Preparing for Employment: An exploration of the transition experiences of young people with mild and moderate learning difficulties and their parents of a supported internship programme.

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Declaration

'I, Diksha Narendra Laungani, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.'
Acknowledgements

The completion of this milestone has only been possible through the presence of many wonderful people, from both personal and professional spheres of my life. I am indeed blessed to be associated with you all and this section will never be enough to express my gratitude to you, but only a beginning.

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To my cheerleaders across borders: Rish and Shrish.

To my home away from home: Farheen.

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Abstract

Transition to adulthood marks a crucial yet complex developmental stage for any young person (YP), more so for YP with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND). This transition is associated with several key outcomes; gaining meaningful employment is one of them. Within the United Kingdom (UK), there exists ample grey literature preceded by recent changes in the SEND Code of Practice (Department for Education [DfE] & Department of Health [DoH], 2015) pertaining to supporting transitions. However, to date, few studies have explored the transition experiences of YP with SEND of supported employment (SE) initiatives in the UK.

This study aimed to provide a platform for YP with mild and moderate learning difficulties (LD), a diverse yet under-researched population, and their parents to express their views about the transition to supported internships (SIs), a national SE programme growing in implementation.

A qualitative, multiple case-study approach with a longitudinal data-collection design was adopted to explore the views of five YP and their parents at three stages: before, at the beginning of, and midway through the SI. YP’s diverse and co-morbid needs (e.g. Autism Spectrum Disorder [ASD]/mental health needs, etc.) were apparent and acknowledged in this study through the inclusion of comprehensive sampling criteria which included adaptive functioning, rather than LD classifications only. Data-collection was via semi-structured interviews with an additional participatory approach, i.e. photo-elicitation used with YP.

Within- and cross-case analysis of participant data through a thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) yielded several distinctive findings. Gaining employment, emerging independence and forming relationships emerged as key aspirations of YP and parents. YP experienced an ongoing transition to employment through SIs; encountering challenges yet demonstrating personal and skills-based growth along the way. Participants had different perceptions about the role of parents during the transition to SI, which contributed to a dichotomy of views about YP’s independence and support required during the transition process.

Research implications are presented through a Preparing for Adulthood framework and reflections on the research process, findings, strengths, limitations and future directions are discussed.
Impact Statement

This study offered potential insights into the transition experiences of YP with mild and moderate LD about their SI experiences, triangulated with parental views. By doing so, this timely research contributed to a gap in national literature in eliciting the voice of the YP within the post-16 SE domain. Findings highlighted the interconnectedness of the YP’s transition experiences with systems based in their environment, especially parents and Further Education (FE) provisions. The importance of having opportunities for promoting YP’s self-determination during the SI and acknowledging parental transitions at the YP’s transition to adulthood juncture was highlighted.

Consequently, the research findings have given rise to several national implications for stakeholders, further presented in the form of a Preparing for Adulthood framework in chapter five, targeted at the Local Authority (LA), FE provision and Educational Psychologist (EP) levels; a summary of which is provided here. These implications contribute to the claims for emancipatory research practices.

These implications highlight the importance of providing opportunities for networking and support for parents in the post-16 domain. The research findings reinforce the significance of preparing for adulthood from the earliest stages, which includes providing opportunities for promoting YP’s self-determination and person-centred planning since secondary school. Facilitating transition best practices in educational provisions at the systemic and individual casework level comes under the purview of the role of the EP.

The researcher’s plans to disseminate the research findings within the focus LA and beyond are outlined in chapter five.
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Introduction

1.1 Research Questions

This study aims to provide a platform for YP with mild and moderate LD and their parents to express their views about their preparedness for and transition to employment through an SI model from a person-centred perspective.

The research questions (RQs) to be addressed through this study are:

Ψ RQ1: What are the hopes and aspirations of YP with mild and moderate LD and their parents of the SI programme?
Ψ RQ2: How do YP with mild and moderate LD experience the transition from education to SIs?
Ψ RQ3: What is the perceived role of parents in supporting the transition of YP to SIs?

This introductory chapter provides the rationale for this study, followed by debates and contentions surrounding the LD terminology. Important research concepts such as transition to employment and SIs as a type of SE are described, followed by highlighting the national and local context which signifies the importance of the research topic. Theoretical frameworks used to analyse the research findings are also critically described. The chapter concludes with a summary of the research aims.

1.2 Rationale

The rationale for this study is embedded within the national and local context of the SEND reforms and the Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) strategy in the UK, both described in subsequent sections. As services expand their remit to include the 16-25 sector, there is a growing interest and marked lack of research to support effective service provision within this domain. This emphasis is evident in EP services which are aiming to further develop practice in this sector, visible from the emerging research (Morris & Atkinson, 2018; Vukoja, 2017) and several work discussion groups within and across LAs focussing on post-16 practice.

Employment constitutes one of the most important elements of a successful transition to adulthood, which is often used by the government to understand the effectiveness of educational and social care support for people with LD (House of
Commons, 2017). Paid employment is linked to emerging independence, socialisation and identity development for people, especially those identified as having SEND (Parmenter, 2011). This provides the basis for exploring the transition processes linked to achieving employment for a less-researched and perhaps not-so-well understood population, i.e. YP with mild and moderate LD. As explored below, children or young people (CYP) with mild LD may often be overlooked within the educational system, yet have difficulties in achieving a successful transition to adulthood, including employment (Bouck, 2013). The population of moderate LD is often under-researched, possibly due to difficulties in the identification, co-morbidity and understanding of their needs (Emerson & Hatton, 2008). However, this does not justify the lack of research in this domain.

The following section provides a discussion of issues surrounding the mild and moderate LD population, which includes the researcher’s positioning within the debates and contentions.

1.3 Mild and Moderate Learning Difficulties

The YP participating in this study will have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan (DfE & DoH, 2015) identifying cognition and learning as one of their primary areas of need, with the description of need consistent with mild and moderate LD as described below.

1.3.1 Terminology, Criteria and Definitions. In practice, several terms have been used, often interchangeably, to describe LDs. These have been subject to changes across geographical and historical contexts, for instance, within the United States (US), the term mental deficiency was replaced by mental retardation and currently, intellectual disability (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities [AAIDD], 2010). Within the UK, a similar shift of terminology has occurred, i.e. from mental deficiency to mental sub-normality, mental handicap and currently, learning disability (British Psychological Society [BPS], 2015). Hardie and Tilly (2012) considered that the term learning disability is more commonly used in health and social care domains, whereas learning difficulty is widely used in educational contexts. At this point, it may be necessary to clarify a (general) learning difficulty from a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, etc.
Along with the shift in terminology, there have been changes in the way LD is defined and identified in recent times by major classification systems (Webb & Whitaker, 2012). The BPS (2015) stated that the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual [DSM-5] (American Psychological Association [APA], 2013) and the AAIDD (2010) use a common classification framework including three key criteria for LD:

- significant impairment in intellectual functioning: intelligence quotient (IQ) < 70;
- significant impairment of adaptive behaviour; and
- onset of both impairments before 18 years of age/adulthood.

These criteria mirror those adopted by the Valuing People white paper (DoH, 2001) which indicated a strategic push to improve employment outcomes for people with LD. Until the previous revisions of the classification systems, LD were only identified on the basis of IQ scores derived from standardised testing, resulting in four discrete categories of LD: mild, moderate, severe and profound. This includes the International Classification of Diseases-10 (ICD) that is currently in revision. However, it is widely anticipated that the ICD-11 will further broaden its criteria accordingly (BPS, 2015; Harris, 2013; Webb & Whitaker, 2012). The DSM-5 (APA, 2013, p.33) states that "the various levels of severity are defined on the basis of adaptive functioning, and not IQ scores because it is adaptive functioning that determines the levels of support required", an argument supported by the BPS (2015) and reflected in the SI principles. A combination of difficulties in cognitive functioning and adaptive skills is likely to be a more inclusive and comprehensive means to identify YP with mild and moderate LD, reflected in the inclusion criteria of this study (see section 3.4.2).

Definitions by the British Institute of Learning Disabilities [BILD] (Hardie & Tilly, 2012, p.7), which are consistent with DSM-5 descriptions, are used for the research:

- "Mild: A person who is said to have a mild learning disability is usually able to hold a conversation, and communicate most of their needs and wishes. They may need some support to understand abstract or complex ideas. People are often independent in caring for themselves and doing many everyday tasks. They usually have some basic reading and writing skills. People with a mild learning disability quite often go undiagnosed. Most
people still need appropriate support with tasks such as budgeting and completing forms.

- **Moderate**: People with a moderate learning disability are likely to have some language skills that mean they can communicate about their day to day needs and wishes. People may need some support with caring for themselves, but many will be able to carry out day to day tasks with support.”

These definitions reflect differences in adaptive functioning, which is why they were chosen for this study.

**1.3.2 Categorisation within the focus LA.** The categorisation of LD such as mild, moderate, severe or profound, is currently not used within the focus LA, which adheres to the broader term of *Learning Difficulties and Disabilities* (LDD). The LA's SEND Panel considers a holistic perspective to considering CYP’s needs, ensuring that needs are identified and matched to educational provision during the process of an EHC needs assessment.

The LDD category is consistent with the SEND Code of Practice’s (2015) post-16 categorisation. A point to consider is that there is no recognition of mild LD in this legislation; only moderate, severe and profound LD are mentioned. This could reflect that the legislation may not have engaged with the need for consistency with the major classification systems representing different categories of LD across the lifespan.

This inconsistency raised specific challenges related to the identification of YP with mild and moderate LD for this study, addressed by incorporating multiple criteria to capture the range of YP with mild and moderate LD’s needs.

**1.3.3 Models of Disability.** Many debates regarding the definition and identification of LD are underpinned by the medical versus social model of disability. The medical model attributes disability as a problem rooted within the person with an emphasis on permanent impairment, whereas the social model acknowledges societal factors, including attitudes and perceptions in enabling or disabling the person (Shakespeare, 2006).

Rudnick (2017) argues that the dichotomy or mutual exclusivity between these models is both a false and simplistic notion, as disability can be both a social construction and the result of physical difficulties or impairments. Rudnick (2017)
further suggests that there exists a continuum between these two models where most pragmatic ideologies and organisational attitudes lie, influencing interactions and outcomes for people with SEND. The researcher's stance is more consistent with the social model of disability, reflected in the philosophical underpinnings, reflexivity and interpretation of research findings (chapters three and four). However, it is acknowledged that the pragmatics of the research methodology refer to frameworks of identification and classification of YP with LD, i.e. the research inclusion criteria coincide more with notions of the medical model.

1.3.4 Contentions and Debates. A major characteristic of the population of mild LD is that their needs may often be overlooked or masked within mainstream educational provisions. Their learning needs may be associated with complex medical conditions or other forms of SEND such as ASD or Down Syndrome (Bourke, de Klerk, Smith & Leonard, 2016), which is acknowledged in this study. Tomlinson (1982) argued that mild LD could be linked to socio-economic status rather than a within-individual classification, which has contributed to the debates about the validity of this category.

The concept of moderate LD has been a topic of contention and debate in educational, social and policy constructs, much more so than mild LD. This construct has been categorised as difficult to define, as individuals with moderate LD often constitute a heterogeneous population with a wide and varying range of abilities (Norwich, Ylonen & Gwernan-Jones, 2014). The moderate LD construct has undergone many changes in its history; from being referred to as ‘educationally subnormal’ and linked to IQ in the range of 35-50 (Burton, 1997) to having the Warnock report (Warnock, 1978) calling for a shift in societal perceptions towards acknowledging environmental factors that support education and recognising that LD exists on a continuum. Norwich and Kelly (2005) suggested that the category of moderate LD has expanded over the years to include milder forms of general LD or ‘low attainers’, due to a lack of consolidation over mild LD.

1.3.5 Prevalence and Research. Despite its contentiousness, moderate LD is recognised as an area of need by the DfE and constitutes the most common primary type of need in England with 22.7% of pupils having this difficulty on their SEN support
plan or EHC plan. In totality, 29.9% of pupils in England with an LD are being supported through an EHC plan (DfE, 2017).

Despite its prevalence, only 5.7% of the people with an LD known to LAs were known to be in paid employment in 2016, a figure that has dropped from 7% in 2013 (National Health Service, 2017). Beyer, Meek and Davies (2016) added that employment rates of people with LD are amongst the lowest of any SEND. This provides the basis for most SE programmes being tailored to suit the needs of this population.

Highlighting the voice of a population that has been largely underrepresented in the research and employment domain (Emerson & Hatton, 2008) in comparison to its prevalence, fits in with the participatory ethos of this study. Existing research has highlighted the voices, transition experiences and outcomes for YP with SEND such as ASD, specific LD or Down’s Syndrome (Brunswick, 2012; Cullum & Ennis-Cole, 2014; Hedley et al., 2017; Strickland, Coles & Southern, 2013; Thomson, Ward & Wishart, 1995). However, there is a paucity of research exploring the same themes for people with mild and moderate LD, providing a strong justification for working with this population through this study.

In conclusion, the contentiousness of the terms ‘mild and moderate LD’ is recognised. However, this must not be considered as a barrier to accessing the voices of YP with such difficulties. The definitions given by the BILD (Hardie & Tilly, 2012) and the criteria highlighted by the BPS (2015), which focus on difficulties in adaptive functioning are used in this study.

The following sections provide an overview of the importance of employment within the transition to adulthood domain and a description of different models of SE that have emerged as effective programmes for YP with LD, which includes the SI programme relevant to this study.

1.4 Transition to Adulthood and Employment

There exist many definitions of transition; Kaehne and Beyer (2009) described transition as referring to social, biological, psychological or institutional changes that involve partnerships and planning across an individual’s life. Transition to adulthood can often be a stressful period as it denotes increased expectations of YP assuming
greater independence and a change in role transitions or status. The research literature quantifies this transition as comprising of certain developmental expectations or tasks for YP with or without SEND which include completing higher/further education, gaining employment, forming friendships, achieving independent living, etc. (Hanson et al., 2017).

However, changing social and economic landscapes have altered traditional, transitional mechanisms to some extent, which may already be challenging for people with SEND. Henninger and Taylor (2014) call for redefining transition expectations based on individual perspectives rather than traditional societal expectations.

Transition assumes greater importance for YP with SEND, especially to adulthood. Kaehne and Beyer (2009) stated that "transition for YP with disabilities occurs at the intersection of many organisations" (p.117). For instance, YP with SEND face a shift from children to adult services, which involves institutional changes. A parent described this process as, "from the pond, you are picked up and put in the sea" (NICE, 2018, p.2). Also, psychological growth processes such as independence and identity formation are typically associated with this transition.

Despite varied operationalisation of transition programmes across the world, the key to transition planning is the use of a person-centred perspective which keeps the YP and family at the heart of the process (Hanson et al., 2017; NICE, 2018). Traditionally, transition planning has prioritised FE over employment for YP with SEND post-school, even though YPs preferences may lie towards the latter. This could be linked to the boundaries of past legislation which often left vulnerable YP, with LD, for instance, unsupported after FE (Kaehne & Beyer, 2009). However, the SEND reforms in the UK, as discussed later, place greater responsibility on services to support YP with SEND’s transition to employment, providing an increased impetus on the phenomenon of SE initiatives in this domain, further explained below.

1.5 Overview of Supported Employment

The principle of SE is built on the rights of people with SEND to participate in the workforce with required support mechanisms (Hunter & Ridley, 2007). SE is a cost-effective, evidence-based and effective approach to help people with SEND into sustainable work (Jacobsen, 2010; Mavranezouli et al., 2014). Within the US, SE is
part of mainstream provision for YP with SEND as a post-school outcome and supported by legislation, e.g. the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004). SE is considered more effective for people with mild and moderate LD, including ASD, as opposed to people with more severe needs (Ineson, 2015). There exist varied approaches to SE in the US, such as supported jobs, mobile crew, benchwork, social firms, work crews and enclaves and the experiences of YP with LD of transition to employment through an SE framework is well-documented within the US research context (Cooney, 2002; Kessissoglou, 2000).

The most common approach adopted in the UK is the individual placement or place-and-train model, which entails phased processes such as vocational profiling, job matching and job support that are essential to its success (PfA, 2018; Swan & Newton, 2005). Despite the historical roots of SE within the UK stemming from the 1970s, there are wide variations in its implementation, as LAs continue to adopt models on an ad-hoc basis (Kaehne & Beyer, 2013; Kessissoglou, 2000).

Kaehne and Beyer (2011) stated that YP with LD often remain within the cycle of FE in the UK, completing one course after the other and SE offers an alternative placement strategy during this phase. However, SE is not a framework without its limitations. Kilsby and Beyer (2002) noted that supported work-based training often does not emulate normal working conditions, could be casual/exploitative and often act as a means to temporarily appease families and YP with SEND. Budget cuts in recent years also pose questions for the sustainability of such measures (Yates & Roulstone, 2013). The SI programme emerged as a type of SE which took most of these limitations into consideration, further explored below.
1.6 Supported Internships

The SI model as a variant of SE within the UK was first proposed in the DfE (2011) green paper, *Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability*.

“A supported internship is one type of study programme specifically aimed at YP aged 16 to 24 who have a statement of special educational needs or an EHC plan (see SEND Code of Practice, 2015), who want to move into employment and need extra support to do so.” (DfE, 2014b, p.6). SIs last for approximately 12 months and are aimed at supporting YP with LD into employment, with pathways to progression including paid employment, apprenticeships or traineeships. Providers are free to adapt the operationalisation depending upon the local context. However, the following four features must be evidenced in the SI:

**Principle 1:** The majority of a young person's time should be spent at the employer's premises.

**Principle 2:** Young people’s education must be supplemented by school/college based learning including English & Maths skills aimed at a Level 2 qualification.

**Principle 3:** The supported internships must benefit both the young person (with experience and skill-building or paid employment) and the employer (fulfill a business need).

**Principle 4:** The young person’s transition to internships must be supported by a tutor or formally trained job coach who may use the systematic instruction method for training wherever appropriate.

*Figure 1. Principles of a supported internship (DfE 2013, 2014, p.12).*
These principles indicate an emphasis on supporting transition and linking work placements to the YP’s aspirations, which require elements of person-centred planning and feedback. These are reflected in the aims and RQs of this study.

The estimated benefits of SI include preventing YP from becoming dependent on benefits and imbibing a culture of workplace diversity within the employer's premises (Allott & Hicks, 2016). SIs offer an alternative to apprenticeships for YP whose difficulties may prevent them from pursuing the level of qualifications associated with the latter (DfE, 2014). The SI model addresses limitations highlighted by existing research, including experiencing employment while in education and continuing welfare benefits during employment, often an area of concern for families (Kaehne & Beyer, 2013).

The government's recognition of the importance and continued need for SI has resulted in an additional investment of £9.7 million in SIs, with additional funding stipulated to create more local SI forums and training of additional job coaches (PfA, 2018).

Despite SIs’ growing national emphasis and implementation, it must be recognised that this model is a relatively recent pathway to SE in the UK and has a very limited evidence base, indicating that its effectiveness must be considered with caution. To date, there has been just one published evaluation of this model by the DfE (2013) and one survey targeting outcomes and implementation (PfA, 2019) (see section 2.3.1). It could be argued that SIs are further constrained by a lack of centralised data collection for programme outcomes that make evaluation procedures more difficult. This could be attributed to inconsistent implementation across different LAs who have chosen to implement this model at different times (Ofsted, 2011; Hanson et al., 2017).

Allott and Hicks (2016) report that employers are often not aware of the effectiveness and best practices associated with SI and compare this model to other unpaid internship opportunities. Most importantly, there has been no published account of feedback or experiences of service users, such as YP or employers, as compared to several qualitative explorations of participants’ transition to employment using models such as Getting a Life in the UK or Project SEARCH in the US (Christensen & Richardson, 2017; Purvis, Small, Lowrey, Whitehurst & Davies, 2012) (see section 2.3.2).
1.7 Alternative Approaches to Supported Employment

In addition to SIs, there exist other vocational employment pathways in the UK, such as traineeships and apprenticeships, both of which may be suitable for YP with or without SEND. These provide YP with alternatives to develop skills and enter the workforce if not choosing to follow traditional academic routes after the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSEs) or at risk of not being in education, employment or training (NEET). In general, both these alternative routes are considered to be more complex than SIs due to high-level technical skills involved, resulting in different outcomes post completion, working hours, availability of wages and entry level requirements, as described below.

1.7.1 Traineeships are a study programme which includes a work placement for about 100 hours within six months. Aimed at creating a bridge into apprenticeships or paid employment through opportunities to build networks and employability skills, traineeships are meant for YP between 16-24 years of age who do not have the skills or experience to be employed and have lesser than a Level 3 qualification¹ (National Apprenticeship Service [NAS], 2016).

1.7.2 Apprenticeships are a step above traineeships for people over 16 years of age and are considered as being in genuine employment, where people are paid wages and work for a minimum of 30 hours per week. Entry requirements are more rigorous and include having a Level 3 qualification. However, this has recently been

¹ According to the gov.uk website, qualification levels are part of the (national) Regulated Qualifications Framework for general (educational) and vocational qualifications in England and Northern Ireland, regulated by The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual). These levels range from entry level to Level 8.

A Level 3 qualification, for instance, indicates a person’s ability to gain and apply factual, procedural and theoretical knowledge and skills of a subject or field of work. This is equivalent to the completion of A (or AS) levels/International Baccalaureate or a similar higher education diploma from an educational institution, or Level 3 National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) which indicates independent working, or an advanced apprenticeship, or specific tech(nical) levels such as the Business and Education Technology Council (BTEC) (gov.uk, 2015; Ofqual, 2015).
revised for people with SEND. There is an expectation that an apprenticeship will lead to permanent employment immediately after completion (NAS, 2019).

For YP with SEND, apprenticeships and traineeships could mostly be applicable only for YP with mild LD due to the progression routes and intensive demands (Mencap, 2017), whereas SIs could be applicable for a wider range of YP with SEND due to its flexibility.

The following sections provide an overview of the national and local context for the provision of SIs.

1.8 National Context

This study is set within the context of the legislative changes introduced by the Children and Families Act (DfE, 2014a) operationalised through the SEND Code of Practice (2015) in the UK. A key tenet of the reforms has been an extension of the statutory focus and support for YP with SEND from 0-25 years, instead of the earlier 0-16 years.

This emphasis on continued support within the 16-25 range has resulted in the establishment of the four PfA outcomes (DfE & DoH, 2015) to support YP with SEND’s transition to adulthood:

- employment;
- independent living;
- friendships, relationships and community inclusion; and
- good health.

These outcomes are underpinned by five key messages that provide the foundation for the service provision in the post-16 domain:

- using a personalised approach;
- develop a shared vision;
- improve post-16 options and support;
- raise aspirations; and
- plan services together.

PfA is both an approach to post-16 provision in the UK and also a team of professionals working to establish joint practices in collaboration with the DfE.
Concerning employment, the SEND Code of Practice (2015) states that most YP with SEND are capable of achieving paid, sustainable employment through preparation and support.

Another notable statutory reform which underpinned some of the post-16 changes in the SEND Code of Practice (2015) was the raising of school leaving age in England and Wales – till 17 years of age by 2013 and 18 years by 2015 as mandated by the Education and Skills Act (2008, cited in DfE, 2016). In practice, this meant that all YP were expected to participate in education, employment or training programmes for a longer period of time, which had consequences for post-16 SEND provision, including filling gaps in the number of FE options made available to YP and an increased impetus on promoting YP’s successful transition to employment.

Related to decision-making for all YP and adults over 16 years of age, the Mental Capacity Act (MCA) (Department of Constitutional Affairs [DCA], 2005) assumes particular importance. These five principles underpin this legislation:

- **Presumption of capacity**: Any individual over 16 is assumed to have capacity to make their decisions unless proved otherwise.
- **An individual must be supported to make their own decisions** in all ways possible.
- **Unwise decisions**: Capacity is not dependent on the type of decisions made by an individual.
- **Best interests**: If decisions are being made on behalf of an individual, these must be made in their best interests.
- **Least restrictive option**: Any best interest decision must be made in a way that restricts an individual’s rights or freedoms in the least possible way.

*Figure 2: Principles of the Mental Capacity Act (2005, as cited in Mencap, 2010, p.9).*
Another aspect of the MCA which is of significance to this study is related to the role of parents/carers, termed as the 'scope of parental responsibility', i.e. when YP/adults have capacity, their decision supersedes that of parents even in cases of opposing views. Also, while YP/adults are encouraged to involve their parents in information-sharing and use, they still have the right to discuss matters related to education, health or care without parents being informed. Parents also have the opportunity to appeal to the care team if concerned about not being involved in the YP/adult's care (Broach, Clements & Read, 2016; Cerebra, 2018). The application of the MCA principles will further become evident, e.g. assuming capacity for YP consent to participate in this study (methodology) and implications for transition including parental roles and beliefs (discussion).

1.9 Local Context

The proportion of people known to the focus LA with all types of LD in paid employment is only at 0.6%, which is the lowest proportion of any LA in London and fourth lowest in England. These statistics depict a greater need and push to direct more initiatives in this area. Thus, an 18-month collaboration with Mencap, a leading charity to support people with LD and CAPITA, an international business process outsourcing and services company, formed the LIFE project. As part of this project, additional funding for SE pathways (traineeships, apprenticeships and SI), the sourcing of a project manager for the LIFE project, training of job coaches in systematic instruction techniques and awareness-generating workshops within the council to better support people with LD was planned.

YP with mild and moderate LD represented the maximum prevalence and variability in the SI cohort of 2018-2019 in the focus LA, further justifying the consideration of these YP in this study.

The following section describes psychological theories that underpin the interpretation of the research findings.

1.10 Theoretical Frameworks

This section will present a critical overview of theories relevant to YP with SEND’s transition to adulthood and employment. Considering the complete scope of each
theory is outside the boundaries of this thesis. Only the most relevant aspects of each theory are represented and discussed throughout.

1.10.1 Self-determination theory. This theory is often used within the domain of transition planning for people with LD and has applications within education and social work, mostly within the US context. International applications of this framework are gradually emerging (Wehmeyer & Bolding, 2001). The prominence of this theory has developed over the years within psychology, human personality and most commonly, motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2000). Wehmeyer, Aberj, Mithaug and Stancliffe (2003, p.27) defined self-determination as "a complex process the ultimate goal of which is to achieve the level of personal control over life that an individual desires within those areas the individual perceives as important". Key inferences about self-determination include that it may differ across contexts, and it is key to elicit the opinions of the people about the areas in which they would like to foster self-determination. Deci and Ryan (2000) described self-determination as an innate need of a person to be the primary determiner of their thoughts, actions and feelings. The goal of self-determination is to fulfil three basic psychological needs of autonomy (control and independence), competence (effective dealing with environment) and relatedness (sense of belonging) in daily life.

Self-determination has been described to exist along a continuum, ranging from amotivation, i.e. lack of motivation, to extrinsic motivation, and finally, intrinsic motivation in a fully self-determined individual (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). Self-determination develops through real-world experiences, for instance, on-the-job learning for YP with SEND. Research suggests that self-determination capacities are undeveloped in YP with SEND due to dependency on caregivers (Wehmeyer & Bolding, 2001). Consequently, the development of self-determination is regarded as a facilitator for a successful transition to adulthood in the SEND literature (Wehmeyer, 2014). Lam (2016) highlighted the notion of cultural differences in perceptions of self-determination. This theory will be used to interpret YP’s responses about their employment aspirations and transition experiences.

1.10.2 Bioecological model of development. This model has been applied within this study when considering the methodology and the interpretation of the data. Derived from Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) earlier ecological systems theory, this model
emphasises person-context interrelatedness in human development. In other words, development across the lifespan is influenced by several interconnected systems located in the environment. Specific to the employment domain, this theory states that “a developmental outcome at a later point in time [transition to employment] is a joint function of a process [bi-directional/proximal interaction between the YP and other systems located within their environment]; characteristics of the developing person [e.g. age, sex, gender, physical or mental health]; the nature of the immediate, ‘face-to-face’ environmental context in which the person lives [see Figure 3]; and of the length and frequency of the time interval [preparedness and length of transition] during which the developing person has been exposed to the particular process and to the environmental setting under consideration.” (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000, p.119).

Key elements of the nested interactions between the YP and various systems located in their environment during the transition process are examined below:

| Chronosystem | Temporal aspects including current financial situation, SEND reforms, Preparing for Adulthood outcomes, Mental Capacity Act |
| Macrosystem | Overarching values, beliefs and ideologies such as culture, e.g. cultural expectations of employment or LD |
| Exosystem | Indirect environmental influences such as job coach training, parent employment, etc. |
| Mesosystem | Connections and relationships amongst microsystems, e.g. between parents and FE staff or job coach and placement provider having an indirect impact on YP |
| Microsystem | Proximal processes within Immediate setting, Bi-directional relationships with parents, peers, FE staff members/job coach |

Figure 3. Contextual elements of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (Keenan et al., 2016).
This theory has undergone several changes across the years, with the inclusion of the role of the ‘person’ in their development being the most significant and recent change (Keenan et al., 2016). This theory is widely used within the domain of EP practice (e.g. Costelloe, 2018; Vukoja, 2017) to formulate hypotheses about CYP’s development in the home-school context or to structure thinking about research analyses, However, Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield and Karnik (2009) cautioned that researchers or authors often use different versions of this theory without acknowledging the variants, i.e. model fidelity. They also critiqued the lack of clarity around the concept of proximal processes. Costelloe (2018) noted the oversimplification of this theory in practice.

1.10.3 Ecological theory of self-determination. Aber (1994) first conceptualised a variant of the self-determination theory to include the notion of ecological influences, e.g. microsystem, macrosystem, etc. in the continuous evolution of an individual's self-determination. Bremer, Kachgal and Schoeller (2003) postulated that self-determination could only be fostered in a supportive social context. This joint theory is an amalgamation of the two frameworks mentioned above and offers a comprehensive consideration of the person (YP)-environment fit. The influence of environmental systems, especially the role of parents, on the YP’s transition will be further considered in chapter five.

Wehmeyer and Bolding (2001, p.374) highlighted three factors which promoted self-determination: “a) individual capacity, influenced by learning and development; b) opportunity, provided by environments and experiences; and c) supports and accommodations”. It is suggested that individual capacity is fostered by interactions between the individual and environment, i.e. YP experimenting with different careers, whereas the latter are facilitated by systems such as SE, presence of job coaches and role of parents. Consequently, Wehmeyer and Bolding (2001) advocated that self-determination in people with LD is heavily dependent on the person-environment model, as opposed to a within-person framework. A limitation of this theory is that its empirical applications in research for people with LD are limited and yet emerging, with no known application related to transition mechanisms for YP with LD in the UK yet.
1.10.4 Non-finite loss. Also known as recurrent grief or chronic sorrow, this construct originated from literature linked to parents of children and people with chronic physical illness (Brown, 2016). In the current context, non-finite loss is referred to the “ongoing sense of grief experienced by parents caring for children with disabilities.” (Bruce & Schultz, 2002, p.9). Within this study, this theory will be linked to the experiences and views of parents in relation to coping with YP’s transition to adulthood.

This theory is part of a systemic consideration which implies that transition affects more than the person (YP) directly involved in the process. Traditionally, research literature focussed on a deficit view of sadness and denial experienced by parents, especially when their child was diagnosed with a long-term difficulty such as an LD. However, the focus has recently shifted to recognising that parents experience periods of well-being interspersed with variable moments of sadness that are usually triggered at key points of transition, developmental stages or through environmental influences in their child’s life across the lifespan (Brown, 2016; Bruce, Schultz, Smyrnios & Schultz, 1994). A significant stage includes transition to adulthood, when parents often encounter ongoing comparisons and widening gaps when comparing their child, with other people of their age, eliciting adjustment of expectations as coping mechanisms. Brown (2016) indicated that this non-finite loss could promote a sense of wanting to be involved in the decision-making regarding the YP’s life.

Bruce, Schultz and Smyrnios (1996) indicated differences in patterns of grief and coping for mothers and fathers, depending upon parental roles. Brown (2016) also commented on personal and societal factors which influence non-finite loss, especially for mothers. Personal factors include attitudes, whereas societal influences include socio-economic status, culture, type of difficulty and service provision.

Bruce and Schultz (2002) indicate that parent communication with professionals involved in the YP’s life is mediated by the perception of threat and information sharing processes linked to the language used by professionals and parent-professional partnerships. The latter leads to the formation of a trusting relationship which results in a sense of parent empowerment.
Overall, the inclusion of these theories as a lens to interpret and discuss the research findings is indicative of a bio-psycho-social approach to considering transition for YP with SEND.

1.11 Research Aims

As indicated earlier, this study aims to provide a platform for YP with mild and moderate LD and their parents to express their views about their preparedness for and transition to employment via an SI model from a person-centred perspective. By doing so, this study aims to fill in the gaps in national research on what makes a successful transition to employment, to make a significant and original contribution to the field. Eliciting the views of YP with LD and their parents can be considered as a pathway to ensuring greater participation and decision-making in processes linked to their transition to adulthood, forming the basis of emancipatory research (see section 3.1.2). The research findings are linked to psychological theories and models which underpin the YP's transition to employment through an inductive research process, i.e. derived from the emerging themes highlighted by the participants through a data analysis approach of Thematic Analysis (see chapters four and five). Keeping the YP at the centre of this exploration, this study also examines the functioning and support provided by systems such as FE provisions and parents to facilitate the transition to employment.

Chapter two explores and critically analyses findings yielded by existing research into transition to employment for YP with LD.
Literature Review

The following literature review presents existing research into the transition experiences of YP with LD relevant to the aims and RQs of the present study (see Appendix A for a list of terms used while surveying the research literature).

2.1 Transition to Adulthood Experiences of YP with SEND

The Institute of Longitudinal Studies conducted mixed-method, longitudinal research into the transition of 1,020 YP with SEND from 16 years of age to early adulthood in three waves; the largest research of its kind in the UK. The research examined the perspectives of YP and their parents/carers to identify their achievements, experiences and attitudes of the preparing for adulthood process (Dewson, Aston, Bates, Ritchie & Dyson, 2004; Aston, Dewson & Loukas, 2005). Mild and moderate LD constituted a majority of the SEND classification of YP aged 19-20 in the wave-three research.

YP’s aspirations from gaining employment included earning money (57%), identifying career interests (36%) and building work experience (19%). Parental pressure was not a very influential factor to gain employment for these YP (2%). However, parents/carers constituted the most helpful source of advice (38%), transition support (27%) and method of gaining employment (47%) for YP. Parental views were not explored in the research, which would have been beneficial to consider, demonstrating a gap in research that will be addressed by this study.

Research findings also demonstrated that YP wanted to receive support from other professionals/organisations to support with employment information (54%) and decision-making (36%). Paid employment was associated with autonomy and independence for the YP, contributing to independent living aspirations (72%). YP’s attitudes about their difficulties and the level of support required to meet their aspirations were considered to be essential determinants of employment.

The research elicited YP’s views using a mixed-method approach, with statistical information yielding detailed knowledge of the support that works best for this population. However, there was no distinction made between findings for YP with different SEND from a comparative point-of-view, except for final employment outcomes. There was also little overlap between the reporting of the quantitative and
qualitative findings, i.e. the qualitative information was presented as descriptive case-studies, which was not linked to the quantitative data. This had implications for the transferability of qualitative findings to other studies. However, a positive influence of this research was the in-depth presentation of the case studies, which was similarly imbibed in the current study to introduce the YP to the reader (see Table 2 and Appendix D).

2.2 Transition to Employment Perspectives of YP with LD

Wistow and Schneider (2003) explored views of 30 employed people with unspecified LD about the processes, experiences and received support at work through qualitative analysis. The authors highlighted issues around accessibility for obtaining consent and collecting data, in addition to data-validity concerns due to the presence of a supporter for YP during the interviews. These elements were helpful to consider for this study. Participant experiences of employment interviews included: moderate preparation for jobs but lack of on-the-job training, support from employment agencies, lack of choices and fewer decision-making opportunities in job selection, satisfaction with employment support, partial social integration, feeling valued at work and financial independence. These findings imply that SE processes need to ensure more opportunities for decision-making and greater on-the-job training. However, no interpretations were made about the applicability of these findings to individuals with different levels of LD.

2.3 Evaluations of Supported Employment Programmes for YP with SEND

2.3.1 Evaluations of supported internships. The DfE (2013) published the only evaluation of SIs in the UK. This longitudinal, mixed-method evaluation took place for 190 YP from 15 FE provisions. The methodology involved interviewing FE provision leads, employers, job coaches, parents and YP at different stages during the process, to identify the outcomes, procedures and cost-effectiveness of SIs. 36% of the interns gained paid employment as a result of this trial with others transitioning to voluntary employment (26%), FE (14%) or some left with no clear outcomes (25%); the latter considered as a notable limitation of the pathway. However, this limitation is accounted for by the current programme on offer by the focus LA as Mencap’s ‘Employ Me’ agenda promotes SIs as a pathway to further traineeships, apprenticeships or paid employment within the same umbrella.
Interns also developed employability skills such as time management, understanding formal work dress codes and personable skills such as self-esteem and confidence, consistent with Kaehne's (2014) findings about SE outcomes, explored below. Job matching and engaging with parents emerged as essential facets for the effectiveness of the SI trial. These processes were further explored in this study.

This trial failed to distinguish between the effectiveness of SI for YP with different SEND. The SEND Code of Practice’s (2015) LDD terminology was used in the findings despite YP with mild and moderate LD being included in the cohort. This makes it difficult to compare the findings to other research based on different forms of need.

Despite YP interviews being conducted, this publication did not elaborate on their perspectives about the most valuable or difficult aspects of transition to SIs. The voices of the FE provision leads, parents and employers were given more precedence, evident through several quotations and coherence of opinion presented.

The PfA (2019) team published results from a recent survey exploring the prominence of SIs across the UK. From the 90 post-16 institutions who responded, 82% offered SIs. The use of job coaches to support SIs was also highlighted (75%). Most importantly, over 50% of over 1000 YP who participated in SIs transitioned to some form of paid employment, reflecting an increase in employability outcomes from the DfE (2014b) research.

While these evaluations reflect the growing implementation of SIs across the nation, they also exhibit a gap in transition research documenting YP’s experiences specific to this stream of SE (Hanson et al., 2017). This sets the scene for further research within the SI domain; contributed to by this study.

2.3.2 Perspectives of YP with severe/complex LD and ASD of the Real Opportunities SE programme. This project was an SE programme by the government of Wales, supported by the European Social Fund Conversion and aimed at addressing gaps highlighted by research to support the transition of YP with severe/complex LD and ASD to adulthood, including employment (Beyer et al., 2016). The authors used a mixed-method approach, including interviewing 25 YP and their families about their SE experiences. YP's views indicated three themes including: practicality of work experience, being treated as adults, and socialisation.
opportunities. Families shared that SE helped enhance the YP's confidence, ability to meet new people and develop work discipline. A positive change in familial attitudes towards the YP's employability also emerged as an outcome of SE. However, familial expectations for paid employment remained low. Similar to Wistow and Schneider (2003), the research did not specify the differences in outcomes or experiences for people with severe/complex LD in comparison to ASD which limited the applicability of these perspectives to similar populations. There is a dearth of research considering experiences of YP with mild and moderate LD and ASD in the employment domain.

2.4 Facilitators of a successful transition to employment

Heslop, Mallett, Simons and Ward (2002) highlighted the five C’s of a successful transition experience for YP with LD, based on mixed-method research considering YP and parents’ views on the transition to adulthood. Their framework included: communication, coordination, comprehensiveness, continuity and choice, which will be linked to findings of this study in chapter five.

Parmenter (2011) published an international literature review based on employment factors, historical development and research for people with LD. This publication did not make distinctions between different LD needs. According to this review, the factors influencing inclusive SE for the LD population included:

- preparedness: vocational training, social and behavioural support;
- individualised financial support, e.g. availability of benefits in the SI programme; and
- school-to-work transition programmes.

Some characteristics of successful employment programmes described by the review most pertinent to this study included:

- support needs assessment: identifying social, emotional and behavioural needs and linked environmental modifications;
- person-centred planning;
- job coach support: training for job coaches based on systematic instruction was recommended by the DfE (2014b) in relation to SIs and is being implemented in the researcher’s focus LA. This could result in more consistent
provision of job coach support for YP accessing SIs, positively influence the process; and

- links with parents: parental attitudes, communication and support.

Within the UK national context, Hanson et al. (2017) published a review of best practice and outcome evidence for transition programmes for YP with SEND. This comprehensive paper outlined ten best practices for transition planning, outlined below.

**Table 1**

*Best Practices for Transition Programmes, based on Hanson et al. (2017, p.8)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taxonomy Categories</th>
<th>Best Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Inter-agency &amp; interdisciplinary collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme structures</td>
<td>Integrated schools, classrooms &amp; employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student development</td>
<td>Functional life skills curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community-based instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social &amp; personal skills development and training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Career vocational assessment &amp; education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business &amp; industry linkages with schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-focused planning</td>
<td>Development of individualised and comprehensive plans which include self-determination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>development, advocacy and input in transition planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Involvement</td>
<td>Parent/family involvement in planning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This document provides a structured, timely review of existing structures, i.e. legislation and practice in the UK while highlighting current gaps. There is also some comparison to international contexts which is useful in the comparison process. Interestingly, there is some mention of the importance of self-determination for YP with SEND in the UK, as this construct is usually considered within the US context.
2.4.1 The role of contextual support in transition to employment. Two sets of contextual variables are considered essential to and directly influencing YP with LD’s transition to employment, i.e. parents/carers and job coaches (Aston et al., 2005; Beyer et al., 2016; Parmenter, 2011).

Research into job coach perspectives on YP with LD’s transition was only briefly considered within this literature review, as the scope of this topic was beyond the RQs. Aston et al.’s (2005) longitudinal research illustrated the role of employers or friendly co-workers and societal attitudes as facilitative elements for employment transitions. Kilsby and Beyer’s (2002) research linking self-determination and SE demonstrated that YP with LD often looked up to job coaches’ perceptions of themselves to validate their abilities and limitations.

The role of family members is considered vital to the transition process, as they often constitute the most immediate form of support, influence and advocacy for the YP in decision-making. Research into the effectiveness and importance of parental involvement at the primary and secondary school stages is prominent within the literature (Goodall & Vorhaus, 2011), however, considerations of parental involvement at the post-16 level, especially in light of the recent SEND reforms is scarce, corresponding to parental concerns about the lack of support for YP with SEND at the post-16 level (Case, 2001).

In a recent study, Francis, Stride and Reed (2018) commented that two of the least researched areas in the transition literature include evidence-based practices for improving parental involvement and inter-agency collaboration at the post-school level, e.g. communication between FE provisions and parents. Their research looked at filling in the gaps in parental perceptions of their involvement in supporting YP with different SEND such as ASD, unspecified LD, and complex LD, however, the findings were presented together for all samples involved. The 26 parents that participated in the research reported the usefulness of several strategies to support YP with SEND’s transition to adulthood:

- Starting transition planning at primary and secondary school and identifying community resources and support;
- Maintaining high expectations for YP’s future which are not limited by their needs;
• Permitting choice and risk by facilitating YP independence in decision-making;
• Recognising family interdependence and involvement: no person exists in a vacuum and needs support to make decisions;
• Prioritising parent skill development and support through meeting other parents and thinking about how to promote parental growth mindset rather than dependency;
• Maximising use of technology to support and communicate with YP: and
• Promoting inclusion in education settings, socialisation and community.

Despite the research being US-based, the authors considered the relevance of international legislation (including the SEND Code of Practice, 2015) in promoting person-centred planning; contributing to its inclusion in this literature review.

Kaehne and Beyer (2011) in their qualitative exploration of 62 YP with unspecified LD, parents/carers and support staff, reported that parents’ and professionals, i.e. teachers and social care support staff had differing perspectives on the influence of transition support. Parents/carers noted the influence of positive employment experiences on familial relationships and attitudes, while staff focussed on the development of skill sets. The notion of families undergoing a period of transition themselves was discussed as an emerging finding in this article, but was not explored in depth. This was explored with parents in this study.

As part of the Valuing People (DoH, 2010) guidance, the Getting a Life programme was established from 2008-2011, similar to the ongoing PfA programme. Within that initiative, Kaehne and Beyer (2013) explored the experiences of five YP with mild and moderate LD, their families and employers of an SE experience through a peer support model, i.e. being supported by peers of their age without any SEND, as opposed to job coaches. The authors used a mixed-method approach involving activity data, family interviews and surveys with employers. The findings of this study could not provide support for the overall effectiveness of peer instruction in comparison to job coaching. However, parental views yielded findings linked to:

• transition planning: employment aspirations were not discussed for all YP during reviews or other processes;
• experiences of employment: importance of job matching, benefits of supported work experiences, differing opinions about the timing and duration of work placements; and
• outcomes of the peer support model: improved behaviour and social skills but concerns about developing work identity in a supported work environment.

Unlike other studies (Beyer & Kaehne, 2008; Beyer et al., 2016; DfE, 2014; Wistow & Schneider, 2003), this research did report the nature of participants' LD, i.e. three with mild LD, one with borderline LD and one with moderate LD. However, despite data being collected from the YP, their voices were not represented in the article. The authors cited that the quality of data was insufficient to highlight views and experiences in detail, affecting the validity of responses. Aldridge (2015) noted that this is a pragmatic element of the methodology of working with a vulnerable population such as LD. However, there could be some elements of the data from YP that could mesh with findings generated by parental and employer views to provide a more comprehensive picture of the findings, while acknowledging and discussing the limitations of the data's validity, similar to Wistow and Schneider (2003). This limitation contradicts the principles of participatory research and normalisation, as described in the article discussion, through a lack of representation of the YP's voices. Also, parents' and employers' views were stated to represent the views of the YP in many instances. This study aims to consider such difficulties and possible limitations in its research methodology.

2.4.2 The role of self-determination in transition to employment. One of the most prominent applications of psychological theory underpinning employment transition processes, especially in the US (Shogren, Wehmeyer, Palmer, Rifienbark, & Little, 2015) is self-determination. Hensel, Kroese and Rose (2007) explored the psychological factors associated with gaining employment for 60 people with mild and moderate LD and described motivation to be one of the most influential determinants of employment. Heller et al.'s (2011) review of self-determination across the lifespan noted that this construct was associated with several positive outcomes for people with LD such as employment, improved health and psychological well-being, better quality of life and greater independence. They also commented that YP on the
periphery of transition to adulthood who were more self-determined, exercised more involvement in the transition processes when compared to YP who had lower self-determination. The authors also noted that there was more research about self-determination for people with more severe LD in comparison to mild and moderate LD.

As noted earlier, there is limited research that explicitly outlines the principles of the ecological theory of self-determination. However, some studies have considered the role of contextual support in self-determination. Heller et al. (2011) commented that involvement of family/peers increased self-determination in people with more severe LD. Extending this finding, Curryer, Stancliffe and Dew's (2015) research on familial perspectives stated that there exists a continuum of support from people with LD's families in relation to self-determination. While some families work hard to promote the person's self-determination, others may take on a more protective role. The latter then becomes a barrier to the person's ability to make choices and exert control over their lives.

Shogren (2013) published a socio-ecological review of the existing self-determination literature, which included a framework of contextual factors based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) that influences the development of self-determination for people with SEND. Chapter five will consider current findings in light of this framework. The majority of research reviewed by Shogren (2013) were based in the US, with a sporadic mention of studies internationally, which did not include the UK. Shogren (2013) also noted the dearth of research on interventions to promote self-determination through contextual factors. Research often explores different contextual factors in isolation due to its complexity, and there is a need for comprehensive studies to consider the interaction between different factors involved in the development of self-determination.

Few UK-based studies have linked self-determination theory to transition processes. Kilsby and Beyer (2002) were amongst the few researchers who advocated for SE programmes as promoting people with LD’s capacity for self-determination through their research with 40 individuals with mild, borderline and moderate LD. The SE-based interventions involved 14 job coaches evaluating the development of self-determination characteristics through reflection with the
participants. Findings depicted overall reductions in job coach assistance and indicated the ability of the individuals with LD to increase self-determination through SE. The authors suggested that the validity of the results could be enhanced by allowing opportunities for the participants to express their opinions about the interventions. This suggestion forms the basis of the methodology of this study and is a critical element of a person-centred approach.

2.5 Barriers to an effective transition to employment

2.5.1 Limitations of SE models. The DfE (2014b) reported that SE programmes are often time-limited and tokenistic in nature, and remain ineffective in terms of securing employment or future pathways for participants, despite skill development.

2.5.1.1 Model fidelity. Kaehne (2014) placed importance on model fidelity, i.e. consistency as a barrier of SE models in the UK, where eclectic models are often used in practice or modifications made to existing models. The Project SEARCH model, a type of SE programme originating from Ohio, US, is growing in relevance and application in the UK (Kaehne, 2014). There were two national evaluations by Kaehne (2014) and Purvis et al. (2012) that explored the effectiveness of this approach by exploring YP's views. Kaehne (2014) reported that YP with moderate LD represented the maximum number of participants in their evaluation and an employment rate of 51.5% was achieved across all cohorts. Interns from four of 11 SE sites and families reported qualitative improvements in confidence and motivation, independence, decision-making, communication skills, health, socialisation and familial relationships. Some families reported challenges in accepting the YP's newfound independence, while other families described gaining freedom to focus on other duties as a result of positive employment experiences. Reported limitations of the Project SEARCH model included attitudes towards the programme, further explored below and concerns about benefits (Purvis et al., 2012), which have been addressed in the SI model. Most importantly, despite an in-depth exploration of YP with LD' and their families' views on the transition to employment, the authors did not offer any suggestions or ways to improve the experiences for the participants. This has been considered in this study and elaborated in chapter five.

2.5.2 Parental/Familial Attitudes. Findings emerging from many studies explored above indicate the influence of attitudes on transition experiences and future
aspirations. Scior (2011) suggested that societal attitudes towards people with LD often act as a barrier to an effective transition to adulthood, including employment, consistent with the social model of disability. Within this section, two elements of parental attitudes: of the YP, and towards professionals supporting the YP, will be explored as potential barriers to employment.

The continuum of parental expectations and support, explored in Curryer et al.’s (2015) and Kaehne’s (2014) research could be underpinned by parental attitudes. Traditionally, parents seem to be heavily involved in the decision-making processes regarding the YP. However, at the transition to adulthood stage, parents could find it difficult to come to terms with the YP’s independence, which may result in ‘over-protective’ attitudes, parental frustration and contrasting views about YP being considered as adults (Biswas, Tickle, Golijani-Moghaddam & Almack, 2017; Bowey & McLaughlin, 2006; Kessissoglu, 2000).

Also linked to parental attitudes is the notion of hopes and expectations from the YP’s future. Henninger and Taylor (2014) explored the views of 198 parents of people with SEND (mostly ASD and LD) about their transition to adulthood based in the US, through an online survey with open and closed-ended questions. The authors of the research argued that traditionally, parental aspirations focussed on the developmental tasks of adulthood such as employment, independence or relationships. However, their research reflected on more comprehensive goals from parents, as follows:

- Having an occupation or functional role in society
- Moving out of home
- Relationships with peers/romantic relationships/starting a family
- Skills required for daily functioning
- Continuing academic or intellectual pursuits
- Independence/Independence with support
- Constructive relationship with community
- Accessibility and transportation
- Psychological well-being
- Physical health and safety
While the research included views of parents of people across many age ranges with LD and ASD, the findings were not classified by any criteria or age groups. It may have been valuable to compare parental aspirations with those of their children, as suggested by Scior (2011). This will be addressed by this study through RQ1 in chapter five.

A finding from McTier, Macdougall, McGregor, Hirst and Rinne’s research (2016) suggested that some parents may have low expectations of their children’s work abilities. This, in turn, may become a self-fulfilling prophecy when these expectations are internalised by YP. It is also not uncommon for parents of YP with LD and ASD to use ‘normative standards’ derived from peers of similar age to set goals and ambitions for YP. Depending on YP’s unique characteristics, needs and preferences, such expectations may result in some psychological adjustment (Biswas et al., 2017; Sosnowy, Silverman & Shattuck, 2018).

Brown (2016) and Todd and Jones (2005) considered that mothers of YP with SEND could be undergoing midlife transitions during the YP’s transition to adulthood, making the process more complex. However, they highlighted gaps in research considering paternal views and longitudinal studies considering parental perspectives across the lifespan of YP’s needs. Research linked to non-finite loss during the transition to adulthood process is also outdated and linked to people with more severe difficulties, rather than mild and moderate LD (Biswas et al., 2017; Bruce, Schultz, Smyrnios & Schultz, 1994).

Within the research literature, there is some consideration of parents of YP with SEND expressing dissatisfaction with professionals due to differences in opinions or lack of communication between home and provision (Case, 2001; Hanson et al., 2017). Although, there is a dearth of research that has explored this interaction explicitly.

Overall, it could be considered that while parental involvement in transition is considered as part of best practice, this could be complicated by parents finding the transition process difficult.

2.5.3 Mental health and well-being. There is a dearth of high-quality literature that explores the impact of the transition to adulthood on YP with LD’s (including ASD,
considering co-morbidity of needs) mental health and well-being (Allcock, 2018; Young-Southward, Philo & Cooper, 2017). Austin, Hunter, Gallagher and Campbell (2018) argued that mental health concerns in YP with LD are often underdiagnosed and attributed to their LD. Their Australia-based research explored the experiences of YP with mild, borderline and moderate LD. Findings suggested that: a) YP with LD experience greater mental health difficulties such as anxiety and depression than other peers of their age; b) insight (into their self and emotional well-being) and maladaptive coping mechanisms predict anxiety and depression for YP with LD.

Biggs and Carter’s (2016) research into parental views of YP with LD and ASD about mental health, suggested that the domains of social support/peers and psychological well-being were of most concern to parents, especially of those YP with ASD. Similar findings were echoed by Crane, Adams, Harper, Welch and Pellicano (2019) through a mixed-method, participatory research based in the UK. Their research indicated that over 80% of the 130 YP experienced mental health problems at the transition to adulthood stage.

Overall, the literature indicates the prominence of mental health needs for YP with LD and ASD. However, this may be of greater concern for the ASD population.

2.6 Summary of research literature

Existing research has demonstrated that SE principles are underpinned by the processes and outcomes of self-determination, independence, financial motivation, person-centred planning, decision-making and social inclusion for people with LD, as cited by people accessing SE, their families and job coaches/employers (Hunter & Ridley, 2007; Kaehne, 2014; Parmenter, 2001; Skellern & Astbury, 2014).

Other distinct elements linked to YP’s transition to adulthood in relation to parental/familial involvement/views which emerged from past research included: adaptation/adjustment to YP’s emerging independence, differing expectations of YP’s abilities due to their SEND, normative comparisons with other YP, some indication of parental transition to midlife during YP with SEND’s transition to adulthood and elements of the parent-professional relationship at the post-16 level (Biswas et al., 2017; Brown, 2016; Case, 2001; Hanson et al., 2017; Kessissoglou, 2000).
Most importantly, there exists a gap in national (UK-based) research exploring concepts of employment transition for YP with mild and moderate LD. Much of the literature based on YP and parental views is dependent on programmes and evaluations based in the US (Francis et al., 2018; Hensel et al., 2007; Shogren, 2013), which limits generalisability and relevance to the UK context. Hanson et al. (2017, p.22) summarised this issue succinctly: "the evidence base is too reliant on evidence from the USA. It is necessary to build a strong culture of research and evaluation of SEND transition programmes in England."

Much of the national research considering both YP and parental perspectives has been conducted as a consequence of the Valuing People white paper (DoH, 2001; Kaehne & Beyer, 2013; Swan & Newton, 2005; Wistow & Schneider, 2003) and is outdated, considering recent legislative changes in provision. Since then, there has been a paucity of research to highlight the voices of YP with LD and their parents/families. Heslop et al. (2002) stated that existing research has considered employment transitions at a post-secondary level, rather than a post-FE outcome. The latter seems a more relevant strategy after the SEND reforms. As Case (2001) noted earlier, parental involvement in research is less evident at the post-16 level, as opposed to during primary or secondary school stages, despite parents/families being recognised as significant factors of support during the transition to adulthood stage (Francis et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, Melling, Beyer and Kilsby (2011) argued that significant developments in policy and guidelines have not translated into better employment outcomes for people with LD. It is suggested that existing research indicates a developing understanding of ‘what works’ in terms of transition to employment. However, UK-based research predominantly consists of grey literature, i.e. factsheets, guides, etc. than empirical studies (Cerebra, 2018; Hardie & Brooks, 2009; NICE, 2018).

Emerging trends in SE pathways, for instance, through the SI programme (DfE, 2014) do seem to take into consideration the limitations highlighted by existing research. However, such research has largely been outcome-focussed (DfE, 2014; Kaehne & Beyer, 2013). The voice of YP with LD is still underrepresented within the research domain, which is contradictory considering the importance of advocacy for
people with LD within the SE process. The implementation-research gap for SI programmes provides a rationale for further research in this area. This paucity of research and associated research methodologies suggest that the voice of YP is not at the heart of the research or, perhaps, the planning process, which indicates a lack of a person-centred approach to planning (DoH, 2001). Most of the research explored above has sought YP views as a supplement to quantitative measures completed by families, job coaches or their perspectives, which does not fit with a participatory research approach.

However, considering contextual influences on transition is equally important; past research has explored parental/familial views alongside/separate to YP’s views in relation to transition and employment to a certain extent (Beyer et al., 2016; Curryer et al., 2015; Henninger & Taylor, 2014; Kaehne & Beyer, 2011). However, similarities or differences in parental aspirations/views versus that of YP have not been openly acknowledged or compared by such research, as suggested by Scior (2011). The RQs of the current study set the ground for such comparisons to be made in the discussion chapter.

Specific research studies exploring the experiences of YP with mild and moderate LD or other difficulties is scarce, with most existing research focussing on LD or SEND as an overall construct (Beyer et al., 2016; Biggs & Carter, 2016; Kaehne & Beyer, 2011; Wistow & Schneider, 2003). This emphasis on research for the specific sample of YP with mild and moderate LD is driven by an understanding that the needs of people with mild or severe LD may be different to one another and effectiveness of transition programmes may depend on severity or nature of difficulty (Hanson et al., 2017). This discrepancy may have direct implications and relevance to practice. The National Audit Office (2011) illustrated the importance of having comparable data on the nature of difficulties and life outcomes to better understand the effectiveness of transition interventions for YP with SEND. This argument could be attributed to academics considering LD as a broad continuum, rather than different types of difficulties. This approach has its merits and limitations as addressed in chapter one.

Most studies explored within this section have not included a theoretical framework to help assimilate or ground their findings in theory (DfE, 2014; Kaehne & Beyer, 2014; Wistow & Schneider, 2003). Also of note is a lack of methodological detail in most
research studies, with the possible exception of Wistow and Schneider (2003). Ryan, Coughlan and Cronin (2007) argue that this is a common characteristic of qualitative or mixed-method research. It could be that such details may not be included due to publication constraints. However, this does not undermine the importance of such considerations for readers or future researchers.

In conclusion, this literature review represented a broad overview of existing research, which will be linked to the findings of this study in chapter five.

Chapter three will outline the research design and methodology.
Methodology

This chapter will describe the researcher’s perspectives about the world and this study, followed by an outline of the research process and rationale for associated methodological decisions. The chapter concludes with a reflection on some ethical dilemmas and a discussion of the potential rigour and trustworthiness of this study.

3.1 Philosophical and Psychological Approach

3.1.1 Social constructionism. Braun and Clarke (2013) refer to social constructionism as a broad framework that posits an understanding of the nature of reality, i.e. ontology and how knowledge is created and maintained, i.e. epistemology, that is different to positivism or realism. Social constructionism deems that reality is constructed through social processes such as language and interaction, influenced by cultural values and historical contexts and that there are no objective truths. This philosophy is accepting of shared meanings and the subjective nature of truth that is based on multiple perspectives (Burr, 2003). This stance is consistent with the social model of disability which views disability as a product of societal discourses and norms (Anastasiou & Kauffman, 2011) and can also be drawn upon when reflecting on the complex notion of MLD.

The researcher assumes a stance of curiosity and seeks to explore the complexity of participants’ experiences through discussion and visual methods using an inductive approach (Creswell, 2014). This stance is consistent with the researcher’s dual role of researcher and practitioner. Within this study, the researcher accepts that transition is constructed through participants’ subjective perceptions of their experiences and that the researcher may have certain influences in interpreting them.

3.1.2 Participatory and emancipatory approach to research. Walmsley (2001) used the term inclusive research to refer to participatory and emancipatory research. The participatory approach is both an inclusive and ideological perspective as well as a range of methods to enhance the active participation of people with LD within the research paradigm (Aldridge, 2015). This approach is based on the rights of children until 18 years of age, recognised by The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), advocating for children to have their say in all matters important to them and for their voices to be taken seriously (Groundwater-Smith, Dockett & Bottrell, 2016).
It is also influenced by normalisation: providing people with disabilities with everyday opportunities and experiences (Walmsley, 2001) such as employment experiences. Aldridge (2007) argued that while the influence of the social model of disability was apparent in the way LD was perceived in recent times, the challenge remained in the domain of research ethics. People with LD were still being asked to participate in research which was not inclusive or did not use participatory methods.

Within this study, efforts were made to enhance YP’s participation through the use of creative data-collection methods which provided them with choices to direct the interview in ways important to them. However, this study is limited in terms of incorporating a participatory approach throughout the research process. Participatory claims are more applicable to the research ideology: keeping the participants' voices at the core and enhancing their participation in decision-making processes. These aims could also be considered emancipatory, i.e. having a meaningful, practical outcome or direct implications for a vulnerable population (Traina, 2016), as explored in chapter five. Emancipatory research is also linked to highlighting personal experiences within the environmental context of the sample. This is consistent with the bioecological notion underpinning this study and sets the tone for the research methodology described in this section. This study also adopts a notion of advocacy, rather than objectivity, another key characteristic of participatory and emancipatory research (Klára, 2014). Participatory and emancipatory research fits in well with a social constructionist stance (Karnilowicza, Ali & Phillimore, 2014).

3.1.3 Person-centred research. A person-centred perspective stems from keeping the individual at the heart of any process, advocated by the SEND Code of Practice (2015) through an emphasis on the participation of YP and their parents in decision-making which includes the transition to adulthood. This psychological approach is closely aligned with participatory research (Haselberger & Hutterer, 2013) and is reflective of the researcher’s professional practice. The research aims and methodology are significantly influenced by this non-directive, empathetic approach that seeks to empower and motivate participants to voice their views about the RQs.
3.2 Research Design

3.2.1 Qualitative methodology. Research questions were addressed via a qualitative research design, which emphasises the study of a phenomenon from the perspectives of the people experiencing it (Lapan, Quartaroli & Riemer, 2011). Qualitative methodology is considered a suitable design for exploratory research through the use of open-ended data-collection methods. These elicit rich data from participants which can be further explored and interpreted by the researcher (Mack, 2005).

3.2.2 Case-study approach. A qualitative case-study design was adopted. Yin (2014, p.16) defined a case-study as, “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon, i.e. the case in-depth and within its real-world context.” In this study, a case included a YP and their parent.

The use of this approach emerged from the research aims, which are linked to exploring and highlighting the transition experiences of the participants using an in-depth, idiographic approach. The researcher aimed to understand the facilitators and barriers involved in YP’s transition to employment. This forms the basis for what Yin (2003) describes as getting from ‘here to there’, i.e. research aims and conclusions.

Yin (2003, cited in Baxter & Jack, 2008, p.545) provided several criteria for considering the use of case-studies: “a) the focus of the study is to answer ‘how’, ‘what’ and ‘why’ questions; b) you cannot manipulate the behaviour of those involved in the study; c) you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study; or d) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context”. Most of these conditions apply to this study, except for the last criterion: a) the RQs seek to uncover exploratory and explanatory mechanisms promoting YP's transition; b) the researcher is involved in exploring existing phenomena; and c) understanding contextual factors involved in YP’s transition to employment is linked to the theoretical underpinnings of this study.

The qualitative case-study method is widely-used within the social sciences (Burton, 2000) and with the LD population (Ghesquière, Maes & Vandenberghe, 2004; Nath, 2005), despite which there exist several concerns related to its use (Hartley, 2004; Yin, 2009). These include but are not limited to: a) lack of rigour, b) difficulties
in the generalisability of results, c) ambiguity of researcher skills involved in conducting a case-study; and d) time involved in conducting a case-study analysis and complex presentation of data. These possible limitations were acknowledged and addressed as follows.

As previously noted, there is widespread consensus about the heterogeneity of people with LD (Grünke & Morrison-Cavendish, 2016). Hence, a multiple case-study approach was used to highlight the individuality of participants/cases (through a within-case analysis – see Appendix J) while being able to address any commonalities or differences between them (through a cross-case analysis – see Findings chapter).

There were two sources of evidence within each case, i.e. YP and parent. The participants (see section 3.4 for a more detailed description of participants) formed a unit of analysis, i.e. separate case, as opposed to the LA or FE provisions. This within-case analysis was followed by a cross-case analysis in order to identify recurring themes across cases (Creswell, 2013).

The participant as case and multiple case-studies were chosen as this study seeks to promote an element of transferability (not generalisability) through its analysis and research findings. According to Jensen (2008, p.886), transferability of qualitative research implies that the research findings 'can be transferred to other contexts and situations beyond the scope of the study context’. The researcher must provide a rich description of the context and research design for readers to be able to make decisions about the applicability of the findings to their context. Such values are embedded within this chapter.

3.3 Context of the sample

This study was conducted in an Inner-London borough where the researcher worked as a trainee EP for two years. Through discussions with the LA’s special educational needs (SEN) department and the 14-25 Transition Operations team, a list of FE provisions in the LA participating in the SI programme in 2018-2019 was obtained. The researcher identified three FE provisions based on the following criteria: a) provisions who were offering SIs to the largest number of YP; and b) provisions who catered to YP with the profile of needs matching the inclusion criteria of this study (section 3.4.2). It was preferred that one of these would be a participating provision
within the past year's SI programme offered through the LA (2017-2018), which supported the facilitation of a pilot study (section 3.5.1.2).

The researcher then arranged meetings with the FE leads of each setting to seek consent for participation (see Appendix B for FE information sheet and consent form). Participants linked to two provisions took part in this study:

1. VOC* is a charity that provides vocational training to YP from 16-25 years of age who may have additional needs or experienced difficulties within other educational provisions. YP spend up to three years developing their skills in different vocational interests such as retail, horticulture, and floristry through various qualifications. YP also work on enhancing their functional and employability skills. VOC hosts several internal work placements as they have an on-site green space and kitchen. The latter is used to cater for external events that take place in VOC’s conference facilities hired out for professionals. This is the second year that VOC offered SIs to its pupils.

2. The NR college* is a recently established, special FE provision for YP from 19-25 years of age, linked to a secondary school for YP with complex learning difficulties/disabilities. The provision supports pupils with Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD). A Skills for Life curriculum is followed with an emphasis on employment and supported living opportunities that enable YP to prepare for adulthood after leaving the provision. This year was the provision’s first foray into SIs.

*Provision names have been changed to ensure anonymity.

3.4 Participants

There were two groups of participants in this study: a) YP with mild and moderate LD; and b) their parents. The term ‘YP’ as opposed to ‘young adults’ or ‘adults with LD’ is used throughout this study as this reflects the terminology used in educational provisions and the SEND Code of Practice (2015), to refer to people from 16-25 years of age who may be receiving support from the LA through an EHCP.

Collecting data from different participants, i.e. YP and parents involves an element of data triangulation, which is a means to strengthen the validity of research design and explore more contextual factors (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe &
Eliciting parent voices is considered as a means to approach the RQs from another perspective to arrive at consistency across different data sources. However, perspectives of the job coaches supporting YP during the SI or placement providers were not considered in this study. The literature review provides evidence of the documentation of these perspectives within the research domain. Also, considering additional perspectives would not have fit in with the research timeline and scope of the RQs.

3.4.1 Sampling and recruitment. After gaining consent from FE provisions, a discussion was arranged with provision leads around YP who may match the research inclusion criteria, and potential participants were identified anonymously. There emerged an ethical consideration linked to the newly implemented General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) guidelines at this stage (section 3.7.2). YP were then approached to take part in the research. Only parents of those YP who provided written consent to participate were further invited to take part (see Appendix C for YP and parent information sheets and consent forms).

Selection of participants with mild and moderate LD, accessing an SI for the first time entailed the use of a purposive (selective) sampling strategy. A practical consideration of people with LD is the individual differences in their profile of strengths and needs, for instance, through research and practical experience, the researcher recognised that YP with LD may have additional (co-morbid) needs such as ASD, Down Syndrome or speech, language and communication (SLCN) difficulties (Bourke et al., 2016), making it challenging to use homogeneous sampling criteria. Therefore, a maximum variation or heterogeneous purposive sampling technique was employed to suit this complex and variable population, which is often used in exploratory research designs (Emmel, 2013). The recognition of the potential diversity of participants led the researcher to incorporate comprehensive and diverse inclusion criteria for YP participating in this research, based on notions of adaptive functioning (see section 3.4.2 below). No sampling criteria were applied to the parent group of participants.

Following this process, five YP and their parents, totalling 10 participants, were recruited to participate in this study. As mentioned earlier, each YP and their parent formed one case-study. The participant sample size and number of case-studies were
deliberately kept small; this was in order to provide adequate emphasis on multiple case-studies within the research timeframe and to consider the possibility of adding a longitudinal data-collection element to the research (section 3.5.1.1).

3.4.2 Inclusion criteria and its applicability to this study. The following criteria were incorporated during the sampling and recruitment process and discussed with FE provision leads, following consideration of issues and challenges in the identification of YP with mild and moderate LD within the focus LA:

- a finalised EHCP with one of the primary areas of need including cognition and learning and profile of needs consistent with the classification of mild and moderate LD. This may be evident either through: a) a professional report that outlines the YP’s IQ as below 70 or two standard deviations below the mean or between the 1st and 2nd percentile on scores of overall cognitive functioning; or b) attendance of a provision designated for CYP with mild and moderate LD; and

- difficulties with adaptive functioning that are similar to those mentioned by the DSM-5 in relation to mild and moderate LD. This may be evident through needs mentioned within the Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) or Independence and Community Involvement sections of the YP’s EHCP. The latter section is a prerequisite within the focus LA's EHCPs. In practice, this was the primary/principle criterion used for participant sampling in this study, as recognising difficulties in YP’s functional skills allowed for a diversity in participant needs (potential co-morbidity), yet assuring the researcher that the YP’s profile of needs met that of a person with mild and moderate LD. In the researcher’s opinion, this was successfully fulfilled for all five YP in this study.

The case summaries in Appendix D include more information about each YP’s profile of needs. The first criterion regarding cognition and learning was more difficult to consider due to several reasons, including the growing use of dynamic or curriculum-based assessment within the LA which do not provide any standardised scores for comparison. Also, at the stage of transfer from SEN statements to EHCPs, many YP did not receive updated assessments. While the researcher did use some information from previous reports, these may not have been very relevant to the YP’s current difficulties.
Hence, when faced by a lack of evidence or uncertainty towards fulfilling the more formal first criterion, the researcher discussed YP’s needs with the staff working with them, using the definitions based on adaptive functioning (functional skills in everyday life) for mild and moderate LD mentioned earlier in section 1.3.1 – the FE staff members were able to engage/weigh this practical criterion for YP. It could be said that adaptive functioning was considered a more important inclusion criterion rather than a classification/diagnosis.

Typical of the profile of YP with mild and moderate LD, there was a significant overlap, i.e. co-morbidity of needs observed in the five YP, especially in terms of ASD and LD, which could be accommodated due to the breadth and diversity of the second criterion. This consideration of YP with diverse needs could be considered as a function of real-world research.
3.4.3 Participants’ information. Table 2 below presents participants’ contextual information. Further descriptions of YP’s placement history and activities are in Appendix D. No contextual information about the parents was sought during the interviews. The following information was obtained directly from the participants.

Table 2  
*Contextual Information of Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of YP</th>
<th>YP’s age</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Areas of need from EHCP</th>
<th>SI activities</th>
<th>Name of parent</th>
<th>Relationship with parent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natalia</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Bangladeshi</td>
<td>ASD, anxiety</td>
<td>Floristry, catering, exploring different jobs</td>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chloe</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>White-British</td>
<td>MLD, mild hearing impairment</td>
<td>Gardening, retail</td>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Black-African</td>
<td>ASD, pragmatic language difficulties</td>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>Beatrice</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Black-African</td>
<td>Receptive and expressive language difficulties</td>
<td>Retail, gardening, exploring different jobs</td>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob*</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>White-British</td>
<td>ASD, dyspraxia and mental health needs (anxiety and depression)</td>
<td>Carpentry, gardening, maintenance, administration</td>
<td>Alexandra</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Names of participants have been changed to ensure anonymity.*

*All participants attended the VOC provision, except for Bob who attended the NR college.*
3.5 Data Collection

Data-collection involved the use of two methods:

3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews. Open-ended, semi-structured interview questions were aimed at encouraging participants to construct, interpret and describe their knowledge of situations, a characteristic of constructionist research. The flexibility of such interviews was the rationale for selecting this method, allowing the researcher to provide extra prompts or time to explore certain participant narratives (Lapan et al., 2011). Interview schedules were derived from a combination of existing research (Holwerda, van der Klink, de Boer, Groothoff, & Brouwer, 2013), theories linked to people with LD’s transition to employment such as self-determination theory and qualitative themes regarding transition to employment that were discussed in initial visits with the Transition Operations team at the LA and the FE provisions.

3.5.1.1 Interview procedures. Data-collection was carried out at three time-points in relation to the SI process, denoted as T1, T2 and T3. A longitudinal data-collection process provided an opportunity to conduct a more in-depth exploration of participants’ experiences than a cross-sectional approach, enabled greater comparability amongst participant data, and added to the robustness of data that enabled a more rigorous analysis. Carduff, Murray and Kendall (2015) stated that longitudinal qualitative research is useful to explore changes within the boundary of a certain context and that such changes may be reflective of development in participants’ narratives or experiences that emerge over time, both of which could apply to the participants in this study.

Interviews at T1 were carried out before the beginning of the SI during the summer of 2018 when the purpose of the interview was to explore hopes, aspirations, features of transition planning and any concerns. Interviews at T2 were carried out at the beginning of the SI during September 2018 when initial impressions about the SI and any immediate challenges or highlights were sought. Interviews at T3 were conducted almost midway through the SI in December 2018. At this point, in addition to exploring current experiences, participants were asked to reflect on their initial expectations from the SI (T1).
The question themes explored during T2 and T3 were influenced by narratives emerging from T1. Hence, T2/T3 interview schedules were designed after transcription and coding of the previous set of transcripts from T1.

An ideal scenario may have been to conduct T3 interviews towards the end of the SI in Spring/Summer 2019. However, the timeframe did not match the boundaries permitted for the analysis and submission of the thesis. The current data-collection strategy is sufficient to answer the RQs, which are based on hopes and transitions and not outcomes of the SI.

The research design allowed for 30 interviews to take place (see Figure 4). According to Braun and Clarke (2013), 20 interviews or more is sufficient for a large-scale, doctorate thematic analysis project.

Each interview was conducted on a one-to-one basis with every participant within their FE provision to ensure familiarity. To help make the interview questions more accessible for YP, the use of PowerPoint presentations involving icons of the question
themes as prompts was utilised (see Appendix E), based on the recommendations by Mencap (2008). Interviews with participants lasted between 15-45 minutes.

A sample question from the YP’s interview schedules (see Appendix F) is: “What do you think you will find difficult on the internship? What do you think will be the most interesting part of working at __________?”

A sample question from the interview schedules for the parent (see Appendix G) is: “How is (YP) currently being supported for the internship? What would help in making the transition process easier or better for you and (YP)?”

At the end of each interview, the researcher included a verbal member-checking process as part of debriefing. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed orthographically (verbatim), as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2013) by the researcher for analysis.

3.5.1.2 Pilot interviews. The aims of the pilot study were derived from Breakwell, Hammond, Fife-Schaw and Smith’s (2006) recommendations, which included: a) assessing whether the explanation of the interview is understood by all participants; b) checking the degree to which specific questions can be easily perceived by them; c) making the necessary amendments that arise from the pilot feedback; d) testing whether the participants engage easily with the interview process; and e) evaluating whether the responding answers are the desired ones. The last aim was not relevant to this study and therefore, discarded from the pilot process.

A pilot of the T1 interview schedule was conducted in the summer term with a YP named Clara and her parent, Samantha from VOC. Clara was at the last stage of her SI from the previous year, i.e. 2017-2018 at the time of the pilot. The pilot questionnaire for Clara and Samantha had to be slightly modified to make it more retrospective. The decision to involve a YP accessing the previous year’s SI and their parent was influenced by several factors. This was appropriate in terms of the research timeline, as the LA was still finalising the logistics, i.e. funding and placement providers during the pilot study timeframe and new SIs were not accessible to the researcher at this time. A previous intern provided a more comprehensive and retrospective account of their experiences, including the comparison between initial expectations versus actual experiences. Some questions from the follow-up
interviews (T2 and T3) were also piloted at this stage. Access to limited participants meant that including a participant from the actual participant group for pilot purposes could have negatively affected the sample size of this study. However, the chosen type of pilot may have posed certain limitations to the process, addressed in ways indicated in the ethics form (see Appendix H). No changes to any of the parent forms or interview schedules were deemed to be required after the parent pilot interview.

Due to an ethical consideration which may have affected the validity of Clara’s pilot interview, i.e. her job coach joining the interview halfway through the process, a second pilot interview was conducted with another existing intern, Raymond. As an outcome of this second pilot interview, minor additions to some of the question prompts were made.

3.5.2 Photo-elicitation. This was used as a secondary data-collection method to support the semi-structured interviews (only T2 and T3) with the YP. This method involved asking YP to bring pictures of themselves at work or related to any aspect of the SI to the interviews. These pictures acted as valuable prompts for discussion and facilitated increased participation and engagement in the research.

Photo-elicitation is a method of collecting data that involves the use of visual material to elicit responses from participants through invoking memories (Epstein, Stevens, McKeever & Baruchel, 2006). This method has gained popularity within the participatory research domain and is being increasingly used with vulnerable populations such as CYP with LD (Aldridge, 2007).

The decision to include photo-elicitation was guided by its success highlighted by existing research (Aldridge, 2007; Epstein et al., 2006; Leonard & McKnight, 2015) and discussions with staff members at VOC and the NR college about making the research more meaningful and accessible for YP. Some ethical considerations needed to be considered regarding the use and storage of photos, linked to confidentiality (see Appendix H).

Before the interviews, the researcher sent some prompts (see Appendix I) to the YP, job coaches and provision leads, for YP to take pictures of themselves or interesting/preferred/difficult aspects of the SI and bring to the interviews. All YP
except Bob (during T2) chose to engage with this process. Some YP needed reminders on the day by the FE staff to do so.

This additional data collection method is consistent with the constructionist approach adopted in this study. Photo-elicitation provided YP with a more accessible opportunity within the semi-structured interviews to expand on their constructions of the internship experiences in a way that did not limit their responses (Bates, McCann, Kaye & Taylor, 2017). Rose (2016) commented that ‘the visual is central to the cultural construction of social life in contemporary western societies’ (p.6). Photo-elicitation is also consistent with a person-centred approach, as YP had the choice to share any photographs or share as much or little about them as they wanted.

3.6 Analysis

The data collected via semi-structured interviews was analysed using thematic analysis (see Table 3), as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis compliments the aims of exploratory research and has also been used to analyse data obtained from photo-elicitation (Smith, Mccullough, Critchlow & Luke, 2017). This technique provides a flexible, yet structured framework that allows for its use within research with different philosophical orientations and data-collection methods. The flexibility offered by thematic analysis was appropriate to the within-and cross-case design of this study. All interviews were coded and analysed for each case, i.e. YP and parent after each time-point, as part of a within-case analysis for each case-study.

The within-case analyses (see Appendix J for a thematic table of within-case analyses for each case-study) resulted in the development of common/recurrent themes for each case of a YP and their parent.

Hence, to reduce duplication, highlight individual experiences within recurrent themes and promote transferability of findings, a cross-case analysis for both YP and parents was further conducted, i.e. searching for common themes across all YP and all parents. This resulted in the generation of overarching themes for both sets of participants (see Appendix K). These overarching themes which formed the cross-case analysis are further described in chapter four. The cross-case analysis was then divided into the relevant RQ’s in chapter five.
Prior to selecting thematic analysis as the method of analysis, other approaches were considered. Since the pictures shared by YP were only used as prompts to elicit views on the SI, a separate analysis for the photo-elicitation method, e.g. content analysis was not undertaken.

The use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was also considered, however, this approach was not consistent with the case-study methodology of this study and may have been suitable if the participant group had only one unit, e.g. either YP or parents. IPA requires extended responses from participants to make sense of their experiences, which could have been difficult considering some YP’s communication difficulties. Also, IPA would not have been a feasible method to analyse an extended number of interviews, (i.e. 30 for this study) within the research timeframe due to the in-depth coding strategies involved.

Another method of analysis considered but not chosen included grounded theory (GT). The rationale for this methodological decision is that GT did not match with the RQs of this study, i.e. they were not aimed at understanding the social processes or generating theoretical, explanatory models for the transition to employment processes.
### Table 3

**Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and their operationalisation within this study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Links to current study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Familiarising yourself with your data</td>
<td>Transcribing, reading and re-reading interviews, noting down initial ideas.</td>
<td>After transcription, the researcher read each transcript twice and made initial notes, which included: a) general information about the YP which were not included in the analysis but in the case summaries; and b) initial impressions, e.g. questions and assumptions about the data that also incorporated the researcher’s reflections during the interview process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Generating initial codes</td>
<td>Coding interesting features of the transcripts in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating evidence relevant to each code.</td>
<td>All 30 transcripts were coded through a combination of <em>semantic</em>, i.e. based on surface-level meanings of data and <em>latent</em> codes, i.e. involving a level of interpretation, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). Extracts were coded for meaning, i.e. a code could be a phrase, sentence or paragraph, rather than using a line-by-line approach. The coding process was inductive, i.e. data-driven, rather than the use of a theoretical framework. See Appendix L for sample coded transcripts for a YP and parent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Searching for themes</td>
<td>Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.</td>
<td>After coding, the researcher generated sub-themes and candidate themes for each case-study, i.e. each YP and parent by searching for patterns involving similarities or differences in each participant’s narratives. Similar to phase 2 of thematic analysis, there was a combination of semantic and latent candidate themes that were generated from the data. A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development is also similar to that described by Eредay and Muir-Cochrane (2006). The researcher then looked for patterns.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Reviewing themes  
Checking if the themes work with the coded extracts (level 1) and the entire data set (level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.  
The over-arching themes from the integrative analysis were linked back to the transcripts and the initial impressions about the data from phase 1. Any overlap between subthemes or themes was clarified at this stage.

5. Defining and naming themes  
Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.  
Theme boundaries were established, and the researcher chose concise theme names due to the large volume of data encapsulated within them.

6. Producing the report  
The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back to the analysis of the research question and literature, producing a report of the analysis.  
Themes were evidenced in chapter four and interpreted in relation to the RQs in chapter five.

The researcher moved between the use of a computer-assisted-qualitative-data-analysis-software (CAQDAS), i.e. NVivo during coding (phase 2) to completing the rest of the steps through a manual process. The thematic analysis did not adhere to a strictly linear framework but was a recursive process. At each stage of the analysis, the researcher endeavoured to adhere to the 15-point checklist of criteria for good thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
3.7 Ethical considerations

This study was granted ethical approval by the Research Ethics Committee at the UCL Institute of Education through an application (see Appendix H) including ethical considerations, following the BPS’ Code of Human Research Ethics (2014) and Code of Ethics and Conduct (2018). Prior to this, a data protection number was obtained from the UCL Data Protection Office. The researcher also obtained an enhanced check from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) for working with vulnerable children and adults.

The researcher referred to Mencap’s (2002, 2008) guidelines on accessible writing and communicating with people with a learning disability, and Nind’s (2008) review of methodological challenges of conducting qualitative research with people with LD to inform overall methodological decisions.

The ethics application included extended considerations of safeguarding, accessibility, informed consent and confidentiality and privacy. The following section involves a summary of some unanticipated or prominent considerations.

3.7.1 Accessibility. The use of diverse methods such as technology and pictures was used to promote accessibility of the consent and data-collection procedures, i.e. within the information sheets and consent forms, use of PowerPoint presentations and photo-elicitation during interviews.

3.7.2 Sampling and recruitment. There emerged two dilemmas during the recruitment of FE provisions and participants for this study. One of the LA’s primary FE provision (supporting YP with mild and moderate LD) who provided consent had to be ruled out from participating in this study as they were unable to facilitate the SI by the beginning of the academic year (September 2018) and postponed the process by a term, which did not fit in with the data-collection timeline. This may have possibly limited the pool of participants accessible for this study.

Concerning participant recruitment, the researcher had to gain verbal consent from provisions and participants to access the latter’s reports and EHCPs for checking against the inclusion criteria of this study, before formally asking participants for consent to participate in the research. This additional step was related to the recently established GDPR guidelines.
3.7.3 Informed consent. According to the Mental Capacity Act (DCA, 2005), it was assumed that every participant, including YP with mild and moderate LD, can provide consent to participate in this study unless the opposite was demonstrated. Consent was considered as an ongoing process rather than a one-off event. Verbal consent was sought from all participants before each interview, defined by Ellis (2007) as process consent. The researcher's own experience within the post-16 domain and further training added another element of reliability to any considerations that may have to be made regarding mental capacity and consent from the participants. The researcher was aware of a possible positive bias for consent which may occur due to the dual role of researcher and trainee educational psychologist (TEP). This was mitigated by approaching provisions in which the researcher had not worked previously, in addition to not wearing the LA identification badge when meeting participants.

For photo-elicitaiton, YP were asked to use the electronic devices available at the FE provisions. This provided a dual layer of consent, i.e. general photographic consent obtained by provisions from YP and parents and specific consent obtained for this study. This strategy limited the use of hard copies of the photographs, and no photographs were retained by the researcher after the interview, ensuring the confidentiality and privacy of the participants, further explored below.

3.7.4 Presence of job coach. As previously indicated, the ethical considerations around the unexpected presence of a job coach during the first pilot interview with Clara led to a second pilot interview. However, the researcher had to make an accommodation for Bob to include his job coach to act as a supporter for him during all the interviews. This was due to his mental health needs and to support his inclusion within this study, which may not have been possible without the presence of the job coach. The researcher reminded the job coach of their role before each interview, e.g. not advocating or answering for Bob but to provide non-verbal support and encouragement through their presence.

3.7.5 Confidentiality and privacy. This was ensured by: a) providing each participant with an option to choose a pseudonym before T1; b) using participant initials during transcription or discussion during supervisions; and c) using pseudonyms during the write-up of the research. Participants' details such as name,
age, areas of need, contact details, associated pseudonyms, provision names and placement companies' details are stored in an encrypted file on the researcher's password-protected laptop and an encrypted USB drive. This information is not privy to anyone except the researcher. This file will be useful in case participants want to withdraw their data. All documents (including transcriptions and audio recordings) are stored electronically in encrypted locations. All confidential documents related to this study will be deleted after two years of research completion.

Many ethical dilemmas in this study were driven by the need to promote participants' autonomy, i.e. a principle which aims to enhance the participants' self-determination and were guided by Beauchamp and Childress' (2001) principles of ethical considerations within practice.

3.8 Rigour and Trustworthiness

There is an ongoing debate around the use of terms such as validity or reliability to evaluate the integrity and robustness of qualitative research. The literature suggests rigour and trustworthiness as more applicable concepts within this domain (Cypress, 2017; Rolfe, 2006). Yardley’s (2000) principles of validity were considered to ensure the rigour and trustworthiness of this study:

3.8.1 Sensitivity to context. The researcher spent some time visiting VOC and the NR college before and after the consent procedures to increase familiarity with the participants and build rapport before the interviews. Also, due to the nature of the researcher's professional practice as a TEP, a degree of understanding of the systems within which the FE provisions operate was already in place. However, a limitation of longitudinal data-collection is related to difficulties in sensitively ending relationships (Carduff et al., 2015). Within this study, participants were informed verbally (and through the use of visuals for YP) of the approaching next steps, i.e. more/end of interviews.

3.8.2 Commitment and rigour. The rigour of research findings was enhanced through considering views of both YP and parents, providing two sources for obtaining more in-depth information that could be compared, highlighted and triangulated. The member checking and inter-rater reliability processes also contributed to the rigour of the findings.
The researcher recognises that Braun and Clarke (2013, 2014) did not advocate the use of inter-rater reliability measures within thematic analysis due to the underlying realist assumption that there exists an accurate way to code the data obtained. However, the methodological decision to use inter-rater reliability within this study was led by the researcher’s views on being fluid, reflexive and transparent about the research process and to identify any possible biases that may have influenced the genuineness of participant voices. This process also helped the researcher to reflect on the use of latent-versus-semantic coding in practice.

A manual form of inter-rater reliability was used rather than adopting more formalised measures. For every ten interviews, one interview was peer coded by a colleague and compared with the researcher’s codes. Any discrepancies in coding were resolved through discussion to reach a degree of consensus. Differences reflected the use of vocabulary, i.e. similar words to describe a phenomenon and having a common essence or building block to the code. Potential themes and subthemes, including the names and descriptions were refined through discussion with trainee EP colleagues, research supervisors and other colleagues working within the EP and psychological research domains.

3.8.3 Transparency and coherence. The researcher maintained a research diary which documented all decisions, obstacles and thinking processes involved in the research. The researcher is also keen to acknowledge her influence on this study through the reflexivity section below.

3.8.3.1 Reflexivity. This section is written in the first person to enable the reader to understand the researcher’s context and dilemmas better.

Reflexivity is an acknowledgement of the researcher’s involvement in the research process which demonstrates a subjective interpretation of the participants’ reality. A reflexive approach to research embraces this subjectivity as the researcher views the world through a particular perspective and cannot be fully independent of it (Shaw, 2010). Finlay and Gough (2008) described this process as being thoughtfully and critically self-aware of personal and relational dynamics and how these affect the research.
As a researcher, I aimed to embed a state of reflexivity throughout the research process. This section only documents some elements of this thinking linked to the methodology. The reflections section in chapter five is another reflexive section, based on the overall research process. Reflexivity is an important concept to me as a person, practitioner and researcher. Highlighting the transparency of my being in everyday processes is consistent with a person-centred approach.


My personal reflexivity, i.e. inclination and passion towards the research topic was influenced by my previous work experience of working in an FE provision outside of the UK in a different cultural context. As part of my practice, I reflected on the practicalities and dilemmas involved in the transition process, which indicated that transition experiences often did not match or lead to the fulfilment of the aspirations of YP and parents and parental involvement was heavily influenced by cultural norms and ideologies. Ever since, I have been considering means to gain the views of YP and parents through empirical research to speak about what matters to them and for this to make an impact on future practice.

My role in the functional reflexivity can be considered in terms of the methodological decisions undertaken during this study, which include the use of the case-study approach and photo-elicitation method. This is indicative of my practice as a trainee EP in which I am keen to use accessible, evidence-based methods to highlight individual voices. In this sense, this study provided me with an opportunity to hone my research skills and build on professional practice.

A particular dilemma that I faced with some participants during data-collection was related to a possible power imbalance: a) between the participants (often parents) and myself; and b) role confusion (trainee EP versus researcher). This was evident through parental expectations, when they expected me to offer information, support or guidance in better understanding the SI process or potential ways forward for the YP after completion of the SI. During interviews, I found it difficult to refrain from highlighting participants’ strengths or helping explore their concerns in detail, which is a common characteristic of EP consultations. These dilemmas helped me think about the core skills which have become embedded within my repertoire of transactions with
people. Transcription helped me become aware of these dilemmas and supervision provided a helpful space to reflect on them. While I could not directly support the parents, I did, with their permission, reflect on some specific feedback with the leads of the FE provisions in a few instances, which helped me think about the possible role of EPs in supporting parents in coping with transition processes, further reflected on in the discussion section. Etherington (2004) also reflected on the dilemmas caused by dual relationships or current boundary issues and urged researchers to be aware of these to conduct ethical research.

3.8.4 Impact and importance. Outlined in the impact statement and chapter five.

Chapter four will illustrate the outcomes of the thematic analysis undertaken to analyse the views of participants in this study.
Findings

This chapter will present the findings of the cross-case thematic analysis of the qualitative data yielded by semi-structured interviews of YP and their parents. Overarching themes and subthemes will be presented, along with illustrative participant quotes which have been transcribed and presented verbatim to ensure the authenticity of participant views. All names have been anonymised. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the main findings, presented under the relevant RQ.

4.1 Integrative Thematic Analysis of YP Data

Table 4 presents the overarching themes and subthemes arising from YP’s data.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overarching theme</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hopes and aspirations</td>
<td>Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing challenges</td>
<td>Uncertainty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Initial workplace difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth dimensions</td>
<td>Conceptual and metacognitive knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal growth and relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skill development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support networks</td>
<td>Parental involvement</td>
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These overarching themes and subthemes are elaborated below.
4.1.1 Overarching theme 1: Hopes and aspirations.

This overarching theme illustrates the broad hopes and expectations of the YP for themselves from the SI and adulthood in general.

4.1.1.1 Subtheme: Employment.

Most YP aspired to gain a paid job by the end of the SI:

“That way I can get that way if they want to hire me for paid film or something relatable...who knows it might be part time as well...” (George, T1)

“If I could think of a dream a perfect dream life um in the future I would see myself with a job.” (Natalia, T1)

“I think the best part of it actually is getting more work experience and hopefully getting a good paid job at the end of it...” (Chloe, T2)

“I mean like I said I am trying to get a job at [nature centre]. So I hope that happens. I am banking on that.” (Bob, T1)

YP also expressed other goals and opinions linked to specific aspects of employment. For George, his aim was linked to gaining employment in the field related to his special interest, i.e. photography:
“Stills photography I might do during film production…um maybe get behind the cam-
camera I mean if the project’s interesting. Other than that, it’s just still photography in
the next five years because I’ll be still doing the projects I’ll be assigned to do.” (George,
T1)

George also wanted to improve the quality of his work and network more during the
SI:

“Hoping that my work might-might I think get my work to its perfect standards…ah
learning new things from time to time…be creative-be creating freely as I can.” (George,
T1)

“And if possible maybe collaborate with a few people who have certain ideas…” (George,
T1)

Initially, Chloe wanted to be able to fulfil her entrepreneurial aspirations after gaining
experience from the SI and thought that gaining retail experience and skills was
important to set up her business:

“Well I’ve always wanted to have my own floristry business…. because I’ve been doing
floristry here for two years…I probably just start like a little open kinda like a little just like
a little market store… I’ve always wanted to have my own business, when I was little.”
(Chloe, T1)

“Emm probably to have a bit of retail skills.” (Chloe, T1)

Chloe’s aspirations were driven by her secondary school experiences:

“Cause when I was in secondary school me and my friend Janelle we actually start off
our own little floristry business inside our school…It went really well.” (Chloe, T1)

However, Chloe’s vision for her preferred future showed a trajectory of change over
the course of the SI. As the SI progressed, Chloe entered a phase of uncertainty about
her future, which seemed to relate to the nature of her placement experiences:

“Because sometimes I actually don’t know what I really want to do in the future but first
of all I struggle a bit a little bit with it.” (Chloe, T2)

“Cause I’m not doing floristry anymore makes it a bit difficult about what I wanna do what
I wanna do next.” (Chloe, T2)

By the last interview, Chloe thought beyond the SI to further education, employment
and training, indicating slight changes in career interests:
“If I was to do a level 2 it would be bit difficult to decide between the two.” (Chloe, T3)

“But I think I maybe staying in the 4th year if I’m lucky…Yeah cause [FE lead] and [job coach] would be thinking of a cooking work placement for here…hmm probably get some more retail skills involved.” (Chloe, T3)

Bob’s motivation associated with the SI seemed to diminish over time, as he began to perceive the SI as a means to remain occupied:

“Uh uh I don’t mind I mean I have nothing else to do so I guess I am just doing it.” (Bob, T3)
4.1.1.2 Subtheme: Independence.

Many YP expressed a desire to live independently in the future:

“*Probably get a house one time, one day.*” (Chloe, T1)

“When I live independently…” (Natalia, T2)

For Sarah, accomplishing this goal meant being financially independent:

“*Like I have to pay bills…alone.*” (Sarah, T1)

Sarah also specified that her independent living goals were influenced by parent aspirations:

“That’s what my parents my dad wanted me to do actually.” (Sarah, T3)

For Chloe, being able to travel by herself was important and she wanted to accomplish this as part of the SI:

“There’s no, normally to be able to travel more independently…this would normally mean just travelling like to like friends’ houses and all that.” (Chloe, T1)

All YP had multiple sources of support during the SI, including several job coaches, tutors and FE leads. However, Sarah indicated a preference to be supported in a group or be more independent from the support received during the SI:

“*Better in a group.*” (Sarah, T2)

“*Um like a like you can do on your own.*” (Sarah, T3)
4.1.1.3 Subtheme: Relationships.

For some YP, forming or maintaining friendships and/or relationships was part of their preferred future:

“It’s just maybe one day I am maybe I will want a relationship…married to someone um living in the countryside…yeah maybe with kids like that would be a perfect life for me.” (Natalia, T1)

Natalia continued by stating that she wanted to maintain friendships with fellow pupils at VOC, even after the SI:

“Friends I like I really like when I leave I really want to be connected to them that’s what I fear that I lose connection with them.” (Natalia, T1).

While George wanted to form friendships during the SI, wanting to be in a relationship appeared to be an unexpected aspiration for him, one that he seemed to come across by chance:

“See uh getting new friendships.” (George, T1)

“But you just realise you feel right at home-home then you just find well a certain interest on a certain somebody that you luck like since you first saw and all on a sudden you just realise you could retire within even five to ten minutes or maybe even longer for few hours.” (George, T3)
4.1.2 Overarching theme 2: Ongoing challenges.

This overarching theme illustrates the ongoing difficulties experienced by the YP. Some challenges are specific to the SI, while others are wider difficulties that impacted on YP’s employment experiences.

4.1.2.1 Subtheme: Uncertainty.

All YP expressed certain difficulties in coping with the unknown during different phases (prior, beginning, midway) of the SI.

YP’s pre-SI nerves were related to not knowing about the nature of the placement just before the SI commenced:

“I haven’t got my timetable just yet.” (Chloe, T1)

“Well I didn’t know I was going to be working in the kitchen.” (Sarah, T1)

Sarah spoke about finding out about a change in placement, i.e. spending time with the job coach in a group to explore different careers and placements, through her timetable:

“Yeah cause I think it has changed cause…I saw the timetable.” (Sarah, T2)
This uncertainty extended to being unsure of future progression after the SI:

“Mm not sure bit tricky.” (Sarah, T3)

Future thinking was another element of uncertainty that proved to be challenging for some YP, i.e. Chloe, Natalia and Bob. Their narratives implied that the unpredictability of the future and the possibility of change affected their thinking. This barrier remained constant for these YP throughout the SI, for instance, in Natalia’s case:

“I don’t like to think about my future why why I see it as uh like like it’s keeps changing because like I like I don’t really want to stay one option I have a lot of options…and sometimes like when I am thinking about the future, I just think of I just like when I am sad or down when I talk about like what I want to do.” (Natalia, T1)

“Still hard.” (Natalia, T2)

For Natalia, thinking about the future also elicited some difficult feelings and self-doubt:

“Um (long pause) um. Emotional…It’s just like I usually don’t really think about my mental health it’s it’s easy to pretend that nothing is wrong but it is and sometimes like when I am thinking about the future, I just think of I just like when I am sad or down when I talk about like what I want to do…In the future and when I think about it I get a bit I get a bit (long pause) (gets emotional) upset.” (Natalia, T1)

“Just some of it might be unrealistic but it’s just like I feel that maybe it could be possible.” (Natalia, T1)

For Bob, his focus was on the present as he found the element of change difficult to cope with:

“I don’t really I’ll tell you the truth I find it really hard to plan ahead. I just usually plan for now…don’t see the point of planning ahead cause things change so… every time someone asks me that question, I just get confused I don’t know I mean.” (Bob, T1)

“I don’t want to go too fast…it’s not easy to think ahead it’s easier to think about now.” (Bob, T3)

While thinking of the present was easier for Bob, reflecting on the past was also difficult:

“Can’t remember can’t remember.” (Bob, T2)
These challenges in future thinking may have also influenced YP’s perceptions of their hopes and aspirations, as explored in theme 1. For Natalia and Bob, it could be considered that their profile of needs, i.e. ASD with mental health difficulties could have made this element of reflection particularly difficult. However, Natalia’s trajectory of emotional responses reflected a gradual shift from ambiguity to clarity and enjoyment that was part of her transition:

At T1,
“Bit nervous.”
By T2,
“It was hard at first…I wasn’t really that confident.”
At T3,
“Yeah I like doing it.”

On the contrary, George employed the use of a proactive thinking strategy to anticipate possible work challenges and demands that reflected his preparedness for the transition:

“Umm I think mostly deadlines is going to be tricky because next thing they’ll say bring in by the weekend, bring it in by tomorrow…and you have got like a few hours to do that before coming in the next day.” (George, T1)

“There might be certain point where I’m going like I need to (pause) change a few things of it and then at one moment it can it might go right and it might go wrong at the same time.” (George, T1)

“Patient and prepared because you never know what they’re gonna ask you.” (George, T2)

These quotes are indicative of George’s approach and understanding of employment and its unpredictability. It could be that George’s (and Bob’s) previous work experiences helped their preparedness for the SI transition, as opposed to other YP who engaged with a work placement for the first time.
4.1.2.2 Subtheme: Initial workplace difficulties.

Many YP spoke about on-the-job challenges faced during the SI, some of which are related to the development of early technical skills or growing accustomed to using specific equipment. These difficulties reflect a certain level of experimentation during different placements such as maintenance, gardening, catering, retail or floristry.

For Bob, these challenges included health concerns and sensory needs:

“Mostly, it’s not easy to get your hands oily you have to wear extra gloves sometime it seeps through your hands the water gets between your hands and the main thing is that I don’t like to get my hands dirty. It wasn’t my favourite thing to do. I always had to wash my hands.” (Bob, T1)

“I don’t mind gardening it’s just not as easy to be outside and I am not really an outdoor person especially since I get hayfever.” (Bob, T3)

For Natalia and Sarah, the physical elements of work were difficult:

“Sometimes the cutting like the hard stuff…it can be a bit hard to just place things like uh together.” (Natalia, T3)

“Difficult cause there’s too much people in the hall cause you have to hold the plates and you have the trolley to put the plate on.” (Sarah, T2)

Sarah also spoke about managing competing task demands:

“Um the tricky thing was like putting it right you know the label and you have to put the barcode on it they make you learn how to do it there was loads of them to make it like that.” (Sarah, T3)

For some YP, growing accustomed to the SI included adapting to the increased physical workload and possible fatigue:

“Cause too much work hmm working hard outside…yeah difficult cause my friend was an intern and she said that you have to do work experience.” (Sarah, T2)

“Tiring…uh I nap sometimes…” (Natalia, T2)
4.1.2.3 Subtheme: Social interaction.

Some YP expressed that engaging with familiar people was easier and that participating in conversations with strangers was difficult. This may be reflective of YP’s communication needs and feelings of social comfort:

“Like I wouldn’t say that I am friends with them because like it’s like I am so used to the people that come here.” (Natalia, T2)

“I think maybe (pause) some of the places talking to new staff, going to see different companies I think that maybe a little bit tricky, because I get really nervous.” (Chloe, T1)

“But also talking to customers that makes me nervous my hands start to shake like now sometimes.” (Chloe, T3)
4.1.3 Overarching theme 3: Growth dimensions

This overarching theme illustrates the three broad areas of development identified by the YP during the course of the SI.

4.1.3.1 Subtheme: Conceptual and metacognitive knowledge.

This subtheme illustrates the influence of experimenting with different placements during the SI on the YP’s knowledge and understanding of work environments. Most YP did not have a defined area of practice or particular interest during the SI, except for George:

“Uh we just look for look at work placements…yeah looking at other options um I am thinking of like cafes and retail shops.” (Natalia, T3)

“I think quite interesting to be working in different places is quite an experience.” (Chloe, T2)

Several outcomes seemed to emerge from the placement tasters for YP: honing into areas of interest that could formalise into eventual careers, understanding workplace environments or simply identifying characteristics of their preferred future work environment:
“It’s hard to decide between floristry and cooking I like them both but I like cooking a bit more.” (Natalia, T3)

“We catch up and we go to like to go to like [xx] shopping mall and we went to [place] last week and we like to check-in like the job hours it helps me to think about the location hours and how are they able to do it.” (Natalia, T3)

“It’s just being outdoors and learning new skills… so it’s quite quiet…” (Chloe, T3)

In addition, Chloe expressed an emerging understanding of work boundaries in relation to herself and others:

“Cause I’m still quite small and I’ve got to be careful of how much I lift well I did I just try and did it by myself but carrying one brick one block is actually better for me because if I was to carry two it would be too heavy.” (Chloe, T2)

“Arguments kind of between manager and customers I just try not to get involved just leave them to it and if it happened to me I ought to do it calmly.” (Chloe, T3)

Natalia reflected an understanding of the support she needed to complete tasks:

“Usually I usually I ask for demonstration before doing it.” (Natalia, T3)

These quotes reflect emerging metacognition, i.e. a person’s understanding of how they function, which is a helpful cognitive skill to develop in relation to any experiential learning task.
4.1.3.2 Subtheme: Personal growth and relationships.

This subtheme identifies elements of YP’s social-emotional growth during the SI, which include emerging positive attitudes towards themselves and others, a sense of self-awareness, motivation and relational elements.

Chloe reflected on various intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors which influenced her SI experiences. At the beginning, Chloe’s views depicted the process of internalising expectations set by staff at VOC which helped her in setting the standards for herself and others:

“Teachers are going to putting a hundred per cent be and they want us want that from us as well so.” (Chloe, T1)

“All of us are meant to set a really good example for the new students that come here now.” (Chloe, T2)

Chloe further spoke about seeking challenging workplace tasks to motivate herself:

“I’m more used to it cause I’m thinking floristry is a bit too easy.” (Chloe, T3)

As the SI progressed, Chloe reflected on her emerging personal qualities and strengths and illustrated a sense of being proud at task completion:

“Being outside in the outdoors even if it is cold some of the students keep moaning about it and I’ll just get on with it.” (Chloe, T3)

“It was actually quite quite rewarding.” (Chloe, T3)

Bob and Natalia further demonstrated self-awareness by recognising that they needed some support but were able to accomplish tasks:

“Uh may need a little direction but apart from that it’s it.” (Bob, T3)

“I had help but I was able to do it.” (Natalia, T3)

Natalia’s narrative also demonstrated an emerging sense of independence and an eagerness in sharing the outcomes of her work with the researcher:

“Because I did it all by myself.” (Natalia, T3)

“I want to show you a picture of a cake that I made last week.” (Natalia, T2)
Natalia further spoke about the calming influence of certain tasks, which suggests an ability to reflect on the emotional impact of work:

“Um I like when I am putting flowers in I feel calm it’s like not really inside but when I am doing it outside I feel like I feel relaxed.” (Natalia, T2)

“Yeah it also happens when I am baking as well like cookies or something it helps me like it’s relaxing.” (Natalia, T3)

Natalia also described an instance of a resilient attitude while on placement, one of which included coping with a slight injury while in the kitchen:

“One time like I grated my hand a little bit it was bleeding but it was really not that bad just a bit sore I didn’t I didn’t cry or anything like before I just-I just I needed a Band-Aid.” (Natalia, T3)

Another developmental point illustrated by YP included elements of relational growth, i.e. about relationships and social interactions. For George and Chloe, this emerged in the form of teamwork skills:

“Let’s see teamwork communication mostly…Another student collaborated and helped me out.” (George, T2)

“Well I think when we was all working in the team it was more effectively than working alone.” (Chloe, T2)

For Natalia, a feeling of being socially accepted became evident from her relationships with fellow interns and pupils at VOC:

“I mean when I came to [VOC] I-I like felt comfortable like showing everyone like my true self I get it’s easier here than when I was at school…yeah like I was shy and I thought that people would think that I am weird and like I-I can’t remember if anyone asked me why I am shy...” (Natalia, T1)

Many YP spoke about adopting a supportive role towards other pupils in FE, to form peer support systems as part of the SI. For instance, Bob worked with the job coaches at the NR college to make transport more accessible for other YP with more complex physical needs and supported them at mealtimes:

“I also help [job coach] out with the bus the lifting and all.” (Bob, T3)

“Uh I just help at lunchtime I tend to watch the group see if they are eating properly also they let me have my lunch at the same time and I think most of them they eat good just
some of them I think they leave a little bit of stuff on their face so I tend to wipe it afterward.” (Bob, T3)

Chloe expressed her views on the benefits of working together at the charity shop with Sarah:

“I’m really enjoying it I think it gives us like more time to talk about what we want to do in the future.” (Chloe, T3)

“Well erm being with my friends and so helping them as well as them helping me.” (Chloe, T2)

Whereas, Sarah presented her thoughts on how this supportive role could transform into a more formal role after the SI:

“Yeah maybe do the OBD doing um what’s it called staff member here after the intern ambassador it’s like it means staff for young people yeah I think maybe next year after the internship I think that.” (Sarah, T2)

From George’s SI experiences, the development of various soft skills, i.e. personal attributes required to succeed in the workplace, became evident. George spoke about dealing with the unpredictable nature of his line of work and coping with feedback and resulting change which helped him develop his professional confidence:

“Cause sometimes they’ll ask me to do something and then the next thing someone wants me to do something important. So you never know what-what could come in through the door.” (George, T2)

“It’s just only the feedback that I’m that I developed I mean I understand feedback and I got used to getting feedback a lot…well take take what they say about well take their feedback and put it into good use from time to time. So basically taking feedback is a good thing.” (George, T2)

“I mean makes me feel makes me feel a bit confident from time to time um suggestions and feedback.” (George, T3)

During his work, George encountered some ethical dilemmas related to consent in photography, which showed some reflection on his code of conduct in the workplace:

“If it’s more of my responsibility I would have done I would have had a consent sheet like concept from certain people but as I am still an intern it’s not it’s not my decision and it’s not my responsibility so I feel like something needs to be sorted out of it…I was kinda worried you know that certain people might get upset with the photos of their faces…And during that [staff] was just like take the pictures anyway and I was just like okay but what if it goes wrong?” (George, T3)
To navigate potentially difficult situations and manage relationships, George described the use of negotiation and problem-solving skills at work:

“If I recall correctly they’ve been concerned about the big memory of pictures and I was like and I was like well can we if it’s short how can you explain the picture I mean I know you want the memory to be small but I just want like a clear quality because basically I have to take like perfect quality of pictures just in case you know.” (George, T2)

George’s SI contained phases of having lesser-to-greater amounts of work, navigating which required patience and workload management, i.e. having a slow pace of work helped George:

“It’s only I mean it’s a slow process at the moment. It always has been for the last well it’s almost a month so it’s a slow process. So it does help me.” (George, T2)

“Um it’s a bit crazy but then again I had like a little bit of doubts like what if I don’t what if I not get the certain stuff they needed plus they want stuff for the VOC calendar...what if I don’t have enough time to handle the stuff and what if they what if I miss something important from time to time?...But sometimes it’s like but I mean I’m not worried about lunch it’s like I’m worried about how much time will it take to get the stuff they want...let me check my diary just to be more specific...” (George, T2)

Sarah’s positive perception of being an intern summarises the largely positive feeling of YP about the SI:

“I like being an intern like being a student is boring...happy cause I am enjoying this I never done it before.” (Sarah, T2)
4.1.3.3 Subtheme: Skill development.

This subtheme illustrates elements of technical or skill-based growth cited by the YP, owing to the different taster placements during the SI. Many skills mentioned by YP included some physical activity that involved the application of knowledge.

Chloe and Sarah were working on developing some functional and daily living skills, during general study time or through a specific placement, for instance, Sarah doing catering:

“Just um practising the colour of the coins um like the shape of it.” (Sarah, T3)

“Washing up the dishes that’s a load of dishes. Very long. And then put it back…you see that is a dishwasher you have to rinse it and then out it in to was it so.” (Sarah, T2)

“Probably how to learn learning how to price clothes properly well sensibly.” (Chloe, T3)

“Hmm I think well last week one day (tutor) she did show us how to use a washing machine properly so that gives me an idea of how to use one.” (Chloe, T3)

Chloe and Sarah also identified an improvement in their customer service and retail skills, owing to their joint placement at the charity shop:

“Probably learning how to use a till and talking to customers.” (Chloe, T2)

“Probably helping people around the shop showing them where the items are in the shop.” (Chloe, T3)

“Just tidy up in the back like hanging up the clothes with the hanger in the right order.” (Sarah, T3)

“Doing the price tags…umm just tidying up doing stock check.” (Sarah, T2)

Chloe and Bob spoke about the specific gardening skills and tasks that they worked on in a group:

“What we’re learning is how to make a club oven it’s to make pizzas…we’re learning how to do bricklaying as well so we’ve been gathering materials bit of planting like vegetables we was picking up some breeze blocks for the oven that we’re making well first we had to do a bit of lawn mowing this bit of grass here so we planted all of them in there.” (Chloe, T2)

“A bit of maintenance. A lot of repairs, yes. Repairing the flower bed, replacing the old seed with the new seeds. Soil I mean soil not seeds.” (Bob, T1)
Bob also spoke about developing his administrative skills at the NR college, which included learning to use new software to help make accessible symbols for his peers:

“Uhh InPrint.” (Bob, T2)

“We usually do laminating or doing something on the computer kinda stuff.” (Bob, T3)
4.1.4 Overarching theme 4: Support networks.

This overarching theme outlines the YP’s perspectives on the two-fold systems of support in place for them during the SI.

4.1.4.1 Subtheme: Parental involvement.

Most YP, except Bob, were unsure of the extent of parental involvement in the SI processes or did not think that their parent(s) had any explicit role in this journey:

“Mm you mean as intern don’t think so.” (Sarah, T2)

“I’m not sure.” (Natalia, T1 & T3)

“No I don’t think so.” (George, T3)

However, Sarah reflected on parental preferences for developing money skills on her placement activity, i.e. she began engaging with a money skills module around T2. Natalia expressed instances of communication and engagement with her family about SI during the initial stages:

“That’s what my parents my dad wanted me to do actually.” (Sarah, T3)

“I mean they we sometimes talk about it okay so how do they feel about you going on the work experience…they feel alright.” (Natalia, T1)

“Um my brother helped me with my CV.” (Natalia, T1)
Chloe perceived her parent as being occupied with work, but providing advice from their own experiences to support her during the SI:

“Normally she’s being quite busy with work so...” (Chloe, T3)

“Well my mum said to take it easy about how much heavy lifting I do so she doesn’t want me to damage my back like she did when she when she did cleaning.” (Chloe, T2)

Bob was clear about the role of his parent in preparing him for work and college in the morning:

“She helps me uh trying to get out of bed in the morning especially Mondays I feel I can’t get up on Mondays I complain a lot to get up (laughs) I don’t like eating much breakfast in the morning since I have been ill recently she tells me to… (laughs).” (Bob, T3)

Overall, this subtheme suggests YP’s ambivalence about the role of parents in supporting their transition to SI.
4.1.4.2 Subtheme: Role of FE staff.

Whilst the DfE model (2013) states that YP must be primarily supported by an allocated job coach during the SI, all YP in this study had varied sources of support from the FE, including: multiple job coaches, tutors and FE leads.

During T1, most YP cited that the SI decisions were made by the FE:

“Sometimes it’s maybe [job coach] or [FE lead] they decide.” (Chloe, T1)

“Mm I don’t know (laughs) ask [FE lead] he knows.” (Sarah, T1)

Chloe was appreciative of her floristry tutor at VOC, who noticed her talents:

“My floristry teacher who works here she says some of my designs are actually really that good…it makes me feel really happy and interested.” (Chloe, T1)

While for other YP, job coaches provided opportunities for reflecting on the SI, along with on-the-job support such as: modelling tasks, supporting the YP in applying for external work placements and exploring different career interests and workplace habits in a group:

“Well they showed us how how much we got to dig down to put the roots in so.” (Chloe, T2)

“Well the [job coach] he set me up with it.” (Chloe, T2)

 “[Job coach] helped and assisted I guess. I mean he was a big help and just to help me with my CV I guess.” (Bob, T2)

George cited that he would probably benefit with some more time with a job coach to reflect on his experiences:

“Well I just get asked from time to time to know how am I doing so far so basically it’s just a regular day basis of knowing what I’ve been up to and how the photos have been going.” (George, T2)

“Not all the time not all the time just ah just at like certain just once in a while more time.” (George, T2)

Chloe and Sarah had opportunities to work without direct support during their placement at the charity shop:

“We both we both go alone.” (Sarah, T3)
4.2 Integrative Thematic Analysis of Parent Data

Table 5 presents the overarching themes and subthemes arising from the parents’ data.

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These overarching themes and subthemes are elaborated below.
4.2.1 Overarching theme 1: Aspirations and barriers.

This overarching theme illustrates parental concerns and associated aspirations for the YP’s future and SI.

4.2.1.1 Subtheme: Employment.

Most parents wanted YP to secure a job by the end of the SI. However, this was dependent on YP’s preferences or needs. For instance, Beatrice initially wanted George to explore different interests but later grew accustomed to his special interest:

“Yeah photography…only thing if you ask to change no (emphasis)…So many times I say, George you can change another things you can try, no…Every time I say, no…Yeah because he like photography, filming. If he can achieve that, that’ll be nice for him. Yeah he can have a job something to do probably will be good.” (Beatrice, T1)

Alexandra thought that continuing to work in the NR college may be beneficial for Bob:

“He said he liked his job in the college here…in admin or working with other people as a teaching assistant or someone helping out…he is a really caring person so.” (Alexandra, T3)
Some parents aspired for YP’s employment readiness through emerging career interests, external work experiences, more training and exploring work environments through SI.

Amy’s aspirations originated from concerns around Natalia’s career confusion and wanting Natalia to be inspired by watching others work:

“Sometimes she says she wants to work in a shop umm like you know MotherCare, book store, yeah like that she wants to really confused I really confused…sometimes she changes her mind.” (Amy, T1)

“If she see people really hard working she will say oh that person is really hard working why I can’t do it myself?” (Amy, T1)

“I-I really want her to you know get a big chance like everyday she go to training get the job you know.” (Amy, T2)

Lucy’s hopes were centred around preparedness for employment through experiencing the working world:

“Well to be ready to be more ready for the working kinda world you know to know what goes on at work different jobs.” (Lucy, T3)

“Um yeah I can see it leading to something better she needs a lot more experience in the workplace…maybe a good career in the future…Getting a feel for life and work.” (Lucy, T2)

Along with preparedness, Lucy wished for Chloe to become an entrepreneur:

“Oh ideally, I’d like her to have her own floristry business.” (Lucy, T1)
4.2.1.2 Subtheme: Independence.

This subtheme illustrates the different elements of daily living that parents wanted YP to become proficient in. Some parents wanted YP to have experiences, including friendships and a future like any other YP and to develop their knowledge of the world:

“Because I want my daughter to be like good future bright you know like she wants you know in her mind she wants to be like normal people walking in the street they go in work you know bar you know making lots of friends.” (Amy, T1)

“Um a bit more um you know about the world you know and be more outgoing.” (Lucy, T3)

Alexandra hoped for Bob to be employed independently of any support:

“And you never know maybe in the future he could do it on his own.” (Alexandra, T1)

Some parents expressed their concerns about and the importance of YP being able to travel alone, for instance, Alexandra:

“He would get very anxious and depressed before even going out of the house.” (Alexandra, T1)

“Be able to travel further as well…I’d like him to get back to that he used to go and we used to do like little touristy things around London you know so I would insist of getting him to Central London or just out of his area out of his comfort zone.” (Alexandra, T3)

Amy expressed concerns related to distance and managing the route:

“In a crowd she is really scared, she doesn’t know the location because this is the roads they are confusing…and she is really interested working with the brother’s Superdrug, I mean, you know like it’s really far.” (Amy, T1)

Amy and Alexandra also wanted the YP to become more independent in self-care:

“If she buy anything in the shop she have to make sure what kind of things she is eating. She’s got nut allergy.” (Amy, T1)

“I would like him to do more things for himself.” (Alexandra, T1)

Peter considered money skills as a barrier for Sarah and an essential ingredient to achieving independent living and employment:

“I think if there is any place where they can count the money I should send her to that place to count money and she will come out better.” (Peter, T1)
“So that in future she can live on her own. Otherwise that will be tough because if nobody is there and they it can be it can be cheated…I want to work in my own shop and also maybe want to be a hairdresser you need to count your own money you don’t want someone to count your money for you.” (Peter, T3)

Alexandra was also explicit about the barriers to independence faced by Bob, one of which included losing support at the post-16 level, which was important for him at this stage:

“I always worry about that because as soon as they leave school they lose a lot of support.” (Alexandra, T1)

“But it will just take him time and adjustment he needs someone there to help him and support him in things that he does.” (Alexandra, T1)

On the contrary, Alexandra also spoke about finding it difficult to ‘let go’ as a parent, despite realising Bob’s independent abilities:

“Because to be honest I do way too much for him…But I know he can actually do more because I’ve seen him do at college more than what he does at home.” (Alexandra, T1)

“He’ll always be my child.” (Alexandra, T1)

Amy further clarified that her aspirations for Natalia’s independence were centred around the fact that she will not have parental support indefinitely:

“And because in a in a future I want to my daughter to get better…not to you know support her everyday.” (Amy, T3)
4.2.1.3 Subtheme: Social interaction & well-being.

This subtheme highlights aspects of YP’s social development and physical and mental well-being that were crucial for parents. Most parents indicated that YP found it difficult to engage in social interaction with unfamiliar people which could possibly impact on their employability:

“She doesn’t want to work in like a shop counter in a cashier she is very nervous she doesn’t want to see people she wants to hide say in a library.” (Amy, T1)

Consequently, they aspired for YP to further develop their social communication & interaction skills through the SI:

“Talking to people face to face…be more outgoing…maybe get less anxious.” (Lucy, T1)

“But when he is out and meet someone who is nice to him he is going to keep talking to that person but not everyone…Specific people for George.” (Beatrice, T1)

“Some people think he is rude when he is ignoring them or doesn’t talk to them. He doesn’t interact very well. So that’s another thing I think that he may be get better at interaction with people.” (Alexandra, T1)

Parents wished for YP to develop friendships and relationships in life. For instance, Beatrice was hopeful for the SI to act as a medium for George to meet new people and make friends:

“Yeah if he’s working they are doing something that means he is meet friends there.” (Beatrice, T1)

Amy was pleased with Natalia wanting to pursue a relationship after gaining employment:

“About a month ago she said when she have a job and when she is settled and after she wants to get married yeah that’s the good thing.” (Amy, T1)

A significant concern for Amy was Natalia’s attendance at the FE, due to her physical well-being and possible lack of motivation, which could impact on maintaining employment:

“You know like when she comes here sometimes she doesn’t come I’m really worried I’m say oh my god if she goes to work they are gonna sack her.” (Amy, T1)
“When she have those period she find really difficult yeah tha-that’s the main problem.” (Amy, T3)

In relation to motivation, parents hoped for YP to be able to develop their self-confidence and sense of purpose through the SI. For Lucy, this meant that Chloe would be more socially confident, able to express her needs and to make better judgements:

“Come out of herself a bit more asking for what she wants…Chloe has got a habit of saying yes to everything even if it is not good for her.” (Lucy, T1)

“Maybe getting a bit of confidence in herself hopefully.” (Lucy, T2)

Alexandra wanted Bob to recognise his achievements, develop confidence to try new things and contribute to society:

“I want him to yeah have the confidence to know that he can achieve and do to you know be a productive member of society. But also I want him to yeah to have he needs the confidence isn’t it? To try things that are new hasn't tried before.” (Alexandra, T1)

These aspirations are also linked to parental concerns about YP finding a change in routines difficult, which could be reflective of the nature of the YP’s needs, e.g. ASD:

“He doesn’t uh want change you are doing this and this sometimes you say stop this and say do this. For George it will be hard. But if he don't like it you can't force him. He’s not going to do it. If he say no, no.” (Beatrice, T1)

“He is struggling a bit at the moment…he seems a bit you know more he is a bit more stressed and anxious that’s more to do with the getting back into the routine…after the eight weeks he struggled to get back into it because you know it is a long holiday.” (Alexandra, T2)

Amy described difficulties in future thinking that could affect Natalia during the SI:

“The first day she’s gonna be difficult and she will thinking about what’s gonna happen in her future.” (Amy, T1)

Consequently, many parents championed YP’s well-being, over other factors such as monetary benefits:

“I want my daughter to be happy we happy I don’t want her to get struggling you know lifetime.” (Amy, T1)
“I would love for him to be doing a job that he enjoys and for him to be comfortable and feel safe in his job, you know?...So I really want him to like find a job where he is where he enjoys it more than anything not even about if he earns money.” (Alexandra, T1)

Alexandra expressed concerns about the impact of hidden (not physical) needs and wished for greater awareness about the same:

“See the problem is that people wouldn’t know that Bob had had special needs you know...Yeah when I go to the doctors they generally don’t realise that he has ASD or anxiety or they don’t have a very good understanding some of them. It’s not their fault, the system is not changing so it’s all physical...cause you don’t see the disability do you so.” (Alexandra, T1)

Alexandra and Amy advocated for a person-centred approach to promote YP’s inclusion in decision-making:

“And even if like he doesn’t want to get involved, you have to try to get him involved...It is important even if he doesn’t want to answer the question at least he is being asked.” (Alexandra, T1)

“It’s her choice you know like we can’t say to her force her what kind of role you want-she wants to do.” (Amy, T2)

There were instances when some parents were uncertain of the potential benefits of the SI and their YP’s future. This could be linked to wanting different goals for YP or perceiving SI as a way to keep YP occupied:

“Think about her, and she is an adult and in the four-five years’ time I don’t know what’s gonna happen you don’t know...if she doesn’t want to go where we’re going to put her.” (Amy, T1)

“My first intention was to think I don’t know the catering how as I said how the catering will come out to. But since then for her to stay home I think she have to do something.” (Peter, T1)

“They don’t do decoration at [VOC] you know...something like this I think maybe it will help.” (Peter, T2)

Similar to the differences in types of parental aspirations, there was a division in views about the optimism regarding the SI:

“I think she’s gonna be alright, you know, I think so...” (Amy, T1)

“Well she only started this about two months ago let’s see how this goes.” (Peter, T2)
4.2.2 Overarching theme 2: Observed growth.

This overarching theme illustrates the elements of development in YP noticed by the parents during the SI, which also includes notions of not much observed growth by some parents. This overarching theme is similar to the ‘growth dimensions’ theme of the YP and many growth elements are in sync with parental aspirations. The voices of a few parents may be more prominent than others, which could be associated with differences in views about the usefulness of SI.

4.2.2.1 Subtheme: Personal growth and relationships.

This subtheme depicts YP’s personal development pertaining to their self and others as observed by parents.

Amy seemed pleased to notice positive differences in Natalia’s well-being, which also reflected in increased attendance at VOC and the SI, perhaps due to emerging motivation:

“I’m really pleased with her…she is really happy when she come home she is really happy.” (Amy, T2)

“Erm she’s she’s quite a lot changed as well actually like she’s she want to go to [VOC] you know like she wants to she’s very happy when she goes [VOC].” (Amy, T2)
Alexandra noted a change in Bob’s independent working patterns:

“Um I think he is learning how to like work independently with just a little bit of extra help with a little guidance which is good and he is working by himself which I think he also quite enjoys doing.” (Alexandra, T3)

Some parents observed changes in YP’s social communication and interaction skills, which reflected more confidence and development of friendships:

“He now talks to the person at the local shop he is been going to the same barber since he was like 5 years old and he just started talking to him now so in some ways it has helped his confidence.” (Alexandra, T3)

“So getting um more at ease talking to you know members of the public or people she doesn’t know helping her getting more at ease with you know talking to other people mixing a bit more with other people.” (Lucy, T3)

“Emm she’s enjoying going out on the weekend with her friends.” (Amy, T2)

Alexandra also noted that Bob began to support other pupils at the NR college. He was also paid a small stipend for working at the nature center. Overall, this reflected Bob’s developing empathy for others, compassion, motivation and sense of achievement:

“I think overall he seems to be enjoying helping at the [center] and helping [job coach] with the minibus and helping make it wheelchair accessible… he went to the [NR] school a couple of times and he helped with the pupils there and in the office there and he felt really good about himself he came home like I helped do this and I helped do this and I helped this boy do this and and so he felt really good about it so I think it made him feel a bit more grown up.” (Alexandra, T3)

“Yeah, it’s just in the sense that they’ve achieved something, you know? They’ve earned something…It makes him feel good, doesn’t it?” (Alexandra, T1)
4.2.2.2 Subtheme: Career interests & skill development.

This subtheme illustrates the development of YP’s emerging career interests and specific technical skills, as noted by parents.

Some parents noticed the emergence of daily living skills in the YP, which included working in the kitchen at home and handling money, i.e. functional Maths:

“She does some work in the kitchen sometimes in the kitchen she is okay.” (Peter, T3)

“Now she is learning how to count the money I think she told me the last time…now she knows how to when I send her outside the last time um she was able to get a change finally so she came to know.” (Peter, T3)

“She got a certificate last week um so she’s passed her Maths that she was doing um she has struggled with Maths but hopefully you know she’s got better now you know using numbers more and working with money maybe helps.” (Lucy, T3)

Amy indicated that Natalia had begun to develop career interests, despite which, there was ongoing confusion about her chosen path:

“She’s very interested working in a bookshop you know.” (Amy, T2)

“Um I think she is really good at catering you know like she she is interested in a catering…I mean I’m not sure which which think she is I think she is best.” (Amy, T3)

Some parents spoke about the specific technical skills which the YP developed and preferred. These included administrative skills, carpentry, maintenance, floristry and retail skills:

“He likes being in an office apparently at the [NR] school because its quiet there and he’s like and he can just sit there and work by himself you know.” (Alexandra, T2)

“He is even good at woodwork, carpentry…he enjoys the garden…mechanics seems good as well.” (Alexandra, T1)

“But since she has been here a few years she has got a lot better at floristry.” (Lucy, T1)

“But I think she’s getting uh good customer service skills.” (Lucy, T3)

Most parents described noticing changes in YP at home, such as being tidier or doing homework, or being able to see the outcomes of YP’s efforts. These opportunities could make the SI more concrete for the parents:
“She is bringing home lots of food and then flo-floristry uh she is doing lots of things she is bringing at home.” (Amy, T3)

“Um at home she’s more tidier um you know in the surroundings her bedroom stuff like that more help trying to be more helpful.” (Lucy, T3)

“She stay on the computer here she come home and she doing it on the computer studying how to doing the counting yeah so she is getting better she is doing well.” (Peter, T3)

Despite parent narratives around growth, there were some instances of parents not being satisfied or uncertain of positive changes in YP’s personal or employability characteristics:

“Well to be honest he is still the same (laughs).” (Alexandra, T3)

“Uh I don’t see the difference with George he is just like the same George I know.” (Beatrice, T3)

“Well it’s just the same to be honest go to school come to home and I don’t think anything has changed yet because the way I see her it’s still the same.” (Peter, T2)

“Before it was like garden-garden-garden-garden I didn’t like that yeah just like every time you see them they are doing all of them they are doing some gardening planting some flowers and all that…I mean as for sports one can do sports it’s eh it’s entertainment isn’t it.” (Peter, T3)

These views could point towards parents not perceiving the SI as a valuable provision, or could indicate the possibility of YP not making the expected growth during SI.

However, Peter also acknowledged that Sarah had made good progress since joining VOC, a few years before the SI:

“See I think it is improving it is okay uh if I think to three years back to now yeah yeah she is um okay now.” (Peter, T3)
4.2.3 Overarching theme 3: Parental experiences of SI.

This overarching theme encapsulates varied parental perspectives on their understanding of the SI processes and communication experiences with the FE.

4.2.3.1 Subtheme: Knowledge & understanding.

This subtheme illustrates the various layers of complexity in parental knowledge and understanding of SI, which varied largely throughout the SI duration.

For some parents, there was an initial lack of clarity about what the SI entailed:

“I’m not sure because they said they are gonna decide her.” (Amy, T1)

“I don’t yet know enough about it.” (Lucy, T1)

While Amy suggested an open-minded attitude to what the SI would entail:

“I’m happy what they are gonna do, I’m really happy, I don’t mind.” (Amy, T1)

Lucy thought that she could have taken more responsibility to inquire about the SI:

“About I should have read it a bit more.” (Lucy, T1)

As time progressed, parents reported more of a knowing stance about the SI such as the kind of support on offer and recent changes in the YP’s placements:
“And all kind of guide they giving her quite supporting you know they are trying their best [VOC] trying and support you know just you know they are going everywhere they are going out and stuff yeah.” (Amy, T3)

“Um just doing Maths every week um as well as English as well as the other internship stuff.” (Lucy, T3)

Alexandra was the only parent who did not indicate any inconsistencies in her knowledge/understanding of SI processes and updates about YP’s placement throughout T1 to T3. This could have been a facet of being linked to another FE provision, i.e. the NR college and their processes of parental engagement:

“He finished [nature centre] now because he was starting to get fed up and a bit anxious about going there.” (Alexandra, T3)

“Yeah he has got a good support network at the college and at [nature centre] so he has people that he can talk to over there and speak about what he is enjoying and what he is not enjoying.” (Alexandra, T2)

For Beatrice and Peter, the lack of knowledge of SI processes remained consistent throughout the SI:

“I don’t know the progress yet at the end.” (Peter, T3)

“It is but we are still waiting to see the end to see what other…” (Beatrice, T3)

This gap in knowledge extended to being unsure of what the SI might culminate in, e.g. further education, employment or training:

“Uh no I wasn’t because I think [FE lead] knows everything so for one it seems like she uh what’s she’s studying it she’s studying I don’t get no much information.” (Peter, T1)

“I don’t know if he is working in the same company or different I don’t know.” (Beatrice, T2)

“I think as I know they go somewhere with someone I don’t know much supported something like that.” (Beatrice, T3)

While Beatrice’s narrative indicated a positive attitude towards the SI at the beginning, the uncertainty throughout the SI led to some stressful moments for her when reflecting on SI processes:

“Must be positive first don’t be negative. If it’s not going to work then wait. But in the first time must be positive.” (Beatrice, T1)

“Heh uh as a parent it be sad.” (Beatrice, T2)
“I don’t know I don’t know I don’t know (emotional).” (Beatrice, T3)

Due to gaps in knowledge, many parents adopted alternative means to fulfil their curiosity about the SI, i.e. they sought information from many sources which included the researcher. This uncertainty lasted throughout T1 to T3 for these parents:

“Um how long does Chloe's internship last for?...What will Chloe be doing?” (Lucy, T1)

“Um when will she get her first work placement?” (Lucy, T2)

“If you also know if you also know if you also know anything that will be benefit for Sarah you can even let me know as well.” (Peter, T2)

For Beatrice, this lack of knowledge resulted in the expression of some frustration at the researcher and the research project:

“If you can tell me what will happen…yeah as you are meeting parents you must explain to us oh you are going to be doing this this and this but you finish your programme without telling us this…you didn’t at the end because you start at the beginning but you don’t know how it ends I mean your project going nowhere.” (Beatrice, T3)
4.2.3.2 Subtheme: Communication with FE.

This subtheme illustrates parental views on their level and nature of communication with the FE. Mostly, there seemed to be a sense of dissatisfaction in this aspect.

Beatrice felt that initiating communication and providing feedback was the FE’s responsibility, which was not being fulfilled throughout the SI:

“Because when your child doing something, you’re not informed. How you’re going to know?” (Beatrice, T1)

“No one really talk to me uh this is for him I think uh I don’t know I don’t know yet yeah…as parent must know every time what he is doing how thing work there.” (Beatrice, T2)

“It’s for [VOC] to tell us at this stage we are doing this he is have a good progress something like that but we don’t know just a kid going out in the morning coming back and that’s it.” (Beatrice, T3)

While Lucy had a similar experience, she specified the kind of feedback that would be useful for her as a parent. She also indicated a level of trust in the FE and the SI processes by indicating that she could get in touch with them if needed:

“No I am not really getting any updates…I mean there is not much at all at the moment.” (Lucy, T2)

“Well I never really spoke to anyone from the [placement provider] I’ve not needed to or you know really had to so I think Chloe’s got their phone number and stuff though if I did need to speak to them you know it won’t be a problem.” (Lucy, T3)

For Peter, communication with FE was of a practical nature. For instance, he received a call from VOC asking for his bank details so that Sarah’s stipend could be transferred to him.

“Well uh it’s the same because uh I don’t ring them too often and they don’t ring me too often. In case they need me they call me.” (Peter, T2)

Peter also indicated that due to the gaps in communication during SI, he would take the initiative to get in touch himself. He also noted that this pattern of communication during the SI was different from previous years:

“I think this is why I am planning to go and see them [FE lead] as I said at Christmas I will have a meeting with him and see how the next step it will be yeah so the last three years or so I always had a meeting with them they would call me to see the progress or
would tell me but this year this year they haven't they haven't called me at all.” (Peter, T3)

Often, YP would act as the channel of communication between FE and parent, but some parents did not find this satisfactory:

“Um Chloe told me herself she brought home a letter.” (Lucy, T1)

“He just said but he didn’t show…I must ask can you show me?” (Beatrice, T1)

Alexandra and Amy were the only parents who provided instances of open communication with VOC and the NR college, which included joint decision-making and providing feedback about the YP’s progress:

“I do stop and chat with everyone we talk about how we can keep Bob motivated then we decided that maybe it was he doesn’t wanna keep going there you know there’s no point so and we did have a meeting and we decided he needs to try something else we all agreed on that everyone me Bob and the college.” (Alexandra, T3)

“Yeah I think the communication’s been quite good between us all and everyone’s trying to do what’s best for Bob I feel yeah.” (Alexandra, T3)

“[FE lead] he told me you know Natalia is doing very well.” (Amy, T3)

“I told her teacher that she’s struggling with that what kinds of things she wants to do.” (Amy, T2)

Initially, Amy sought support from the researcher to foster links with the FE and even Natalia, before communication links were established:

“Can you just talk to them just three or two and a half days that’s all I don’t want to give her more.” (Amy, T1)

“If you see her like just like explain it to her kindly.” (Amy, T1)

Parents who had good communication links with FE had more positive attitudes towards them:

“Oh I think the college is amazing I think they’re doing really well with him and they support him in everything he does and I think he really does like everybody here he loves this college.” (Alexandra, T3)

“It’s different actually it’s I mean I think [VOC] doing very well and excellent you know I’m really pleased with them.” (Amy, T3)
4.2.4 Overarching theme 4: Parental beliefs.

This overarching theme illustrates the complexity of parental beliefs about their involvement and YP’s needs. The subthemes from overarching theme 3, i.e. knowledge, understanding and communication, could contribute to the need for parental involvement in SI processes and the YP’s transition to adulthood.

4.2.4.1 Subtheme: Parent involvement.

This subtheme illustrates parental perceptions of their involvement in the SI, described in two dimensions: expectations and actions. These perceptions seemed to be heavily influenced by the role of the FE in the SI processes.

According to Alexandra, her role in the SI was linked to being a part of the decision-making processes, supporting Bob in getting to the placement or FE and reflecting on his experiences. It was also apparent that Bob seemed to rely on her for support:

“They do discuss everything with him and they discuss everything with me. They talk to me and they ask my opinion.” (Alexandra, T1)

“I take him to college I talked to him about trying to encourage him to go in even when he doesn’t really want to (laughs)...yeah and just motivating him to come to college especially in the morning (laughs) get him up and out of the house.” (Alexandra, T3)

“I have been in there with him to help him settle down...and obviously I have been talking with him discussing with him if he is enjoying what he is not enjoying what he wants to do so I feel that Bob can talk to me which he does.” (Alexandra, T2)
Similarly, Amy described her role in encouraging Natalia to attend the SI by speaking from her own work experiences and a feeling of being involved (and supported in turn) in the SI processes:

“I said when I went to work I made lots of friends I’m really happy my friends are really happy. You know like staying boring in house it’s good making friends at workplace…so I explained her if you are out of [VOC] who’s gonna take you and you know like if you stay there you’re gonna get really good reference work reference and timekeep her.” (Amy, T1)

“Yes umm actually I’m supporting her she go to everyday [VOC] and umm you know I encourage her like to go everyday.” (Amy, T3)

“You know they they support me lots of things like say you know she they’re talking about her you know she’s doing a well I’m really happy with that actually.” (Amy, T2)

For Peter, his involvement was linked to shaping the nature of Sarah’s SI activities to some extent, i.e. after his feedback, VOC initiated money skills support for Sarah and Peter further supported her in consolidating those skills:

“Yeah she got the counting…she got something like uh how you be deducting something from the something… that’s what she’s been doing on the computer I think the school the school they have told her to do that.” (Peter, T2)

“Well the way I was support her is when I am ready I will put money rather than change or the notes then I will go through the the change and allow her to pick up some coins and say how much this is and what that is.” (Peter, T2)

On the contrary, Peter also indicated that it was the responsibility of the FE to notice Sarah’s development or any changes. Further parental involvement was limited due to parents’ perceived lack of expertise:

“Because she come from school and if there is something change then maybe maybe the school will probably know.” (Peter, T2)

“We are not teachers we don’t know how much we can do more to support her.” (Peter, T3)

Peter also expressed an intention to be responsible for Sarah’s future after the SI, which could indicate dissatisfaction with SI processes:

“When Sarah left [VOC] then maybe I will find a solution for I told you I will find a solution new another job where she will study another thing…I don’t think it is worth staying there for another year.” (Peter, T3)
Beatrice had a similar view of FE responsibility, but perceived parental involvement as key because of her core relationship with George:

“Well uh it’s not me to tell you that he is better but them to tell us that he is doing better or because we are parent we are at home you know what-they are doing.” (Beatrice, T3)

“I know George better than anyone because everything everytime when things doesn’t work for George I know sometime how to explain to her to him.” (Beatrice, T2)
4.2.4.2 Subtheme: Perception of YP’s difficulties.

It was apparent that parental beliefs about YP’s needs shaped their aspirations for the YP, expectations from SI and views about their involvement. These beliefs or views were in a state of flux, i.e. reflected ongoing adaptation and adjustment during the YP’s transition to employment.

Alexandra was appreciative of the notion of SIs and that Bob was going to engage with it. This optimism extended to include the ongoing changes in his placements to find the right fit for him:

“I think that them doing this type of internship and apprenticeship for children with special needs I think it’s really good. It’s amazing. You know because the employment level for children with disabilities is very very low… I’m very happy that he’s got this internship…It will help him a lot drastically I think.” (Alexandra, T1)

“Obviously once he gets settled back in and once they change what he is doing I think he will be a bit better.” (Alexandra, T2)

Some parents wished for normalised experiences and development, i.e. similar to other people of YP’s age, as cited in the aspirations theme and any discrepancy or incongruence may be difficult to cope with:

“Well I feel I feel sorry for her because the age is going everyday she’s going on 22. Next year she’s going to 23…I said look how long do you are you going to study all this how is 1+1=2, 2+2=3, 5+ how long are you going to do that…I feel very very upset about that in a way because it’s not going well for me because she’s age the age is going up now and she is not getting better.” (Peter, T1)

“When she go to 23 maybe or maybe but no at that age she should be able to know everything.” (Peter, T1)

“That’s the thing like I found really yeah I found really hard like this time lots of students goes to work.” (Amy, T1)

While Peter was hoping for Sarah to be able to accomplish tasks relative to her age, he also recognised that Sarah will benefit from access to easier opportunities. His reflections on her personality traits could possibly be indicative of her needs:

“I am looking for something which will be simple for her…easy yeah yeah.” (Peter, T3)

“I think she is uh see Sarah is the one who is so lazy she is sometimes lazy so sometimes actually because we are not here all the time so she does what she wants.” (Peter, T3)
Peter’s narrative also suggested that he was hoping to see a change in Sarah through the SI experience:

“Maybe we’ll get some the brains you know I don’t know how the slow the brain is too slow maybe as she’s in school doing all these things maybe gradually.” (Peter, T1)

For Beatrice, her perception of George’s difficulties influenced her rationale for being involved in his life:

“Cause George uh thinks because he thinks he got learning difficulty sometime he can forget to tell me.” (Beatrice, T1)

“When the boy is normal, it’s no problem. But you know when he’s no when he’s got difficulty sometime, you must always be involved.” (Beatrice, T1)

4.3 Summary of Main Findings.

Themes within RQ1: What are the hopes and aspirations of YP with mild and moderate LD and their parents of the supported internship programme?

- All YP and parents expressed a variety of hopes and aspirations linked to gaining employment and developing independence from the SI and YP’s adulthood. Parents also spoke about YP’s ongoing challenges linked to their aspirations.
- Both YP and parents wanted YP to gain paid employment as a consequence of the SI. Some YP’s hopes from the SI changed from T1 to T3, whereas parents’ views remained largely consistent. Parental hopes were centred around YP’s preparedness and readiness for employment as a consequence of the SI.
- Both YP and parents emphasised wanting YP to travel independently and develop some functional like skills during adulthood.
- While YP wanted to develop friendships and relationships during the SI and beyond, parents spoke about wanting YP to develop social interaction skills to achieve the same. Parents also elaborated on some barriers to YP’s well-being such as motivation, confidence and decision-making.
Themes within RQ2: How do YP with mild and moderate LD experience the transition from education to supported internships?

- All YP and parents expressed some challenges and growth dimensions that influenced YP’s transition to SI.
- Common challenges for most participants included YP’s social interaction difficulties and lack of knowledge and understanding of SI processes.
- Common areas of growth for YP from T1 to T3 included personal growth and relationships and skill development.
- YP further elaborated on some challenges and growth dimensions that emerged from their own SI experiences and the role of FE in supporting their transition.

Themes within RQ3: What is the perceived role of parents in supporting the transition of YP to supported internships?

- While YP indicated some ambivalence towards the nature of parental involvement during the SI, all parents had strong views in relation to their involvement.
- Parental views about involvement were mediated by their communication with FE and perceptions of YP’s difficulties.

Chapter five will elaborate on these research findings within the context of the current RQs and existing research.
Discussion

5.1 Overview

This study aimed to provide a platform for YP with mild and moderate LD and their parents to express their views about their preparedness for, and transition to, employment through an SI model from a person-centred perspective. Semi-structured interviews were facilitated at three time-points, i.e. before, at the beginning of, and midway through the SI with five YP with mild and moderate LD and their parents. YP interviews at the T2 and T3 time-points included the use of photo-elicitation as a means to enhance their engagement and participation with the research. Data was analysed in the form of within and cross-case studies through the use of a thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). All themes and sub-themes discussed below are derived from the cross-case analysis for YP and parents, informed by the within-case analysis for each case-study.

Research findings will be discussed in relation to the three RQs and within the context of existing research and psychological theories. Similarities, differences and links between the views of YP and parents within each RQ will be examined. This will be followed by a discussion of the implications of the findings for several stakeholders, including LAs, FE provisions and EPs. This chapter concludes with a reflection on the impact of this study on the researcher’s practice and an acknowledgement of the strengths, limitations and directions for future research.

5.2 Research Question 1: What are the hopes and aspirations of YP with mild and moderate LD and their parents of the supported internship programme?

This RQ can be answered by considering YPs and parents’ responses to the overarching themes of hopes and aspirations and aspirations and barriers, respectively.

Both YP and parents cited similar hopes and aspirations for the YP’s transition to adulthood, i.e. in relation to obtaining employment, developing independence and fostering relationships and social interaction skills. According to Henninger and Taylor (2014), these form the developmental tasks of adulthood and are often considered as outcomes of a successful transition to adulthood, for YP with or without LD. However,
they stated that these outcomes might not be relevant for YP with LD in current times considering YP's additional needs and the current socio-economic climate. This argument is contrary to the findings of this study. Their assumption could be based on research methodology which did not include YP's voices. Instead, their research cited more diverse parental goals, e.g. YP moving out of home, developing skills for daily functioning, having a productive role in society, developing constructive relationships within the community, etc. It is suggested that these diverse goals could be assimilated into the larger themes of employment, independence and relationships, as demonstrated in the findings of this study, discussed below.

Within this study, many aspirations expressed by participants transcended employment into adulthood, e.g. independence, relationships and social interaction and well-being; despite interview questions being confined to the remit of employment and SI. This could be an indication of the interconnectedness of the employment outcome with wider adulthood, as suggested by Allcock (2018). Also, all parents spoke about YP’s ongoing challenges which influenced their views. This indicates that transition to employment and adulthood is perhaps an area of concern for parents. Of note, there was little change in parental perceptions from T1 to T3.

While YP and parental aspirations indicated in the employment and independence subthemes may appear to be the same at the outset, there were some differences in the underlying details of each subtheme, as described below.

Within the employment subthemes, both YP and parents hoped for YP to achieve some form of relevant paid employment by the end of the SI. However, parents emphasised YP’s employment readiness, i.e. developing basic skills for employment. One of the readiness skills most pertinent to YP included identifying career interests. In that way, parent aspirations matched the functionality of the SI, which included a series of employment tasters designed to aid YP in exploring different work environments. Both aspirations and SI experiences were aimed at YP becoming more competent in the employment domain, a construct linked to self-determination theory. All YP started or contributed to some work experience within the provision they were based in and gradually moved to external employers to work in certain areas of interest. This indicates experimentation with different careers while staying connected
to support networks, i.e. being in employment while in education. This is consistent with the SI principles indicated in Figure 1.

In line with Heslop et al.’s (2002) research, both YP and parents wanted YP to be able to travel independently and develop some daily living and self-care skills in the future. YP wanted to live alone in the future (Aston et al., 2005), but this was not cited by parents, who placed more emphasis on wanting YP to gain knowledge of the world. Aspirations linked to independence could be linked to the self-determination construct of developing autonomy.

An interesting dichotomy arose within parental narratives: some parents wanted YP to develop independence in employment or life in general. However, they were worried about the YP losing support during the post-16 phase and acknowledged that it was difficult to come to terms with the YP’s emerging independence. This contradiction could be labelled as independence versus support. Issues of wanting independence and losing support have been separately documented by existing research (Biswas et al., 2017; Bowey & McLaughlin, 2006; Kessissoglu, 2000). However, only Henninger and Taylor’s (2014) research briefly acknowledged the connection between these aspirations. A possible interpretation of this finding could be that parents would like YP to receive just enough support to perform some tasks independently, such as living independently with some support. This interpretation could point towards the notion of interdependence in self-determination literature; an acknowledgement that individuals do not exist in a vacuum, and there need to be mechanisms of interaction with the environment to achieve autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This is akin to the person-context relationship in Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Alternatively, parents could be of the opinion that once YP acquire the necessary skills to be employed independently, they may require lesser or no support, i.e. initial provision and gradual withdrawal of support.

Consistent with Parmenter’s (2011) findings of the school-to-work transition as a form of preparedness for future employment and Wehmeyer et al.’s (2011) views about early work experiences predicting further employability, YP spoke about external influences on their aspirations. For Chloe, having work experience at secondary school helped her think of the future. In line with Heslop et al.’s (2002) research, Sarah commented that her parent’s emphasis on developing money skills
as a form of developing independence shaped her future goals. Both these external influences are situated in the YP's microsystem (immediate environment) and reflect the influence of YP's microsystems on their aspirations.

While the third subtheme for YP and parents may appear to be distinct from each other, i.e. *relationships* and *social interaction and well-being*, respectively, it is suggested that some elements of these subthemes may be complementary to each other. YP hoped to be able to maintain friendships and form relationships in their life. Parents were concerned about and wanted YP to develop social interaction skills to communicate with strangers, which can be considered as a *precursor* to forming relationships. Therefore, parents outlined the necessary skills to achieve the YP's aspirations of relationships. Both aspirations can be linked to the third psychological construct of self-determination, i.e. developing *relatedness*. While social interaction is a recognised area of need for people with ASD, parents of YP without ASD, e.g. Lucy, also cited this concern and aspiration.

In addition to *social interaction*, parents also spoke about YP's *well-being* as an area of concern and aspiration, which is consistent with parental views in Biggs and Carter's (2016) research and Wehmeyer's (2014) views. The well-being construct in relation to YP’s mental health will be further considered in RQ2.

Many goals identified for YP's future that were related to *independence*, e.g. being able to travel independently, develop money skills, or *social interaction*, e.g. being more comfortable in their communication with strangers, seemed to contribute to YP’s employability. This supports the notion that aspirations for the YP’s transition to adulthood are *interlinked*.

In the current study, parents spoke about the *process* of reaching aspirations, e.g. skills needed to accomplish a goal. Whereas, YP considered the *outcomes or product* of transition to adulthood.

There were relatively few changes in YP or parental aspirations across time, from T1 to T3, except for some re-evaluation of employment pathways and realisation of new goals for some YP.
Overall, it is suggested that the subthemes contributing to this RQ are consistent with the PfA outcomes of: a) employment; b) independent living; c) friendships, relationships and community; and d) good health.

5.3 Research Question 2: How do YP with mild and moderate LD experience the transition from education to supported internships?

This RQ can be answered by exploring two of the YPs’ overarching themes: ongoing challenges and growth dimensions; and two of the parents’ overarching themes: observed growth and aspirations and barriers.

It was apparent that YP did not experience a seamless or structured transition to the SI. Instead, the transition process could be categorised as ongoing (i.e. in progress over time) and compared to a continuum, with YP alternating between facing challenges and accomplishing growth during the SI process.

Challenges      Growth

Challenges faced by the YP will be discussed first, followed by dimensions of growth cited by both YP and parents.

There was some overlap between the challenges cited by YP and observed by parents. While YP had first-hand experience of the SI, parental views were based on their observations, knowledge of the SI processes and communication with the YP and FE provisions.

Within the YP’s overarching theme of ongoing challenges, the following subthemes emerged: uncertainty; initial workplace difficulties; and social interaction.

The uncertainty subtheme, i.e. most YP not being aware of the SI processes prior to and during the programme or what it may eventually culminate in, i.e. from T1 to T3, could perhaps be interpreted as lack of participation of YP in the SI’s decision-making processes. This is contrary to the person-centred approach and principle of self-determination. This also presents an example of the possible interplay of the social model of disability, i.e. a barrier located within the environment or society in preventing YP’s participation.
Heller at al. (2011) expressed that self-determination in employment is associated with the *knowledge of alternatives*, which helps people exert control over decision-making. Consistent with Dewson et al. (2004) and Aston et al.’s (2005) research, an element of uncertainty included YP not knowing much about the possible work placements on offer.

This uncertainty could also be a product of YP’s lack of preparation prior to the SI, contrary to Wistow and Schneider’s (2003) research where people with LD accessing an SE programme received support for interview skills and job applications. This does not imply that YP did not access any pre-SI preparation in this study; rather, support received may be inconsistent or not perceived as preparatory by YP.

Both principles of preparedness and involvement through decision-making form *best practices for transition planning*. These are supported by theory, such as self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 2000), research (Heslop et al., 2002; Hanson et al., 2017; Parmenter, 2011; Wistow & Schneider, 2003) and legislation, i.e. planning services together as part of a person-centred approach, included in the PfA strategy and the SEND Code of Practice (2015). According to Hanson et al. (2017), a person-centred approach that keeps the YP at the centre of transition planning is a key determinant of the success of transition programmes such as SIs. According to self-determination theory, being self-determined is not all about being autonomous or competent in making the choices, but having the *opportunities* to do so (Heller et al., 2011), which seemed to be lacking for YP in this study.

Particularly challenging for YP included *thinking about the future*. While none of the YP were sure about how their transition to adulthood would look like, this element was particularly distressing for YP with ASD, LD and mental health needs. The future, i.e. adulthood, represents the unknown, indicating the possibility of change and moving away from established routines. Therefore, this particular challenge for YP becomes a significant one. Within this study, it was apparent that YP had some insight into their mental health, although this was not measured quantitatively. Some YP received mental health and well-being support during the SI; consistent with Parmenter’s (2011) review which highlighted the importance of identifying social, emotional and behavioural support for people during SE. The role of YP’s insight into mental health symptoms was examined by Austin et al. (2018). However, the findings which predict
a negative connection between insight and mental health cannot be directly compared to the findings of this study due to methodological differences, i.e. quantitative versus qualitative data. However, it could be suggested that the domains of insight and mental health are linked.

Such challenges in future thinking were consistent from T1 to T3 and could have influenced YP’s perception of their hopes and aspirations. There is an important role for professionals in supporting YP to make the abstract future more concrete for them. This is further discussed in the implications section below.

This finding can also be linked to parental concerns about YP’s mental health and well-being in adulthood, which was prioritised over employment for YP. Parents indicated that this factor often influenced YP’s motivation to attend the SI. This is consistent with Hensel et al.’s (2007) findings which indicate that motivation constitutes an essential determinant of employment; also consistent with self-determination theory. For instance, Natalia initially required support and encouragement from her mother Amy to consider attending the SI; consistent with Amy’s concerns about her well-being at that time. As Natalia began to enjoy her time during the SI, Amy noticed an improvement in her mood and attendance, which reflects Natalia’s intrinsic motivation to attend the SI. Overall, it is suggested that YP and parental awareness and concerns about mental health are growing in prominence within research literature (Austin et al., 2018; Biggs & Carter, 2016; Crane et al., 2019).

The subtheme of initial workplace difficulties, which included YP’s on-the-job challenges such as coping with workload, using equipment, working outdoors, etc. are similar to the difficulties expressed by people with LD in Wistow and Schneider’s (2003) research. Some difficulties can be classified as environmental barriers, which suggest the influence of YP’s microsystem, e.g. work environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). These initial challenges cited by the YP, especially about skill development, are consistent with the acquisition stage of the instructional hierarchy (Haring, Lovitt, Eaton, & Hansen, 1978), which is a model of skill acquisition that divides the learning process into several levels. Acquisition is the first stage of learning when people learn to master the accuracy, i.e. correctness of skill through repetition and developing independence.
Further, the domain of social interaction was a common area of concern for participants. YP considered the unpredictability of social interaction with unfamiliar people as challenging. This could frequently occur when at work, especially during a retail placement. This challenge linked directly to the observed growth domain of relationships, i.e. YP developing teamwork skills, benefitting from social inclusion, engaging in peer support mechanisms, developing soft skills in the workplace and emerging confidence and friendships through partaking in the SI. All these elements of relational growth can be linked to the third psychological construct of self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 2000), i.e. the need for relatedness.

The element of social inclusion, i.e. feeling accepted and valued by peers and the wider community was consistent with Wistow and Schneider’s (2003) research. The development of social interaction skills and increased opportunities for socialisation provided by SE programmes was recognised by Beyer et al. (2016) and Kaehne (2014).

Peer support emerged as another aspect of relational growth for YP who spoke about taking up supportive roles towards others at FE. This could reflect YP’s need to assume more responsibility, due to a perceived change in position from student-to-intern or internalising increased expectations set by the FE staff. There is little mention in existing research about this finding, except for Kaehne and Beyer’s (2013) research, exploring the use of peers as instructional support mechanisms during SE instead of job coaches. However, there was no evidence of the success of that model. Within this study, peer support emerged as an informal support mechanism during the SI. This finding emerged from the YP’s narratives only, and there was little mention of this in the parental views. Parents may not necessarily be aware of this process or may not view it as a growth aspect for YP.

Other growth-based subthemes included: personal growth, knowledge and skill development. These dimensions are largely consistent with outcomes of SE demonstrated by existing research. Regarding knowledge, the emergence of work discipline and adhering to formal work rules emerged as an outcome of Beyer et al.’s (2016) research. In terms of personal growth, parents spoke about YP feeling valued as part of the SI, consistent with Wistow and Schneider’s (2003) research. An increase in personal attributes of confidence, self-esteem and decision-making abilities is also
consistent with existing research into various SE programmes (Beyer et al., 2016; DfE, 2014; Kaehne, 2014).

Skill development through SI, specifically, functional and technical skills, was recognised in the DfE evaluation (2014). YP cited that they enjoyed the practical nature of SI, which was different to being a student, similar to YP views in Beyer et al.’s (2016) research.

YP and parents’ views are mostly congruent with each other in relation to YP’s dimensions of growth during the SI. While the growth-based overarching themes represent SI’s outcomes, it is suggested that these outcomes are a product of the transition to SI, rather than its conclusion. Some elements of growth could reflect attempts to overcome the challenges cited earlier.

The role of the FE provision, i.e. a facet of the YP’s microsystem and a contextual variable (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) in supporting the YP’s transition to employment from their perspective also emerged as a key finding, which included:

a) Support from job coaches: included on-the-job support through systematic instruction and reflective support during the SI. This formed part of the core SI principles (DfE, 2014b) and was recommended by Parmenter (2011). YP’s satisfaction with job coach support matched findings from Wistow and Schneider’s (2003) research.

b) Support from staff members in highlighting YP’s areas of strength positively influenced YP’s perception of certain careers, consistent with Kilsby and Beyer’s (2002) research findings.

c) Decision-making for the SI: The notion of FE leading SI decisions is somewhat contrary to best practice, legislation and self-determination theory which promote YP’s involvement (Hanson et al., 2017; Heller et al., 2011; Parmenter, 2011; Shogren, 2013). However, this indicates the significant role of FE provisions in determining the nature and direction of YP’s transition to employment, similar to Heslop et al.’s (2002) findings. This was applicable for most YP in VOC except for Bob in the NR college, indicating the domain-specificity of this finding in this study.

Overall, this RQ discusses the ongoing transition of YP during the SI, which comprises both challenges and growth for the YP. Most of YP’s challenges stayed
consistent throughout T1 to T3, whereas growth dimensions were proportionate to YP’s experiences. Some YP could have achieved the best fit of work experiences during the SI, but for YP such as Bob, this trial-and-error approach continued from T1 to T3. It was apparent that the challenges and growth experienced by YP during the SI were not limited to employment. They influenced many personal attributes of YP such as self-confidence, well-being and developing a supportive attitude towards others.

5.4 Research Question 3: What is the perceived role of parents in supporting the transition of YP to supported internships?

This RQ can be addressed by exploring a YP subtheme: *parental involvement* and two of the parents’ overarching themes: *parental experiences of SI* and *parental beliefs*. Parental views are more prominent in this RQ, as they held stronger opinions about their involvement in transition processes than YP. This gave rise to some differences in participant views, explored further.

While existing research has documented parental involvement at the transition to adulthood stage (Curryer et al., 2015; McTier et al., 2016) and YP’s need to be autonomous, there is little discussion of the conflicting nature of these two transition practices within the post-16 domain. Parents, i.e. part of YP’s microsystem, often constitute one of the most significant contextual influences for YP with LD (Allcock, 2018), even during the transition to adulthood phase.

As observed in YP’s subtheme of *parental involvement*, YP were largely ambivalent and unsure of the extent of parental involvement in the SI, from T1 to T3. YP stated that parents offered some support to reflect or provide advice on the SI. While YP in Dewson et al. (2004) and Aston et al.’s (2005) research indicated a similar role of parents in employment processes, parents were the most prominent sources of influence on their employment processes, which was not the case with YP in this study. It could be assumed that interpreting YP’s views about parental involvement is based on the differences between YP’s perceptions of *direct involvement* and *indirect influences* which may not be as apparent and could be embedded in daily life routines. Perhaps, YP’s ambivalence towards parental involvement could be an expression of an emerging sense of *autonomy* that is typically associated with the transition to adulthood (NICE, 2018). YP’s autonomy to make their own decisions, one of which
includes determining the extent of parent involvement, is supported by the Mental Capacity Act (DCA, 2005) in the UK.

Parental views, expressed through the overarching themes of *parental experiences of SI* and *parental beliefs*, indicated inconsistencies in perceived parental involvement in SI processes. Most of the parental experiences and beliefs stayed consistent from T1 to T3. Some parents described instances of being included in SI-based decisions for YP and being updated about YP’s progress or changes in routines. Other parents expressed a lack of parental involvement in SI processes, with an aspiration to be more included. The latter set of parents’ experiences are contrary to existing research, legislation and guidance which have advocated the important role of parents in supporting CYP during key times of transition (DfE & DoH, 2015; Francis et al., 2018; Hanson et al., 2017).

The benefits of parental involvement in YP’s lives at the transition to adulthood stage is generally associated with positive outcomes for YP such as increased wages and hours spent in employment, greater possibilities for independent living and better community adjustment (Case, 2001). Being included in decision-making and information-sharing processes about YP was important to all parents. This discrepancy in parental views of wanting to be involved and their actual experiences created an *expectation versus reality gap* for some parents during the SI. In the researcher’s opinion, parental involvement was mediated by several factors, explored henceforth.

Similar to YP’s views expressed through the *uncertainty* theme in RQ2, all parents of YP associated with the VOC provision expressed *a lack of knowledge and understanding* of SI (before, during and after) processes, which included available career options for the YP. Understanding the transition mechanisms is essential to make or support informed decisions and uncertainty; therefore, limits parental involvement in some situations.

In relation to RQ1, while all parents did elaborate on their concerns and aspirations for the YP, some were unsure of what the SI could lead into. This could be considered as lack of information sharing with parents or parents possibly not feeling content about the possibilities presented by the SI programme. As mentioned by Kilsby and Beyer (2002), it is not uncommon for parents to consider an SE programme as a trial
and a means for the YP to be occupied, rather than have a positive outcome. It could be the role of the FE provision (VOC) to disseminate information better or reassure parents of the usefulness of the SI for YP.

The *parent-professional relationship*, i.e. the relationship between parents and staff members of FE provisions, constitutes another important mechanism of parental involvement in transition planning. In terms of Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) bioecological theory, this relationship is part of the YP’s *mesosystem*, i.e. influence of surrounding environments. Case (2001) stated that this relationship is usually characterised by a *disparity*, such that parents often lack the knowledge, experience and power, i.e. not self-determined in themselves to participate in decision-making for the CYP. This was true for at least three of five parents in this study. The DfE (2014, p.7) advocated for greater parental engagement as part of the SI programme by placing responsibility on the FE provisions to facilitate the same: “they should establish a relationship with parents early on, promoting the successes of the programme, and thereafter provide regular communications to maintain the confidence and support of parents and carers”. This implies that an equitable relationship includes *communication* with parents, which forms a parent subtheme in this study. The DfE (2014b) proposition is similar to parental views in this study, which placed the responsibility of communication on the provisions.

This dissatisfaction with the information-sharing processes and parent-professional relationships could be indicative of: a) the need for change in FE provisions’ communication policy with parents; and b) efforts in improving parental engagement. However, this interpretation may not be valid for all provisions and is limited to a single FE provision, i.e. VOC. Nevertheless, it is evident that parent-professional communication and parental involvement are both significant areas of importance for all parents and need to be considered during the transition to adulthood stage. Case (2001) presented the possibility of integrated and reciprocal communication and decision-making between parents and professionals.

For some parents, clear communication pathways and some involvement in decision-making corresponded to a notion of *parent empowerment*. However, this expectation was not fulfilled for other parents, indicating a lack of equitable partnership with their provision that corresponded to little to no parental involvement in the SI and
thus, *parent disempowerment*. Thus, two variations of parental involvement, including parent-professional communication emerged, corresponding to the existence of both empowerment and disempowerment for parents.

Parent disempowerment elicited an *emotional impact*, i.e. feelings of frustration and distress on parents. Others were determined to become more involved in the YP’s transition to adulthood after the SI, i.e. transform the lack of control into familial involvement about future decisions. In addition, there was a larger issue on the horizon for parents, i.e. one of the growing differences in YP’s abilities in comparison to other peers of their age. This *comparison against normative standards* was apparent in parental views in this study, also captured by existing research (Biswas et al., 2017; Sosnowy et al., 2018). This was evident in parents aspiring for normalised experiences for YP, growing difficulties in coming to terms with the longevity of the YP’s difficulties, i.e. YP will need some form of support for an extended period of time and recognising that YP’s progress to date did not match parental expectations. These expectations and comparisons point towards the *social construction of LD*, which differs for each parent and is influenced by societal norms. These constitute part of the YP’s macrosystem, i.e. values based in YP’s environment.

It is suggested that these factors contributed towards parental attitudes and expectations from the SI and FE provisions, thus representing a facet of transition, i.e. *acceptance and adjustment* for the parents themselves, as part of the YP’s exosystem (indirect influences). While parental transition in tandem with YP’s transition is somewhat acknowledged by existing research, previous studies pointed towards parents’ midlife transitions or changes in family dynamics as a result of YP’s employment, which did not appear in this study (Brown, 2016; Todd & Jones, 2005).

All the factors explored above, i.e. the expectations versus reality of parental involvement, difficulties in coping with YP’s independence, ongoing comparisons with other YP, adjusting expectations of YP’s abilities and needs, and emotional responses to lack of communication with professionals, suggest the existence of *non-finite loss* in different forms for all parents (Brown, 2016; Bruce & Schultz, 2001; 2003). The notion of non-finite loss is somewhat explanatory of many parent views and opinions expressed in this study. Similar to Brown’s (2016) views, this feeling of ongoing grief
could have elicited the strong views from parents about being involved in the SI processes.

It is suggested that there could be a link between parental concerns and YP’s autonomy in the SI. For instance, parents of YP who appeared to be well-settled, autonomous and who experienced a smooth transition to the SI expressed the need to be more involved. Parents of YP having an ongoing transition during the SI were more content with their involvement and seemed to promote self-determination for the YP. This dichotomy is similar to the continuum proposed by Curryer et al. (2015), which includes promoting self-determination and familial protectiveness as its two poles.

While it may appear that a ‘solution’ to parental concerns would be to ensure maximum parental involvement at the YP’s transition to adulthood stage, this is not consistent with some YP’s growing sense of autonomy and self-determination. Herein lies the dilemma for professionals and other stakeholders: where does the balance lie between promoting YP’s self-determination versus parental involvement, when legislation supports the former and transition best practice promotes the latter? There may not be a one-size-fits-all solution to this dilemma. A resolution could involve consulting with YP around the boundaries of information sharing with parents and extent of parental involvement at the outset, pending reservations around YP’s mental capacity.

Overall, this RQ addresses a complex interaction of factors which are both internal to the parents, i.e. YP’s microsystem and also externally based in the environment or society, i.e. YP’s mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem. Which factors preceded or directly influenced the others is debatable. However, the complexity and interconnectedness of parent attributes during YP’s transition to adulthood, including parental attitudes, perceptions of YP’s difficulties, experiences of SI, involvement and parent-professional relationship, is acknowledged and highlighted in this RQ.

5.5 Findings and Frameworks

In this section, the research findings will be considered in the context of theory and research-based frameworks introduced in chapter two.
5.5.1 Elements of a good transition experience. The five C’s, proposed by Heslop et al. (2002), can be considered relevant to the transition to adulthood and employment domains, as discussed below:

a) Communication: Between YP and parents, YP and FE provisions (microsystems) and parents and FE provisions (mesosystem) emerged as essential factors impacting on the challenges and growth experienced by participants.

b) Coordination: Between different members involved in SI processes, i.e. YP, parents and FE provisions varied across different case-studies and was associated with different parental expectations.

c) Comprehensiveness: Systematic instruction training for all job coaches supporting YP and SI outcomes being included in the YP’s EHC plans.

d) Continuity: Of transition planning, from the earlier years, for instance, secondary school to post-16 was applicable for some YP.

e) Choice: The opportunities, or lack thereof, in some cases, available for YP to be able to make decisions regarding their future, i.e. self-determination and dimensions of parental involvement are attributes of this sector.

The development of these 5 C’s in practice is addressed in the next section, i.e. research implications, in greater detail.

5.5.2 Socio-ecological theory of self-determination. Embedded throughout the findings and discussion are notions of self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and the influence of the bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The research findings indicate the relevance of the bioecological model. The process of interaction of the person (YP) with contextual influences have the potential to reciprocally influence the development of self-determination within the current legislative climate (time), across different ecological systems such as home, FE provision or work placement. Another important interpretation includes the influence of said contextual factors on parental perceptions and roles, which is an indirect influence on YP. Thus, it can be said that the socio-ecological theory of self-determination, i.e. the person-environment fit, is of relevance for YP with mild and moderate LD at the transition to employment stage.
To summarise, elements from Shogren’s (2013) framework pertinent to this study are given below:

*Table 6*

Factors influencing self-determination based on Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) contexts of development

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Contextual level</th>
<th>Influencing factors by Shogren (2013) and relevance to current study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Microsystem</strong></td>
<td>• Disability type: nature of difficulties: LD, ASD, etc.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Race/Ethnicity/Culture: differences in expressions of self-</td>
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<td></td>
<td>determined behaviour and expectations of autonomy across the</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lifespan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Family factors: promoting self-determination at home, parental</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>perceptions of self-determination</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Social networks: positive role of social skills, friendships/</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>relationships in promoting self-determination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mesosystem</strong></td>
<td>• Teacher characteristics: job coach training, time spent with</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>staff</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• School programme characteristics: SI model devised by the DfE</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2014b), variations adapted by different provisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Opportunities for self-determination (across different contexts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Other disability service system factors (community support)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Macrosystem</strong></td>
<td>• Cultural norms &amp; beliefs (societal perceptions of disability that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>influence parental views)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Public policy (legislation such as the SEND Code of Practice (2015) and Mental Capacity Act (2005))</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.6 Research Implications

The findings of this study have potential implications for various stakeholders at different levels of the YP’s ecosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), primarily, LAs, educational provisions, i.e. secondary schools/FE provisions and EPs. This section is based on some key and unique messages from this research.

Participants’ uncertainty about SI processes and YP’s future requires transition planning from the earlier stages, i.e. at least from 14 years of age or at the secondary school stage, as advised by the SEND Code of Practice (2015). This could involve working with secondary school staff and parents to promote the notion of self-determination, and provide opportunities to promote YP’s abilities and understanding of independence and decision-making abilities from this stage onwards. YP also need additional support to make links between current tasks and future planning, due to difficulties with future thinking.

Since parents find YP’s transition to adulthood difficult, there need to be mechanisms of communication and support for parents at the post-16 stage, for instance, a parent communication policy in FE institutions. The dilemma between parental difficulties in letting go and YP’s self-determination needs to be recognised and addressed sensitively by stakeholders. Most importantly, there needs to be consistency in adopting transition practices at the post-16 stage, across different FE settings.

The research implications are presented in terms of a Preparing for Adulthood framework, divided into two sections, i.e. implications for working with parents and YP. As the systems around the YP are connected, so are the implications. Most of the implications are targeted towards removing environmental barriers that prevent YP’s inclusion in society or providing support for YP to participate in their decision-making, in line with the social model of disability approach adopted in this study.
### 5.6.1 Preparing for Adulthood Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implications for Local Authorities (LAs)</th>
<th>Implications for Educational Provisions</th>
<th>Implications for Educational Psychologists (EPs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Create support groups or forums for parents of YP (post-16) with SEND in the LA.</td>
<td>• At the secondary school level, schools need to have conversations with parents about promoting young people's independence and decision-making abilities.</td>
<td>• Work with educational provisions to facilitate systemic work with parents, providing a psychological perspective on the importance of fostering independence and self-determination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Raise awareness about the Mental Capacity Act in an accessible manner for YP and parents on the Local Offer.</td>
<td>• At the post-16 level:</td>
<td>• Within the Educational Psychology Service's post-16 policy, include a service position on working with parents which takes into account the principles of the Mental Capacity Act (2005).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Acknowledge that the transition to adulthood for YP is a difficult time for some parents.</td>
<td>• Discuss the principles of mental capacity with YP and families during meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Create and maintain a consistent communication policy for parents which outlines information-sharing and involvement protocol.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Create opportunities for parent engagement and networking through coffee mornings, seminars/workshops.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 5. Implications for stakeholders 1 – Working with parents/families*
Implications for Local Authorities (LAs)

- Improve information sharing of post-16 options for YP with SEND through the Local Offer, mandated by the SEND Code of Practice (2015).
- Consider ways to facilitate a smooth transition from children to adult services for YP with SEND, which includes education, employment, social care, mental health, etc.

Implications for Educational Psychologists (EPs)

- Support educational provisions in preparing for adulthood from the earliest years (SEND Code of Practice, 2015), which includes forming pathways to achieve YP and parents' hopes and aspirations by using person-centred tools such as MAPS (making action plans) and PATHS (Planning alternative tomorrows with hope). The use of these tools will also enable young people to think about the future in more concrete terms.
- Support young people to present their views at annual reviews or other meetings by using person-centred tools to elicit their views such as the MOSAIC approach (Clark, 2001), Wikis (personal websites) and photo-elicitation.
- Work with teaching assistants (TAs) in secondary school to promote young people's independence.
- Provide training on person-centred approaches for FE staff.
- When writing statutory advice, form outcomes and provision that promote self-determination and take into account YP's transition needs.

Implications for Educational Provisions

- Provide opportunities for young people to be able to make decisions about things that are important to them.
- Ensure that young people's voice is at the heart of any decisions made about their future.
- Consider young people's mental health needs at the transition to adulthood and employment stage and signpost towards appropriate external agencies as required.

Figure 6. Implications for stakeholders 2 – Working with young people
5.7 Reflections

5.7.1 Reflections on practice

Some contradictions in research findings, such as expectations versus reality gap in parental hopes from SI or the independence versus support contrast in YP and parental views were surprising to the researcher as they moved away from traditional expectations of consistency. These helped the researcher to consider the complexity and individuality of working at the transition to adulthood stage in her personal practice as a TEP, influencing consultation practices for YP and parents.

Another personal developmental point included accepting and coming to terms with 'real-world' research challenges, especially during the participant recruitment process. Through engaging in this research, the researcher consolidated and expanded her critical understanding of the national context and legislation, specific to the post-16 stage. This has increased the researcher’s competence in working in this sector. While not a conclusive finding, there were some differences in participant views, especially related to YP’s self-determination that could be attributed to cultural attributes; the researcher is now more mindful of such possibilities in her post-16 practice. Coming from a different region, i.e. the Middle East, in its infancy of inclusive frameworks, the researcher has realised the value of national legislation in protecting the needs of vulnerable populations through engaging in this research.

5.7.1.1 Dissemination plans. The research findings were discussed during an EPS team meeting at the focus LA. The rich discussions influenced the formation of the earlier implications section and will influence the drafting of a post-16 policy in the EPS. One-page, accessible research briefings will be shared with participants who opted to receive them. The colleges involved in this research were also contacted to disseminate the research findings. Key findings and implications will be discussed during a meeting of the 14-25 Transition Operations team; directly influencing the operationalisation of SIs within the focus LA in the future. The researcher also intends to publish this study in a peer-reviewed journal targeted at an EP audience. These plans are consistent with emancipatory research practices.

5.7.2 Strengths and significance of this study. It is suggested that the strengths of the research lie in its methodology: a) the longitudinal research design, i.e. multiple
data-collection points which provided an opportunity to hear participant voices in depth; b) opportunities to use accessible means to gain informed consent and views of the YP, including photo-elicitation, which could be successfully used in further participatory research; and c) data collection from two participant groups which enabled triangulation of perspectives. These practices added to the rigour and trustworthiness of obtained data. A further strength is the cultural diversity and variation of the participants (notwithstanding the small sample size), which is reflective of the focus LA’s demographics. Although the sample was not large enough to comment on differences in participants’ perspectives, there were variations in parental perceptions of YP’s needs or their roles that could perhaps be a function of culture.

To an extent, this timely research filled a gap in national literature in highlighting the voice of the YP contributing to a limited evidence-base of an under-researched population in the SEND domain, i.e. YP with mild and moderate LD, about a widely-implemented SE programme, i.e. Sls. The findings also yielded some interesting dichotomies in parent-YP views which must be considered when working with such populations at the transition stage. Potential new lines of enquiry are further explored below.

5.7.3 Limitations of this study. The following challenges encountered during the research process are acknowledged. Firstly, there was an unequal representation of participants from the FE provisions, i.e. four YP were based at VOC, while only one YP, i.e. Bob, was linked to the NR college. This could have influenced some findings in one direction and limited the applicability of findings to other provisions. However, only a limited number of participants who met the inclusion criteria were accessible to the researcher during the recruitment process, despite the broad inclusion criterion based on adaptive functioning. This disproportionality was also one of the reasons why the provisions did not form units of case-studies to be compared with each other. Secondly, the number of participants, case-studies and contexts, i.e. one focus LA, was limited in this study. Ideally, this study would include more participants across multiple LAs to enable greater comparability and transferability of findings. Given greater breadth of word-count, it would have been useful to represent the within-case analyses in the findings chapter instead of the appendices, for the readers to be able to make the connections between similarities in case findings before summarising
through the cross-case analysis. Thirdly, it would have been beneficial to add an additional set of interviews at the end of the SI to enable a comparison of change or continuity in participants’ views throughout the entire SI. Fourthly, views of fathers were underrepresented in this study, due to uncontrollable variables. Fifthly, while this study was participatory in its ideology, methodological approaches that could be termed as participatory (except for photo-elicitation) could be strengthened; YP’s involvement in the conceptualisation, data collection or analysis processes would have been beneficial. Lastly, while the inclusion criteria were set out to include YP with mild and moderate LD, the significant overlap of YP’s needs, especially ASD, was unexpected. Perhaps more consideration to this overlap could be given before setting the criteria. However, the two-pronged approach to participant selection ensured the validity and comprehensiveness of the criteria.

Most of these challenges could be attributed to the pragmatics of ‘real-world’ research and limited timeline of this study. Without the latter constraint, a comprehensive description of the within-case analysis before the cross-case analysis would be useful to present in chapter four.

5.7.4 Directions for future research. The research findings have given rise to several directions for future research within the post-16 domain for YP with SEND. There needs to be more insight into the views of YP and parents about the perceived role of parents in relation to different transition outcomes. Consideration needs to be given to examining evidence-based, collaborative approaches that promote YP’s self-determination while providing opportunities for parental engagement. Views of parents/carers need to be further considered, in addition to cultural differences in familial perceptions. YP with LD’s views on mental health within the employment domain could also be considered further.

5.8 Conclusion

The findings from this study were largely consistent with existing research into the experiences of people with mild/moderate LD, unspecified LD or ASD, in contexts different to that of the UK. This suggests the applicability and transferability of existing findings to the national context.
YP’s transition to employment and adulthood appeared to be interlinked in this study. There was some contradiction in parental hopes in wanting YP to be independent, yet access support during the SI or everyday life. This was also apparent in YP’s developing autonomy versus parental support aspirations. This dichotomy is akin to a self-determination versus familial protectiveness continuum that was a characteristic of the YP’s transition to adulthood. Nevertheless, this study demonstrated the consistency of emerging self-determination from YP’s views and a lack of opportunities to demonstrate their involvement in matters pertaining to them.

YP and parental participation during the SI was underpinned by their knowledge and understanding of related processes, which could be improved in most cases. Overall, YP’s transition to employment through SIs could only be described as ongoing; alternating between challenges and growth, indicating the complexity of this transition phase. However, thinking about the future appeared to be incredibly difficult for many YP, an area in which they need to be supported from secondary school onwards. Hence, there emerged a need to operationalise (or make more practical) the notions of adulthood, independence and what the future could entail for these YP.

Parental experiences of SI were linked to the communication-relationship-involvement triad with FE provisions, which was experienced as either positive or negative by the parents. This was possibly influenced by parents’ ongoing sense of adaptation and adjustment to YP’s needs during the transition to adulthood phase. The interconnectedness of parental attitudes and their experiences of the SI also emerged through this study.

This study aimed to overcome some of the perceived limitations of existing research and achieved this to a large extent: the study’s timely nature contributed to the implementation-research gap for SIs in the UK and explored views of a population that is generally underrepresented in research, i.e. YP with mild and moderate LD. Having specific yet comprehensive inclusion criteria promoted the transferability of findings. The application of research findings within the current national context presents some unique challenges and considerations for this population, mostly related to YP’s self-determination, i.e. preparedness, information-sharing and opportunities for decision-making. The most prominent implications arising from this study are related to reinforcing the core principles embedded in legislation such that transition practices
become more consistent across different contexts, providing YP with LD the opportunities to make their own decisions, with the support of systems around them.

To conclude, the voices of YP with SEND encapsulate the essence of this research:
“*I belong in society. Engage me in vocational training. I want to contribute. The services I need during my adult life should be guided by self-determination, relationships, and inclusion in all the activities of my community. Your goal must be to adapt the environment I have to face and modify settings and attitudes. It also will make our society better.*” (Fuentes, 2014, p.1146).
References


Department for Education. (2014b). *Supported Internships: Guidance for further education colleges, sixth form in academies, maintained and non-maintained schools, independent specialist providers, other providers of study programmes and local authorities.* London, UK: DfE Publications.


Appendices

Appendix A - Details of the literature search

The researcher used the following combinations of terms during the literature search process:

- Transition to employment AND learning difficulties OR learning disabilities OR intellectual disabilities
- Transition to employment AND mild learning disabilities OR moderate learning disabilities
- Supported internships AND mild OR moderate learning disabilities AND United Kingdom
- Voice of young people with learning disabilities AND transition to employment
- Facilitators of transition to employment AND learning disabilities AND United Kingdom
- Barriers OR limitations of transition to employment AND learning disabilities AND United Kingdom
- mild learning disabilities AND supported employment AND United Kingdom
- moderate learning disabilities AND supported employment AND United Kingdom
- intellectual disabilities AND supported employment AND United Kingdom
- social care AND transition to employment AND United Kingdom
- vocational experiences young people with learning disabilities AND United Kingdom
- qualitative research OR interviews AND supported employment AND United Kingdom
- Self-determination AND intellectual disabilities AND employment
- Self-determination AND transition
- Supported employment AND autism AND United Kingdom
- autism transition to work systematic review AND United Kingdom
- supported employment learning disability AND United Kingdom
- parent perspectives learning disabilities AND employment
- supported employment learning disability AND United Kingdom
The researcher searched for the above titles in the following databases and academic search engines:

- British Education Index (EBSCOhost);
- Dawsonera (ebooks);
- Digital Education Resource Archive;
- EmeraldInsight;
- Google Scholar;
- IOE Eprints;
- ProQuest Central;
- ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global;
- PsycINFO (for US based research);
- UCL Explore;
- United Kingdom Parliamentary Papers (ProQuest); and
- Wiley.

The researcher hand-searched for some references from the articles obtained from the literature search. In addition, due to a lesser number of results obtained from limiting the search to research published from 2010-2018, the search criterion was widened further.

The research presented in the literature review of this report were considered by the researcher on the basis of several factors which include consistency with the current research’s aims, research design, participant characteristics (mild/moderate LD or unspecified LD) or application of past research’s limitations or directions for future research within the current research.
Appendix B - Research Information Sheet for FE Colleges

Title of Study: Preparing for Employment: An exploration of the transition experiences of young people with mild and moderate learning difficulties and their families of a supported internship programme.

Department: Psychology & Human Development

Name & Contact Details of the Researcher: Diksha Narendra Laungani

Research Supervisor: Dr Dawn Male

Dear Head Teacher/Operations Manager,

Your FE college is being invited to take part in a doctoral (DEdPsy) research project, looking into the experiences of young people with mild/moderate learning difficulties in your provision who will be undertaking a supported internship programme during the next academic year (2018-2019) and their families.

Before you decide to voluntarily take part in this research, it is important for you as the designated person leading the supported internship programme, to understand why the research is being done and what participation will involve. Please take some time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with the researcher in case anything is not clear or if you would like more information. This study has been granted ethical approval by the Research Ethics Committee at the UCL Institute of Education and will meet all ethical requirements as set out by the British Psychological Society (BPS)’ Code of Ethics.

This research will seek to provide a platform for young people with mild and moderate learning difficulties and their families to express their views about the preparedness for and transition to employment from a person-centred perspective. Through a qualitative exploration, this research aims to highlight the hopes and aspirations of the young people and their families prior to the supported internship experience and their perceptions about the facilitators and barriers to employment during the supported internship experience.

The potential implications of this research could point towards the importance of including the views of young people and the support networks around them in making decisions that have a considerable impact on their transition to adulthood. The research findings could also support the Local Authority, FE provisions and other agencies such as charities who promote and fund supported employment programmes in considering the needs and wishes of the young people in planning similar programmes or future pathways for them.
Participation is entirely voluntary and the refusal to participate will involve no implications for your provision at all. Should you choose to participate, you will have the choice to withdraw your support at any time. Approximately 2-3 young people and families from your provision will be approached to participate. In each case, written consent will be obtained from each young person and their parent.

Data will be collected through the facilitation of individual interviews with each parent and young person at three stages i.e., once before the commencement of the supported internship between May-July 2018, a follow-up during September 2018 and a final round of interviews in December 2018. Each interview is expected to take between 20-40 minutes. With your consent, all interviews will be conducted at (FE provision) as the location will provide familiarity to all the participants. The researcher will endeavour to visit the work placement to build rapport with the young people with prior consent. The young person/job coaches will be asked to click photographs of the young person on work placement and use them as a prompt to guide discussions during the interviews.

All pictures will be clicked using the FE’s electronic devices and returned to the young person immediately after the interviews, except for any pictures that might not depict any identifiable person, which might be retained with the researcher with the young person’s permission. The interviews will be audio recorded for transcription and stored in encrypted locations. Both parents and young people will be made aware of their rights to participate and withdraw from the study. No ethical concerns are anticipated after conducting this study, but college procedures regarding signposting will be applied if required. All confidentiality procedures will be followed by the researcher such that the young people, their families, (FE provision) and placement companies will not be identifiable in any reports or publications.

The researcher will design a research brief and share it with you and the families after the completion of the research. The researcher will also produce a one-page, visual summary of the findings to be shared with the young people.

The researcher will be happy to clarify any further aspects of the study or address any concerns if required. If you would like to provide consent for your college to participate in this research, kindly sign the attached consent form and send it to [REMOVED] at the earliest. Please keep this information sheet with you.

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering to take part in this research study.

Diksha Narendra Laungani
Trainee Educational Psychologist/Researcher
UCL Institute of Education
Research Title: Preparing for Employment - An exploration of the transition experiences of young people with mild and moderate learning disabilities and their families of a supported internship programme

Researcher: Diksha Narendra Laungani

FE College Consent Form

If you are happy to participate, please complete this consent form and return to Diksha Laungani via email [redacted] by the 1st of May 2018.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I have read and understood the information sheet about the research.

☐ [ ]

I agree for the researcher to contact the young people who will undertake the supported internships in 2018-2019 and their parents.

☐ [ ]

I agree to share relevant details of the young people with the researcher once consent has been gained from them and their parents.

☐ [ ]

I understand the role of the young people and their parents in this research.

☐ [ ]

I agree for the interviews to be held at the school/college as it will provide a more familiar location for the young people and their parents.

☐ [ ]

I understand that the researcher may visit the young people at their work placement to build rapport and interact with them.

☐ [ ]

I agree for the researcher to ask the young people to click photographs of themselves with support on work placement through the electronic devices available at the school/college.

☐ [ ]

I understand that only some photographs will be shared with the researcher after the interview with the express verbal consent of the young people, only if the photographs do not contain any identifiable person/information for the purposes of being used in the researcher's report.

☐ [ ]

I understand that the school/college is free to withdraw their participation from the research at any time without giving a reason and if so, then any data contributed will not be used.

☐ [ ]

I understand that the information gathered in this research will form the basis of a report and that the findings may be used in future reports and/or presentations.

☐ [ ]

I understand that the researcher will make every effort to preserve confidentiality in this research such that the identity of the young people, their parents, the school/college and placement provider will not be identifiable in any report/presentation.

☐ [ ]

I understand that I am free to contact the researcher at any time to ask any questions about the research.

☐ [ ]

Name ____________________________ Signed ____________________________

Name of provision __________________ Date ____________________________

Name and email address of safeguarding lead at provision ____________________________
Hello,

My name is Diksha Laungani. I am training to be an Educational Psychologist. I often work with children and young people to find out what helps them to be happy and succeed at school and college.

I am interested to talk to you about your internship beginning in September and hear your experiences about your work because I think it is important for people to understand your views.

I would like to talk to you 3 times during this year:

- **JULY**
  - July 2018
- **SEP**
  - September 2018
- **DEC**
  - December 2018

Our talk:

- Will last for 30-40 minutes.
- Will be audio recorded.
- We will talk at your school/college.
- You can ask to stop or leave anytime.
- We can ask your teacher/job coach to sit with us if you want.
I will ask you to take pictures of yourself at work and bring to our talk. You can then tell me about your pictures. I will not take away any pictures with me unless you say so.

What we talk about will be private, but if you tell me anything that is harmful to yourself or others, I will have to tell someone about it.

I will listen to our talk and write a report about it. I will make sure that your name or details do not appear in any report that I may share with others.
I will send you an easy report to read later.

Do you want to take part?

Yes, please!

Complete the consent form and give it to __________ (key person at school/college).

I will come to your school/college to meet you and you can ask me any questions then.

You can also email me on __________.

I will set a date/time with you to meet in July.

See you soon!

No, thank you!

No problem. Thank you for your time!

Tick 'NO' on the consent form and give it to __________ (key person at school/college).

I will not contact you again.

All the best! 😊
Title of Study: Preparing for Employment: An exploration of the transition experiences of young people with mild and moderate learning difficulties and their families of a supported internship programme.

Please circle your preferred options:

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<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am happy to talk about my internship experiences with Diksha.</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✘</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have read and understood the information sheet.</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✘</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am happy to participate in all 3 discussions with Diksha.</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✘</td>
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<tr>
<td>I understand that the discussions will be audio recorded.</td>
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<td>I am happy to click photographs of things that are important to me or</td>
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<td>that I like during work to share with Diksha.</td>
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<td>I understand that Diksha will not take away any of my photographs of</td>
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<td>my internship without asking me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I understand that Diksha will keep our discussions private, except</td>
<td>✔️</td>
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<td>when I mention something that is harmful to me or others.</td>
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<td>I understand that I can skip any question during our discussion.</td>
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<td>I understand that I can leave the discussion at any time without saying</td>
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<tr>
<td>why.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I understand that Diksha will not use my real name in any report or</td>
<td>✔️</td>
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<tr>
<td>presentation and will make every effort to protect my identity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I understand that I can email Diksha at any time to ask any questions</td>
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<td>about this project.</td>
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</table>

Name of Young Person ___________________________________  Signed ____________________________

Date __________________________________________
Research Information Sheet for Parents

Title of Study: Preparing for Employment: An exploration of the transition experiences of young people with mild and moderate learning difficulties and their families of a supported internship programme.

Dear Parent,

My name is Diksha Narendra Laungani, and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at the UCL Institute of Education. I am passionate about working with adolescents and young people, listening to their voices and supporting them during their transition to adulthood.

As part of my doctoral (DEdPsy) training, I am conducting a research project which involves exploring the experiences of young people with mild/moderate learning difficulties who will be undertaking a supported internship programme during the next academic year (2018-2019) supported by [school/FE name here] and their families. I would like to invite you and your son/daughter ........... to participate in this research which has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee at UCL Institute of Education. The management of ...... [school/college] has provided consent to approach you and conduct the study within their premises.

Before you decide to voluntarily take part in this research, it is important for you as the parent to understand why the research is being done and what participation will involve. Please take some time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with the researcher in case anything is not clear or if you would like more information.

This research aims to:

- provide a platform for young people and their families to express their views about the preparedness for and transition to employment from a person-centred perspective;
- highlight the hopes and aspirations prior to the supported internship experience; and
- consider perceptions about the facilitators and barriers to employment during the supported internship experience.

The findings of this study could support the Local Authority, schools/colleges and other agencies/practitioners to understand the significance of including the voices of young people and their families in important decisions regarding transition to employment or in planning similar initiatives in the future and the processes behind a successful transition.
Yours and your son/daughter’s participation is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to take part without any associated implications. Should you and your son/daughter choose to participate, both and/or either of you will have the choice to withdraw your support at any time. Your son/daughter will be provided an accessible and interactive information sheet and consent form separately, which they can complete independently or with the support of a key person at school/college or you, their parent.

I would like to meet you and your son/daughter separately to speak about your experiences at three times during the year:

1. The first interview will be held between May-July 2018, before the supported internship begins
2. A follow-up phone call or interview (depending on your convenience) will be held in September 2018 just after the start of the internship
3. The final interview will take place during December 2018

It is expected that each interview will take about 30-40 minutes and will be recorded for analysis. Before the interviews with your son/daughter (only), they will be asked/supported to click pictures of themselves at work using the school/college’s electronic devices, which will provide an additional prompt for discussion during the interviews. Please be assured that I will not take away any pictures, except for any that might not depict any identifiable person and might be retained with the young person’s express permission.

Confidentiality will be given paramount importance, except in the cases when significant harm is detailed by the young person towards themselves or others, which will then be referred to the school/college’s safeguarding lead, however, such situations are not anticipated. I will make every effort to ensure that any identifiable information about you, your son/daughter, the school/college and the placement provider is not visible on any report or publication associated with this study. I will report back about to you and your son/daughter about the findings after the analysis.

In order to ensure consistency, it is important for me to gain consent from both you and your son/daughter to confirm participation. Therefore, please take your time to consider your decision and do contact me on [redacted] to clarify any aspects, express any concerns or provide feedback about the study at any time.

If you would like to give your consent for your participation in the study, please complete the attached consent form and return to … (designated contact person at school/college) as soon as you can. Please keep this information sheet with you.

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering to take part in this research.
Research Title: Preparing for Employment - An exploration of the transition experiences of young people with mild and moderate learning disabilities and their families of a supported internship programme

Researcher: Diksha Narendra Laungani

Parent Consent Form

If you are happy to participate, please complete this consent form and return to Diksha by email or .... (contact person at school/college) in person by the 15th of May 2018.

I have read and understood the information sheet about the research.

☐ Yes  ☐ No

I understand that my son/daughter will be contacted to participate in this study and that participation will depend upon consent from both myself and my son/daughter.

☐ Yes  ☐ No

I agree to participate in all three interviews which will be held at a date/time of my convenience.

☐ Yes  ☐ No

I understand the role of my son/daughter in this research and that any photographs that may be used during some interviews with my son/daughter will be returned back to my them or the school/college, however, Diksha may gain verbal consent from my son/daughter to preserve some photographs without any identifiable person/information in them to be used in her report.

☐ Yes  ☐ No

I agree and understand that all the interviews will be audio recorded.

☐ Yes  ☐ No

I understand that both sets of interviews (of my son/daughter and myself) will be confidential and there will be no information sharing through Diksha.

☐ Yes  ☐ No

I understand that if we disclose any information that suggests that we/others may be at the risk of significant harm, Diksha will need to pass on this information to the safeguarding lead at the school/college.

☐ Yes  ☐ No

I understand that both/either my son/daughter and myself are free to withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason and if we choose to do so, then the data we have contributed will not be used.

☐ Yes  ☐ No

I understand that the information gathered in this research will form the basis of a report and that the findings may be used in future reports and/or presentations.

☐ Yes  ☐ No

I understand that Diksha will make every effort to preserve confidentiality in this research such that the identity of my son/daughter, myself, the school/college and placement provider will not be identifiable in any report/presentation.

☐ Yes  ☐ No

I understand that I am free to contact Diksha at any time to ask any questions about the research.

I would like to be contacted by phone/email (please circle your preference and mention contact details) to set suitable dates/times for interviews.

Name of Parent ___________________________ Signed ___________________________

Name of Son/Daughter ___________________________ Date ___________________________
Appendix D – YP’s Case Summaries

Contextual information for each YP is presented below, e.g. their interests, preferences and information about their placements during the SI at different stages.

*Natalia.* Natalia is an 18-year old young woman with ASD and anxiety – her EHCP records cognition and learning as one of her primary areas of need. She is a polite and shy young woman who does not like to engage much with active occupations or tasks. She prefers to watch Anime, a Japanese animation series, or engage with creative pursuits linked to arts and crafts in her free time. This is Natalia’s second year at VOC. Natalia experienced a difficult transition to VOC with frequent absences and coping with menstrual difficulties. Her parent, Amy, took a leave of absence from work to support Natalia during her transition. Natalia attends VOC for four days a week as a general intern, i.e. she engages with a range of different placements at VOC, as compared to three days when she first began. Natalia accesses an enrichment programme at VOC for one day a week, which includes sports, music and yoga. She spends the remaining three days exploring various roles and placements with the job coach and engaging with floristry and catering tasks at VOC.

*Chloe.* Chloe is a 21-year old young woman with MLD and mild hearing impairment. Her parent described her to be well-behaved, shy and kind. She likes listening to the radio and spending time with her friends from VOC. Chloe thought of herself as fun to be around and being trustworthy. Chloe has been at VOC for the past three years. Chloe is a horticulture intern at VOC, i.e. she engages with gardening-based activities most of the time, e.g. working with the other horticulture interns to maintain the green spaces of two allotments in the nearby vicinities. For one morning a week, Chloe works at a local charity shop to develop her retail skills.

*George.* George is a 22-year old young man with ASD and associated pragmatic language difficulties. He is described as a hardworking and committed person. George likes to read books, listen to music and play video games in his free time and has a special interest in photography. George is a general intern and works for four days a week as a resident photographer for VOC. This is George's first year at VOC. Before this, he was NEET for a year, before which he was on-roll at the LA's flagship FE provision in a supported learning programme designed for YP with moderate-to-severe LD. George also completed an external work placement at a visual arts training and employment charity. In his statement of SEN, George was described to have ‘average-to-severe’ LD. At
present, George engages with the enrichment programme for one day a week. During the remaining three days, George works on VOC's social media (Facebook) page, covers events at VOC, e.g. Christmas events, fairs, clubs, etc. and has some opportunities to collaborate with external companies such as the Shakespeare's Globe and A's Park* on photography-based projects.

Sarah. Sarah is a 23-year old young woman with receptive and expressive language difficulties. Sarah also found it difficult to engage in independent learning and develop organisational, literacy and maths skills. Before VOC, Sarah accessed a specialist secondary school for YP with SLCN and MLD. Sarah engages with the SI for three days a week as a general intern. She accesses the enrichment programme, works with the job coach to explore different placements and visit job sites, works at a local charity shop, VOC's retail shop and does gardening. Sarah works with Chloe in the same charity shop on one of the SI days.

Bob. Bob is a 20-year old young man with ASD, dyspraxia and mental health needs, i.e. anxiety and depression. Bob’s profile of needs does not match those of a YP with SLD or PMLD. However, he is placed at the NR college due to his mental health needs and preference for being in a smaller, more contained provision. This placement was obtained through a SEND tribunal initiated by his parent, Alexandra. Before this, Bob attended a supported learning course at the LA's FE provision (similar to George) and attended a specialist secondary school for YP with SLCN and MLD. In his free time, Bob likes to read horror novels, watch thriller movies, swim or eat out at restaurants. In the beginning, Bob engaged with the SI for 3.5 days a week and was placed at a nature centre within the LA, where he engaged in different carpentry, gardening and maintenance-based tasks. Bob completed a work experience placement at the same location from 2017 for one day a week. In that sense, the SI was a continuation of his previous work experience. As the SI progressed, Bob's placements became varied, and his timetable was reduced to three days a week. He worked at the nature centre, attended the Princes Trust and helped out with administrative work at the NR college, e.g. making picture symbols on the PECS software, printing/photocopying, etc. By the end of data-collection, he had terminated his placement at the nature centre. This was going to be replaced by an external internship in an office setting to provide opportunities for developing Bob's administrative skills.
Appendix E – Sample PowerPoint Presentation with Interview Question Prompts for YP (T3)
Appendix F – YP Interview Schedules (T1, T2 & T3)

Young People Interview Schedule T1 – Pre Supported Internships

Introduction

- Welcome young person
- Plug in Powerpoint “Interview 1”
- Provide a simple introduction to the research
- Explain the purpose of this interview (talking about how YP is feeling and preparing for work)
- Restate the interview process and young person’s rights 1) audio recording procedures; 2) right to skip questions, stop, leave or take a break anytime; and 3) confidentiality except in cases of harm/danger
- Introduce young person to visual prompt cards such as emotion cards, stop, break, question, etc. (if applicable & needed)
- Check if young person is still happy to continue/clarify any questions
- **Begin audio recording**

Semi-structured questions and specific prompts

* - *Researcher will check with YP/school/college about the use of familiar terminology re internships and substitute accordingly (e.g. internship/placement/internship/placement)*

- Can you tell me something about yourself? *(Prompt: What do you like? / What are your hobbies?)*
- What would you like to be doing in 5 years from now? *(Prompt: What kind of work would you want to do in a few years’ time? Whom would you want to be living with?)*
- Can you tell me a little about your work placement* from September? *(Prompt: Where will you be working from September? Have you visited the company/office? How many days/hours in a week will you be working for? What uniform will you be wearing? How will you be travelling to work?)*
- What kind of work will you be doing at ____ (name of company)? *(Prompt: What will your responsibilities be? What skills will you be working on? Or give a few examples of tasks depending on YP’s role)*
• How are you feeling about beginning a new internship? (Prompt: name a few emotions or use emotion cards and probe further / Do you think that your new internship sounds interesting? Why/Why not?)
• Do you think this internship will help you in the future? if so, how? (Prompt: What will you get from this internship? / Link to previous aspirations)
• I am interested to know about how you were supported to find this internship. Can you tell me something about that? (Prompt: how did you/Who helped you to find this internship? Was it your school/college? Did you have to make a CV or give an interview? Was it easy to find this internship?)
• Who will be supporting/helping you at work? (Prompt: Who will your job coach be? What will they do to help you? / How will they help you?)
• How are you preparing for the internship? (Prompt: Are you practicing any skills or tasks at school/college? / Who is helping you to prepare (get ready) for the internship? How?)
• Is there anything that you want help with to get ready for your internship?
• What do you think you will find difficult on the internship? What do you think will be the most interesting part of working at __________?
• Is there anything else that you want to share with me about your internship?

Debriefing
• Just to check with you, you said that ____________ (summarise YP’s views here). Is that correct?

Concluding procedures
• Thank the young person for participation
• **Switch off audio recorder and save file**
• Seek feedback on interview process through questions like:
  i. *Did you enjoy our talk?*
  ii. *Was it easy or difficult?*
  iii. *What could make it more fun or easier for you?*
• Reiterate next steps in the research (next interview in September, mention that you might be visiting the YP in college or on placement to think about taking pictures)
Young People Interview Schedule T2 – Beginning of Supported Internship

Introduction

• Welcome young person
• Plug in PowerPoint “Interview 2”
• Reintroduce purpose of research and stage 2 interviews: follow-up from last time, talk about ‘settling in to the SI’, different experiences at work, share pictures
• Restate the interview process and young person’s rights 1) audio recording procedures; 2) right to skip questions, stop, leave or take a break anytime; and 3) confidentiality except in cases of harm/danger
• Introduce young person to visual prompt cards such as emotion cards, stop, break, question, etc. (if applicable & needed)
• Check if young person is still happy to continue/clarify any questions
• **Begin audio recording**

Introductory question

• When we spoke the last time, you mentioned that __________________________. Can you tell me some more about your internship? (Prompts: Where do you work? What are your work timings? What is your role? How many days do you work for? How do you travel to work? What are you doing at work? What are you learning through the internship? / Are you working on new things? Are you learning about something new?)

Photo-elicitation prompts: *(Note: this will be the core part of the interview and the semi-structured questions from the next section will be embedded within this section of the interview as applicable. Any areas not explored during photo-elicitation will be brought up later)*

• Would you like to share some pictures of yourself at work with me? Can you pick 3 or 5 of your most favourite photographs of yourself at work? For each picture:
  o Why did you pick this picture? Why is this important to you?
  o What are you doing in this picture? Was this easy/difficult?
  o How long did you take to work on it?
  o What did you learn from it?
Did you need any support with this?
What photographs would you like to show me the next time?

Semi-structured questions and specific prompts

- How do you think this internship might help you in the future?
- When you are at work, how does that make you feel? OR When we spoke the last time, you said that you were feeling ___________ about the internship. Do you still feel the same or do you feel differently? USE EMOTION CARDS IF NECESSARY.
- How did you find settling in to work?
- Can you tell me about a time when you found it really difficult at work? What happened next? Have you found anything difficult/challenging at work? If response is no, ask ‘What has helped you at work?’ (Prompts: Who would you ask for help/Is there anyone who is available to help you out?) What kind of help/support do you get? USE EMOTION CARDS IF NECESSARY.
- What is the most interesting part/best part about your internship? OR What do you enjoy the most about being at work? USE EMOTION CARDS IF NECESSARY.
- How and when do you talk with the people you work with? (Prompts: break times, during work)
- How often do you attend college in a week? What do you do at college during that time?
- Do you like being at college more than work, or at work more than college? Or are you equally happy in both places?
- Have your parents done anything to support/help you during the internship?
- CHECK NOTES FROM LAST INTERVIEW.

Debriefing

- Before we end, I just wanted to spend some time to check out the things that we spoke about today.
Concluding procedures

- Thank the young person for participation
- **Switch off audio recorder and save file**
- Highlight that next interview in December will be the last discussion
- Seek feedback on interview process through questions like:
  
  i. *Did you enjoy our talk?*
  
  ii. *Was it easy or difficult?*
  
  iii. *What could make it more fun or easier for you?*
  
  iv. *What would you like to talk about the next time?*

Researcher observations:

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________
Young People Interview Schedule T3 – Mid SI

Introduction

• Welcome young person.
• Plug in PowerPoint “Interview 3”.
• Reintroduce purpose of research and stage 3 interviews: themes from last two interviews will be discussed; opportunity to share pictures; reflect on SI and next steps. Reiterate that this will be the final interview.
• Restate the interview process and young person’s rights 1) audio recording procedures; 2) right to skip questions, stop, leave or take a break anytime; and 3) confidentiality except in cases of harm/danger
• Introduce young person to emotion cards – can be used by YP if needed.
• Check if young person is still happy to continue/clarify any questions
• **Begin audio recording**

A. **Introductory question**

• When we spoke the last time, you mentioned that you were at _______ (insert name of provision here) for ____ days in a week. On ____ days, you are/work at ________, on ____ days, you are/work at ________ and on ____ days, you are/work at ________. Does your timetable still look the same or has anything changed?

If any changes indicated:

• What has changed in your timetable? (Prompts: What are you doing now? Why did this change happen? Are you learning about something new? Is there anything interesting/difficult about ________?)

If unchanged move to Section B.

B. **Photo-elicitation prompts:** *(Note: this will be the core part of the interview and the questions from Section C will be explored during photo-elicitation as applicable, with any remaining points discussed later).*
• Can you pick 3 of your most favourite photographs of yourself at work and share them with me? For each picture:
  o Why did you pick this picture? Why is this important to you?
  o What are you doing in this picture? Was this easy/difficult?
  o How long did you take to work on it?
  o What did you learn from it?
  o Did you need any support with this?

C. Semi-structured questions and specific prompts
• For each element of YP's SI, ask:
  o What are you working on in ________ at the moment? How is that going for you now?
  o What do you enjoy the most about ________? Why? Use emotion cards if necessary.
  o Is there anything difficult for you during ________? (Prompts: Has anyone helped you to ________? What could make ___ better for you?) Use emotion cards if necessary.
• Out of ________, which one do you like the most? Why? Which one do you not like as much? Why?
• Last time, you said that you were feeling __________ about __________. How do you feel about that now? Use emotion cards if necessary.
• Do you meet new people during your internship? (Prompts: If yes, how does that make you feel?)
• Think of someone who really helps you out during the internship. What is it that they do to support you?
• What could make this internship better/easier for you? (Prompt: If you had to change one thing about the internship, what would it be?)
• Have your parents done anything to help you during the internship? What do they think about your internship?
• What would you like to be able to do/know by the end of the internship? (Prompts: Can you think of some things that you want to know or be able to do by the end of the internship?)
• Are there things from this internship that will help you ________ in a few years?
• Is there anything else about your internship that you would like to share with me?
• CHECK NOTES FROM LAST INTERVIEW (Any questions that the YP may have found difficult to answer the last time? e.g. future, intern v/s student, difficult things about being an intern).

D. Debriefing
• Before we end, I just wanted to spend some time to check out the things that we spoke about today.

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

(summarise YP’s views here)

Concluding procedures

• Thank the young person for participation
• **Switch off audio recorder and save file**
• Seek feedback on interview process through questions like:
  i. *Did you enjoy participating in the discussions? What was easy or difficult about them?*
  ii. *Would you like to be informed of what happens next? How? (email/letter/in person)?*

Researcher observations:

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________
Appendix G – Parent Interview Schedules (T1, T2 & T3)

Parent Interview Schedule T1 – Pre Supported Internships

Introduction

- Welcome parent
- Provide an introduction to the research
- Explain the purpose of this interview (eliciting parental hopes, expectations from SI, explore preparations for SI programme)
- Restate 1) parent’s right to withdraw from the interview & research at any point and 2) right to skip questions if needed
- Mention audio recording procedures
- Outline confidentiality and anonymity procedures
- Check if parent is still happy to continue/clarify any questions
- **Begin audio recording**

Semi-structured questions and specific prompts

*xx will be replaced with the young person’s name*

- Before we begin talking about the internship, can you tell me a little about xx*?*
- What are your hopes and aspirations for xx’s future? *(Prompt: What do you see xx doing in 5-7 years from now?)*
- Coming back to the supported internship programme that xx will begin from September - What are your thoughts/feelings about the new internship? How is xx feeling about the transition to a new phase from September? What changes are you expecting in your family/for xx? *(Prompts: name a few emotions/feelings)*
- I am interested to know some more about xx’s internship. Can you share some information about xx’s future job role? *(Prompt: Where is xx going to work? What will his/her responsibilities at work be? How long will he/she work for in a week?)*
- What did the process of choosing/selecting a suitable internship for xx look like? *(Prompt: How did the school/college choose a job internship for xx? How was xx involved? How would you describe your involvement in the process? What are your thoughts on the suitability of the internship for xx?)*
• What skills do you think xx will be/needs to be working on during the internship?  
(Prompt: What is your understanding of the tasks that he/she will be doing on placement? How will that help him/her?)

• How do you think this internship will support/help/benefit xx? (Prompt: What are your expectations/hopes/aspirations from this internship for xx? E.g. in what way will this internship help xx to become more independent?)

• How do you think this internship will help xx in fulfilling the ambitions you mentioned earlier on? (Prompt: link back to aspirations mentioned earlier)

• How is xx currently being supported for the internship? What would help in making the transition process easier or better for you and xx? (Prompt: How is the school/college helping xx to prepare for the internship? E.g. vocational training, interviewing, preparing a CV, thinking about formal dress codes, communicating with placement staff)

• How are you being supported to prepare for the internship? What would help in making the preparation easier or better for you? (Prompt: What (if any) support are you receiving from the school/college or any other agency to think about the internship? E.g. information leaflets, parent forums)

• What difficulties do you anticipate for xx during the internship? (Prompt: Do you have any concerns for xx during the internship/What aspect do you think will be most difficult for xx during the process? E.g. routine, travelling, communication)

• Is there anything else that you would like to discuss about your son/daughter’s preparation for supported internships that we have not touched upon?

General Prompts

What does that mean? / What do you mean by _____?

What would/does that look like? / What does/would that entail?

Can you tell me a little more about that? / Could you elaborate a bit more on that?

Debriefing

• Before we conclude, I would like to take some time to reflect back on the key points and check if I have understood your perspective correctly. Is that okay?

Concluding procedures
• Thank the parent for participation

• **Switch off audio recorder and save file**

• Seek feedback on interview process through questions like:
  
  i. *How was your experience of taking part in this interview?*
  
  ii. *What could have made this experience better for you?*
  
  iii. *Was there something that you wanted to talk more about in detail that was missed out on?*
  
  iv. *Is there something that you particularly enjoyed talking about today?*
  
  v. *Was there anything that you did not like talking about, or made you uncomfortable?*

• Reiterate next steps in the research (interview with young person, two more stages/time points of interviews)

• Set date/time/method (face-to-face or phone call) for next interview in September 2018 and any reminder procedures

**Researcher observations**
Parent Interview Schedule T2 – Beginning of SI

Introduction

- Welcome parent
- Reintroduce purpose of research and stage 2 interviews: follow-up from last time, talk about YP’s ‘settling in process’ to the SI
- Restate the interview process and parent’s rights 1) audio recording procedures; 2) right to skip questions, stop, leave or take a break anytime; and 3) confidentiality except in cases of harm/danger
- Check if parent is still happy to continue/clarify any questions
- **Begin audio recording**

Semi-structured questions and specific prompts

- When we spoke the last time, you mentioned that ___________________________ _____________________________. Can you tell me some more about xx’s internship? (Prompts: Where do they work? What are their work timings? What is their role? How many days do they work for? How do they travel to work? Parental understanding/knowledge of SI)
- How do you think xx is settling in to his/her internship? (Prompt: What is difficult/challenging/a barrier for him/her at the moment? What is working well? Can you give me an example of a time when xx found something really difficult or interesting at work? How is he/she adjusting to the new routine?)
- How do you think xx is experiencing the transition (difference in environment) from being at college/in education to being at work?
- What skills do you think xx is working on at the moment? How will these help him/her in the future?
- Is there anything that you think xx is developing a particular interest or preference for, at work?
- The last time we spoke, you mentioned that you would like for xx to be able to _____________________________. What do you think of that now?
- During our last discussion, you mentioned that you were a bit concerned about xx’s _____________________________. How do you think he/she is coping with it now?
• What do you think of xx’s support network at work? (Prompt: Who is supporting xx at work? How do you think their relationship is developing so far?)
• The last time, you had mentioned that you would like for xx to develop more social networks/social skills through being at work. What do you think of that now?
• What do you think your role has been/is in xx’s transition to being at work?
• I am curious to know if anything has changed at home now that xx is going to work?
• What do you think about the communication between college, home and the employer about xx’s internship?
• What do you think would make the internship process better for you or xx?
• CHECK NOTES FROM LAST INTERVIEW.

General Prompts

*What does that mean? / What do you mean by _____?*

*What would/does that look like? / What does/would that entail?*

*Can you tell me a little more about that? / Could you elaborate a bit more on that?*

Debriefing

• Before we conclude, I would like to take some time to reflect back on the key points and check if I have understood your perspective correctly. Is that okay?

Concluding procedures

• Thank the parent for participation
• **Switch off audio recorder and save file**
• Seek feedback on interview process through questions like:
  i. *How was your experience of taking part in this interview?*
  ii. *What could have made this experience better for you?*
iii. Was there something that you wanted to talk more about in detail that was missed out on?

iv. Is there something that you particularly enjoyed talking about today?

v. Was there anything that you did not like talking about, or made you uncomfortable?

vi. What would you like to discuss further during our next interview?

- Reiterate next steps in the research (one last interview with YP and parent in December)
- Set date/time/method (face-to-face or phone call) for next interview in December 2018 and any reminder procedures

Researcher observations
Parent Interview Schedule 3 – Mid SI

Introduction

• Welcome parent.
• Reintroduce purpose of research and stage 3 interviews: themes from last two interviews will be discussed; reflect on SI and next steps. Reiterate that this will be the final interview.
• Restate the interview process and parent’s rights 1) audio recording procedures; 2) right to skip questions, stop, leave or take a break anytime; and 3) confidentiality except in cases of harm/danger
• Check if parent is still happy to continue/clarify any questions
• Begin audio recording

Semi-structured questions and specific prompts

• When we spoke the last time, (YP) was working in/for ________________. Has anything changed in his/her internship routines since then?
• What do you think (YP) is working on at the moment?
• Overall, how do you think (YP) has settled in to the internship? (Prompt: What is working well? Is there anything difficult/challenging for him/her at the moment? Is there something that (YP) knows more about or can do since the internship began? Has (YP) expressed an interest/preference for a particular field/career?)
• During our last discussion, you mentioned that you were a bit concerned about xx’s _________________________________. How do you think he/she is coping with it now?
• Initially, you wanted (YP) to work on their ________ (e.g. social skills) during this internship. What do you think of that now?
• What do you want (YP) to be able to do/know by the end of this internship? Does this match your expectations?
• Your hopes for (YP)’s future included ____________. Do you think this internship will help him/her achieve that in any way? Why/why not?
• How do you think (YP) is being supported during the internship? (Prompt: Who is supporting xx at work? How do you think their relationship is developing so far?)
• What do you think your role has been in supporting (YP) during their internship?
• I am curious to know if anything has changed at home now that xx is going to work? Have you noticed any changes in (YP) since the beginning of the internship?
• How is the communication between college, home and the employer about the internship?
• Is there anything that would make the internship process better for you or xx?
• Is there anything else about the internship that you would like to express your views about?
• CHECK NOTES FROM LAST INTERVIEW.

Debriefing
• Before we conclude, I would like to take some time to reflect back on the key points and check if I have understood your perspective correctly. Is that okay?

Concluding procedures
• Thank the parent for participation
• **Switch off audio recorder and save file**
• Seek feedback on research process:
  i. *How was your experience of taking part in this interview/research overall?*
  ii. *What could have made this experience better for you?*
  iii. *Is there anything that was particularly uncomfortable/difficult to talk about?*
  iv. *How could this research process be made easier for you?*

Researcher observations:

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
Appendix H: Ethics Form

**Institute of Education**

**UCL**

**Doctoral Student Ethics Application Form**

Anyone conducting research under the auspices of the Institute (staff, students or visitors) where the research involves human participants or the use of data collected from human participants, is required to gain ethical approval before starting. This includes preliminary and pilot studies. Please answer all relevant questions in simple terms that can be understood by a lay person and note that your form may be returned if incomplete.

*Registering your study with the UCL Data Protection Officer as part of the UCL Research Ethics Review Process*

If you are proposing to collect personal data i.e. data from which a living individual can be identified you **must** be registered with the UCL Data Protection Office before you submit your ethics application for review.

If the Data Protection Office advises you to make changes to the way in which you propose to collect and store the data this should be reflected in your ethics application form.

For further information see Steps 1 and 2 of our Procedures page at:  
[https://ethics.grad.ucl.ac.uk/procedures.php](https://ethics.grad.ucl.ac.uk/procedures.php)

### Section 1 Project details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. Student name and ID number (e.g. ABC12345678)</td>
<td>Diksha Narendra Laungani (16088091)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| c. *UCL Data Protection Registration Number | Z6364106/2018/02/110  
Date issued: 28th February 2018 |
| c. Supervisor/Personal Tutor | Academic Supervisor: Dr Dawn Male  
Educational Psychology Supervisor: Helen Upton |
| d. Department | IOE – Psychology & Human Development |
| e. Course category  
(Tick one) | PhD  
EdD  
DEdPsy |
| f. If applicable, state who the funder is and if funding has been confirmed. | Not applicable |
| g. Intended research start date | February 2018 |
| h. Intended research end date | August 2019 |
| i. Country fieldwork will be conducted in  
If research to be conducted abroad please check [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk) and submit a completed travel risk assessment form (see guidelines). If the FCO advice is against travel this will be required before ethical approval can be granted: [http://ioe-net_inst.ioe.ac.uk/about/profservices/international/Pages/default.aspx](http://ioe-net_inst.ioe.ac.uk/about/profservices/international/Pages/default.aspx) | United Kingdom |
| j. Has this project been considered by another (external) Research Ethics Committee? | |

Doctoral student ethics form February 2017
Yes □ External Committee Name:
No ✓ go to Section 2 Date of Approval:

If yes:
- Submit a copy of the approval letter with this application.
- Proceed to Section 10 Attachments.

Note: Ensure that you check the guidelines carefully as research with some participants will require ethical approval from a different ethics committee such as the National Research Ethics Service (NRES) or Social Care Research Ethics Committee (SCREC). In addition, if your research is based in another institution then you may be required to apply to their research ethics committee.

Section 2 Research methods summary (tick all that apply)

- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Questionnaires
- Action research
- Observation
- Literature review
- Controlled trial/other intervention study
- Use of personal records
- Systematic review ⇒ if only method used go to Section 5.
- Secondary data analysis ⇒ if secondary analysis used go to Section 6.
- Advisory/consultation/collaborative groups
- Other, give details: visual methodology including photography (method: photo elicitation)

Purpose & Aims of the research

In 2015, the updated SEND Code of Practice, i.e., a statutory guidance for organisations working with children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities outlined an extension for the age until which young people could be supported by the government, from 16 to 25 years of age. With this extension came the extra focus on the support that enabled young people with SEND to make a successful transition to adulthood under the umbrella term of Preparing for Adulthood (PfA). Under the SEN reforms, the PfA agenda consists of four elements: 1) Employment, 2) Independent Living, 3) Friendships, Relationships & Community and 4) Good Health. Ideally, services should start planning for such outcomes for young people with SEND since the earliest years and young people and their families would be more involved in participating in decision making at the individual and strategic levels (Children & Families Act, 2014).

Consequently, services are currently working to develop and extend the remit of their work to include young people in the 16-25 age range. The Department for Education (2013) has developed a model of supported internships as a pathway (study programme) for young people to transition from education to temporary employment, with the ultimate aim of helping the young people to secure paid employment. Achieving paid employment not only brings young people financial independence, but it can be key to building confidence and self-esteem, increasing health and well-being, and to gaining friendships and a social life. This indicates that there are wide-ranging benefits to the young person and their families from paid employment. However, DfE (2013) research has shown that only 7% of young people with learning difficulties achieve paid employment, despite a much larger proportion of young people wanting to do so.

Several Local Authorities (LAs) have adopted the DfE model (or other models such as Project SEARCH or the MENCAP model) successfully within their boroughs. In the researcher’s LA, the DfE model has been piloted this year, with additional funding from MENCAP procured for the 2018-2019 supported internships programme.

Considering the relatively new SEN reforms and the statutory focus on employment outcomes for young people with SEND, there is very limited UK-based research on highlighting the perspectives of young people and their families on what makes a successful transition to employment. This research will aim to fill in the gaps in national research by exploring the...
views of young people with learning difficulties and their families about the perceived facilitators and barriers to employment for the young people. This research will also aim to explore the psychological underpinnings of the transition to employment. The findings of this research will be useful for the Local Authority, in considering the opinions of young people and their families to further develop employment pathways through a person-centred perspective. This research will also have implications for the schools/Further Education provisions in understanding what works for the young people and their families and to consider how they could be better supported to make the transition. Lastly, this research will also have implications for the Educational Psychology profession from a more holistic perspective, in supporting the systems around the young person, i.e., families, educational provisions and LAs to come together and provide a person-centred and smooth transition to employment and thus adulthood for the young person.

Research Questions

- RQ1: What are the hopes and aspirations of young people with learning difficulties and their families from the supported internship programme?
- RQ2: How do young people with learning difficulties experience the transition from education to supported internships?
- RQ3: How do families of young people with learning difficulties support their transition to greater independence through supported internships?

Research Design

Within the domain of exploratory qualitative research, this research will follow a case study design. The researcher will collect data from the participants at three time points/stages of the supported internship process: 1) before the commencement of the supported internships, 2) at the beginning of the supported internships and 3) a few months into the supported internship programme. This longitudinal approach to data collection will allow the researcher the opportunity to track the participants’ perspectives over time and add more depth to their views. As the research aims are closely linked to highlighting and promoting the voices of young people with learning difficulties and their families, a participatory approach fits in well with the research design. In the context of this research, a participatory approach means that the participants will be able to express their opinions about what is important to them and the data collection tools will be driven by what is most comfortable and accessible for the participants.

Participants & Sampling

There will be two groups of participants in this study, young people with mild to moderate learning difficulties and their parents. The term ‘young people’ as opposed to young adults or adults with learning difficulties is being used as this term is prominently used in the SEND Code of Practice (2015) to refer to people from 16-25 years of age that may be receiving support from the Local Authority through an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan. The expected age range of young people who will be participating in this research is 16-21 years of age. This age range is defined according to the provision that the young people may be from, for instance, special schools may be offering supported internships as part of their post-16 vocational courses and FE colleges/vocational centres may be offering supported internships as part of their post-19 provisions.

The cohort of young people with mild to moderate learning difficulties will be selected for this research as a) this cohort represents the maximum variability in the supported internships cohort from the probable schools/colleges that intend to partake in the supported internships programme, in 2018-2019 thus providing a breadth of participants whose voice can be highlighted through this research and b) this will promote maximum consistency and inclusivity within the research design, as part of the participatory research approach.

All young people who will be asked to participate in this study will have cognition and learning listed as the primary area of need on their EHC Plan with a diagnosis of mild or moderate learning difficulty. However, the researcher acknowledges
that there is no central definition of the different categories of learning difficulties, especially in relation to moderate learning difficulties. In addition, the SEND Code of Practice (2015) mentions that “Post-16 organisations often use the term Learning Difficulties and Disabilities” (p.15). The researcher may have to be flexible with the exact terminology in relation to the young people’s diagnoses, for instance, global (developmental) delay. Any issues/overlap in participant sampling will be discussed in research supervision and outlined clearly in the research report.

The selection of participants with a mild/moderate learning difficulty entails a purposive sampling strategy. A practical consideration of working with people with learning difficulties is the individual differences in their profile of strengths and needs. Many of the young people with learning difficulties (either through attending a special school or additional support within a mainstream setting) will have needs in addition to their learning difficulties such as Autism Spectrum Disorder, Down Syndrome or speech and language needs. Therefore, a maximum variation or heterogeneous purposive sampling technique will best suit this complex and variable population. This type of purposive sampling is often used in exploratory research designs like the current research.

No sampling criteria will be applied to the parent group participants.

This research will be based in an inner-London borough in southeast London. As part of the sampling procedure, the researcher will choose five young people and their parents to participate in the study. The researcher will obtain the final list of schools/Further Education (FE) colleges or vocational provision participating in the supported internships programme in 2018-2019 from the Local Authority’s (LA) SEN department (expected 5 provisions) by the end of March/beginning of April 2018. Using previous knowledge of the LA’s systems and provisions and seeking support from placement and research supervision, the researcher will identify two-three (ideally three) provisions to seek consent for participating in the research, based on the profile of pupils, i.e., whether young people with mild/moderate learning difficulties are included within the provision. Ideally, one of these will be a participating provision within the current (2017-2018) supported internships programme through the LA. This will facilitate the pilot interviews procedure, as explained in the next section. The researcher will then introduce the research to the head teacher/operations manager or lead person overlooking the supported internships programme in the provision.

Data Collection

The data collection procedure will involve three sets of semi-structured interviews with each participant (which includes both parents and young people). The semi-structured interview will provide a broad structure and yet allow for flexibility for the discussions to be driven according to the opinions of the participants, a feature that is considered important in working with people with any additional needs, i.e., the young people in this study. The researcher has designed an interview schedule for the first interviews with parents and young people and the themes for discussions to take place during the later interviews have been incorporated in a document, ‘Themes for Questions’. The themes largely revolve around topics of transition, preparation and support for the young people. These themes have been derived from a) the research questions, b) past research and c) theories of learning. The interviews will be conducted at the young person’s school/college to provide familiarity for the young people and parents. Each interview with the parents will take approximately 30-40 minutes and between 20-30 minutes with the young people. In order to make the interview questions more accessible for the young people, the researcher will design a visual presentation with the questions/themes and visuals that best characterize the topic being discussed (See sample presentation ‘Young Person Interview Schedule 1 Draft presentation’. The researcher will also prepare visual prompts for use by the young people during the interview which will include but are not limited to: break, stop, skip, like/dislike, emotion cards, etc. The purpose of including such visuals is to promote maximum comfort and inclusivity of the young people.

To complement the interview process, the researcher will also incorporate a photo-elicitation method within stages/time points two and three of the interviews with the young people. The photo elicitation process will include an additional procedure before the interview when the researcher will send some prompts to each participant to either a) take photographs of familiar/interesting/preferred/difficult aspects of their work placement or b) ask their job coaches to take
photographs of the young people during the internship (however, the young person will choose when to be photographed). The prompts and the method of photo elicitation will depend on the preference/ability of the young person. The purpose of this photo elicitation is to provide extra prompts and support the young people to talk about their internship experiences, which may be difficult for some young people to do in an abstract manner. The suggestion to include photography in the research methodology was co-constructed by the researcher and a few members of a specialist FE provision, i.e., current job coaches. The researcher will request the young person to use the electronic devices (e.g., tablets) of their school/FE college due to accessibility reasons (further elaborated in section 8).

Post ethical approval, the researcher will carry out a pilot process in which a young person for the current supported interns cohort will be asked to share their views regarding their placement experiences and a parent of a current supported intern will be asked to do the same. The researcher recognizes that there are certain limitations to the pilot process, as only one young person and parent from the current cohort will be asked to share their views and this will determine the accessibility of the data collection tools, however this will be counter-balanced by the researcher’s efforts to approach each young person’s key worker (job coach/teacher) to share the interview schedules and visual prompts after the pilot process and once all participants have given consent.

**Reporting & Dissemination**

This research will culminate in a 35,000-word thesis report, which will be shared with the university's academic panel for grading purposes. After completion, the thesis will also be available to the university’s staff, students and alumni via an online portal. Confidentiality and anonymity procedures will be followed for any identifiable information linked to the school/FE colleges, participants or placement companies, as outlined in Section 8. In addition, after the grading of the thesis, a research brief will be shared with the schools/FE colleges, parents and the Local Authority (as this as this research may impact broader systems of communication or planning within the latter). The researcher will also design an accessible, one-page visual brief to share with the young people if they want.

### Section 3 Research Participants (tick all that apply)

- Early years/pre-school
- Ages 5-11
- Ages 12-16
- Young people aged 17-18
- Adults please specify below
- Unknown – specify below
- No participants

**NB:** Ensure that you check the guidelines carefully as research with some participants will require ethical approval from a different ethics committee such as the [National Research Ethics Service (NRES)](https://www.nres.nhs.uk) or [Social Care Research Ethics Committee (SCREC)](https://www.scrc.org.uk).

### Section 4 Security-sensitive material (only complete if applicable)

Security sensitive research includes: commissioned by the military; commissioned under an EU security call; involves the acquisition of security clearances; concerns terrorist or extreme groups.

a. Will your project consider or encounter security-sensitive material?  
   - Yes □  * No ✓

b. Will you be visiting websites associated with extreme or terrorist organisations?  
   - Yes □  * No ✓

c. Will you be storing or transmitting any materials that could be interpreted as promoting or endorsing terrorist acts?  
   - Yes □  * No ✓

* Give further details in Section 8 Ethical Issues

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Section 5 Systematic reviews of research (only complete if applicable)

a. Will you be collecting any new data from participants? Yes ✓ * No □

b. Will you be analysing any secondary data? Yes □ * No ✓

* Give further details in Section 8 Ethical Issues

If your methods do not involve engagement with participants (e.g. systematic review, literature review) and if you have answered No to both questions, please go to Section 8 Attachments.

Section 6 Secondary data analysis (only complete if applicable)

a. Name of dataset/s

b. Owner of dataset/s

Yes □  No □

If no, do you have the owner’s permission/license?
Yes □  No* □

If yes, do you plan to anonymise the data?
Yes □  No* □

If yes, do you plan to use individual level data?
Yes* □  No □

If yes, will you be linking data to individuals?
Yes* □  No □

c. Are the data in the public domain? Yes □  No □

If no, do you have the owner’s permission/license?
Yes □  No* □

d. Are the data anonymised?

Yes □  No □

If yes, do you plan to anonymise the data?
Yes □  No* □

If yes, do you plan to use individual level data?
Yes* □  No □

If yes, will you be linking data to individuals?
Yes* □  No □

e. Are the data sensitive (DPA 1998 definition)?

Yes* □  No □

f. Will you be conducting analysis within the remit it was originally collected for?
Yes □  No* □

g. If no, was consent gained from participants for subsequent/future analysis?
Yes □  No* □

h. If no, was data collected prior to ethics approval process?
Yes □  No* □

* Give further details in Section 8 Ethical Issues

If secondary analysis is only method used and no answers with asterisks are ticked, go to Section 9 Attachments.

Section 7 Data Storage and Security

Please ensure that you include all hard and electronic data when completing this section.

a. Data subjects - Who will the data be collected from?
The data will be collected from young people and their parents/caregivers.

b. What data will be collected? Please provide details of the type of personal data to be collected
The type of personal data that will be collected includes name, age, area of special educational need/diagnoses, location of work placement, participants’ views during interviews and participant photographs while on work placement.

c. Disclosure – Who will the results of your project be disclosed to?
The findings of this study will be disseminated through a doctoral thesis that will be made available through the library and online archives to readers. In addition, the researcher will make sure to provide an accessible research brief to the schools/FE provisions, parents/caregivers, young people themselves and the Local Authority after the thesis has been graded.

d. **Data storage** – Please provide details on how and where the data will be stored i.e. UCL network, encrypted USB stick*, encrypted laptop* etc.

*The collected data will be stored on to a) a password protected laptop on an encrypted folder and b) an encrypted USB drive for backup purposes.*

*Advanced Encryption Standard 256 bit encryption which has been made a security standard within the NHS*

e. **Data Safe Haven (Identifiable Data Handling Solution)** – Will the personal identifiable data collected and processed as part of this research be stored in the UCL Data Safe Haven (mainly used by SLM* divisions, institutes and departments)?

How long will the data and records be kept and in what format?

*The audio recordings, transcriptions, photographs and all other documentation (consent forms, etc.) will be stored in an electronic format on a) a password protected laptop and b) an encrypted USB drive for a period of 2 years post the completion of the study. All paper documents will be scanned and then disposed of in confidential waste.*

f. Will personal data be processed or be sent outside the European Economic Area? (If yes, please confirm that there are adequate levels of protections in compliance with the DPA 1998 and state what these arrangements are: NO)

Will data be archived for use by other researchers? (If yes, please provide details.) NO

**Section 8 Ethical Issues**

Please state clearly the ethical issues which may arise in the course of this research and how will they be addressed.

All issues that may apply should be addressed. Some examples are given below, further information can be found in the guidelines. Minimum 150 words required.

- Methods
- Sampling
- Recruitment
- Gatekeepers
- Informed consent
- Potentially vulnerable participants
- Safeguarding/child protection
- Sensitive topics

- International research
- Risks to participants and/or researchers
- Confidentiality/Anonymity
- Disclosures/limits to confidentiality
- Data storage and security both during and after the research (including transfer, sharing, encryption, protection)
- Reporting
- Dissemination and use of findings

**Methods**
The longitudinal nature of the data collection process presents with some considerations. In a way, this provides the researcher with more opportunities to build rapport with the participants, particularly the young people and ensure continuity of the data obtained, which will add consistency to the information. However, the researcher will be sensitive that the dynamics of the relationship with some participants, particularly, the young people may develop over time. Therefore, the researcher will make sure to prepare the participants after every interview that the involvement will conclude by a certain period in a year and manage expectations accordingly.

The researcher will also endeavour to maintain the data protection guidelines regarding the photo elicitation method. The notion of using the school/college's electronic devices to take photographs was suggested by the head teacher of an FE college. This pathway will allow for double consent (many schools/colleges already have parental/young person consent for obtaining photographs during outdoor tasks/activities and in addition, the researcher will obtain separate consent from the young people and notify the parents about the limited use of photographs in this research). This method will ensure that no hard copies of the photographs will be retrieved or used at any point. The researcher will only ask to obtain those photographs in which no identifiable person or object is seen (for instance, a picture with a face or a company logo will not be taken back). Only in the case when photographs in which an activity/task/process is shown, will the researcher ask the young person and the school/college for verbal consent to access the photograph via secure means, i.e., encrypted email. This is outlined clearly in all information sheets and consent forms.

The researcher recognizes that consent is not directly being gained from the parents for use of the photographs (the parents are being made aware of the process – full disclosure), considering that all young people participating in this research will be above 16 years of age and will be assumed to have the capacity to give consent. However, this will be discussed with the school/FE provision prior to the information sheets and consent forms being sent out to the parents. If this procedure contradicts school/FE policies, then the researcher will make slight amendments to the parent consent form accordingly.

If any school/college have any issues with the use of their electronic devices for photo elicitation, then the researcher will make use of disposable cameras – in this case, the researcher will give one disposable camera to the young person on a specific day and time, collect and develop it in time for the interviews. However, the same ethical procedures will be followed if the researcher would like to retain any pictures. The remaining pictures will be returned to the young person immediately after the interview or put in confidential waste. The researcher will amend and resubmit the ethics application if necessary.

In relation to the data collection tools, i.e., interview schedules and young person's visual presentation of questions, only the interview schedules for the first interview has been attached. The interview schedules for time points/stages two and three cannot be determined at this point, as those interviews are deemed as follow-up interviews and the discussions will largely follow the themes discussed with the participants in the first interview. However, the researcher has designed a document 'Themes for Questions' that outlines the general themes that may be discussed during the second and third interviews with the participants (both parents and young people). The interview schedules/accessible visual presentations for stages two and three will be developed and discussed with the research supervisors closer to the time of the interviews.

The 'Young Person Interview 1 Presentation' does not have all the questions/themes outlined in the young people's interview schedule as it is intended to be a draft presentation. The researcher will finalize the presentation after the pilot process and discussions with the school/college staff.

For the pilot interviews, it is likely that the researcher will have to change the phrasing of certain questions from the attached interview schedule for the pilot procedure such that it reflects the preparation and transition to employment to supported internships in the past tense. However, the essence or main themes of the questions will remain the same.

**Sampling & Recruitment**
Due to the difficulties in defining the population of young people with mild/moderate learning difficulties and the fact that comorbidity of certain difficulties may occur in addition to their learning difficulties (e.g., Autism, Down Syndrome), this may result in different participants having different levels of accessibility or accommodation required to access the research materials such as information sheet, consent form and language of questioning. Even though the current materials have been developed after visiting two current provisions offering the supported internships and observing/talking to some young people who are current interns, it is likely that more provisions will be included in the actual data collection, which means that the actual participants’ needs may differ. Therefore, the researcher has only presented draft versions of all documents and there will most likely be different versions of all materials that have been adapted for participants. The researcher will gain feedback from the key members from schools/colleges who have consented to participate, i.e., head teachers/teachers/job coaches, etc. about the level of accessibility of the materials for each young person and make adjustments accordingly, in addition to performing a pilot interview with a parent and young person from this year’s supported interns.

Gatekeepers
The schools/FE colleges will act as gatekeepers for accessing the participants, therefore, every effort will be made to approach the provisions and request for their consent. As long as confidentiality of the FE provision is paramount, no ethical issues are anticipated. During the initial visits to two FE provisions (vocational and specialist), both provisions were keen to participate in this research and did not express any concerns about the research.

Informed Consent
Informed consent will be gained through an “opt-in” procedure for this research. It will be assumed that each young person has the capacity to consent to participate in this research and understand its consequences, therefore, accessible materials have been designed to help the young people understand the purpose and process. Gaining consent for this research will involve a three-step process: 1) Consent from the schools/FE provisions, 2) Consent from the parent and 3) Consent from the young person.

1) During this process, the researcher will also show the designed information sheets and consent forms for young people to the key person managing the internships at the school/college and consider its accessibility. The researcher will make any adjustments to the style, visuals or text as needed as part of the pilot process.

2) & 3) The researcher will request a key person to brief the young person about the research and impending visit by the researcher by a selected date, which will help the young person be prepared. During the initial meeting, the researcher will use the ‘Meeting the young person’ presentation to discuss her own background with the young people. The researcher will make sure that the young person’s key worker (teacher/job coach) is present during the first meeting with the young person. After the information sheet has been discussed and read by the young person, a request for consent will be made. However, the researcher will provide some time to the young people if needed. The researcher will look out for any signs of potential discomfort (verbal or non-verbal) in the young person and consider alternative means of asking for consent if needed. In such a case, there may be limits to the consent gained through the participants, therefore, the researcher will make sure to discuss any potential difficulties with the schools/FE provisions beforehand or at the time.

While consent from both parent and young person is essential for participation in the research, the researcher will make every endeavour to meet the young people and send the information sheet to parents on the same day or on consequent days, such that the parent and young person can discuss their participation with each other. Importance will not be given to either parent or young person’s participation (one over the other), however, if one parent/young person declines participation, then the other will not be approached.

The researcher will also check for verbal consent before each interview with every participant.

The researcher has been involved in service training regarding the Mental Capacity Act (2005) and is aware of the boundaries/limits of capacity. The researcher has also been exploring capacity issues through a service working group.
Therefore, the researcher feels fairly competent to address any professional concerns and will also make use of research supervision to further reflect on any arising issues.

Safeguarding & Child Protection/Limits to confidentiality/Vulnerable participants

- The researcher will be aware of and follow the safeguarding procedures of every provision and the name/contact details of the safeguarding leads. The researcher has also been trained in the LA’s safeguarding procedures. The researcher will also follow-up on any safeguarding related actions which may need to be followed up by the school/other services (e.g., social services).

- The only perceived limit to confidentiality is if the parent or young person disclose any information which may signal potential harm to themselves or others. In this case, for the young person, school/college safeguarding procedures will be followed. The researcher will be made aware of the name and contact details of the safeguarding lead at the school/college through the school/FE consent form. For the parent, depending on the level and type of concern mentioned, either the school safeguarding lead and/or social services may be notified. The researcher will make use of research supervision to clarify any queries. The limits to confidentiality are clearly outlined in all information sheets and consent forms and will also be reiterated at the beginning of each interview.

- The researcher has obtained an updated DBS check that includes working with vulnerable adults recently. To ensure that the participants are protected:
  - The researcher will make sure that school staff are aware of each interview, name of participant, time and room that the interview will be held in.
  - The young people will be given an option to have a key person sit in with them during the interviews if needed.
  - The young people will be given the option to keep the door open and it will be requested that other people do not pass by the room to maintain confidentiality.
  - The researcher will make sure that a consistent, familiar room is used to ensure the comfort of the young people.
  - The researcher will build rapport before the interviews, by visiting the young people to obtain consent and participate in any activities that they may be partaking as applicable. Before the 2nd and 3rd stages of the interviews, the researcher will also visit the young people on their job placement, with the consent of the young person and the school/college.

Sensitive topics

The researcher does not anticipate that the interviews will elicit any discomfort in the participants, however, if due to any reason, the participant felt uncomfortable, the researcher would offer them a break, option to skip the question or reschedule the interview if needed. In case the discomfort persists, the researcher would signpost the young person to a pastoral member of staff/key person and a support service for the parent if needed. The researcher will design visual prompts for use by the young people during the interviews which will include but not be limited to the following: stop, break, like, dislike, skip, I don’t know, happy and sad emoticons, etc.

Risks to participants/researchers

There is no anticipated risk to the researcher/any participant as a result of this research.

Confidentiality/Anonymity

The researcher will ensure confidentiality/anonymity of the participants by:

- Providing each participant with an option to choose a pseudonym before the interview.
- Even if the participant chooses to keep their name, the researcher will use the participant initials during
transcription.

- All the participants’ personal details such as name, age, diagnoses, contact details, associated pseudonyms, school/FE college names and placement companies’ details will be stored in a password-protected file on the researcher’s password protected laptop and on an encrypted USB drive. This information will not be privy to anyone except the researcher. This file will be useful in case the participant wants to withdraw their data.
- During the reporting of the findings through the thesis, any presentation or ensuing report, the researcher will assign the participant a pseudonym and only use that name during the write-up.
- The researcher will not use participants’ real names even during research supervision.

**Data storage & security**

As mentioned earlier, all documents will be stored electronically in password protected and/or encrypted locations. All audio recordings/photographs/confidential files/consent forms will be deleted after two years of research completion.

**Reporting, dissemination & use of findings**

At any point during the thesis or any report/presentation, the participants’ real names or any identifiable features of the LA, school/college will not be mentioned, however, pseudonyms and certain extracts from the transcripts may be mentioned. The findings may form part of future presentations or reports, however, the same confidentiality/anonymity procedures will apply to the same.

A research brief will be shared with the Local Authority, school/colleges and parents, however, no identifiable features of any participant or provision will be visible from the brief. A one-page, visual brief with accessible language will be prepared for the young people and shared with them if they wish.

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**Section 9 Attachments**

Please attach the following items to this form, or explain if not attached

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. Information sheets, consent forms and other materials to be used to inform potential participants about the research</th>
<th>Yes ☑</th>
<th>No ☐</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. School/FE Information Sheet</td>
<td>Yes ☑</td>
<td>No ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. School/FE Consent Form</td>
<td>Yes ☑</td>
<td>No ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Parent Information Sheet</td>
<td>Yes ☑</td>
<td>No ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Parent Consent Form</td>
<td>Yes ☑</td>
<td>No ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Young Person Information Sheet</td>
<td>Yes ☑</td>
<td>No ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Young Person Consent Form</td>
<td>Yes ☑</td>
<td>No ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Meeting the Young Person Presentation.ppt</td>
<td>Yes ☑</td>
<td>No ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Parent Interview Schedule – 1</td>
<td>Yes ☑</td>
<td>No ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Young Person Interview Schedule – 1</td>
<td>Yes ☑</td>
<td>No ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Young Person Interview 1 Draft Presentation.ppt</td>
<td>Yes ☑</td>
<td>No ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Themes for Questions</td>
<td>Yes ☑</td>
<td>No ☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**If applicable/appropriate:**

| b. Approval letter from external Research Ethics Committee | Yes ☑ |
| c. The proposal (‘case for support’) for the project | Yes ☑ |
| d. Full risk assessment | Yes ☑ |

**Section 10 Declaration**

I confirm that to the best of my knowledge the information in this form is correct and that this is a full description of the ethical issues that may arise in the course of this project.

---

*Doctoral student ethics form August 2017*
I have discussed the ethical issues relating to my research with my supervisor. ✓ □
I have attended the appropriate ethics training provided by my course. ✓ □

I confirm that to the best of my knowledge:
The above information is correct and that this is a full description of the ethics issues that may arise in the course of this project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Diksha Narendra Laungani</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>15.02.2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Please submit your completed ethics forms to your supervisor for review.*

**Notes and references**
Professional code of ethics
You should read and understand relevant ethics guidelines, for example:
or
or
British Sociological Association (2002) Statement of Ethical Practice
Please see the respective websites for these or later versions; direct links to the latest versions are available on the Institute of Education http://www.ioe.ac.uk/ethics/.

Disclosure and Barring Service checks
If you are planning to carry out research in regulated Education environments such as Schools, or if your research will bring you into contact with children and young people (under the age of 18), you will need to have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) CHECK, before you start. The DBS was previously known as the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). If you do not already hold a current DBS check, and have not registered with the DBS update service, you will need to obtain one through at IOE. Further information can be found at http://www.ioe.ac.uk/studentinformation/documents/DBS_Guidance_1415.pdf

Ensure that you apply for the DBS check in plenty of time as will take around 4 weeks, though can take longer depending on the circumstances.

Further references
The www.ethicsguidebook.ac.uk website is very useful for assisting you to think through the ethical issues arising from your project.

This text has a helpful section on ethical considerations.

This text has useful suggestions if you are conducting research with children and young people.

A useful and short text covering areas including informed consent, approaches to research ethics including examples of ethical dilemmas.

Departmental use
If a project raises particularly challenging ethics issues, or a more detailed review would be appropriate, the supervisor must refer the application to the Research Ethics and Governance Coordinator (via ioeresearchethics@ucl.ac.uk) so that it can be submitted to the Research Ethics Committee for consideration. A departmental research ethics coordinator or representative can advise you, either to support your review process, or help decide whether an application should be referred to the REC. Also see 'when to pass a student ethics review up to the Research Ethics Committee': http://www.ioe.ac.uk/about/policiesProcedures/42253.html

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student name</th>
<th>Diksha Narendra Laungani</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student department</td>
<td>Psychology &amp; Human Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course</td>
<td>IOE – Professional Doctorate in Educational, Child &amp; Adolescent Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project title</td>
<td>Preparing for Employment: An exploration of the transition experiences of young people with mild and moderate learning disabilities and their families of a supported internship programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reviewer 1**

| Supervisor/first reviewer name | Dawn Male |
| Do you foresee any ethical difficulties with this research? | No |
| Supervisor/first reviewer signature |  |
| Date | 1st March 2018 |

**Reviewer 2**

| Second reviewer name | Helen Upton |
| Do you foresee any ethical difficulties with this research? | No |
| Supervisor/second reviewer signature |  |
| Date | 2nd March 2018 |

**Decision on behalf of reviews**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision</th>
<th>Approved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approved subject to the following additional measures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not approved for the reasons given below</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referred to REC for review</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Points to be noted by other reviewers and in report to REC**

**Comments from reviewers for the applicant**

*Once approved by both reviewers, students should submit the ethics application form to the Centre for Doctoral Education team IDE.CDE@ucl.ac.uk.*
Appendix I: Photo-elicitation prompts

These prompts were designed for the YP and shared with them and FE staff members via email prior to the T2 and T3 interviews:

Dear Young Person,

(insert details of upcoming interviews)

This time, I hope that you can bring some pictures of your work to our discussion. You can bring any three (3) pictures that you would like to share. In particular, I am interested to see pictures of:

- your workplace (where do you work?)
- your favourite places at work
- any work equipment (tools) that you use
- your favourite tasks at work
- any task that is new/tricky for you
- people who support you

You can click these pictures yourself or ask (job coach) to help you. Like I mentioned earlier, I will not take any pictures with me, they are all yours!

Looking forward to talking with you on (day/date).

Best Regards,
Diksha
Appendix J: Thematic Table of within-case analysis for each case study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case study 1: Sarah (YP) and Peter (parent)</th>
<th>Case study 2: George (YP) and Beatrice (parent)</th>
<th>Case study 5: Bob (YP) and Alexandra (parent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Young Person</strong></td>
<td><strong>Parent</strong></td>
<td><strong>Parent</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Ongoing challenges (workplace difficulties, seeking independence, uncertainty)</td>
<td>1. Parental aspirations (Employment, social opportunities &amp; skills)</td>
<td>1. Doubt &amp; certainty (indifference towards SI purpose &amp; employment aspiration, developing self-image &amp; positive employability skills)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Perceived benefits of SI (interest in helping roles, intern&gt;student, impact on independent living aspirations, satisfaction with SI, skill dev)</td>
<td>2. Parent perception (special interest, YP’s needs &amp; difficulties)</td>
<td>2. Support - A two way street (supporting other YP, support networks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Along the 'locus of control' continuum (parent dis-empowerment, SI as last resort, perception of YP’s disability, unfamiliarity with SI processes, seeking evidence of progress, intent to change YP’s career trajectory, exploring different avenues for YP)</td>
<td>3. Perceived challenges (Knowledge/information, parental involvement)</td>
<td>3. Transitions &amp; thinking patterns (anxiety, reflection, recall, fear of change, future thinking, seeking challenging work)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Emphasis on money skills (barrier to independence, wanting to be involved, noticing small steps of progress)</td>
<td>4. Zooming in on photography (specific interest, experiences)</td>
<td>4. Trial &amp; error approach (emerging routines, change in placements, developing career interests)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case study 3: Natalia (YP) and Amy (parent)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Case study 4: Chloe (YP) and Lucy (parent)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Young Person</strong></td>
<td><strong>Parent</strong></td>
<td><strong>Parent</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Ambiguity about SI (participation, knowledge)</td>
<td>1. Parental aspirations (Employment, social opportunities &amp; skills)</td>
<td>1. Barriers to independence (daily struggles, challenges to enter FE, support vs independence, communication, lack of post-10 support, routine changes, parent perception)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Journey to the future (future aspirations, barriers)</td>
<td>2. Parent perception (special interest, YP’s needs &amp; difficulties)</td>
<td>2. Ongoing adaptation and adjustment to SI (flexible placements &amp; routines, parent role, characteristics of preferred work environment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Protective factors (coping with change, positive friendships and familial relations, being proud of own achievements)</td>
<td>3. Perceived challenges (Knowledge/information, parental involvement)</td>
<td>3. Person and professional development (future work interests, personal values &amp; development)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Perceived growth (personal development, employment experiences &amp; interests)</td>
<td>4. Zooming in on photography (specific interest, experiences)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Bilateral mechanisms of support (parent role &amp; mindset, FE role)</td>
<td>1. Parental aspirations (Employment, social opportunities &amp; skills)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. From concerns to growth (readiness, mental health &amp; wellbeing, self-care)</td>
<td>2. Parent perception (special interest, YP’s needs &amp; difficulties)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Managing expectations (YP needing support, work interests/preferences, ongoing acceptance &amp; adjustment towards YP’s disability)</td>
<td>3. Perceived challenges (Knowledge/information, parental involvement)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Preparing for Adulthood-based hopes and aspirations (Employment readiness &amp; exploration, independence, socialisation, relationships &amp; wellbeing)</td>
<td>4. Zooming in on photography (specific interest, experiences)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Numbered bullets indicate themes for each participant and subthemes are mentioned in brackets.
Appendix K: Thematic Maps of cross-case analyses for YP and parents
### Appendix L: Sample Coded Transcript for YP and Parent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extract from YP transcript (Natalia - T1)</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Researcher: <em>friends I like I really like when I leave I really want to be connected to them that’s what I fear that I lose connection with them</em></td>
<td>• Fear of losing friends at FE after leaving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher: hmm</td>
<td>• Existence of social connections at FE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Person: <em>and I try try that’s why I try to meet up with them often like</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher: absolutely so you want to stay connected to your friends even after you leave [VOC]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Person: Yeah</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher: So does that mean you’ve found really good friends here?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Person: Yeah</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher: Yeah so that’s a positive thing about being here isn’t it? um so work is important, relationships friendships anything else that’s important or for now, that’s it?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Person: Um (long pause) um. Emotional.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher: Okay. Emotional. So what what about that?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Person: <em>It’s just like I usually don’t really think about my mental health</em></td>
<td>• Finding it difficult to think/talk about mental health worries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher: Mm-hm.</td>
<td>• Needing a space to talk through difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Person: <em>It’s it’s easy to pretend that nothing is wrong but it is.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher: Hm. Okay.</td>
<td>• Future thinking linked to emotional worries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Person: <em>And sometimes like when I am thinking about the future, I just think of I just like when I am sad or down when I talk about like what I want to do</em></td>
<td>• Difficult to think about the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher: Mm-hm.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Person: <em>In the future and when I think about it I get a bit I get a bit (long pause) (gets emotional)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher: A bit upset?</td>
<td>• Changes in aspirations from secondary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Person: <em>It's like when I was at secondary school</em></td>
<td>• Doubts about the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher: Yeah</td>
<td>• Feeling accepted at FE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Person: <em>I had I wanted to be a teacher</em></td>
<td>• Social inclusion at FE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher: Okay.</td>
<td>• Worried about people’s perceptions of self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Person: <em>and when I came here I changed</em></td>
<td>• Feeling accepted at FE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher: Changed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Person: <em>but sometimes I even wonder if being a teacher is even possible</em> (long pause) I mean when I came to [VOC] I I like felt comfortable like showing everyone like my true self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher: Yeah absolutely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Person: <em>I get it’s easier here than when I was at school and I am still thinking about why it is</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher: Hm. Why is this place making you feel more comfortable?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher: <em>Yeah like I was shy and I thought that people would think that I am weird</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher: Hm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Person: <em>and like I-I can’t remember if anyone asked me why I am shy</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parent: internship, umm, she wants to do, I want to give her like, she doesn’t want to do like five days a week and she wants to do like three days

Researcher: she wants to do part-time

Parent: yeah like part-time, yeah because if she do full time, she gonna miss, like I’m really worried like, sometimes two days and she is gonna say ‘oh I’m really tired’ or shall I go work, and you know, it’s gonna be miserable for me, and I have to phone her. It’s good for her part time, I think so, my husband, he said, it’s good for her. She can do three days or two and a half days, that’s good

Researcher: and then she’ll be at [VOC] for a while.

Parent: she can relax and she wouldn’t miss, so that’s why I gave her part time there it’s good like flexible, if she do five days, crazy

Researcher: It’s going to be very hectic for her, especially because she is not used to it, isn’t it, like the work environment, the people and working and things like that

Parent: and each day say she can do like six hours or five hours each day. That’s all right.

Researcher: as a starting step. Do you know where she is going, just out of curiosity, where she’s going to be placed or which internship she’d going to be

Parent: I’m not sure because they said they are gonna decide her she doesn’t want to do like in a clothes shop, she thinks she wants to like interest, I work in a childcare and it’s like that, she wants to, and I want to give her, her choice, like sometimes she wants to work in a big bookshop, you know like not people, she doesn’t like people, she’s really nervous, you know. And she is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extract from parent transcript (Amy - T1)</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Parent: internship, umm, she wants to do, I want to give her like, she doesn’t want to do like five days a week and she wants to do like three days | • Wanting part-time internship for YP  
• YP or parent’s decision? |
| Researcher: she wants to do part-time | • Parental concerns about YP’s employment readiness leading to part-time work decision  
• Joint parental decision/hope  
• Not wanting YP to feel tired |
| Parent: yeah like part-time, yeah because if she do full time, she gonna miss, like I’m really worried like, sometimes two days and she is gonna say ‘oh I’m really tired’ or shall I go work, and you know, it’s gonna be miserable for me, and I have to phone her. It’s good for her part time, I think so, my husband, he said, it’s good for her. She can do three days or two and a half days, that’s good | • Hoping for short work days  
• Setting some boundaries for YP’s work timings |
| Parent: she can relax and she wouldn’t miss, so that’s why I gave her part time there it’s good like flexible, if she do five days, crazy | • Parent unsure of YP’s placement before SI  
• Responsibility of FE to decide  
• YP unsure of career interests |
| Researcher: It’s going to be very hectic for her, especially because she is not used to it, isn’t it, like the work environment, the people and working and things like that |  |
| Parent: and each day say she can do like six hours or five hours each day. That’s all right. |  |
| Researcher: as a starting step. Do you know where she is going, just out of curiosity, where she’s going to be placed or which internship she’d going to be |  |
| Parent: I’m not sure because they said they are gonna decide her she doesn’t want to do like in a clothes shop, she thinks she wants to like interest, I work in a childcare and it’s like that, she wants to, and I want to give her, her choice, like sometimes she wants to work in a big bookshop, you know like not people, she doesn’t like people, she’s really nervous, you know. And she is |  |
really interested working with the brother’s Superdrug, I mean, you know like it’s really far and like and he brother said it’s really far and sometimes you know like he wouldn’t help her sister

Researcher: yeah he wouldn’t be able to, because he’s on the job, he has his own professional duties

Parent: yeah you know like same timetable, it can’t be like that, like if she has say nine to three and he has got 12 to 6, it’s gonna be more worse

Researcher: absolutely, makes sense, so at this stage, it’s just figuring it out, like where she is going to be, how it would look like for her. We have thought about how it would be, but, if you can just tell me a little bit about, what are your thoughts about, how do you think Nora is going to find the transition from being at Roots and Shoots which is more mainly educational you know learning in a different way to going on a job. How do you think she is going to adapt to it? The change?

Parent: Change I mean I think they will support her. Maybe I think they’re gonna support her.

Researcher: so that’s your expectation from [VOC]?

Parent: and like [FE lead] said he’s going to help her everything, like support her, like they will tell her lots of things about her, and she’s really quiet, she have to make a lot of friends you know that’s the main. Now she is really happy, she has got so many friends there that’s the main, yeah she’s got many friends, when her friends got a birthday she give a gift, and I’m really happy and people give her gift, that’s the things

| • YP thinking of varied career options |
| • Difficult to work with people |
| • Influenced by brother’s career choice but existing barriers |
| • Expectation/hope of FE supporting YP during SI |
| • Nature of expected support from FE during SI |
| • Parent pleased at development in social skills/relationships since being at FE |