorator at both survey and interview times. Between finishing his diploma and beginning work in the building trade he had been unemployed and during that time had taken part in a sound engineering course. Steven was very interested in music, played the bass guitar in a band which had been booked to go on tour around small venues in the UK later on in the year.

Teresa

Teresa was 20 and living at home with her parents and two brothers in the south east of England. She left school in 2003 and went to another specialist residential placement to continue with a GCSE course combined with literacy and life skills training. At the time of the survey she was in her first year of the three year course. By the time of the interview she had gained the three GCSEs and was currently unemployed and looking for work in the retail sector. She was yet to make it to the

interview stage. The main focus of her leisure time was as a member of a local ladies rugby team which trained during the week and played matches at the weekend.

Tim

Tim was 21, living at home in Wales with his parents and his sister. After leaving school in 2003 he continued for two years at a specialist residential setting before returning home to attend a local college. During his first post-16 placement he had completed a range of literacy, numeracy and life skills courses. At the time of the survey he was in his first of a two year course, attending a local college. During this time he had completed further literacy and numeracy courses and a foundation course in Information Communication Technology. When interviewed he had been unemployed for almost six months but during that time had completed an unpaid work placement with a charity maintaining parts of the outside of the building. One of his main interests was training with and playing football for a local team.

Wendy

Wendy was 21 and living at home in the south east of England with her parents and brother. She continued for three years at a specialist residential placement after leaving school in 2003 and on leaving her highest qualification was a Level 2 GNVQ in Performing Arts. When she was interviewed for the survey she was in her final year of the course. She then attended local college for two years completing a Level 2 Food Hygiene course and a Level 1 Diploma in Health and Social Care. At the time of the interview she had been unemployed for three/four months but she was delighted that she had just been offered a position of Care Assistant at a local home for the elderly which was due to commence in two weeks. Wendy was also enjoying attending an adult course one evening a week in Level 1 British Sign Language.

APPENDIX III: Summary of results from pilot survey

No. of participants	3					
Gender	Male					
Age	18	1	1	1	20	1
Current activity	All full time study					
Place of study	Residential specialist college	1	Sixth Form College	1	Specialist College	1
Current courses	Mixture of GCSE and Entry Level	1	Entry Level	2		
Type/level of support for current course	Speech & language therapy	1	LSA	3		

Sources of advice for current course	School/college staff		1 Parents		2 Connexions		1 Don't know	
	1	Parents/careers	1	Don't know	1	2	1	1
Most helpful when choosing course	School/college staff	1	Parents/careers	1	Don't know	1		
Type of advice provided	Explained options available	1	Helped me to make decisions	2	Provided information	1		
How easy/difficult was it starting current course	Fairly easy	1	Neither easy or difficult	1	Fairly difficult	1		
How much current course is enjoyed.	A lot	3						
Usefulness of attendance at Annual Reviews since Year 11	Fairly useful	1	Can't remember	2				

				er	
Had there been a meeting with Connexions in the last year.	Yes	2	No	1	
How useful was this meeting?	Very helpful	2			
Which of the following people helped with preparation for Post 16 in general?	Parents/carers	3	School/College Careers Adviser	2	Other school/college staff
				1	Connexions
					3
					Friends
					1
					Doctor/Health worker
Who was the most helpful from the above group?	Parents/carers	2	Don't know	1	
How useful were work related activities in the curriculum to preparation for Post 16?	Very helpful	2	Fairly helpful	1	

How useful are ASDAN/Life Skills course to preparation for Post-16?	Very helpful	1	Fairly helpful	2
Why were they useful?	Helped make decisions about future life	3	Gain skills for adulthood	3
Leisure activities during the week	Shopping	3	Computer Games	3
How easy is it to take part in activities outside the home?	Very easy	2	Not very easy	1
	Helped progress into FE	2	Prepare for life outside college	1
	Reading magazines/books	3	Internet	3
	Watch TV	3	Participate in a sport	3
				1
			Socialise pub/clubs	

Number of good friends	None	1	2-5	1	More than 10	1
Weekday evenings spent with friends?	None	1	1-2	1	3-5	1
Weekend time spent with friends	None	1	One day	1	All weekend	1
How easy is it to make friends?	Very easy	1	Quite easy	2		
Current living arrangements	With parents	3				
Regular partner	Yes	1	No	2		
Worry about family issues	Sometimes	2	Rarely	1		
Worry about college issues	Rarely	1	Never	2		
Worry about money issues	Sometimes	2	Rarely	1		
Worry about health issues	Always	1	Sometimes	1	Rarely	1

Worry about friendship issues	Rarely	2	Never	1
How often do you feel confident?	Always	1	Often	1
How often do you feel happy?	Always	1	Often	2
The same or more friends since Year 11	Strongly Agree	1	Agree	1
Mainly enjoyed time since Year 11	Strongly Agree	1	Agree	2
More independent since Year 11	Strongly agree	1	Agree	2
The courses since Year 11 have generally worked out well	Strongly agree	2	Agree	1
Know how to find about future work, education /training opportunities	Strongly agree	1	Agree	2

Hopeful about the future	Strongly agree	3
Don't get enough support in planning for future	Disagree	3
Plan to do more education/training in the future	Strongly agree	1
	Agree	2
Next activity	Go to local FE college	1
	Work experience	1
	Find a job	1

APPENDIX IV: Interview Topics

List of topics sent to participants to help with preparation for telephone survey

Interview Topics

- Have you got any more qualifications since leaving school?
- If you went to college what was it like?
- What courses did you do?
- How easy or difficult was the course?
- If you work what is your job like?
- What activities during school e.g. Work Experience, helped you after you had left school?
- Have you had any contact with Connexions?
- Your leisure activities
- Your relationships/friendships
- What issues are important to you at the moment?
- Your thoughts about the future
- Any ideas you may have which should be included in the project

APPENDIX V: Survey Schedule

Young Person's Name:

Date of Interview:

DOB:

Thank you for agreeing to speak to me and for your support of this project.

Your views are extremely valuable to us.

Everything that you say will be treated as confidential. Nothing that you say will be reported about you XXXX or your family. No information will be shared with your college or if you are in employment – your work place. All the results from the people who take part in the study will be anonymous.

If at any time during the interview you do not wish to discuss any of the issues, please tell me and we will move onto the next question.

First I would like to discuss your current situation.

1.a. Do you :

1	Study full time		Go to 2a
2	Have a full time job		Go to 3a
3	Take part in a modern apprenticeship/training scheme		Go to 4a
4	Are you unemployed		Go to 5a
5	Attend a day centre		Go to 5a
6	Look after a family and home		Go to 5a
7	Work but do not get paid		Go to 5a
8	Ill/health problems		Go to 5a
9	Other		Go to 5a

1.b. Have you passed any more qualifications since leaving school?

1.c. Can we quickly go through what you have done each year since leaving school.

1999/2000	
2000/1	
2001/2	
2002/3	
2003/4	

I am now going to ask you some questions about your education.

2.a. Where are you currently studying?

1	College of Further Education or tertiary college	
2	Sixth Form in a school	
3	Specialist college for learners with learning difficulties	
4	Residential Specialist College	
5	Residential Training College	
6	Private Training Centre	
7	Independent or other college	
8	University	
9	Other	

2.b. What course/courses are you studying?

	Course		Subject	Level
1	GNVQ			
2	NVQ			
3	A Level			
4	Entry Level			
5	GSCE			
6	Life Skills/ASDAN			
7	Degree			
8	Other			

2.c. What kind of support do you get to help you with this course?

	Type of support		Extent
1	Learning support assistant		
2	Learning support teacher		
3	Specialist provision at a specialist school/unit		
4	Speech and language therapy		
5	Occupational therapy		
6	Counselling		
7	Other		

2.d. Who helped you or gave you advice about your current course?

1	Parents/carers	
2	Careers Adviser at school/college	
3	Other school/college staff	
4	Connexions Personal Adviser	
5	Friends or partner	
6	Someone else in your family	
7	Other	
8	Don't know	Go to 2g

2.e. Who was the most helpful person when choosing the course?

1	Parent/carers	
2	Careers Adviser at school/college	
3	Other school/college staff	
4	Connexions Personal Adviser	
5	Friends or partner	
6	Someone else in your family	
7	Other	
8	Don't know	

2.f. Can you explain why.

2.g. What kind of advice did you get when choosing the course?

1	Provided information	
2	Explained options available	
3	Helped me to make decisions	
4	Planned how I would be supported	
5	Gave me encouragement	
6	Gave me support/understood my needs	
7	Gave me confidence	
8	Took me to interviews/college	
9	Other	
10	Don't know/can't remember	

2.h. How easy/difficult was it starting the course?

1	Very easy	
2	Fairly easy	
3	Neither easy nor difficult	
4	Fairly difficult	
5	Very difficult	
6	Don't know/can't remember	

2.i. Why was it _____?

2.j. How much do you enjoy college?

1.	I like it a lot	
2	I like it a little	
3	I don't like it very much	
4	I don't like it at all	
5	Don't know	
6	Other	

2.k. Can you explain why in more detail.

IF THE EX PUPIL HAS ONLY BEEN TO COLLEGE GO TO Q7

I am now going to ask you some questions about your job.

3.a. What type of job do you do? (*Do not go through categories – just ask*)

	Occupation		Specific role
1	Professional		
2	Associated professional and technical		
3	Administrative and secretarial		
4	Skilled trades		
5	Retail and customer service		
6	Process, plant or machine operator		
7	Elementary occupations		
8	Other		

3.b. How easy/difficult was it to find this job?

1	Very easy	
2	Fairly easy	
3	Neither easy or difficult	
4	Fairly difficult	
5	Very difficult	
6	Don't know/can't remember	

3.c. What methods did you use to find this job?

1	Through friends or family	
2	Applied directly to employers	
3	Applied for jobs advertised in newspapers	
4	Visited a Connexions Service	
5	Visited a Job Centre	
6	School or college careers service	
7	Training and Employment agency	
8	Through work experience/part time work	
9	Visited a job market/fair	
10	Internet	
11	Disability Employment Adviser	
12	Other	

3.d. Who was the person that gave you the most help when looking for work?

1	Parents/carers	
2	Friends or partner	
3	Connexions Personal Adviser	
4	Other family member	
5	Jobcentre	
6	Careers adviser at school/college	
7	Other school/college staff	
8	Other	

3.e. Why were they the most important person?

3.f. What types of advice did you get when you were looking for work?

1	Provided information	
2	Helped me to make decisions	
3	Explained options available	
4	Planned how I would be supported	
5	Encouraged/pointed me in the right direction	
6	Helped with CV/application forms	
7	Other	
8	Don't know/can't remember	

3.g. How much do you enjoy work?

1.	I like it a lot	
2	I like it a little	
3	I don't like it very much	
4	I don't like it at all	
5	Don't know	
6	Other	

3.h. Can you explain why?

3.i. How well do you get on with your work colleagues?

1	Very well	
2	Quite well	
3	OK	
4	Not very well	
5	Not at all	
6	Don't know	

If young person attended college before work go to Q6.

I am now going to ask you about the training scheme.

4.a. What type of training scheme are you on?

1	Modern Apprenticeship	
2	National Traineeship	
3	Work based training through the New Deal	
4	Other government supported training	
5	Supported employment	
6	None of the above	
7	Don't know	

4.b. How easy/difficult was it to find the scheme?

1	Very easy	
2	Fairly easy	
3	Neither easy or difficult	
4	Fairly difficult	
5	Very difficult	
6	Don't know/can't remember	

4.c. What methods did you use to find the scheme?

1	Through friends or family	
2	Applied directly to employers	
3	Applied for schemes advertised in newspapers	
4	Visited a Connexions Service	
5	Visited a Job Centre	
6	School or college careers service	
7	Training and Employment agency	
8	Through work experience/part time work	
9	Internet	
10	Disability employment adviser	
11	Other	

4.d. Who was the person that gave you the most help when looking for the scheme?

1	Parents/carers	
2	Friends or partner	
3	Connexions Personal Adviser	
4	Other family member	
5	Jobcentre	
6	Careers adviser at school/college	
7	Other school/college staff	
8	Other	

4.e. Why/how were they the most helpful?

4.f. What types of advice did you get when you were looking for the scheme?

1	Provided information	
2	Helped me to make decisions	
3	Explained options available	
4	Planned how I would be supported	
5	Encouraged/pointed me in the right direction	
6	Helped with CV/application forms	
7	Other	
8	Don't know/can't remember	

4.g. How much do you enjoy the scheme?

1.	I like it a lot	
2	I like it a little	
3	I don't like it very much	
4	I don't like it at all	
5	Don't know	
6	Other	

4.h. Can you explain why?

4.i. How well do you get on with the other people on the scheme?

1	Very well	
2	Quite well	
3	OK	
4	Not very well	
5	Not at all	
6	Don't know	

If young person attended college before training scheme go to Q6.

5.a. Do any of the following describe your situation?

1	Waiting for a job to start		
2	Looking for work		
3	Waiting for education/training course to start		
4	Looking for an education or training course		
5	None of these		Go to 5e

5.b. What methods are you using to find a job or training?

1	Through friends or family	
2	Direct contact with employers	
3	Jobs/schemes advertised in newspapers	
4	Connexions Service	
5	Jobcentre	
6	School or college careers service	
7	Training and Employment Agency	
8	Jobs/schemes on the internet	
9	Disability employment adviser	
10	Other	

5.c. Who is the person giving you the most help with looking for work/training scheme?

1	Parents/carers	
2	Friends or partner	
3	Connexions Personal Adviser	
4	Other family member	
5	Jobcentre Adviser	
6	Careers adviser at school/college	
7	Other school/college staff	
8	Other	

5.d. What types of advice/help are you getting with looking for work/scheme?

1	Providing information	
2	Helping me to make decisions	
3	Explaining options available	
4	Planning how I might be supported	
5	Encouraging/pointing me in the right direction	
6	Helping with CV/application forms	
7	Other	
9	Don't know	

ONLY ASK IF NOT ANSWERED THE ABOVE

5.e. Why are you not working or at college?

1	Poor health	
2	Looking after home/children	
3	Not yet decided what job or course to do yet	
4	Need more qualifications or skills to get a job or training	
5	Not yet found a suitable job or course	
6	Housing problems	
7	Family problems	
8	Available transport is not suitable	
9	Currently having a break from studying	
10	Other	
11	Don't know	

5.f. Can you explain why in a little more detail?

If young person previously attended college go to Q6.

I am now going to ask you about your previous education.

6.a. Where did you study?

1	College of Further Education or tertiary college	
2	Sixth Form in a school	
3	Specialist college for learners with learning difficulties	
4	Residential Specialist College	
5	Residential Training College	
6	Private Training Centre	
7	Independent or other college	
8	University	
9	Other	

6.b. What course/courses did you study?

	Course		Subject	Level
1	GNVQ			
2	NVQ			
3	A Level			
4	Entry Level			
5	GSCE			
6	Life Skills/ASDAN			
7	Degree			
8	Other			

6.c. What kind of support did you get to help you with this course?

	Type of support		Extent
1	Learning support assistant		
2	Learning support teacher		
3	Specialist provision at a specialist school/unit		
4	Speech and language therapy		
5	Occupational therapy		
6	Counselling		
7	Other		

6.d. Can you describe this support in more detail?

6.e. Who helped you or gave you advice about the course?

1	Parents/carers	
2	Careers Adviser at school/college	
3	Other school/college staff	
4	Connexions Personal Adviser	
5	Friends or partner	
6	Someone else in your family	
7	Other	
8	Don't know	

6.f. Who was the most helpful person when choosing the course?

1	Parent/carers	
2	Careers Adviser at school/college	
3	Other school/college staff	
4	Connexions Personal Adviser	
5	Friends or partner	
6	Someone else in your family	
7	Other	
8	Don't know	

6.g. What kind of advice did you get when choosing the course?

1	Provided information	
2	Explained options available	
3	Helped me to make decisions	
4	Planned how I would be supported	
5	Gave me encouragement	
6	Gave me support/understood my needs	
7	Gave me confidence	
8	Took me to interviews/college	
9	Other	
10	Don't know/can't remember	

6.h. How easy/difficult was it starting the course?

1	Very easy	
2	Fairly easy	
3	Neither easy nor difficult	
4	Fairly difficult	
5	Very difficult	
6	Don't know/can't remember	

6.i. How much did you enjoy college?

1.	I like it a lot	
2	I like it a little	
3	I don't like it very much	
4	I don't like it at all	
5	Don't know	
6	Other	

6.j. Can you explain why.

I am now going to ask you some general questions about the help you have received planning for transition and careers advice.

7.a. How many Annual Reviews have you attended since Year 11?

1	All	How many?
2	Most	How many?
3	Some	How many?
4	None	
5	Can't remember	

7.b. How useful were these meetings?

1	Very useful		Go to 7c
2	Fairly useful		Go to 7c
3	Not very useful		Go to 7d
4	Not at all useful		Go to 7d
5	Don't know/can't remember		7e

7.c. Why were they useful?

1	Helped with decision making		
2	Provided information		
3	Explained the options available to me		
4	Helped me to move into work/further education		
5	Planned other support		
6	Other		

Go to 7e

7.d. Why was the meeting not useful?

1	Did not provide enough information		
2	Did not provide the right sort of information		
3	Did not help with making decisions		
4	Confusing		
5	Did not explain all of my options		
6	Not enough planning for other support		
7	I had already made my decision		

	about what to do next		
8	Other		
9	Don't know/can't remember		

7.e. Have you met with a Connexions Adviser in the last year?

1	Yes		Go to 7.f.
2	No		Go to 8.a.
3	Can't remember		Go to 8.a.

7.f. How helpful was the meeting discussion?

1	Very helpful		Go to 7.g.
2	Fairly helpful		Go to 7.g.
3	Not very helpful		Go to 7.h.
4	Not at all helpful		Go to 7.h.
5	Don't know/can't remember		Go to 8.a.

7.g. Why was the meeting helpful?

1	Explained the options available	
2	Provided information	
3	Helped with progress into work/further education	
4	Helped with making decisions	
5	Planned other support	
6	Other	
7	Can't remember/don't know	

7.h. Why was the meeting not helpful?

1.	Did not provide the right sort of information	
2	Did not provide enough information	
3	Did not help with making decisions	
4	Did not explain the full range of options available	
5	Confusing	
6	Not enough planning for other support	
7	I had already made my decision	
8	Tried to make me do something I did not want	

9	Did not listen/take me seriously	
10	Other	
11	Can't remember/Don't know	

8.a. Which of the following people have helped you prepare for Post 16 activities?

1	Parents/carers	
2	School/college Careers Adviser	
3	Other school/college staff	
4	Connexions Adviser	
5	Friends or partner	
6	Other family member	
7	Social/worker/Services	
8	Doctor/health worker	
9	Other	
10	None	Go to Q 9.a.
11	Don't know/can't remember	Go to Q 9.a.

8.b. Why/how were they helpful?

8.c. Which was the most helpful person when preparing for Post 16 activities?

1	Parents/carers	
2	School/college Careers Adviser	
3	Other school/college staff	
4	Connexions Adviser	
5	Friends or partner	
6	Other family member	
7	Social worker/Services	
8	Doctor/health worker	
9	Other	

8.d. Why were they the most helpful?

I am now going to ask you some questions about activities at MHS and college have helped you prepare for Post-16.

9.a. Which of these work related activities have you taken part in at school and college?

1	Work experience		
2	A link course with a further education/specialist college		
3	Overnight stays at a residential college		
4	Visits to further education/sixth form/specialist colleges		
5	Visits to work places		
6	Mini-enterprise schemes		
7	Attendance at careers/job fairs		
8	Voluntary work		
9	Spending time with role models/mentors		
10	Other		
11	None	Go to 9.c.	
12	Don't know/can't remember	Go to 9.c.	

9.b. Which two of these were the most useful activities? (Tick column/9.b.)

9.c. How useful were these activities in preparing you for Post-16?

1	Very helpful		
2	Fairly helpful		
3	Not very helpful		Go to 9.e.
4	Not at all helpful		Go to 9.e.
5	Don't know/can't remember		

9.d. Why were these activities useful?

1	Provided information about what I could do in the future	
2	Helped with progress into work/further education	
3	Helped with making decisions	
4	Helped me gain skills to use on the work place	
5	Other	
6	Don't know/can't remember	

9.e. Why were the activities not useful?

1	I had already made up my mind	
2	They were not relevant/about what I wanted to do	
3	They did not help me to progress into work/further education	
4	They did not help me to make any decisions	
5	Other	
6	Don't know/can't remember	

9.f. Which of these things from school did you show to College or your employer?

NRA	
Leaver's File	
Leaver's Report	
Therapy File	
ASDAN File	
Specialist Subject work e.g. Art	
Other	

10.a. Did you continue with any of the following courses after school:

1	Life Skills		
2	ASDAN Youth Award		
3	Careers/Work Related Learning		
4	Duke of Edinburgh		
5	Other		
6	None		

10.b. How useful were these courses in preparing you for Post-16?

1	Very helpful		
2	Fairly helpful		
3	Not very helpful		Go to 10.d.
4	Not at all helpful		Go to 10.d.
5	Don't know/can't remember		

10.c. Why were these courses useful?

1	Helped me to prepare for life outside school/college	
2	Helped with progress into work/further education	
3	Helped with making decisions about my life	
4	Helped me gain skills to prepare for adulthood	
5	Other	
6	Don't know/can't remember	

10.d. Why were these courses not useful?

1	I needed more time to spend on my academic qualifications	
2	They were not relevant	
3	They did not help me to progress into work/further education	
4	They did not help me to make any decisions about my life	
5	I learnt about life skills outside school	
6	Other	
7	Don't know/can't remember	

I am now going to ask you some questions about your social life and leisure activities

11.a. Which of the following leisure activities do you take part in during the week?

1	Watch TV	
2	Go shopping	
3	Play video or computer games	
4	Go to cinema/theatre	
5	Read magazines/books	
6	Use the internet	
7	Go out socialising (pubs/clubs)	
8	Listen to music/attend gigs/concerts	
9	Play a sport	
10	Other	

11.b. How easy do you find it to take part in leisure activities outside your home?

1	Very easy		Go to 11.d.
2	Quite easy		Go to 11.d.
3	Not very easy		Go to 11.c.
4	Very difficult		Go to 11.c.
5	Don't know		Go to 11.d.

11.c. Can you explain why?

11.d. How many good friends do you have?

1	None	
2	1	
3	2-5	
4	6-10	
5	More than 10	
6	Don't know	

11.e. How many weekday evenings do you spend with friends? (Including partner/boyfriend/girlfriend)

1	None	
2	1-2 evenings	
3	3-5 evenings	
4	Don't know	

11.f. How much weekend time do you spend with friends?

1	None	
2	Half a day	
3	One day	
4	All weekend	
5	Don't know	

11.g. How easy do you find it to make friends?

1	Very easy	
2	Quite easy	
3	Not very easy	
4	Not at all easy	
5	Don't know	

11.h. Do you drive?

Yes	
No	
Having lessons	

The next set of questions will look at more personal issues

12. Which of the following statements best describe your living arrangements?

1	Living with parents	
2	Living independently away from home	
3	Living independently away from but with parental support	
4	Living in sheltered/supported accommodation	
5	Other	

13.a. Do you have a regular partner?

1	Yes	
2	No	

13.b. Do you have any children?

1	Yes	
2	No	

14.a. How often do you worry about family issues?

1	Always	
2	Often	
3	Sometimes	
4	Hardly ever	
5	Never	
6	Don't know	

14.b. Can you explain why?

14.c. How often do you worry about college/work issues?

1	Always	
2	Often	
3	Sometimes	
4	A little	
5	Never	
6	Don't know	

14.d. Can you explain why?

14.e. How often do you worry about money issues?

1	Always	
2	Often	
3	Sometimes	
4	Hardly ever	
5	Never	
6	Don't know	

14.f. Can you explain why?

14.g. How often do you worry about health issues?

1	Always	
2	Often	
3	Sometimes	
4	Hardly ever	
5	Never	
6	Don't know	

14.g. Can you explain why?

14.h. How often do you worry about issues with friends?

1	Always	
2	Often	
3	Sometimes	
4	Hardly ever	
5	Never	
6	Don't know	

14. i. Can you explain why?

15.a. How often do you feel confident?

1	Always	
2	Often	
3	Sometimes	
4	Hardly ever	
5	Never	
6	Don't know	

15.b. Can you explain why?

15.c. How often do you feel happy?

1	Always	
2	Often	
3	Sometimes	
4	Hardly ever	
5	Never	
6	Don't know	

15.d. Can you explain why?

15.e. What do you feel good about in your life at the moment?

15.f. Is there anything you would like to change about your life at the moment if you could?

How far do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

16.a. I have at the same, or more friends now than when I was in Year 11.

1	Strongly agree	
2	Agree	
3	Neither agree or disagree	
4	Disagree	
5	Don't know	

16.b. I have mainly enjoyed my time since finishing Year 11.

1	Strongly agree	
2	Agree	
3	Neither agree or disagree	
4	Disagree	
5	Don't know	

16.c. I feel that the things I have been doing since Year 11, will help me in the future.

1	Strongly agree	
2	Agree	
3	Neither agree or disagree	
4	Disagree	
5	Don't know	

16.d. I have clearer ideas about what I want to do in the future than I did when I was in Year 11.

1	Strongly agree	
2	Agree	
3	Neither agree or disagree	
4	Disagree	
5	Don't know	

16.e. I feel more confident than when I was in Year 11.

1	Strongly agree	
2	Agree	
3	Neither agree or disagree	
4	Disagree	
5	Don't know	

16.f. Can you explain why?

16.g. I feel more independent now than I did when I was in Year 11.

1	Strongly agree	
2	Agree	
3	Neither agree or disagree	
4	Disagree	
5	Don't know	

16.f. Can you explain why?

For this final section I am going to ask you a few questions about your thoughts on the future.

How far would you agree/disagree with the following statements?

17.a. Since Year 11, the course, jobs, training or what have done has generally worked out well for me.

1	Strongly agree	
2	Agree	
3	Neither agree or disagree	
4	Disagree	
5	Don't know	

17.b. I know how to find out about future work, education or training opportunities.

1	Strongly agree	
2	Agree	
3	Neither agree or disagree	
4	Disagree	
5	Don't know	

17.c. I think that making plans for the future is a waste of time.

1	Strongly agree	
2	Agree	
3	Neither agree or disagree	
4	Disagree	
5	Don't know	

17.d. Can you explain why?

17.e. I am hopeful about the future.

1	Strongly agree	
2	Agree	
3	Neither agree or disagree	
4	Disagree	
5	Don't know	

17.f. Can you explain why?

17.g. I get enough support in planning my future.

1	Strongly agree	
2	Agree	
3	Neither agree or disagree	
4	Disagree	
5	Don't know	

17.h. Can you explain why?

17.i. I want to do more education or training in the future.

1	Strongly agree	
2	Agree	
3	Neither agree or disagree	
4	Disagree	
5	Don't know	

17.j. I have all the qualifications I need for the job or course I would like to do in the future.

1	Strongly agree	
2	Agree	
3	Neither agree or disagree	
4	Disagree	
5	Don't know	

What is the next activity you would like to do?

1	Go to/stay at work	
2	Go to/stay at college	
3	Go to university/HE college	
4	Change jobs	
5	Take a year out/go travelling	
6	Work based training/apprenticeship	
7	Work experience	
8	Join the armed forces	
9	Set up own business	
10	Obtain more qualifications	
11	Other	
12	Don't know	

19. Are there any specific concerns or issues you would like this study to address?

Thank you very much for your cooperation. I will feedback the results/findings of the project to you in the near future. This will be in the form of a report.

Take part in next interview Yes/No

Happy for me to contact parents Yes/No

Read prompt sheet Yes/No

APPENDIX VI: Semi-structured Interview Pilot Study

1.1 Aims of the pilot

As with the telephone survey, a small pilot study was designed and carried out to:

- i. Trial the interview instrument
- ii. Devise a provisional coding framework
- iii. Investigate and explore the data in order to:
 - Ensure that all relevant areas concerning the research questions had been included in the interview schedule
 - Formulate different methods of analysis and some provisional graphical representations of the data

1.2 Participants

The pilot consisted of two interviews with specific information on the participants contained below in Table 1.

Table 1 Profile of participants of pilot interview

No	Gender	Ethnicity	Home	Cohort	Routes	Word R	WORD S	WORD RC	Background information
1	M	White British	Surrey	2001	5	100	98	89	Currently studying at university
2	M	White British	London	2001	4	86	86	87	Currently working after going to FE college after school

Both participants had experienced quite different transitions since leaving school, having encountered success and difficulties in varying aspects of their lives. Although both participants went onto FE college after residential school, their experiences and academic outcomes of this post-16 phase contrasted sufficiently to provide wide ranging insights. After FE college, participant one, who from now will be called Daniel

(this is not his real name), went onto university and participant two, who will be called Paul, began fulltime work after college. This selection allowed the possibility of exploring two quite separate transition routes. Finally, during the telephone survey both participants had been able to describe and explain eloquently and in substantial detail the issues surrounding their transition and for young people with a history of SLI in general.

1.3 Materials

The interview schedule used with the participants consisted, in the main, of open questions focused on the three main areas of transition included in the telephone survey; work, independence and social and leisure activities. The content of the questions were directed in three ways:

1. To provide data to answer the second research question; the factors which facilitate and inhibit transition.
2. To examine the progress of transition since the telephone survey.
3. To explore the perception and views of the participants about their role in the transition process. This data assisted with the broader theoretical context of transition; namely the tension between a structuralist or individualist explanation.

1.4 Procedure

Participants were contacted by letter and then a follow up telephone call and invited to take part in a face to face interview as part of a pilot study. They were offered a selection of venues for the interview to take place and both chose to return to their residential school. The interview was undertaken by the same teacher who had conducted the telephone survey. The interview was two and a half hours long for Daniel and almost four hours for Paul. A number of breaks were taken during the interview and the young person was assured of confidentiality at the beginning and end of the interview. Both participants knew beforehand that by coming to school their participation in the project might be known by other staff in the school.

1.5 Analysis of pilot data

The first stage of analysis was to code at single statement level using the coding framework. The NVivo programme was used for coding and to build up a series of memos related to the codes and the interview schedule itself. The second level of coding addressed within case analysis and attempted to draw out for each participant the factors which influenced their own transition. A second level analysis of each of the facilitator and inhibitor codes was carried out to determine importance and how they affected the experience of transition. Using the data gathered under each code, it was possible to establish in more detail the different ways in which, for example, the family acted as a facilitator.

Leading on from this will be the third level of analysis which would investigate patterns across participants. (This was not carried out as part of the pilot as it would require a bigger sample). Here the aim would be to support any graphical representations with short narratives in order to represent the experiences of the young adults as fully and as richly as possible.

1.6 Results

1.6.1 Interview with Participant One: Daniel

This section will address the various transition outcomes for the first participant, followed by the factors Daniel considered facilitated and inhibited his transition.

1.6.1.1 Transition outcomes

Academic outcomes

At the time of the telephone survey, Daniel had just started a degree course in Fine Arts at a university college for creative arts. After leaving school, he attended a local FE college and during his four years there had completed a GNVQ Level 2 course in Art and Design, an A Level in Art and Design and a National Diploma in Fine Art. At the time of the interview, eight months later, he had completed his first year at university and had returned home for the summer holidays and was busy looking for part time employment.

Academically, Daniel's transition had followed a linear course since leaving school, but it had not been without challenges. During his time at college, Daniel had received one hour a week learning support to assist with the written demands of his course and continued to receive similar level and type of support at university. When discussing the written aspects of the course he commented:

'I still struggle a little bit, it takes me a lot longer'.

Independence outcomes

Unlike the majority of participants in the study, going to university meant that Daniel was able to live independently from the parental home which he found a positive experience.

'I enjoy living away...go out when you want, stay up late.'

However, he did not regard himself as completely independent as he felt he still required support from his parents, particularly in the form of advice, such as dealing with financial matters. He was also able to explain how a previous Saturday job in a fast food restaurant, had helped to develop his independence as the position brought him in contact with the public and he learnt about the management of staff.

Social outcomes

The greatest obstacle reported by Daniel, when he was considering applying for university was the challenge of meeting new people.

'I did struggle a bit with meeting people at college so I thought it would be similar'.

However, at university, he had made friends with the people on his course and with those he shared a flat. Although he tended to avoid parties, he would regularly go to the student union bar. At weekends and holidays he kept up with two/three friends from primary school and his FE college. He felt that socially his best times had been at secondary school and university because as they were both residential settings, this had helped him to find and maintain friendships.

1.6.1.2 Factors which facilitated and inhibited transition – 'Utilising all resources'

AN examination of the various elements which assisted the transition from school for Daniel revealed a young adult who was able to call upon a range of resources but at the core, it was evident Daniel himself had played a central role in the process. Figure 1 summarises the different sources of support; distinguishing between primary and secondary facilitators to highlight the varying degrees of importance.

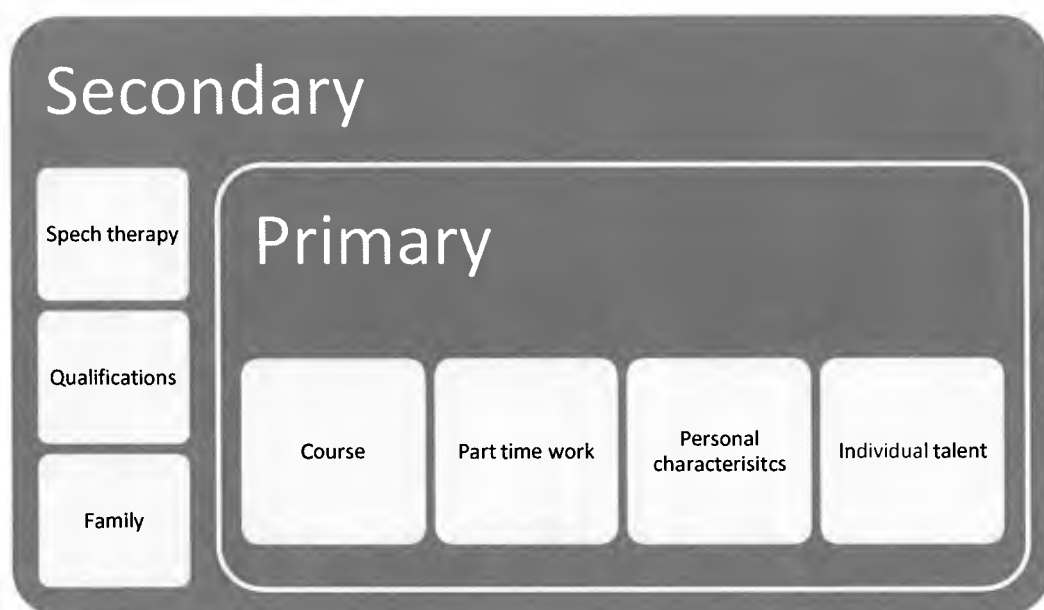


Figure 1 Primary and secondary facilitators of transition for Daniel

In many respects Daniel's artistic ability provided an obvious and successful routes through FE and onto higher education.

'I love to express myself through painting and drawing'.

However, despite this 'head start' compared to a number of his peers in the survey, post-16 transition had still brought challenges. What was evident, none-the-less, was

how he was able to draw on a number of personal characteristics to meet these challenges which the next section has defined as 'Drawing on the self'.

Drawing on the self

Two of the most striking of these personal characteristics included diligence and perseverance. These were demonstrated by his completion of four years at FE college and throughout most of that time maintaining a part time job to support his studies.

'I did the usual nine thirty to five Monday to Friday and as I was doing two courses I might have to do another two hours in the evening.'

He had a clear understanding of how his history of SLI had impacted and continued to affect aspects of his life including his academic performance and in certain social contexts such as meeting new people and friendships. At college and university, he had right from the beginning of his courses, discussed some of his difficulties with the various tutors describing how he could be 'shy' and found 'writing essays' taxing. This understanding and readiness to talk about the implications of SLI complemented his ability to remember and use previously taught strategies to manage potentially demanding situations such as, writing frameworks from school to help with the production of extended written work and various social skills strategies to help with social situations. Pre-empting possibly difficult circumstances was a further characteristic. Daniel commented that he often tried:

'Thinking about ways to actually getting round to it rather than letting it happen'.

Such actions included practising journeys to new places, filling in any complex forms by completing a photocopy first and writing down any difficult requests on paper so that he could read it if necessary when speaking in public. Finally, with regard to personal characteristics, Daniel was able to display much resilience in many strands of his life, including coping with regular aggressive behaviour from the public when at work, maintaining positive about friendships despite finding it stressful at times and coping with the demands of having to make regular presentations to groups at college and then university.

'It's all down to confidence really.... And believing in yourself..'

Drawing on the external

Daniel also benefited from external sources of support, the most important being his parents and the support they offered in terms of advice with such issues as living independently and making friendships.

'They gave me suggestions about different ways of communicating to people and finding out who they are and what they are interested in'.

Support was also received from various tutors at college and university all of whom were helpful when Daniel sought guidance either on an academic or personal level. He was for example, provided with considerable support in his application to university, including how to prepare for interview and advice on the suitability of courses. This was supplemented at both academic placements by the sufficient availability of learning support.

Making effective choices

Daniel's transition was assisted by two important choices; his selection of courses at college and subsequently university and the taking of a part time job. Both provided him with opportunities for building confidence, independence, and social networks. As Daniel had artistic ability he didn't have to face making a choice about the subject or general content of his course so in some ways he was protected from choosing from the vast and complex array of post-16 courses on offer to school leavers. Other young people in the survey had not made such appropriate or rewarding choices. Daniel's transition demonstrated explicitly the importance of the right choice of course at sixteen, less secure choices, as highlighted in the transition of the second participant in the pilot study, can impact on subsequent educational and career opportunities as well as with feelings of general confidence and self-esteem.

Inhibitors to transition

Daniel expressed that he had not felt that there had been any significant barriers or inhibitors to his transition and overall was happy with the progress he had made.

There had been challenges such as the written demands of his degree and with some social situations but he had been able to draw on internal and external resources to ensure that they didn't prevent his transition or progress in different aspects of his life. His hopes for five years into the future were similar to many young people of his generation including a job, possibly teaching art after graduating, living away from home and being in a long term relationship.

1.6.2 Interview with Participant Two: Paul

1.6.2.1 Transition outcomes

Academic/Work outcomes

Paul left school the same year as Daniel. At the time of the telephone survey, four years after leaving school, he was working as an assistant caretaker in a police station. Before beginning employment, he had spent a few months unemployed after completing a two year NVQ Level 2 course in music at a local college. During this period of study, he had also worked part time for a local green grocers. Just under a year later, at the time of interview he was working in the same caretaker role but at a different station. Initially, Paul's trajectory from school had taken a linear course, having improved upon his qualifications since leaving school and similarly to Daniel, studying a subject in which he possessed a talent and interest. However, on completion of FE college, progress for Paul had been less secure, explanations for which are described in a later section.

Independence outcomes

Paul was living at home at the time of interview with his parents and brother. His salary as an assistant caretaker did not provide sufficient income to live away from home. However, when asked to describe his level of independence he stated:

'Yeah, I would say like any other 20 year old really'.

Paul travelled to work by public transport which was a complex journey. He also used this form of transport for attending the gym and other leisure activities. He was hoping to start driving lessons in the near future.

Social outcomes

Paul enjoyed an active social life which was dominated by his love of guitar playing, which he started at fourteen and had recently started lessons again. He was a member of the local gym and trained up to three times a week. These activities did not leave him much time to meet with friends and any evenings going to bars and clubs would usually be with his two elder brothers.

Factors which facilitated and inhibited transition

A summary of the factors which facilitated Paul's transition are shown in Figure 2 and presents some similarities and differences to that of Daniel's transition.

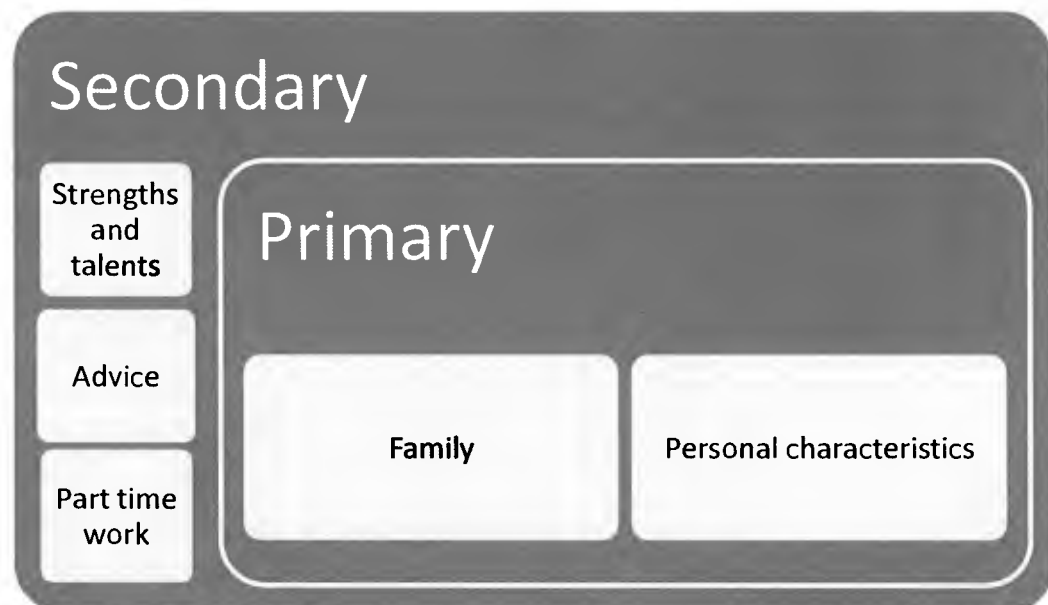


Figure 2 Primary and secondary facilitators of transition for Paul

The main contrast was the overall reduced availability of resources he was able to call upon to support transition. This and the potential impact of indiscriminate decision making with regard to academic and career choices had lead, to date, to a transition trajectory that was in some aspects insecure and lacking in purpose to that of his fellow classmate Daniel.

Drawing on the self

However, one striking similarity to Daniel was Paul's ability to call upon his own personal characteristics to cope with a number of the obstacles he had faced since leaving school. Similarly these resources included resilience, perseverance and an understanding of the impact of a history of SLI and how to mediate the impact. Yet at the same time he recognised that many of these obstacles were typical for any young adult his age. The work place had presented Paul with many challenges through which he had shown much resilience. These challenges included bullying from colleagues, taking on new tasks untrained, having to attend a disciplinary hearing and the taking on of additional responsibilities without additional financial remuneration. Despite these experiences he talked positively about his employment and the skills it had afforded him.

'It is good because you learn other skills...as well as being a deterrent or security person. You learn how to put doors in, do lights, electrics...'

Paul had experienced some difficulties with peers at college which included physical fights on a few occasions, but he could still recognise the benefits of having completed the course.

'At college it was a bit difficult. I was with a weird bunch of people. The fact that they were musicians they were all trying to sell themselves... I am happy that I did the course'.

As like Daniel, Paul found the written components of the music course more challenging and he showed much perseverance to complete three and four thousand word assignments. When asked to review the part he had played with regards to the progress he had made at college and work Paul responded:

'..just persevere it's just one of those things like, it's like playing an instrument, you learn it, you keep at it, you do it day in and day out and days when you feel like you

can't do it...no one else is going to hold your hand...whether it takes you longer or slower you still get there.'

He was able to talk in depth about his history of SLI and how it had impacted and continued to affect his life at times. Some examples included the use of public transport to a new destination, judging people's characters and needing more time on some occasions to process his thinking.

'You just got to understand it takes you longer cause while everyone is a computer broadband you are a computer without and you are getting it 56K and it will take you a bit longer you know.'

Nevertheless, Paul had developed different coping mechanisms to deal with potentially difficult situations. This included, for example, being open early on with new people he met either personally or professionally about some of the difficulties he experienced. He would often use humour to deal with tense moments at work and when working as a student resorting to making up prices when he couldn't remember the cost or manage the mental arithmetic involved. He was willing to face challenges.

'You can't be afraid to go and do things really... You have to have strategies.'

Drawing on the external

Paul came from a large supportive family and he was articulate about how they had assisted over the years with transition. One of the most important ways was helping him to find employment. Paul's brothers had helped him to find his part time and full time positions having first worked there before him. One brother had also helped Paul to prepare his Curriculum Vitae (CV). They had also provided Paul with an immediate social network on return from residential school, to the exclusion perhaps, of developing regular social contact with friends outside those met through his brothers. However, it was his mother who was his closet support.

'She has always been there for me....To me she is one of the most people who understands really my problem...'

Along with this emotional support, practical help was also provided such as attending the local Job Centre with Paul to help with any explanations Paul and or the staff might have required. Paul himself described his mother's role in this situation as having to 'translate' and help with any of the subtle points which he might have missed. Paul also drew on his musical talent and interests in physical fitness to facilitate his transition. It was his love of music and particularly his guitar playing that was his main interest in life.

'I would train a lot, it builds up your confidence...in my appearance, how I see things...the way I make my decisions...it helps to get rid of frustration at times'.

'I practise most nights, every time I can'.

He had built up quite a collection of guitars, some of them costing thousands of pounds and arranging for them to be shipped from abroad. This interest had a positive impact on his self-esteem and if feasible, was a career path he wanted to pursue but he was at the same time, realistic about the demands of achieving professional success in such a precarious profession.

Finally, it was possible to identify a few key individuals, outside of Paul's family, who had provided advice and encouragement at key moments. Firstly, there had been two colleagues at work who Paul felt had been very understanding of the difficulties he faced at times. One had been his immediate line manager when he started at the police station and who had helped him to plan his journey to work and any other stations where he had to complete relief duties. The other was a colleague who had volunteered to attend the disciplinary hearing with Paul and helped to explain what was happening to Paul as the meeting proceeded. Secondly, at the gym there had been an assistant who had taken an interest in helping Paul when he first started with more detailed and clearer explanations of how to use the gym equipment.

Inhibitors to transition

When compared with Daniel, it appeared that Paul did have to contend with more difficulties which may not have acted as barriers to his transition, but did inhibit or restrain his experiences and choices. There were four factors in particular; lack of career direction, insufficient or lack of relevant qualifications, the transition of returning home permanently from residential and the lack of advice and formal support structures.

Apart from contending with some difficult peer relationships at times at FE college, Paul also felt that some of the support he received, particularly around his language impairment, was not always appropriate or provided in a positive manner. The college did provide a dyslexia tutor to support him with written assignments but there appeared to be little in-depth understanding of his specific language impairment. In one class he was prevented from using a dictaphone to help with note taking which he felt was essential as he wasn't always given extra time to keep up with note taking.

'I tried to explain to them that someone with dyslexic isn't necessarily going to need the same kind of help as someone with speech and language which is totally different thing like draughts and chess are both played on the same board but it is a different set of rules.'

Although not specifically mentioned by Paul, an insufficient understanding of SLI by his management at work may also have contributed to some of the difficulties there, including the disciplinary action. Unlike Daniel, since finishing FE college Paul had never been clear about which career path to take.

'I wanted to stay at home and practise all the time my music. I didn't actually want to go for a job.'

Eventually, as a result of family pressure, and unsuccessful attempts to secure stacking jobs at supermarkets, he went for the assistant caretaker role viewing it as a stepping stone until he was sure about the next career step. Almost three years on that lack of direction was still evident. This was highlighted throughout the interview during which he mentioned an interest in becoming a Community Police Officer (CPO), a mechanic and with joining the forces. This lack of discrimination or real focus might be related to three issues; a lack of relevant qualifications and a reluctance to retrain, the fact that his only genuine interest lay in the music field and a lack of targeted relevant advice.

'But to be honest there really isn't anywhere for me to go unless I go back to college and learn a trade... and I don't really know what I want either.'

The attraction of a CPO role was that it did not require qualifications and the pay was considerably more than his current salary. Paul had been to a local Job Centre, where the member of staff had tried to be helpful with providing information about different careers

including the police force, but he did not provide quite the type of advice Paul was seeking which might have assisted him in making a decision.

Finally, Paul like Daniel, looked to the future with enthusiasm and where his life might be in five years time. These hopes included, continuing with his music, possibly working in the police, driving, having saved enough money for a deposit on a flat and friends to meet in the pub for a drink. In the long term he also wished to marry and have a family.

‘Not too much, nothing majorly adventurous just the simple ordinary life like the average bloke...’

1.7 Discussion

As this was a small pilot study it was not possible to come to any firm conclusions regarding the factors which affect transition for this specific population of young adults. However, it did achieve the aims set out at the beginning of the Chapter and at the same time certain themes did emerge regarding transition around three key areas:

- Informal and formal sources of support
- Choices and decision making
- Perspectives on having a history of SLI.

1.7.1 Informal Support

The data revealed three common types of informal support; the family, leisure interests and the role played by the young person themselves. The contribution provided by parents and wider members of the family, was not unexpected and their vital role is recorded in other follow up studies of young people with SLI (Dockrell et al., 2007, Palikara et al., 2009) and in studies of young people with a range of SEN in the UK (Polat et al., 2001, Dewson et al., 2004, Aston et al., 2005) and in the United States (US) (Levine and Nourse, 1998). For both participants in the pilot study, their families had the various capacities to offer effective

support on a general basis and targeted specifically towards transition issues when needed. However, there are limits to this resource. The parameters of this study did not seek the views of parents on their role regarding the transition process but other studies have shown that many parents felt that there was inadequate information and services available (Aston et al., 2005, Dewson et al., 2004) In contrast Dockrell et al. (2007) found that parents were positive about the support offered to help their child with transition into the first year of post-16 education.

Although more difficult to judge, the pursuit of leisure activities especially those stemming from an individual talent, appeared to have a positive influence on the transition process. Daniel and Paul derived much pleasure and success from their interests in art and music respectively. Paul was in an enviable position of being able to combine his academic and personal interests. In the full study it will be interesting to observe how those young people without an obvious talent or leisure interest manage their transition.

Finally, an advantage of the semi structured interview format is the opportunity afforded to the interviewee to play an important role in determining the direction of the interview and the evidence gathered. One perhaps unexpected feature of the data was just how much the young person themselves had contributed to the facilitation of their own transition by exercising and demonstrating an impressive diversity of personal strengths and characteristics such as perseverance, humour and resilience. It was the one influence which stood out amidst all the other facilitating factors. This is an issue which has received limited attention in most follow up studies, although Dockrell et al. (2007) did address the use of coping mechanisms on behalf of the young person in their research. This remains a crucial area for further research not just from the importance of improving practice and policy but also for the insights into the theoretical discourse between individualisation and structuralism.

1.7.2 Formal Support

A major concern in the literature is the ad hoc, haphazard nature of the provision of formal support structures for young adults with a disability after the age of sixteen (Aston et al., 2005, Dewson et al., 2004, Lewis et al., 2007b). It is clear that support and understanding towards disability are still patchy and unpredictable. There was considerable luck involved when provision was felt to be good (Lewis et al., 2007b). Aston et al. (2005) also described the 'serendipitous' nature of support. This lack of coherent provision was evident in this pilot

study. Daniel did receive relevant and sufficient learning support and reassuring tutors. It was heartening to see effective learning support provision at university as well. This was not reflected in Paul's case with a learning support service providing a limited understanding of his needs. In relation to more extended and wide ranging support, neither of the participants had seen a Connexions Officer in the previous three years. Furthermore, in Paul's case the Job Centre could only meet part of his needs, providing a list of possible careers but not the targeted advice about which one might be more suitable for him. In many respects, much of Paul's transition had lacked strategic and coherent direction, some of which might have been prevented with more systematic and relevant support mechanisms.

1.7.3 Choices and decision making

This lack of support went hand in hand with a recurring theme in the data; how the young people made choices in their lives and the effects of these choices. One of the most critical of these was the selection of which first post-16 course which can be seen to have important consequences in the lives of both participants. The decision made by Daniel had led to a structured academic and possible career path. However, in Paul's situation, although the course he took was rewarding it had not lead to any obvious vocational or career path for him. For Paul, indiscriminate decision making was also accompanied by delay in decision making. He had wanted to change his employment for some time but was still very unsure about which way to move forward and almost three years later had found himself in the same job which had initially been thought of as a temporary move.

From a more positive perspective, both had made the same choice to obtain part time work whilst at college which had brought financial, social and independence rewards. Research has shown that completing part time work can have favourable effects on adult outcomes for young people with a disability (Hasazi et al., 1985). Positive benefits were also evident around proactive choices with regard to social and leisure activities as documented in the last section.

1.7.4 Perspectives on having a history of SLI

One of the principle reasons for this thesis was the lack of evidence relating to life outcomes for young adults with a history of SLI. Consequently one of the issues at the heart of the study was the question of how much a history of having a learning difficulty affected the lives of these young adults. However, in order to see the factors affecting transition from the

perspective of the young person, this issue was investigated by the interviewer if only brought up by the interviewee. It was not a specific question on the interview schedule. Although both participants discussed how SLI had impacted on their lives and in many respects continued to do so, neither reported that it was a dominant feature of their lives or had acted as a barrier to achieving their goals. A history of a language impairment may have caused difficulties for them at times and inhibited performance in certain areas but it did not deter them from making choices faced by all young adults. This was also demonstrated by their views and attitudes towards the future with no mention made that having a history of SLI might prevent them from making certain choices or having life experiences. Lewis (2007) found a similar picture in her study of young people with a disability commenting on the very individualised nature of their views and experiences.

APPENDIX VII: Semi-structured Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule for Post-16 Follow Up from Special School

Name:

Date:

Time:

Place of Interview:

Preliminary:

- Thanks for taking part
- Confidentiality
- Need for a breaks etc.
- Topics to include:
 - Work/education/training
 - Family/independence
 - Leisure/social life/Friendships

Q. No.	Question	Asked	Prompts	Notes	Reliability /Validity Links
1	Just to recap can you take me through again where you have studied/worked since school.				Survey Q1.c.

Education /Work /Training			
2	What factors have helped you to get on _____?(course, job etc)	<p>Personal: Talent/ability, research carried out, hard work, knowing what I wanted to do, exam passes</p> <p>Social: Family, friends, staff at school/college/work, Connexions, someone known in the field, locality</p> <p>Economic: Parents support, live at home, EMA, part time work</p> <p>Structural: Annual Review, Transition Planning, Parents' Meetings, Connexions Service, Job Centre</p>	
3	How did they help?		
4	Did you have any other options/choices at the time? If yes, what were they?		
5	Of all the factors/people which helped you to get to _____ which 2/3 have been the most important?		
6	Who was the most helpful person when choosing this course/finding this job?		Survey 2.e or 3.d
7	How much do you enjoy/enjoyed college/work?		Survey 2.j or 3.g
8	Were there any factors which didn't help/got in your way/made it difficult?	Personal: Impairment, lack of qualifications, not sure what my skills were, not sure where to get	

			help, lack of confidence, Social: Family/friends not sure how to help, where I lived, Connexions PA couldn't help Economic: Needed to earn money, college too expensive, Structural: Connexions/Job Centre couldn't help, not given the right advice at school/college		
9	How did they get in your way?				
10	How did you get round this difficulty?				
11	Of all the factors/people which made it difficult _____ which 2/3 have been the most important?				
12	How would you describe the progress you have made in this area since school?		Steady – generally upwards/what I would expect Some progress and then slip back again Little if any since school Further behind than when at school		
13	How far is this progress (or lack of) down to you or others? Can you explain why?		Mostly me Me with I played a small part I didn't play any part		
14	Generally how far would you agree that your courses/work since Year 11 has worked out for		Strongly agree		Survey Q17.a

	you?		Agree Neither agree/disagree Disagree Don't know		
15	Would you have changed any of the decisions/choices you made? Why and if yes how?				
Independence/Family					
16	How would you describe your level of independence?		Completely independent I still need parents support with/some things e.g. travel,/financial support, coping with money, social life, reading and writing I have very little No independence		
17	What things/factors have helped you become more independent?		Personal: Confidence to try new things and new situations, independence skills learned at school/college Social: Family, friends, staff at school/college/work, Connexions, locality Economic: Parents support, live at home, EMA, part time work		Survey Q 16.f

			Structural: Annual Review, Transition Planning, Parents' Meetings, Connexions Service,	
18	How did they help?			
19	Of all the factors which helped you become more independent which 2/3 have been the most important?			
20	Were there any factors which didn't help/got in your way/made it difficult?		<p>Personal: Impairment, lack of qualifications, not sure where to get help, lack of confidence,</p> <p>Social: Family/friends not sure how to help, where I lived, Connexions PA couldn't help</p> <p>Economic: Rely on parents for money, don't have enough money to do what I want</p> <p>Structural: No organisations that can give the right amount of support, not enough training at school/college</p>	
21	How did they get in your way?			
22	How did you get round this difficulty?			
23	Of all the factors/people which made it difficult _____ which 2/3 have been the most important?			
24	How would you describe the progress you have made in this area since school?		Steady – generally upwards/what I would expect Some progress and then slip back again	

			Little if any since school Further behind than when at school	
25	How far is this progress (or lack of) down to you or others? Can you explain why?		Mostly me Me with I played a small part I didn't play any part	
26	Would you have changed any of the decisions/choices you made? Why and if yes how?			
Social/Leisure/Friendships				
27	What things about your social life/leisure activities/friendships are going well at the moment?			
28	How easy do you find it to take part in leisure activities outside the home?		Very/quite/not very/very difficult/don't know	Survey Q 11.b
29	How many good friends do you have?			Survey Q 11.d
30	How often do you see friends in the week and weekends?			Survey Q 11.e and 11.f
31	Are you in a relationship at the moment?			
32	What factors do you think have helped this to		Personal: Happy to talk to people, don't mind meeting new people, have lots of interests, can	

	happen?		drive Social: Family, friends, staff at college/work Economic: Have money to take part in activities Structural: Good leisure facilities close by, good transport links	
33	How did they help?			
34	Of all the things which helped you in these areas which 2/3 have been the most important?			
35	Were there any factors which didn't help/got in your way/made it difficult?		Personal: Impairment, not sure what my skills were, lack of confidence, difficulty making friends, lack of independence Social: Family/friends not sure how to help, where I lived, Connexions PA couldn't help Economic: Not enough money to do what I am interested in Structural: Lack of facilities in the local area, transport difficult	
36	How did they get in your way?			
37	How did you get round this difficulty?			
38	Of all the factors/people which made it difficult _____ which 2/3 have been the most important?			
39	How would you describe the progress you have		Steady – generally upwards/what I would expect	

	made in this area since school?		Some progress and then slip back again Little if any since school Further behind than when at school		
40	How far is this progress (or lack of) down to you or others? Can you explain why?		Mostly me Me with I played a small part I didn't play any part		
41	Would you have changed any of the decisions/choices you made? Why and if yes how?				
General					
42	When you look back over the years since Year 11 and leaving school how would you describe the progress you have made overall?		Steady – generally upwards/what I would expect Some progress but not in all areas Very slow Little if any since school		
43	How much would you say agree that you have mainly enjoyed your time since Year 11?		Strongly agree Agree Neither agree/disagree Disagree Don't know		Survey Q 16.b

44	How far would you agree that you are hopeful for the future?	Strongly agree Agree Neither agree/disagree Disagree Don't know		Survey Q 17.e
45	Where do you see yourself in five years time in each of the areas?			Some link with Survey Q 18.

Thank you for your time and valued contributions. The next step with be

APPENDIX VIII: Semi-structured Interview Coding Framework

Outcomes	Code	Facilitators	Code	Inhibitors	Code	Views on progress	Code	Who was responsible for progress	Code	Future plans	Code
Education	OutEd	Skills and talents	FacS&T	They mentioned SLI	InImp	Education/work	VProgEd/Wk	Education/work	Res/Prog/Ed/wk	Work & education	FutWor
Work	OutWork	Agency/personal characteristics	FacPer	Lack of confidence	InCon	Social/leisure	VProg/S&L	Social/leisure	Res/Prog/S&L	Independence	FutInd
Leisure/social	OutLei/soc	Family	FacFam	Lack of qualifications	InQual	Independence	VProg/Ind	Independence	Res/Prog/Ind	Social & leisure	FutSoc&
Independence	OutInd	Part time work Speech therapy	FacWork FacSALT	financial Lack of family support	InFin InFam						
		Residential school	FacSch	Lack of advice from professionals	InAdv						
		Advice from professionals	FacAd	Location	InLoc						
		Life skills training	FacLS	Residential school	InSch						
		Current course	FacCou								
		Qualifications	FacQual								
		Friends	Fac/Fri								
		Locality	Fac/Loc								

