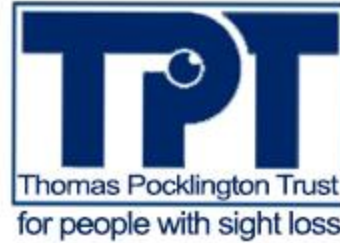


UNIVERSITY OF  
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# **The Transition Experiences of Young People with Vision Impairment aged 21 to 24**

**Technical report of findings to June 2019**

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# GLOSSARY

DLA	Disability Living Allowance
DSA	Disabled Students' Allowance
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
PIP	Personal Independence Payment
RNIB	Royal National Institute of Blind People
SEN	Special Educational Needs
VI	Vision Impairment
VICTAR	Vision Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research
Year 11 cohort	Participants were in school Year 11, aged 15-16 when recruitment commenced in summer 2010
Year 10 cohort	Participants were in school Year 10, aged 14-15 when recruitment commenced in summer 2010
Year 9 cohort	Participants were in school Year 9, aged 13-14 when recruitment commenced in summer 2010

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

The Longitudinal Transitions Study was designed in 2009 by a team from RNIB and the Vision Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research (VICTAR) at the University of Birmingham in response to the research brief prepared by RNIB.

The key objectives of the project were:

- To track the process of transition for vision impaired young people from age 14 for [initially] five years;
- To identify the roles of professionals involved;
- To identify the factors that improve or reduce a young person's chance of gaining employment.

Phase 1 of the study involved the recruitment of an original sample of approximately 80 young people to the longitudinal study and carrying out several surveys of their views and circumstances. This took place between autumn 2009 – March 2012 and was funded by RNIB. This phase of research resulted in a number of technical reports (e.g. Hewett and Douglas, 2011a; Hewett and Douglas, 2011b, Hewett, Douglas, Ramli, and Keil, 2012). Phase 2 of the study was funded by the Nuffield Foundation, and centred on follow-up surveys and case studies of the sample of young people with vision impairment. Phase 3 which commenced in November 2015 is being funded by Thomas Pocklington Trust until 2020.

This report focuses upon data collected between September 2018 and June 2019 when the young people were aged between 22 and 25 years old. The report is part of a series of technical reports which present all findings in the project since 2010.

## **Overview of data collected in Year 3 of Phase 3 (September 2018-June 2019).**

Interviews with participants in Year 3 of Phase 3 of the project took place between September 2018 and June 2019. These interviews covered the following topics:

- What the participants were currently doing (including details of transitions made and planned).
- Experiences of searching for job opportunities (including accessing support).

- Reflections on transitions made so far.
- Welfare benefits and independent living.

It was possible to interview 47 of the participants for this round of interviews. Contact was made with a further five participants who still wished to remain involved in the project but were unavailable for interview during 2018-19.

In line with previous data collections, the interviews were tailored to each individual participant to reflect their most recent experiences, their previous responses and the amount of time they had available. For example:

- A small number of participants had experienced complex and challenging transitions, and therefore more time was devoted to exploring this than with the average participant which meant that some parts of the interview schedule were not covered.
- Several participants who have been in continuous employment over a number of years and therefore were not asked all the questions on experiences in the workplace as they advised that nothing had changed from previous interviews.

Some of the questions asked in this interview have been taken from the Next Steps Age 25 survey. These questions are noted throughout the report. Further information on the Next Steps Age 25 may be found on [the project website](#).

## **Reporting of findings**

One of the key objectives of this report is to understand the different settings of the participants and their experiences within these settings. When reading the report it is important to note that many of the participants reported their experience of being in more than one setting. For example, some participants shared their experiences of both being NEET, and also being in the workplace once they had found employment. Distinction is made in the report between the final reported setting of the participants, and the number of participants who had experienced a particular setting at some point during the previous 12 months.

## **Current settings and plans for the future**

Current settings were established for 47 of the participants. At the time of last interview, the majority were either in employment (23), higher education (11) or NEET (10). Other settings included placement year

from HE (1), volunteering (1) and apprenticeship (1). We note that a large proportion of the participants were not engaged in employment or some type of work activity at the time of last interview. The proportion of participants who are either NEET or in voluntary work has remained about the same. Thirty-three of the participants had made some form of transition, whilst 14 continued with what they were doing the previous year. Eighteen of the participants experienced some form of deviation from their intended pathway, as reported during the 2016 interviews. Most notably, over 80% of the participants (39) intended to be in the labour market by 2019 and all are expected to have entered the labour market by 2021.

## **Higher Education**

Nineteen participants who had been in higher education since the time of last data collection completed this years' interview. The participants were studying a range of courses in HE, including 7 participants who had continued onto postgraduate study. One participant was studying for his undergraduate degree part time, alongside full time employment. Two participants reported that they had withdrawn from their course prior to completion. One had withdrawn by choice for reasons not related to their vision impairment. The second had experienced challenges with both her vision impairment and her flatmates. Whilst she wished to continue on the course, she had concluded it was not an option.

Of the nineteen participants who had been in HE, almost half intended next to find a graduate job or some form of employment, while four had already been successful in finding a job. Despite this, very few of the participants had made contact with their institutions careers service.

The majority had taken part in activities that enhanced their CV, including work experience/voluntary work, part time work, and undertaking a placement as part of their course.

The participants gave mixed accounts of their experiences in HE over the previous 12 months. Positive experiences included having opportunities to work independently and developing positive working relationships with those around them. Less positive experiences included difficulties in managing their workload and the support that they needed.

## **Employment, apprenticeships, voluntary work and job seeking**



Thirty-eight of the 47 participants who took part in the 2018-19 interviews had taken part in some form of work-based activity since the time of last interview. A large proportion (43%) of the participants had been in full time paid employment, while one participant was in part-time employment. Four participants were on casual contracts with unpredictable hours, and two were employed part-time alongside studying full time. Six participants had been working in unpaid placements as part of their course, and four participants had undertaken unpaid voluntary work. Nine of the participants had not undertaken any work-based activities since the time of the previous interview. Fourteen of the participants have been in long-term employment of over a year.

A large proportion of the participants gave examples of barriers that they faced in their work which limited their independence, including barriers to accessing information. Several of the participants, however, gave examples of how they were able to overcome barriers by making their own adjustments, such as using a low vision aid or assistive tools. Others gave examples of ways in which their employers made appropriate adjustments, such as providing larger monitors or ensuring that the lighting was how they needed it.

A further common theme in the interviews was the issue of disclosure of disability. Several participants gave examples of positive outcomes after speaking about their vision impairment to managers or colleagues. One participant described a sense of anxiety of burdening her employer with additional costs because of her vision impairment. Three participants shared that they were experiencing new challenges because their vision, or the impact of their eye condition, had changed. Finally, one participant reported that whilst on the whole things had been positive in terms of accessing her role, she had experienced some short term but significant problems with her eyes, which had led to her being signed off work for two weeks. These cases illustrate how the challenges faced by young people with vision impairment can be dynamic, and not simply in relation to static access needs.

Six of the participants reported that they were accessing support through Access to Work. One participant experienced problems when completing the application form which appeared not to cater for the type of work that she would be undertaking. This led to delays in the report being processed. The most common type of support being received was taxis to get between home and the workplace. While the participants spoke very positively about being able to access this type of support, it was

common to experience problems with the administration required to access the support. However, Access to Work does not cover voluntary placements and there was also evidence of difficulties this might cause – i.e. Access to Work was not supporting participants who wish to undertake voluntary work/work experience in order to develop the valuable skills and experiences that they require in the workplace.

Two of the participants reported that they received technology through Access to Work. However, several others experienced challenges in the workplace that may have been overcome through technology, but they had either not applied for Access to Work, or had not been assessed for technology that might help them in their roles.

### **Transition to the labour market**

At some point in the previous twelve months, 19 of the participants had either been preparing to enter the labour market (15), or were seeking to make some form of transition within the labour market (4). Of the 19 who shared their experiences of applying for jobs, five had already been successful in finding a job.

### **Not in Employment Education or Training**

Ten participants who were NEET at the time of interview spoke of their experiences. When comparing the characteristics of participants involved in the study, those with more severe vision impairment appear to have been more vulnerable to becoming NEET. Although it is important to remember the small sample size, this observation is in keeping with other large-scale survey based studies.

A distinction is often made between those who are actively seeking employment and those who are inactive in the labour market. We note that 7 of the 10 participants who were NEET had not been actively seeking employment in the previous year. The most common reasons given for this were not having relevant qualifications, not having work experience and there not being any jobs available that they were prepared to do.

The length of time that the participants had been NEET varied, but significantly, eight of the participants had been NEET for over a year, with two participants being NEET for as long as six years.

### **Experiences of searching for employment**

Of the 47 participants who took part in this round of interviews, 36 reported that they had previously had some form of paid employment,

whilst eleven had not. Of these eleven, nine reported that they had never searched for employment opportunities before. The most common methods used to find out about their current or previous job was using recruitment agencies/websites and drawing on personal contacts.

The participants reported using a wide range of websites for finding employment opportunities. The most common types of websites used were job listings sites – ‘Indeed’ being by far the most commonly reported. A common theme in the participants’ responses was how the Indeed mobile App had been accessible and beneficial. Despite many of the participants searching for jobs online, nine of the participants stated that they did not feel they had the skills they needed to search for jobs in this way.

### **Experiences of Job Centres**

Twenty of the participants reported that they had been to a Job Centre before. The most common reason was going to find a job, but five participants had been to access specialist support. Ten of the participants recalled that they declared their vision impairment to Job Centre staff, while six said that they did not.

Only seven of the participants recalled being referred to specialist support. They had mixed experiences at the Job Centre in relation to their vision impairment. Four participants said that when they sought to engage with Job Centre staff, they were told they were unable to help them as a person with a vision impairment. Four participants gave accounts of how their aspirations to find employment had been questioned by Job Centre staff, and instead they were told that they did not need to work because of benefits they were on. Two of the participants described inaccessible systems and processes.

More positive accounts came from one participant who was reassured that the Job Centre would be able to provide him support in relation to his disability, and another reported that the centre took account of her range of disabilities when organising a work placement. Three participants who access specialist support services gave positive accounts of the guidance that they received at the meetings that they attended.

### **Welfare benefits**

The most commonly reported welfare benefit being received by the participants was Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or Disability Living Allowance (DLA) (23), while seven participants reported that they

were receiving sickness, disability or incapacity benefits. Just two participants reported that they were receiving Universal Credit, and had had contrasting experiences – one reporting it had been straightforward and the other that it had been very unsatisfactory.

### **Independent living**

The majority of participants were living in a private residence: almost half were renting their property, while just over a third were living in their family (usually parent's) home. Those who were still living with parents gave a range of explanations for this, including wanting to move out but not being able to afford to, and using it as a means to save money. Thirteen of the participants said they had plans to start living independently in the next few years, while seven did not. Eighteen of 27 participants felt that their vision impairment would impact upon them if living independently.

### **Reflections on transitions made**

At the start of the longitudinal transitions study in 2010, the participants were asked what they would like to do when they were older. During the 2018-19 interviews, this question was revisited and their original responses used as a focus of discussion. An interestingly high proportion (41%) of the participants still had the same aspirations as they had shared age 14-16.

When discussing what went particularly well, the participants generally either highlighted particular experiences, or they identified ways in which they had been able to develop as a person. Seven of the participants highlighted university, seven identified increased independence and seven could not identify anything in particular as in general they felt everything had gone well for them. Other highlights included a gap year/year abroad, sixth form/college and increased confidence.

When asked what they would have done differently, seven participants shared that they would have worked harder, seven wished they had studied a different course or at a different institution, six wished they had either accepted more help or sought more guidance and three participants wished they had taken a gap year of some form.

Many of the participants were happy with the support and preparation they had received, but examples of ways in which they might have been better supported included broader guidance of the options available, preparation for living as a person with a vision impairment and support for transitions into university and employment.

Lastly, the participants were asked what they would like to be doing in five years' time. The responses given reflected the stage of life in which each participant currently sat, and predominately focused on what they would like to be doing in terms of their career. The aspiration for many was to find a job, and this was particularly true for those who were not already working. A small number of the participants were cautious in reporting their aspirations, explicitly noting that they had concerns about what was realistic as a person with vision impairment. Several of those already in employment noted that they would like to be able to progress in their careers or find a job that reflected their qualifications. A small number of participants spoke about other aspects of their lives, such as aspirations to live independently, buy a house, relocate to other parts of the country and have a family. One participant noted that they wanted to be in a positive place with regards to their mental health. Finally, two of the participants who were long-term NEET found this a difficult question to answer, and were unable to identify any particular aspirations.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

The research project “A longitudinal study of blind and partially sighted young people in the UK” was designed in 2009 by a team from RNIB and the Vision Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research (VICTAR) at the University of Birmingham in response to the research brief prepared by RNIB.

The key objectives of the project were:

- To track the process of transition for vision impaired young people from age 14 for [initially] five years;
- To identify the roles of professionals involved;
- To identify the factors that improve or reduce a young person’s chance of gaining employment.

Phase 1 of the study involved the recruitment of an original sample of approximately 80 young people onto the longitudinal study and carrying out several surveys of their views and circumstances. This took place between autumn 2009 – March 2012 and was funded by RNIB. This phase of research resulted in a number of reports (e.g. Hewett and Douglas, 2011a; Hewett and Douglas, 2011b, Hewett, Douglas, Ramli, and Keil, 2012). Phase 2 of the study was funded by the Nuffield Foundation, and centred on follow-up surveys and case studies of the sample of young people with vision impairment. Phase 3 has been funded by Thomas Pocklington Trust and commenced in November 2015.

This report focuses upon data collected between September 2018 and June 2019 through semi-structured telephone interviews. This wave of interviews explored:

- What setting participants were currently in (including details of transitions made and planned).
- Experiences of searching for employment opportunities.
- Reflections on transitions made so far.
- Welfare benefits and independent living.

This report is part of a series of technical reports, which have presented an annual overview of the findings in the longitudinal study. The nature of this report (focussing upon the transitions the young people have made) means that we also drawn upon data collected in previous rounds of interviews, therefore exploiting the longitudinal nature of the project.

# **SECTION A: PROJECT PARTICIPANTS – CURRENT SETTINGS**

## **2 CURRENT SETTING AND PLANS FOR THE FUTURE**

Section 1 presents an overview of the different pathways that the participants who took part in the 2018-19 interviews were following. It provides an overview of:

- What the participants were doing at the time of the previous interviews which took place during in 2017.
- What the participants were doing in 2018-19.
- What transitions have been made since the previous interviews in 2017.
- What deviations have been made from the participants' intended plans as reported in 2017.
- What the participants hoped to do next.

When reading the report it is important to note that many of the participants reported their experiences in more than one setting. For example, some participants shared their experiences of both being NEET, and also of being in the workplace having later found employment. Distinction is made between the final reported setting of the participants, and the number of participants who had experienced being in a particular setting at some time during the previous 12 months. A more thorough overview of the participants' experiences of making transitions from one setting to the next is provided in 'Section B: Individual transition pathways'.

### **2.1 OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANTS WHO PARTICIPATED IN 2017 INTERVIEWS**

Forty-seven participants took part in the 2018-19 interviews. In line with previous data collection, the interviews were tailored to each individual participant to reflect their most recent experiences, previous responses and the amount of time the participant had available. For example:

- A small number of participants had experienced complex and challenging transitions, and therefore more time was devoted to exploring their transition experience, which meant that some parts of the interview schedule were not covered.

- Several participants who have been in continuous employment over a number of years, and therefore were not asked all the questions on experiences of searching for employment as this had previously been covered with them in depth at the time.

**Table 1: Characteristics of participants who took part in the 2017 interviews (N=47)**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>	<b>Original sample (%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	22	47%	45%
Female	25	53%	55%
<b>Cohort originally recruited into</b>			
Year 9	15	32%	37%
Year 10	5	11%	7%
Year 11	27	57%	56%
<b>Registration type</b>			
Registered blind	19	40%	*
Registered partially sighted	14	30%	*
Registered – category unknown	0%	0%	*
Not registered/unsure	14	30%	*
<b>Reading format</b>			
Braille/electronic user	10	21%	17%
Large print user (point 16+)	29	62%	38%
Standard print user	8	17%	44%
<b>Highest qualification level</b>			
Degree or above	22	47%	*
A-level or below degree	18	38%	*
GCSE level and other	7	15%	*
No qualification	0	0%	*

\*= information not available

Table 1 provides an overview of some of the key characteristics of participants who took part in the 2018-19 interviews, and provides a comparison of the remaining participants with the original recruited sample. We note that a high proportion of participants with more severe vision impairment (who are registered blind and are braille/electronic users) have remained in the project. This bias could be anticipated, as it is likely that those with severe vision impairment would find the research questions to be of more relevance to them than those who do not require such as significant adjustments.



## 2.2 WHAT WERE THE PARTICIPANTS DOING AT TIME OF LAST INTERVIEW IN 2017?

**Table 2 Setting of participants in 2017 (N=47)**

<b>Setting</b>	<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Higher Education	16	34%
Employment	14	30%
NEET	9	19%
Placement year from HE	3	6%
Volunteering	2	4%
Gap year	2	4%
Leave of absence from HE	1	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above presents a summary of what the 47 participants interviewed were doing the last time we had spoken to them in 2017. The majority (16) were in higher education, while just over a third (17) were engaged in employment or voluntary work.

## 2.3 WHAT ARE THE PARTICIPANTS DOING ONE YEAR LATER?

**Table 3 Setting of participants in 2018-19 (N=47)**

<b>Setting</b>	<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Higher Education	11	23%
Employment	23	49%
NEET	10	21%
Placement year from HE	1	2%
Volunteering	1	2%
Apprenticeship	1	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above looks at what the settings of the 47 participants were during 2018-19. Where participants made a transition during 2018-19, their setting at the time of last interview has been recorded, although several participants were in multiple settings during the course of the year. A larger proportion of the participants are now engaged in employment or some type of work activity (49%). The proportion of participants who are either NEET or in voluntary work has remained about the same (increased slightly from 21% to 23%).

## 2.4 WHAT TRANSITIONS HAVE THE YOUNG PEOPLE MADE?

**Table 4 Primary transitions that the young people have made since the 2017 interviews**

	Total (N)
<b>Transitions</b>	
Changed employment	6
HE to employment	5
NEET to employment	4
HE to NEET	2
HE placement to HE	3
HE undergraduate to HE masters	2
HE undergraduate to PGCE	1
HE undergraduate to PhD	1
HE Masters to HE professional training	1
HE to HE placement	1
Employment to Apprenticeship	1
Leave of absence to NEET	1
Voluntary to employment	1
NEET to FE to NEET	1
Employment to NEET	1
Gap year to employment	1
Gap year to NEET	1
<b>No Transition</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>

The table above provides an overview of the primary transitions made by the young people since they were last interviewed in 2017. Thirty-three of the 47 participants interviewed have made some form of transition, whilst 14 have continued with what they were doing the previous year.

Of particular note, four participants who had been NEET, moved into employment. However, five participants who had previously been engaged in other activities, became NEET.

## 2.5 WHAT DEVIATIONS HAVE THE PARTICIPANTS MADE FROM THEIR INTENDED PLANS?

Eighteen of the participants experienced some form of deviation from their intended pathway, as reported during the 2017 interviews. In some

cases, this was the result of their own decision, but in other cases, it was due to external factors. A description of these deviations is as follows:

- Did better in degree than anticipated, so continued onto a Masters degree.
- Had intended to find local voluntary work, but found part time employment instead.
- Rejected HE course offer and moved into new paid role instead
- Successful in finding employment, but not in a position linked to degree as intended (2).
- Had intended to find full time paid employment, but still NEET (5).
- Didn't intend to change jobs, but was unhappy in role (unrelated to vision impairment).
- Had intended to change jobs, but unsuccessful in finding alternative employment.
- Had intended to continue with course, but found it too expensive.
- Had intended to continue with degree, but unable to complete academic year (2).
- Intended to complete FE course, but withdrew part way through year.
- Had intended to have graduated and found work, but having to retake some modules, linked to problems with vision impairment.
- Left previous job due to challenges with mental health.

## 2.6 WHAT DID THE PARTICIPANTS INTEND TO DO NEXT?

**Table 5: What do the participants intend to in 2019-20 (primary destination)?**

<b>Intended destination</b>	<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Continue in employment (same role)	13	28%
Find employment	10	21%
Change jobs	6	13%
NEET	5	11%
Set up as self-employed	4	9%
Gap year	3	6%
Continue in HE	2	4%
Continue in self-employment	1	2%
Unsure	3	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above gives an overview of what the participants reported they intended to do during the academic year 2019-20. We note that thirty-four (72%) of the participants intend to be in the labour market (both in employment and seeking employment) during this time.

## 2.7 FUTURE PROJECTIONS FOR THE LONGITUDINAL RESEARCH

**Table 6: Projected entry date into the labour market following 2019 interviews**

<b>Date expected to enter labour market</b>	<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>	<b>Cumulative percentage (%)</b>
Already in labour market	33	70%	70%
2019	6	13%	83%
2020	6	13%	96%
2021	2	4%	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100%</b>	

The table above shows our projections for when the participants who took part in the latest interviews are likely to (exclusively) enter the labour market. The majority (96%) expect to have entered the labour market by summer 2020 although it is important to note that the participant's plans continuously fluctuate.

## **SECTION B: PROJECT PARTICIPANTS – INDIVIDUAL TRANSITION PATHWAYS**

In the first section of the interview, the participants were requested to provide an overview of what they had been doing since they were last interviewed in 2017. An overview of these responses data is presented in Section A of the report. During this initial dialogue, the researcher identified which of the other sections of the interview schedule were relevant to that young person. Their responses to these questions are presented in Sections 3-8. In some cases, the participants were asked questions from more than one section of the schedule, having pursued more than one pathway during the previous year. The data presented here has been drawn from 48 participants who took part in the later sections of the 2017 interviews.

### **3 HIGHER EDUCATION**

The experiences of the participants in Higher Education have been explored thoroughly in Hewett at al., 2015. This section provides an overview of the experiences of the participants in HE over the past twelve months – particularly with regards to their future plans and the support available to facilitate these.

#### **3.1 PARTICIPANTS WHO HAVE STUDIED IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Nineteen participants who had been in higher education since the time of last data collection completed this years' interview. Key characteristics of these participants are presented in the table below.

**Table 7: Characteristics of participants who were in higher education (N=19)**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Total (N)</b>
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	7
Female	12
<b>Cohort originally recruited into</b>	
Year 9	8
Year 10	3
Year 11	8
<b>Registration type</b>	
Registered blind	9
Registered partially sighted	4
Not registered/unsure	6
<b>Reading format</b>	
Braille/electronic user	5
Large print user (point 16+)	14
Standard print user	0

The table below provides a summary of the type of course which the participants were studying.

**Table 8: Type of HE course participants are on**

<b>Type of course</b>	<b>Total (N)</b>
Undergraduate	6
Undergraduate with foundation year	1
Undergraduate with year abroad	3
Undergraduate with placement year	1
Undergraduate (part time)	1
Masters or postgraduate qualification	6
PhD	1
Total	19

The participants were studying a range of courses in HE, including 7 participants who had continued onto postgraduate study. One participant was studying for his undergraduate degree part time, alongside full time employment.

**Table 9: Date scheduled to complete course (N=19)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total (N)</b>
2019	6
2020	5
2021	1
2022	2
Completed	3
Withdrawn	2
Total	19

### **3.2 PARTICIPANTS WHO HAVE WITHDRAWN FROM THEIR COURSES**

Two participants reported that they had withdrawn from their HE courses prior to completion.

- One participant was studying for an undergraduate qualification in a vocational course, and decided to withdraw because of the expensive course fees. The participant already had options for self-employment and already had an undergraduate and Masters degree.
- One participant was in the first year of an undergraduate degree. She experienced some challenges with her flatmates, which led to her not sitting her exams at the end of the academic year. She was unsure what she would do next, but still would have liked to have continued in higher education.

### **3.3 PLANS FOR AFTER COMPLETING HIGHER EDUCATION**

**Table 10: Plans for after completing university**

<b>Plans after graduation</b>	<b>Total (N)</b>
Postgraduate course/Masters	2
Graduate job/find employment	8
Gap year	3
N/A – already in employment/self-employment	4
Unsure	2
Total	19

The table above gives a breakdown of the plans the participants had for once they graduated. Almost half intended to either find a graduate job or some form of employment, while four were already in employment.





### **3.4 CASE STUDY: APPLYING FOR GRADUATE ROLES WITH A VISION IMPAIRMENT**

“May” shared her experiences of applying for a number of graduate roles, as she was approaching the end of his degree. During her time in HE, she applied for a large number of internships and graduate jobs. After attending two interviews she noted facing barriers in applying for some of the roles, due to the poor accessibility of the process.

It was extremely common for the online application process to include online tests, which often proved to be inaccessible:

“The biggest headache with accessibility is the online tests that they get you to do. Most of the time I get given between 25% and 100% extra time for the tests. Some companies are good in the sense that they will just let me skip them because most of the time they aren’t very accessible, even with the additional time. So that’s the ideal situation. But that’s the most prohibiting factor about the recruitment process, is the online tests. Especially the ones that have graphs and charts and stuff because it is difficult to see. A lot of them don’t work with speech so the text it’s not interactive, it’s just like a picture. So even with extra time I can’t use speech software to read. A lot of companies don’t understand, they just think with extra time you will be sorted.”

Of around fifty applications that she made for graduate roles, she was unable to complete 5 of them because of inaccessible processes.

A consistent theme in her search for an internship and later a graduate job, were that the companies often did not understand the adjustments that she required:

“I got through the first stage and then they sent me their test, and then I asked for extra time doing a test and they granted me that, but the test didn’t work on my screen with the magnifier. I was trying to say to them it’s not working, and then they wanted me to move onto a different PC. I said to them I can’t really do that because my normal medium of working is working on my laptop with this certain software, and that didn’t really register with them and it was really hard getting in contact with the person who was responsible for making the adjustments and stuff and it got really tedious. So I ended up leaving it.”

She did however note several examples of positive adjustments that different organisations had made during the application process, including allowing extra time and allowing for telephone interviews

rather than video interviews. She also learned during the application process how best to approach the organisations to ask for adjustments.

“Well at first I was messaging the companies and asking them to adapt the online tests. I realised after the first couple of applications that it wasn’t working very well. So I kind of made a better contact and said this is the situation and I don’t think I would be fairly judged based on an online test.”

### 3.5 CONTACT WITH CAREERS SERVICE

**Table 11: Contact made with careers service**

<b>Was contact made, by academic status.</b>	<b>Total (N)</b>
Yes – graduating that academic year	1
Yes – not graduating that academic year	1
No – graduating that academic year	8
No – not graduating that academic year	6
N/A – part time degree whilst working full time	1
Total	17

The participants in higher education were asked whether they had made contact with their institutions careers service. The vast majority of the participants had not, and only one participant who was graduating that year reported that they had spoken with their careers service.

One participant said that she received regular correspondence from the careers service:

“They send out emails for careers forums and stuff, I think there is a different one each month for what career you want to do.”

One participant had taken advantage of various activities organised by the careers service, but had had a negative experience when interacting with a guest speaker who had come in to talk about careers in teaching:

“I actually had a really bad interaction... I spoke to the guy and he was like ‘oh you are interested in teaching’, and I was like ‘yeah’ and he was like ‘are you profoundly blind’ which is a really weird phrase... Then he was like ‘I think this is going to be really difficult for you.’ I was like ‘actually, I know many blind teachers and I think

I am better equipped to know if things would be difficult for me, rather than you, you have just met me today.'

A number of the participants who were studying for courses of more a vocational nature reported that instead of going to the careers service, they had received guidance from academic staff or knew that they would be receiving guidance of this nature in the future:

"We've had a couple of lectures already on careers advice and things like that."

"They'll sort of ask us to do that a bit more when they start talking to us about job interviews and those sorts of things".

One participant who had not been to the careers service was considering going to their university career service after a friend had recommended doing so:

"I haven't. My friend actually recommended them just the other day, that it might be worth getting in touch."

Two participants responding by saying that they had not really thought about going to the careers service, or considered how the careers service might be able to help them.

"Not yet, to be honest. I don't know what I can sort of say, or what they can do for me at the moment."

"That's interesting, I haven't really thought about going to them asking...I've been trying to think like what I'm good at and what I'm not good at, and trying to kind of figure out what would best suit my abilities. Trying to be realistic. Also with a disability I think it's important to keep that in mind."

### **3.6 ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE THEIR CV**

The participants were asked whether they had had the opportunity during the previous academic year to take part in any activities that may enhance their CV. The majority had, with twelve giving examples of experiences they had had that could be referenced on their CV, and only four reported that they had not. The nature of these activities are summarised in the table below:

**Table 12: Activities undertaken by participants in HE to enhance their CV**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Total (N)</b>
Work experience/voluntary work	6
Part time job	3
Placement as part of course	6
None	4

### **3.7 EXPERIENCES IN HIGHER EDUCATION OVER PREVIOUS YEAR**

The participants in higher education were asked to talk about their experience in higher education over the past year. Their responses have been grouped into various themes, as presented below.

#### **Working independently**

Several of the participants gave examples of ways in which they were able to work independently, by making their own adjustments, or by using different types of technology.

“I have adapted to do it on my own. I choose to sit closer to the whiteboard. When I do my readings for the class, I am able to make it bigger on my laptop by zooming in.”

“Accessibility’s been very good. I have had no issues with it really. I can have large print books if I want, but I tend to have the books on an app anyway on my phone as opposed to having them on paper. I much prefer having them on my tablet.”

#### **Positive working relationships**

A number of participants gave examples of ways in which their experience in HE was improved as a result of having positive relationships with the key people around them.

“I mean luckily all my lecturers work electronically. A couple of them know me really well already so they automatically sent me stuff before the semester started. A few are new and I am sort of training them!”

“Yeah. I would say pretty amazing to be honest because I was with them for three years anyway, so they already sort of knew me, and I knew what was going on, so it’s always been catered for there.”

## **Managing workload**

One participant shared that he had found it challenging managing the volume of work required in the final year of study and applying for graduate jobs.

“Final year modules are a lot harder than first or second year. But I have been good in terms of time management. I come to campus early and stay on. But with the job search it’s taken so much of my time, it’s kind of hard to keep up.”

Another participant had had to retake the academic year after having problems managing their workload, and failing to submit coursework at the end of the retake year. This was due to challenges in managing the workload and in particular in coordinating the support he needed to be able to access key texts.

“To be honest I couldn’t do it and then I realised I had missed the deadline and then I sort of just let it go. And then obviously it came back in the summer that it hadn’t been submitted, and I had to do three essays the summer just gone.”

## **Accessing support in HE**

Several of the participants referenced the support that they had been allocated through Disabled Students’ Allowance. There were mixed reports of the accessibility of course materials. Some participants had significant problems in accessing their lecture notes, including one participant who had to take a year out of university as the problems were not resolved in sufficient time. She was unaware that she could apply for Disabled Students’ Allowance. She subsequently applied to receive DSA, but faced challenges in providing the necessary medical evidence.

“They then said that I was entitled to this Disabled Students’ Allowance...I haven’t got my [certificate of vision impairment]. I have tried getting it, I have tried phoning the hospital to get it, and they said that they couldn’t access it and that I needed to go to the doctors, and the doctor said that they didn’t have the authorisation to access it.”

Another participant reported that she tried to access DSA, but did not hear back from the assessment centre she contacted.

One participant on reflecting on the overall support that he had received, noted that whatever adjustments were put in place, it would never

completely account for the extra challenges that he faces due to his vision impairment.

“There are real challenges which, no matter how much support you get, I don’t think can be really resolved. Like if a classroom is designed for people who can see, and you can be emailed the presentations in advance and be as well prepared in advance as you can, and you can have a note-taker and stuff – which is brilliant, but you’re never going to get...well in my case anyway, I’m never going to get the 100% sort of out of each and every class at university because they’re just not designed for people who can’t see. That’s kind of the hard truth.”

One participant, who on the whole had a positive experience, did note that there were problems in accessing the support she had been assigned through DSA, specifically in relation to the work placements that she needed to undertake for her course.

Another participant who had already graduated having completed both an undergraduate and Masters, reflected back and said that he felt more should be done to support students with vision impairment.

“I generally feel that universities can do more to adapt their facilities for visually impaired persons, including their social and academic facilities, as this will greatly increase the independence of persons with a visual impairment.”

One participant who had had significant problems due to her vision reported that she had not notified the university of this, and that she did not know who she should speak to.

“I’ve just noticed it more, my eyesight’s getting worse...I haven’t talked to anyone, but I’m not really sure who I could talk to.”

In contrast, several participants spoke very positively about the adjustments that had been put in place.

“It seems to be very good. It’s intense as I said, but I’ve had all the adjustments in place and things like that, so I’ve had no problems so far.”

“The library support people are amazing. We, sort of, for notes during lectures I have a note-taker. They seem to be quite good. And yeah, I’ve been pretty happy.”



## 4 EMPLOYMENT, APPRENTICESHIPS VOLUNTARY WORK AND JOB SEEKING

### 4.1 OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES OF PARTICIPANTS IN WORK BASED SETTINGS

All participants who had been in some form of work-based activity since the time of the last interview were asked more questions about their experiences.

**Table 13: Nature of work-based activity**

<b>Work-based activity</b>	<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Fulltime employment	20	43%
Part time employment	1	2%
Causal employment/zero-hours contract	4	9%
Part time work alongside full time study	2	4%
Work-based placement for course/apprenticeship	6	13%
Voluntary work	5	19%
Not in employment	9	11%
Total	47	100%

The table above presents an overview of the participants who had been engaged in work-based activities. A large proportion (43%) of the participants had been in full time paid employment. The one participant in part-time employment shared that she hoped to be able to progress into full time employment, but for the time being was happy, having just returned to the workforce after an extended period of difficulties with mental health. Four participants reported being on casual contracts with unpredictable hours. Two participants reported being in part-time paid employment alongside studying full time.

Six participants had been working in unpaid placements as part of their course, and four participants had undertaken unpaid voluntary work. Nine of the participants had not undertaken any work-based activities since the time of the previous interview.

#### 4.1.1 Participants in casual employment

As reported in the last technical report (Hewett and Douglas, 2018), several of the participants have been employed on casual contracts, with undefined hours. None of the four participants on casual contracts viewed this as a long-term option for them, and rather a stepping-stone

to move onto something more secure. Two of the participants had spent a period of time NEET before moving onto casual contracts, having had challenges with their mental health.

#### 4.1.2 Participants in work-based placements

Six of the participants were undertaking work-based placements as part of their programme of study. Two of the participants had undertaken placement years as part of their undergraduate degrees, and had chosen to go into work-based settings. Three of the participants were undertaking placements to gain necessary professional experience in order to obtain a professional postgraduate qualification. One participant was studying for an apprenticeship.

## 4.2 TYPE OF ORGANISATION AND SECTOR

**Table 14: Type of organisation**

Organisation	Total (N)	Total (%)
Private firm or company or PLC	17	36%
Local government or council (including police, fire services and local authority controlled schools or colleges)	5	11%
University or other grant funded education establishment (include 'opted out' schools)	2	4%
Health authority or NHS trust	3	6%
Charity, voluntary organisation or trust	7	15%
Some other kind of organisation	2	4%
Self-employed	2	4%
Not in paid employment	9	19%
Total	47	100%

Taken from Next Steps Age 25 survey

The participants were asked to give more information about the type of organisation that they work for. The responses given in the table above, and show that the participants have been working in a wide range of organisations, with the highest proportion (36%) being in the private sector.

## 4.3 PARTICIPANTS IN PAID EMPLOYMENT

### 4.3.1 Overview of participants whose primary setting is paid employment

In total, there were 29 participants who, since the time of the last interview, had been in some form of paid employment or an apprenticeship. Their characteristics are outlined in the table below.

**Table 15: Characteristics of participants whose primary setting was paid employment (N=29)**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>	<b>All participants who took part in data collection (%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	15	52%	47%
Female	14	48%	53%
<b>Cohort originally recruited into</b>			
Year 9	8	28%	32%
Year 10	3	10%	11%
Year 11	18	62%	57%
<b>Registration type</b>			
Registered blind	7	24%	40%
Registered partially sighted	10	35%	30%
Not registered/unsure	12	41%	30%
<b>Reading format</b>			
Braille/electronic user	3	10%	17%
Large print user (point 16+)	18	62%	62%
Standard print user	8	28%	17%
<b>Highest qualification level</b>			
Degree or above	17	59%	47%
A-level or below degree	8	28%	38%
GCSE level and other	4	14%	15%
No qualification	0	0%	0%

The table above shows some key characteristics of the 29 participants who have been in paid employment, and makes comparison to the characteristics of all 47 participants who took part in this round of interviews. Although the numbers are very small, we do note a higher

proportion of participants in employment who have a degree, and a smaller proportion of participants in employment who read braille/electronic material.

#### 4.4 PARTICIPANTS IN VOLUNTARY WORK

**Table 16: Characteristics of participants whose primary setting was voluntary work (N=5)**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Total (N)</b>
Gender	
Male	2
Female	3
<b>Cohort originally recruited into</b>	
Year 9	1
Year 10	1
Year 11	3
<b>Registration type</b>	
Registered blind	3
Registered partially sighted	2
Not registered/unsure	0
<b>Reading format</b>	
Braille/electronic user	1
Large print user (point 16+)	4
Standard print user	0
<b>Highest qualification level</b>	
Degree or above	2
A-level or below degree	2
GCSE level and other	1
No qualification	0

Five participants had undertaken voluntary work since their previous interview. Two of the participants had been in long-term voluntary work at the same organisation, and were continuing to undertake voluntary work as part of their regularly weekly activities. In both cases, they were hoping to find paid employment, and had been actively looking for work opportunities. One of the participants had been NEET for over a year, although this was somewhat intentional, as he planned to take a gap year after completing his degree. He had managed to find voluntary work in the media industry, which aligned with his long-term career aspirations. The final two participants were in higher education, and had undertaken voluntary work to help gain valuable experience and to enhance their CV.

## 4.5 EXPERIENCES IN EMPLOYMENT AND VOLUNTARY WORK

### 4.5.1 Length of time in role

**Table 17: Length of time in current role/with current employer: employment primary setting for participants in paid employment**

Duration	Total (N)	Total (%)
Less than 6 months	7	24%
6 months to 1 year	8	28%
1 year +	14	48%
Total	29	100% <sup>d</sup>

The table above shows the length of time that the participants who were in paid employment had been with their current employer. Almost half had been in their current role or with their current employer for over one year. We note that fourteen of the participants had been in long-term paid employment - four more than the previous year. This is significant as the aim of this project has been to track the experiences of the young people from compulsory education through to participation in the labour market. Due to the length of time that these participants have maintained employment, we reach some conclusions that these ten young people have successfully navigated the transition into employment. However, as we monitor the cohort, we will continue to assess the experiences of these participants, and whether they remain in, and progress in their roles.

### 4.5.2 Special qualifications and training

The participants were asked whether it was necessary for them to have any specific qualifications or received any special training in order to be employed in their role. Twenty of the participants reporting that it had been, including:

- Participants who needed specific types of degrees to pursue a graduate job.
- Participants who had taken vocational type courses (e.g. childcare) which gave them the necessary qualifications to undertake their role.
- Participants who were studying for professional courses and were undertaking work-based placements to ensure they had the

professional experience required to meet the standards for that qualification.

### 4.5.3 Travel to the workplace

The participants were asked how they normally travelled to and from their workplace. Some had more than one method for travelling to work, depending on the weather or the availability of others to give them a lift. The table below summarises their responses.

**Table 18: Methods used for getting to and from work**

Mode of travel	Total (N)
Public transport	10
Walk	6
Taxi	7
Lift from family members	5
Lift from colleagues	2
Private car	2

Ten of the participants reported that they used public transport to get to work. This includes a range of public transport, including bus, tram, train and tube. One participant who travelled to her work placement which she was undertaking as part of professional training, reported that the university had made adjustments to ensure that she was placed in a school she could access using public transport:

“So I had to fill a form out...and it asks “do you drive or not?” and any sort of, special...like disabilities or special requirements and all that, so they made sure that I was in a school that was nearby.”

Another participant who is severely sight impaired spoke very positively about his experiences of using the tube:

“I love the tube! Always have done. All those trips when I went down to London I started just deliberately getting lost on the tube. So, I would say this is where I want to start from, and I’m just going to go play on the Victoria line or the Piccadilly Line. Before you knew it, I had about three-quarters of the tube map memorised, and all of the locations that I needed.”

Six participants walked to work. They referred to adjustments that they made in order to enable them to do that, such as receive mobility

support to learn the route, receiving support from Guide Dogs, using a cane and buying a property within walking distance of their office.

“I learnt the route to the [placement] quite simply just by doing it and someone following me like I think it was the first couple of weeks.”

Seven participants used a taxi at least some of the time to get to and from their place of work. In five cases, this was funded by Access to Work. In two cases this was self-funded: one participant was in voluntary work, and chose to pay for a taxi for one-leg of the journey, and one participant was undertaking a placement as part of her postgraduate level professional training, and had not organised for taxis to be paid for as part of her Disabled Students' Allowance. One participant shared how it would not be possible for him to get to work without taxi support, due to limited public transport:

“On the up side, I do get Access to Work now to get to work...I start at 5am...There's just one bus at 9 o'clock in the morning!”

Seven of the participants stated that they receive lifts: five from family members and two from colleagues. These participants were reminded that they made be able to receive support to travel through Access to Work.

#### **4.5.4 Challenges faced in their work/voluntary role in relation to vision impairment**

The participants in paid employment and voluntary work were asked about any challenges they faced in their role in relation to their vision impairment, and about any adjustments which were made to overcome these. The open responses that they gave were analysed, and several themes identified. An overview of these responses is given below.

A large proportion of the participants gave examples of barriers that they faced in their work, which limited their independence:

“There are some things I can't do, because of accessibility, like I can't take people's payments on the card machine because I can't read it, and their booking system I can't use, things like that.”

“The documentation is really small, all the documents that we are given, but the school is run by another organisation.”

Some of the participants identified ways in which they struggled to access information in the workplace. As will be discussed later, of particular note for these participants is that they had not applied for Access to Work at all (or had only applied for taxi support) and had not taken advantage of other relevant services, such as low vision clinics.

“Hard sometimes. Just like with computer work, I can’t stay on it for long. If I have got paperwork, I have to really concentrate, my eyes get really tired. I have noticed the past three weeks my eyes have got a lot worse. I know I need to constantly wear my glasses. Everything is already blurry, but it’s a tiny bit even more blurry for me with writing and stuff.”

Several of the participants gave examples of how, whilst they faced challenges in relation to their vision impairment, they were able to overcome them by making their own adjustments.

“I had to find a magnifier I needed myself to take in. Luckily the university had one I could borrow.”

“With regarding books, some of the numbers they might be faded, they are quite small because they have to go on the spine of the books. For that I have got a magnifying glass, it’s the size of a credit card. I have that on me at all times and I can just whip it out when I need it.”

“I’ve made a few modifications to the [display] I can get around it by using the [onscreen] magnifier if I need it”

Other participants gave examples of ways in which their employer made appropriate adjustments for them, such as providing larger monitors or ensuring that the lighting was how they needed it.

“Yeah, ideally I have a double-screen, well, including my laptop three screens – several screens – which they offered me when I first joined...when I have had bad eyes then they are completely understanding, and we’ve been in meetings before, after my eyes are bad, and they’ve turned all the lights off for me, and that sort of thing.”

“I’ve kind of done things the way I’ve been doing it for years really. Getting the provisions that I need – bigger monitor, better resolution, that kind of thing.”



One participant shared how his one-year role as part of a placement year from HE was a time of learning, as he adapted and developed strategies for new situations as they emerged:

“There were presentations sometimes which were a bit difficult to do, especially doing my first one or two. So that was a new dynamic of giving a presentation on a projector. I managed to find ways of getting around that, for instance having a second laptop so that I could zoom in my screen while keeping the projector screen at the same size for other people reading it. Little things like that. I think going forward when I am in a permanent role, I would have an iPad instead. It would be a bit more mobile and easier to move things around.”

A further common theme was the participants’ willingness to disclose as having a vision impairment. Several participants gave examples of positive outcomes having spoken about their vision impairment to managers or colleagues:

For example, one participant who had in previous interviews shared that he did not feel comfortable talking to others about his vision impairment, explained how he had concluded that it was necessary to do so.

“Other people were doing a better job, and they were finding it straight away. So, I went to my manager...I hate talking about my eyes, I think I have said this a thousand times to you! So I went to him quietly, I trust my manager, and I went can I be took off that, I will do the rest of it, but with my eyes. It is a half hour/45 minute job, so if it takes me an extra 15 minutes it’s a lot.”

Another participant who spoke to her colleague about her eye condition found that her colleague was very considerate of ensuring that she could access the information she needed to:

“My [colleague] knows about my condition...she makes sure that her writing is everything clear and anything that she had on the board is in large font that I’m able to read.”

One participant shared how whilst she had declared her vision impairment, she still had some anxiety about not wanting to ‘burden’ her employer. She was particularly concerned about any financial

contributions that the employer would be expected to make towards any equipment recommended by Access to Work.

Three participants shared how they were experiencing new challenges because their vision or the impact of their eye condition had changed.

“When I went last year [to the hospital] they told me my eyesight has decreased. That was not nice to hear.”

“Every day I am looking at a computer, that’s the kind of work I went into because I have always wanted to do office based work, so I knew that was going to be a problem. I am 25 now, so 24 years of my life I have had a blind eye but it’s never been any bother. I have probably put strain on my good eye but I just get on with it. But this past year has been a bit of a nightmare because of the problems that I am having with it.”

Finally, one participant reported that whilst on the whole things had been positive in terms of accessing her role, she had experienced some short term but significant problems with her eyes which had led to her being signed off work for two weeks.

#### 4.5.5 Access to Work

**Table 19: Is participant receiving Access to Work?**

Receiving Access to Work	Total (N)	Total (%)
Yes	6	12%
No	20	43%
Not applicable	21	44%
Total	47	100%

The participants were asked whether they were receiving any support that is funded by Access to Work. Six of the participants reported that they were.

One participant shared that she found the application process for Access to Work to be complex, as the forms provided did not cater for the type of work that she would be undertaking, which would involve spending a lot of time out of the office with the assistance of a support worker.

“I started off with one advisor and then he left and my case didn’t get picked up by anyone else for a few weeks, so there was a delay. I think a lot of the delay is because they don’t know how to

accommodate for my kind of job, it's not like I spend every day in an office. So on their forms, the application things, I can't answer their questions that they ask... things like 'estimate how many hours you will need this'. Well, I don't know, because part of my role here is to go on site visits to check out venues for different things, so I need a support worker to do that. But that's not every week, it's once a month, something like that. But they don't like that! A lot of them were asking me for me information and then I send it and they ask for it again, and you have to go back and say 'I have answered this on this form'. They come back and say 'we don't understand this' and then you have to explain it again. I think it's because their application is so rigid, and then when they get my form and I haven't answered, I haven't checked XYZ box, they don't know what to do with it."

The most common type of support being received by five of the participants was funding for taxis to get from home to the workplace. While the participants spoke very positively about being able to access this type of support, it was common to experience problems with the administration required to access this support.

Researcher: How have you found the process so far?

Participant: Pretty lacklustre to be fair because, it's been the same with most things in terms of benefits, like DSA and Access to Work. The actual process is really disjointed...you make an account online, but then you have got to go in person, you have got to fill in this form or post it, there is no consistency to it. And it is not accessible... Like Access to Work, filling in my transport forms was an absolute nightmare. There must be a better way for these organisations to do these things...I had to print out the forms, fill them in and then post them. I don't handwrite anything, I can barely see to sign my own name. I asked if I could do it electronically and they were just not having it.

"I have got Access to Work, but I am having a bit of trouble with them at the moment, it took me a while with them. They said I had to find my own taxis, things like that. Which wasn't a problem, but my taxi company wasn't...they didn't know who Access to Work is basically, and they weren't comfortable with sending bank details without knowing where the money is coming from, if they would get paid. I couldn't open any accounts because my taxi fares are too low."

“It was a nightmare...Just like trying to find a company that would actually turn up, and actually take me to work, and actually work with Access to Work, because Access to Work are so bad at paying the taxi companies that most of them turn around and say “no, we’re not going to work with Access to Work.”

One participant shared that the claim forms were often being lost by Access to Work, despite sending them recorded delivery:

“Well, I send them first class, I send them what do you call it? Signed for to make sure they get there because it’s information about myself, but then they have lost it four times, that’s been four times in a six month period. I am lucky I am on an account with the taxi company and they are fairly good to me. If the claims are lost I tell them they are lost and they said to send them because they send me the money and I send it onto them...”

As noted in Section 5.5.3, several of the participants were receiving lifts from family members or colleagues in order to get to the workplace. Two who were reliant on lifts to be able to get to their workplace, were in long-term employment and should have been eligible for Access to Work. In both cases, they had not thought about applying to Access to Work for taxi support.

Researcher: If there was an occasion no-one was travelling your way, would there be a way to get there with public transport, or what would you do?

Participant: You can – you could do, but it would take...it would be difficult, so I would probably just get a taxi or something.

Researcher: Did you make contact with Access to Work at all?

Participant: I didn’t, no, I completely forgot about them.

There was also evidence of possible barriers to participants who wish to undertake voluntary work/work experience in order to obtain the important skills and experiences that they require in the workplace, in the event of them not having access to transport. Access to Work is not available to individuals who are in voluntary employment. One participant shared how she uses her money received from PIP to pay for a taxi to enable her to do voluntary work once a week, whilst another participant who had a month’s work voluntary placement during a break from her degree studies, was reliant on family members to transport her there.

Only two of the participants reported that they had received technology through Access to Work. In both cases, they spoke positively about the equipment that they received. However, as noted in the previous section, many others experienced challenges in the workplace that may have been possible to overcome through technology, but they either had not applied to Access to Work, or the only support that they had enquired about had been travel support, and therefore they had not investigated further the ways in which technology might help them in their roles.

#### **4.5.6 Progression within their organisation**

Finally, those participants who were established in their roles were asked if they had looked at the possibility of promotion within their current company. This question was not relevant for several of the participants due to a variety of reasons, such as them being in voluntary work or being in a short-term role. Nine of the participants were anticipating opportunities to progress in their organisation, while six either did not anticipate this, or were not interested in doing so.

## **4.6 THE TRANSITION TO ENTERING THE LABOUR MARKET**

### **4.6.1 Overview of participants looking to transition in the labour market**

This section explores the experiences of 19 participants who shared their experience of having made or preparing to make some form of transition in the labour market.

**Table 20: Reason participant was seeking employment**

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Total (N)</b>
Currently NEET/in temporary work	10
Looking for employment after graduation	5
Looking to change jobs	4
Total	19

The 19 participants who were seeking employment during 2017 provided a range of explanations for this:

- Ten participants were either NEET and therefore looking to find employment, or were in a temporary role and were seeking something longer term
- Five participants had either recently graduated or were preparing to graduate and were looking at graduate roles
- Four participants were already in employment, but were hoping to change jobs

**Table 21: Characteristics of participants who had been looking for employment opportunities (N=19)**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Total (N=19)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>	<b>Total (All participants)</b>
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	9	47%	47
Female	10	53%	53
<b>Cohort originally recruited into</b>			
Year 9	5	26%	32
Year 10	3	16%	11
Year 11	11	58%	57
<b>Registration type</b>			
Registered blind	10	51%	40%
Registered partially sighted	6	32%	30%
Not registered/unsure	3	16%	30%
<b>Reading format</b>			
Braille/electronic user	7	37%	21%
Large print user (point 16+)	9	47%	62%
Standard print user	3	16%	17%
<b>Highest qualification level</b>			
Degree or above	9	47%	47%
A-level or below degree	5	26%	38%
GCSE level and other	5	26%	15%
No qualification	0	0%	0%

The table above provides a summary of key characteristics of the participants who were seeking to transition into and within the labour market. We note that this group of participants is broadly representative of the overall sample.

Of the 19 participants who were looking for work, 17 had decided on the type of work that they were looking for. This ranged from having specific sectors in mind, to simply wanting to find something that would give them an income.

#### **4.6.2 The job search**

Of the 19 participants who shared their experiences of applying for jobs, five had already been successful in finding a job, and thirteen were still searching. Some of the participants were applying for graduates roles, and therefore they would not have expected to have found out the outcome by the time of interview. The participants were asked to talk

about their experiences of searching for opportunities and applying for jobs.

Two participants talked about their experiences of applying for jobs in what are recognised as very competitive industries. They were both seeking roles directly related to their undergraduate degrees, and were in alternative jobs in the meantime to ensure that they had an income.

“I have got to just keep trying and see how it goes.” Participant searching for work in a competitive field.

In both cases they were undertaking further work experience in their spare time to try and boost their opportunity of successfully finding a job in their chosen field.

Two participants spoke of the challenges of juggling hunting for jobs, whilst facing other significant life changes. In both cases it was necessary for them to move house, and they had instead directed their attention to this before looking for work.

Three participants reported looking at grad schemes, and these experiences have already been covered in the ‘Higher Education’ section.

One participant who had been long term NEET spoke of the challenges of dealing with other people’s perceptions of her vision impairment, and described how that was off putting for then applying for roles in the future.

“Because the lady said to apply because there is no harm in trying. Sometimes people say that and it’s like, well actually there is... the reason I have stopped looking is I went to a job and they told me ‘I didn’t realise you were that blind.’”

Another participant described how she was having difficulties identifying suitable job opportunities within the area in which she felt confident to travel.

“I hadn’t found anything to apply for yet, it’s an awkward time of year at the moment. Most of the jobs have been cleaning jobs that are local.”



Several of the participants identified people who had assisted them in their job search, emphasising the importance of supportive networks. This included family members who helped facilitate them going to assessment centres, specialist charities, transition officers who helped identify jobs and friends and family members who gave them leads on specific job opportunities.

#### **4.6.3 Support once in employment**

The participants were asked whether they were aware of support that might be available to them once in employment, with twelve responding that they were. In all but one of these cases they referred to Access to Work. One participant who was looking to set up as self-employed referred to the support that she had received through Access to Business.

## 5 NOT IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION OR TRAINING (NEET)

### 5.1 OVERVIEW OF THE PARTICIPANTS WHO HAVE BEEN NEET

Ten participants who were NEET at the time of interview spoke about their experiences.

**Table 22: Characteristics of participants who were NEET at the time of interview (N=10)**

Characteristic	Total (N)	Total (%)	Total all participants (%)
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	4	40%	47%
Female	6	60%	53%
<b>Cohort originally recruited into</b>			
Year 9	4	40%	32%
Year 10	1	10%	11%
Year 11	5	50%	57%
<b>Registration type</b>			
Registered blind	9	90%	40%
Registered partially sighted	1	10%	30%
Not registered/unsure	0	0%	30%
<b>Reading format</b>			
Braille/electronic user	4	40%	21%
Large print user (point 16+)	6	60%	62%
Standard print user	0	0%	17%
<b>Highest qualification level</b>			
Degree or above	2	20%	47%
A-level or below degree	5	50%	38%
GCSE level or other	3	30%	15%
No qualification	0	0%	0%

The table above presents some key characteristics of the participants who were NEET at the point they took part in the 2018-19 interviews. We note when comparing the participants who have been NEET against key characteristics of all the participants who have taken part in the study. The data indicates that those with a severe vision impairment are more vulnerable to becoming NEET:

- 100% of the participants who were NEET at some point during the past year were registered as blind or partially sighted, compared to 70% of the overall sample.
- 100% of the participants who were NEET at some point during the past year had a preferred reading format of braille/electronic or large print, compared to 83% of the overall sample.

When making these comparisons, it is important however to remember the small sample size.

**Table 23: Have participants who are NEET been actively seeking employment?**

<b>Seeking employment</b>	<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Yes	3	30%
No	7	70%
Total	10	100%

The participants were also asked whether they had been actively seeking employment. Their responses are summarised in the table above. It is interesting to note that 70% of the participants, despite not being engaged in employment, education or training had not been actively seeking employment.

Five participants who were not actively seeking employment, were asked to give further explanation of why this was the case through a series of statements. Their 'yes' or 'no' responses to each statement are summarised in the table below.

## 5.2 PARTICIPANTS NOT LOOKING FOR EMPLOYMENT

**Table 24: Main reasons for not looking for work**

Reason	Yes (N)	No (N)
I don't have any relevant qualifications	2	3
I don't have any work experience	2	3
There aren't any jobs available that I am prepared to do	2	3
I don't know how to look for work	0	5
Travelling to work would be difficult for me	1	4
There are no jobs with the right hours for me	0	5
I am in full-time education	0	5
I am on a training course	0	5
My family would lose benefits if I was earning	0	5
I am caring for an elderly or ill relative or friend	0	5
I cannot work because of a health condition or disability	2	3
I prefer not to work	1	4
I prefer to be at home with the family rather than working	0	5
I prefer to look after my children myself	0	5
I cannot earn enough to pay for childcare	0	5
I cannot find suitable childcare	0	5
My child has a health condition or disability	0	5
I have a new baby	0	5

Question taken from Next Steps Age 25 survey.

The most common reasons given for not looking for work were:

- Not having relevant qualifications
- Not having any work experience
- Not being any jobs available that prepared to do
- Not being able to work because of a health condition or disability

Other reasons given were finding travelling difficult, and preferring not to work.

Both participants who felt that they did not have any relevant qualifications had been unable to complete the courses that they wanted to. One participant had previously wanted to study a particular Level 3 course at a specialist college, but had been unable to access the funding

to do so. The second participant had been studying for a degree, but had withdrawn from the course.

Both participants who stated that they didn't have any work experience had never been in paid employment, and had only had very limited experience of voluntary work. Of the two participants who stated that they are limited by a health condition or disability, one had additional health challenges, whilst the other was referring primarily to their vision impairment.

The participant who reported that travelling would be difficult for them had previously said that she found independent travel to be very challenging, and that it made her very anxious.

Finally, the participant who said that he preferred not to work had been NEET for six years, and during that time had never been actively seeking employment, education or further training.

The five participants were also asked to identify the main reason why they had not been looking for work. The reasons identified were as follows:

- I cannot work because of a health condition or disability (2)
- I don't have any relevant qualifications (1)
- I don't have any work experience (1)
- I prefer not to work (1)

Finally, they were asked if they would like to have a regular paid job and whether having a job or career in the future was important to them. Their responses are summarised in the tables below.

**Table 25: Although you are not looking for work, would you like to have a regular paid job, even if only for a few hours a week?**

Would you like a regular paid job?	Total (N)
Yes	3
No	1
Not sure	1
Total	5

Question taken from Next Steps Age 25 survey

**Table 26: How much do you agree or disagree that having a job or career in the future is important to you?**

<b>Having a job is important</b>	<b>Total (N)</b>
Strongly agree	4
Agree	0
Disagree	1
Strongly disagree	0
Total	5

Question taken from Next Steps Age 25 survey

### **5.3 LENGTH OF TIME PARTICIPANTS HAVE BEEN NEET**

The participants were asked the approximate length of time that they had not been working, in education or training (or if they were now in employment, how long they had been NEET for). This information is important as it can be anticipated that many young people will become NEET after completing their courses and before finding their first job simply due to the length of time the application process can take. The key question, therefore, is how does this translate into the length of time that they have remained NEET.

**Table 27: Length of time participant has been NEET**

<b>Length of time</b>	<b>Total (N)</b>
Less than 6 months	2
6-12 months	0
Over 1 year	8
Total	10

The table above shows that the length of time the participants had been NEET varied, but significantly, eight of the participants had been NEET for over one year, with two participants being NEET for as long as 6 years. One of the participants was NEET because she had been forced to take a gap year from university as she had not been able to start a module on time, due to accessibility challenges.

### **5.4 USE OF TIME**

The participants who had been NEET were asked how they had used the time that they had available to them. Their responses are summarised in the table below.

**Table 28: How have the participants filled their time whilst NEET?**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Total (N)</b>
Volunteering and work experience	3
Looking after pets	3
Activities at home	3
Looking after young child	1
Pursuing hobbies	1
Researching career opportunities	1
Moved house	1

Three participants reported that they spent time volunteering or undertaking activities to gain specific work experience. For one of these participants, the day a week she spent volunteering was particularly significant as this was the only activity she had scheduled during her week.

Three participants recently had new pets living with them at home, which they were committed to caring for during the day. A further three participants reported that they mainly stayed at home and undertook activities such as playing online games or reading books.

## 6 EXPERIENCES OF SEARCHING FOR EMPLOYMENT

### 6.1 PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES

**Table 29: Have you ever been in paid employment?**

<b>Previous paid employment</b>	<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Yes	36	77%
No	11	23%
Total	47	100%

Of the 47 participants who took part in the interviews, 36 reported that they had previously had some form of paid employment, whilst 11 had not.

Of the 11 participants who had not previously had paid employment, their status was as follows:

- Four participants were studying in HE. Two of whom were studying for professional qualifications, for which they had both undertaken extensive periods in work placements and therefore whilst unpaid, they did have a large amount of prior work experience.
- Seven participants were long term NEET.
- It is worth noting that one of the 36 participants with previous paid employment, was only in work for a short time before losing their job, reportedly due to working too slowly. Since losing that job, the participant has been long term NEET.

One of the participants in HE spoke of what a challenge it would be for them to undertake part time work alongside her course.

“The benefits I have for my disability were enough, couple with my student loan, to get by quite comfortably at university. And I think at the moment trying to do some sort of part time work on the side of, you know, my final year, would just be too difficult.”

Of the eleven participants who had never been in employment, nine reported that they had never searched for employment opportunities before.



## 6.2 IDENTIFYING JOB OPPORTUNITIES

**Table 30: How did you find out about your current/last job?**

Source	Total (N)	Total (%)
Job centre	1	2%
University or college	2	4%
Media	1	2%
Employer's website	2	4%
Recruitment agency or website	11	23%
Personal contacts, including family and friends	8	17%
Professional networking	2	4%
Already worked there (including an internship)	1	2%
Other	8	17%
Never worked	11	23%
Total	47	100%

The participants had identified their current or last job through a variety of means. The most common method was through a recruitment agency or recruitment website. This included registering with specific recruitment agencies, or using popular online recruitment websites, such as Indeed.

“That was just on Indeed, because I get emails from Indeed all the time, still even now”

“If I'm out of work, then, you know, I'll raise my CV with agencies, but I also go online to, you know, the usual websites: Indeed, Reed, Jobsite - those sort of websites.”

The second most common way through which the participants found their job was through personal contacts.

“I got it because one of my best friends actually works at the company I work at now, and then there was an opening – there was an opportunity, and... there was an opening came up, and yeah, he put my name forward, and... and it is that kind of company anyway, where it tends to be like family members— friends and family members who work there.”

“It was a friend, my friend used to work for my current employer. My boss asked him if he wanted any hours and he said he didn't

but recommended me. So it was ‘not what you know, but who you know’ kind of thing.”

Other ways in which the participants identified their current job were through the Job Centre, being directed by their university or college, using media outlets such as newspapers, going directly to their employer’s website, through professional networking, and having worked there previously for an internship.

Eight participants gave responses categorised as ‘other’. These included:

- Working as self-employed.
- Directed into role by specialist charity.
- Searching for specific types of job using Google search engine.

The participants were also asked to give an overview of which methods they had used previously when searching for job opportunities. Their responses are summarised in the following table.

**Table 31: What methods have you used for searching for job opportunities?**

Source	Total (N)
Job centre	1
University or college	3
Media	3
Employer’s website	15
Recruitment agency or website	23
Personal contacts, including family and friends	10
Professional networking	2
Other	15

### 6.3 SEARCHING FOR JOBS ONLINE

The participants were posed with the following question ‘Many people search for employment opportunities online. Could you tell me more about your experience of searching online for jobs. Which websites have you used? How accessible have you found them?’

**Table 32: Which websites have you used to search for jobs?**

<b>Website</b>	<b>Total (N)</b>
Indeed	18
Total Jobs	2
Monster	3
Recruitment agency	3
Specialist recruitment site	7
Company website	7
Google	3
Mailing list	2
LinkedIn	4
Online newspaper listings	2

The participants reported using a wide range of websites for finding employment opportunities. The most common types of website used were job listings sites, with Indeed being by far the most popular. Seven participants reported that they use specialist recruitment sites, which list jobs specific to the industry of interest (e.g. performing arts or NHS jobs). Seven participants preferred to go directly to a company's website, and four participants reported that they used LinkedIn to find job opportunities.

The vast majority of the participants spoke positively about the accessibility of job listings, with particular praise being received for the job listings site 'Indeed'.

“Indeed is a magic resource! It's already in a good sized text and stuff. While you look at some jobs and for some reason they are in a size 8 or 10 text...I am like why are you writing crucial information in size 8! Put it in 14 or 16 and I will be happy.”

A common theme in the participants' responses was how beneficial it is to be able to access Indeed through an App.

“So Indeed, because my phone is adapted to large print. I have it on the medium print because too big is a bit too much. But because of that on the Samsung, most of the apps adapt, which means that Indeed is adapted on my phone when I go on it. You can zoom in on Indeed.”

Two participants described needing support in order to access job information online. In both cases they did not have any access to assistive technology to help them accessing the websites.

“There were a few times I got tripped up and I had to ask other people to look.”

**Table 33: Do you feel that you have the skills that you need to search for job opportunities online?**

Skills needed	Total (N)	Total (%)
Yes	25	74
No	9	26%
Total	34	100%

The participants were asked whether they thought they had the necessary skills needed to search for job opportunities online. Twenty-five felt that they did, whilst nine did not.

“Yeah, I think so. I’ve recently got a new tablet which really helps. Because I find it much easier with something like that, because obviously it’s portable, and if I do have a problem you can make things bigger easier, and you can put the thing closer to your face as well, so it’s easier than a computer.”

“I feel I have the skills to do it, I would just need someone to help me to look for jobs...For them to look through the internet mainly.”

“Sometimes like my boyfriend helps me or my Mum. And then...like my Mum helps me with all my emails and stuff as well...she can get onto my emails because I can’t. I know you can enlarge them and stuff but I find it hard emailing and that really.”

**Table 34: Have you ever created a profile and/or used LinkedIn to identify employment opportunities**

Used LinkedIn	Total (N)	Total (%)
Yes	25	63%
No	15	38%
Total	40	100%

The participants were asked whether they had ever created a profile and/or used LinkedIn to identify employment opportunities. Twenty-five of the participants reported that they had, whilst fifteen had not. A large

proportion of the young people were unsure what the purpose of it was, even if they had previously registered on the website.

“Yeah, I tried it out. I wasn’t really sure on how it worked! Also I know that to job hunt you have to put lots of skills on, and at the time I had no idea what I’m supposed to put for skills!”

Because of this lack of clarity of how to use LinkedIn, several of the participants described how they had registered for a profile, but never really used the site.

“I think so, I think it was a couple of years ago. I imagine I probably found it quite difficult as I don’t use it anymore.”

Those who had used LinkedIn more regularly spoke positively of it.

“I have found it really useful, found it really good. I have been in contact with a few recruiters through LinkedIn and they have brought job opportunities to me. Two of the interviews I have lined up were through recruiters through LinkedIn who saw my profile and reach out, which has been good.”

One participant had had training on how to use LinkedIn effectively, and had since found it to be very useful.

“Yeah, I really like it. We had someone from LinkedIn come and do a talk for us during the [...] placement. They talked us through how to make the most of it, and I also chatted to them about some accessibility stuff.”

Two participants noted that they found that the Mobile App version of LinkedIn to be more accessible than the main website.

Participant: There are some areas where it can be improved, but the App is now very functional. You can do just about anything on the App that you can on the web version, and it’s very, very good now.

Researcher: And the App is more accessible?

Participant: Yeah, I don’t use the web version at all now.

## 6.4 EXPERIENCES OF JOB CENTRES AND SERVICES SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS INTO EMPLOYMENT

### 6.4.1 Reasons for attending the Job Centre

**Table 35: Have you ever been to the Job Centre before?**

Attended Job Centre	Total (N)	Total (%)
Yes	20	48%
No	22	52%
Total	42	100%

The participants were asked whether they had ever been to a Job Centre. Twenty participants responded by saying that they had, whilst a further twenty-two had not.

**Table 36: Reasons given for visiting Job Centre.**

Reason	Total (N)
Find a job	11
Access specialist support	5
Sign on	4
Benefits assessment	3
Access to Business	1

The table above summarises the reasons given by the participants for attending a Job Centre. Eleven said that they went along with the objective of finding a job.

“Yeah it was before I went to uni, I was looking for a job, because I had a gap year before I came to uni. I just wanted a part-time one for a couple of months and my Dad recommended going to the job centre. He said that they’re very good for those sort of things.”

Five were accessing different types of specialist support aimed at individuals with disabilities.

“I had this Disability Officer...whatever they are called (don’t ask me with names, I don’t know), and she...she was alright, we didn’t really do a lot.”

Four went to ‘sign on’ as unemployed.

“We had to do this singing thing every two weeks, to say that we’re looking for jobs and they’ll pay us.”

Three were undertaking benefits assessments and one had a meeting with an Access to Business advisor.

“Only for like benefit stuff. I tried to apply for Universal Credit.”

**Table 37: Did you declare as having a vision impairment (and where relevant other disabilities)?**

Declare	Total (N)
Yes	10
No	6

Ten participants recalled talking to Job Centre staff about their vision impairment, while a further six did not.

“No. They don’t really know I have a disability. Whenever I have been to the job centre I have never once mentioned my disability, ever.”

“Yeah I did. Well, I think that was sort of like one of the first things that we talked about.”

#### 6.4.2 Referrals to specialist support services

**Table 38: Have you ever been referred to specialist support which is aimed at individuals with disabilities to help support them into employment?**

Referral to specialist support	Total (N)	Total (%)
Yes	7	16%
No	12	28%
Not sure	1	2%
Not applicable	24	56%
Total	43	100%

The participants were also asked whether they had been referred to specialist support that was aimed at individuals with disabilities to support them into employment. Of those who were looking for employment (20), only seven recalled being referred to specialist support.

### **6.4.3 Experiences of attending the Job Centre as a young person with a vision impairment**

The participants were asked to talk about their experiences of attending the Job Centre in relation to their vision impairment, including their experiences of any specialist services that they were referred to. The responses given by the participants are organised into themes below.

#### **Negative – Job Centre unable to help**

Four participants responded by saying that when they sought to engage with the Job Centre, they were advised (or at least given the impression) that they were unable to help them as a person with vision impairment.

“They told me there’s not much they can do for me which didn’t help me at all. Do you see why it’s become hard for me? They didn’t know what to do because of my visual impairment. I got there and they were like ‘we don’t know what we can offer you’. They are alright working with people with autism and that because they have got the eyes to do it.”

“It was after I had done my A-levels, and I had no money coming in. They kind of said there’s nothing they could do for me, and they turned around and said that the only way I could get a job in the future was by getting a university degree. They literally turned round and said if you haven’t got a degree, you can’t – there’s no job available to you. Because it comes down – due to my numerous disabilities no employer will take me on unless I have a degree backing me.”

One participant who had been informed that the Job Centre could not help him had not even been offered basic support such as help with preparing a CV.

“It would have been nice for them to have a bit more understanding of my visual impairment, and possibly offered different... I don’t know, possibly CV writing. I mean, I’ve got one, but possibly improve my skills, I don’t know, help with job searching, possibly. And I know they already do that in the Job Centre, but I’ve never done that to be honest with you.”

#### **Negative – ‘You don’t need to work’**

Four participants gave accounts of how their aspirations to find employment had been questioned by Job Centre staff when they sought support for finding employment. Instead they were told it was



unnecessary because they 'didn't need to work'. This was linked to the type of benefit that they were on, which viewed their disability as such that they did not need to be actively seeking employment. However, for many of the participants they still had aspirations to find a job and believed it to be a realistic objective.

For example, one participant spoke of her experiences of talking to the Job Centre about a business plan that she was putting together, to set up as self-employed.

"I've had another Work Coach and she's seen me once. I rang her said 'I am doing this plan and I have nearly finished'. And she said 'Ok, but I really don't need to see you.'"

Another participant who was in voluntary work was keen to find paid employment, but was likewise advised by her advisor that it was not something she needed to worry about.

"He turned round and was like 'what you are doing is great, you don't have to look for work with the benefits you are on'.... I wasn't really happy because I have heard it before. It's not what I was there to achieve."

### **Negative – Inaccessible systems and processes**

Two of the participants described inaccessible systems and processes. One participant highlighted how inaccessible the systems are for searching for jobs at the Job Centre:

"The whole system is really inaccessible. Even if you sit down with someone with you, with your adviser or you get family or friends involved. So many of the jobs are things like training to be a brick layer, and you are like 'well I can't do that anyway.' It's just a waste of everyone's time to be honest."

The second participant wanted to access specialist support, but struggled knowing how to access these services.

"They recommended Remploy, but they didn't give me very good instructions about where it was. I wouldn't have been able to find it on my own, I had to have help."

### **Positive – Positive reaction to vision impairment**

One participant described how when he declared his vision impairment at the Job Centre, the staff member reassured him that he would be able to receive the support that he needed.

“To be honest I think it was just water off a duck’s back, you know. I’m not the first and I’m probably not going to be the last.”

A further participant described how they took account of her vision impairment and other disabilities when working with her, particularly as they helped her identify possible places to undertake voluntary work placements:

“And they always sort of compensated for my disability. I worked with one of their disability coordinators. So he actually made sure that my placements were all “in line”. I’m not sure if that’s the right word...were sort of focused around my disability so I wouldn’t have any issue.”

### **Positive – Positive experience through specialist services**

Three participants who accessed specialist support services gave positive accounts of the guidance that they received at the meetings that they attended.

## **6.5 CASE STUDY: ACCESSING SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYMENT AFTER AS SOMEONE ONE IS LONG-TERM NEET**

As identified in the previous section, several of the participants had been awarded benefits which meant that they were not expected to work, or seek for work. However, despite this they still had aspirations of finding employment and hoped to receive support from the Job Centre in doing so. Unfortunately they often faced barriers when trying to access support to help them transition into the labour market. The following case study illustrates the complexities that these participants have faced over extended periods of time.

“Eva” studied a vocational course in college, but since leaving and trying to find a job in that field has been informed by employers that she would not be suitable, due to the health and safety implications of her vision impairment.

Since leaving college over 6 years ago, she has consistently kept applying for job opportunities, and has been successful in getting interviews, and even job offers, but these offers have later been retracted due to reasons associated with her vision impairment.

“I have been for a couple of interviews...I got to one of them and they actually sent me away again because I was VI. They said that there wouldn't be anything they could do for me, yet they didn't even let me try. And I also started another job which they also sent me away from.”

Over the past 6 years, she has expressed her frustration at the limitations to both the financial and practical support that she can access.

In the most recent interviews, she reported how whenever she has tried to access support from the Job Centre, they have indicated that there is nothing that they can do to help her. Similarly, she has sought to access specialist services and she reports that they have not identified any steps that can be put in place to help her move closer to the labour market.

“They didn't know what to do with me because I didn't have the eyesight, they were just like ‘we don't know’. And this is a disabled place, they were like ‘we're not sure’, and it's like putting me down, it's like great, if you can't help me..?”

“I went to this one group and [I said to the lady] ‘have you got any ideas from VI people about getting jobs’. And she said ‘I have sort of drawn a line for VI people getting jobs, I think it's impossible’. I was like ‘oh ok – thanks’”.

When discussing barriers to her finding employment, the principle barrier she identified was the attitudes of employers in understanding that she can work, in spite of having a vision impairment. She also highlighted the expectation of employers that you will start a new role quickly as a barrier, and how that was a challenge due to the length of time that would be required to arrange for Access to Work.

“I think people not knowing that blind people can do something, I really think that’s... because people look at blind people and say ‘oh she can’t do anything, I’ve got to get her this in place, I’ve got to get that in place’ and they just want you to start straight away.”

However, in previous interviews Eva has demonstrated that she does not always feel confident to explain to others about her vision impairment and the adjustments that she requires. This is illustrated by the fact that she has been successful in obtaining interviews, but has been met with negative responses to how she would function in a role because of her vision impairment. It is possible that she would benefit from specialist support to help her develop specific advocacy skills to navigate these sorts of questions. A particular challenge that she faces is that her visual acuity has worsened since she left school, meaning that some of the adjustments she made previously are no longer effective, and therefore she may benefit from the opportunity to learn new technology skills. In the meantime she continues to be frustrated at never really having had the opportunity to work and the chance to experience financial independence.

## 7 INDEPENDENT LIVING

### 7.1 WELFARE BENEFITS

**Table 39: Payments currently being received**

Type of payment	Total (N)
Universal credit	2
Jobseekers allowances	0
Income support	1
Sickness, disability or incapacity benefits	7
Child benefit	1
Tax credits	0
Housing benefit	3
PIP or DLA	23
Income from any other state benefit	1

The participants were asked about any benefits that they were currently receiving. The most commonly reported benefit was PIP/DLA (23), while seven participants reported that they were receiving sickness, disability or incapacity benefits. Three participants who were long term NEET were only receiving PIP/DLA: in one case this was because their partner was earning over a certain threshold and therefore they were unable to claim any further benefits, whilst in two cases they were still living with family members and were financially reliant on them.

#### 7.1.1 Experiences of claiming for Universal Credit

Two participants reported that they were receiving Universal Credit. In one case they said they moved onto Universal Credit because of needing to access housing benefit support, and in the other, because they had recently had a baby. They had very contrasting experiences – one of the participants moved onto Universal Credit with very little difficulty, whilst the other had problems with the payments she received:

“I think it was quite good. I applied online and then they ask you to go in for a face-to-face interview. And then you just take in evidence, like a passport and stuff like that. They upload to a system, you get access to a Universal Credit online account, and you can see when your payments are going to be made and if they need to see you or anything.” (Positive experience of Universal Credit)

“Yeah because I am on Universal Credit. I had to go onto Universal Credit because of having the property. I had to get housing support. It was an absolute nightmare. Because I was on ESA they had to swap over ESA to Universal Credit, but information wasn’t passed between the two and I ended up in debt, which I had to pay off, I had to pay £600 and something because there was a system error. But Universal Credit basically said if I took them to court, they would win.” (Negative experience of Universal Credit).

Another participant had gone all the way through the application and assessment process, only to be informed that she was not entitled to any money.

“It was horrendous, because they let me apply for everything, then you’re looking... you do a calculator thing online, and it says I’m getting £0 for each one because of my wage. It’s like, if you’re going to do that, why not just tell me that from the start?”

A further participant was in the process of applying for Universal Credit, and therefore we will be able to follow up on his experiences at the next round of interviews, and any others who apply over the next 12 months.

### **7.1.2 Experiences of claiming for Personal Independence Payments (PIP)**

As noted in the table above, a large proportion of the participants (23) reported that they received PIP or DLA. Additionally, several participants who applied for PIP had their claims rejected. This particularly confused one participant who had previously received DLA/PIP, and they were actually finding that they needed the support even more than they had done before:

“Yeah, when they did everyone’s reassessment, I had mine, and then they got rid of that! It’s weird, obviously when I first got assessed it was when I was living at home, I was a lot younger, so it’s different my parents were caring for me more then; whereas when I moved away that was when I got the reassessment, when I was at uni and living on my own.”

A number of participants gave examples of a negative experience when going through the PIP application process. For example, three participants were unhappy with the questions asked by the assessor:

“The assessor was as uneducated as I expected them to be on VI things. Like pulling the paper down, and they were like “can you read it?” and I was like “well not from there”, I had to pick it up, and it’s like “Ok, can you read it from there?” and I was like “well I can in this lighting” because it was a very bright room, “but it depends on my nystagmus so”, “yeah, but can you read it? I have to write down if you can read it.” I was like “I tried to explain to you the issues”, and she just didn’t seem to care, she just wanted to tick a box.”

“I applied for PIP again. I don’t qualify for anything...magical. I went to the assessment with this outside company and all they wanted to know was if it gives me anxiety or depression, they didn’t want to know about my eyes.”

Some of the participants who attended assessments described it as somewhat of an unpleasant process:

“I was reassessed like in September or October...Obviously it was a bit nerve-wracking”.

“It was quite stressful I would say.”

“A bit embarrassing personally, but yeah, nothing too bad.”

Two participants noted that they drew on support from others in order to complete the application form. Two participants noted there were challenges because they like to take pride in their independence, but in order to qualify they needed to give the ‘right sort’ of responses in the assessment.

“With my Mum’s assistance and the assistance of RNIB, she helped me fill out the questionnaire, and continuously...The problem is as a blind person, your immediate response is ‘yes I can do that for myself thank you very much’. What you need to do is look at it and say ‘well, actually can you do that on your own’. Actually on your own, not because the person who is always with you at that point will help you do it.”

### **Not applied for PIP**

One participant shared how whilst he knew about PIP, and recognised that he would benefit from the support that it offered, he had not yet applied for it:

“I just never got round to applying for PIP, but I think...because I do have to because obviously I have to spend that little bit more money, like every day, because of my disability, so for example taxis. So yeah, I definitely need to get around to doing that.”

Other participants were unsure what PIP was and whether they were eligible for it or not. For example, one participant assumed they would not meet the eligibility criteria as they were a student:

“I don’t know if I am eligible for it because I am technically a student, and I don’t fit the criteria for it.”

## 7.2 HOUSING AND RELOCATION

The participants were asked a series of questions about where they were currently living, whether they were currently living independently, what their aspirations were for living independently, and how prepared they felt for independent living.

**Table 40: Which of these best describes the accommodation you are living in at the moment?**

Type of accommodation	Total (N)	Total (%)
A private residence	39	91%
A barracks, nurses’ hall of residence, or other accommodation provided by your employer	1	2%
Halls of residence	3	7%
Total	43	100%

Taken from Next Steps Age 25 survey

**Table 41: Which of these best describes your current accommodation?**

Type of property	Total (N)	Total (%)
A house or bungalow	30	71%
A flat or maisonette	11	26%
Something else	1	2%
Total	42	100%

Taken from Next Steps Age 25 survey

The participants were asked to give more information about the type of accommodation that they were living in. Thirty-nine said that they lived in a private residence, three in halls of residence as part of their studies



and one living onsite in accommodation provided by their employer. The majority (30) were living in a house or a bungalow, while just over a quarter (11) were living in a flat or maisonette.

**Table 42: Do you own or rent your house, or have some other arrangement?**

Living arrangement	Total (N)	Total (%)
Own – outright	1	2%
Own – with help of a mortgage or loan	2	5%
Rent (includes all those who are on housing benefit or local housing allowance)	19	45%
Live rent free	5	12%
Other arrangement, including paying board to parents	15	36%
Total	42	100%

Taken from Next Steps Age 25 survey

The majority of participants are living in homes which they do not own, but just under a half (19) renting a property and over half (20) have some other arrangement (primarily living in their family home and paying board to their parents).

**Table 43: If living with parents still, what is the main reason why this is currently the case?**

Reason	Total (N)	Total (%)
You would like to move into your own home, but you cannot afford to.	5	24%
You could afford to do so, but are looking to save money	5	24%
You do not wish to move into your own home at the moment	4	19%
Another reason	7	33%
Total	21	100%

Taken from Next Steps Age 25 survey

Twenty-one participants spoke about their reasons for still living in their family home. The most common reasons given were that either they would like to move into their own home but can't afford to do so, or that whilst they could afford to live on their own, they were taking advantage of being able to live at home and save some money. Four participants stated that they did not want to move into their own home at the

moment, while seven other participants gave a range of different explanations, including:

- Running their own business from their parents' home.
- Waiting to be assigned a council house.
- Jointly owning their family home with their parents.

**Table 44: If not already living independently, do you have any plans or aspirations to start living independently in the next few years?**

Plans for living independently	Total (N)	Total (%)
Yes	13	65%
No	7	35%
Total	20	100%

Of the participants that were not already living independently, thirteen reported that they had aspirations to do so in the next few years, while seven did not. One participant who works on a casual contract explained that he would need more security in his earnings before doing so:

“In the next few years...definitely. But probably not while I am at the current job, because of money! When I get a stable hours contract, I will think about it then.”

One participant who was in her final year at university spoke of a variety of unknowns, which meant it was challenging to make any firm plans:

“Yeah, I would love to do that! But yeah, I’m not really sure how long that’s going to take, like, jobwise, and what sort of job, and... yeah! I would have to probably move in with a lot of roommates! And I’m not really sure what I’m going to do, or where I’m going to live.”

One participant who was currently living with family members said that he was in the process of saving for a deposit for a house. Other participants who were living with family members explained that they were happy in their current circumstances:

“Eventually, yes, I would like to get my own place and settle down, and... when I get paid every month, putting more money aside into a separate savings account I have. But I’m not in any rush either. I would like to eventually, but I do like my home comforts at the moment, so. I know I wouldn’t want to live on my own either, so... But yes, eventually I’m sort of aiming towards there. But you know,

I've got no time— I've got no like period or goal as to when that will be – it will happen when it happens.”

“Maybe someday, but for right now I think it's fine.”

**Table 45: [If not already living independently] Do you think that your vision impairment would impact upon you at all if you were to look to live independently?**

<b>Impacted by vision impairment</b>	<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Yes	18	67%
No (hesitant no)	5	19%
No (definitely no)	4	15%
Total	27	100%

Twenty-seven of the participants who were not already living independently were asked if they thought their vision impairment would impact upon them when looking to live independently. The majority (18) responded by saying that they thought it would, while five gave a hesitant 'no' and four a definite 'no'.

The majority of those who thought their vision impairment would impact them still saw living independently as something that they could aspire to, but they acknowledged that some preparations and adjustments would need to be made.

“I would need to sort out mobility training. I would need somewhere that was easy to locate in the dark and close to a tube station. I haven't really done the research, but that will come after I secure the job I think.”

A small number of the participants noted that they would seek to employ a cleaner to help them manage their home:

“While I've lived in [city] the last couple of years I virtually was living independently, I mean I had a cleaner actually who did help me out with quite a few things, but I could employ a cleaner just as easily, you know, if I lived in a flat on my own”.

## 8 REFLECTIONS ON TRANSITIONS MADE

### 8.1 ORIGINAL CAREER ASPIRATIONS

At the start of the longitudinal study in 2010, the participants were asked to say what they would like to do when they were older. During the 2018-19 interviews, we revisited the original responses from the participants as a focus of discussion when talking about their experiences since leaving school. Comparison was not possible for 12 of the participants who did not answer the original question.

**Table 46: How do the participants current aspirations compared to their original aspirations?**

How did their aspirations compare?	Total (N)	Total (%)
Stayed the same	12	41%
Changed	12	41%
Similar	3	10%
Stayed the same, but now 'more realistic'	2	7%
Total	29	100%

An interestingly high proportion of the participants still had the same aspirations as they had shared aged 14-16. Twelve (41%) still wanted to do exactly the same type of career, three (10%) wanted to go into a similar career and two (7%) still wanted to pursue the same career, but also with an alternative career in mind due to its competitive nature.

### 8.2 REFLECTIONS ON PATHWAYS TAKEN

The participants were asked to reflect back on what had happened after they had left school and the various pathways that they had taken since. They were firstly asked to reflect on what had gone well, and then they were asked to reflect on what could have gone better.

#### 8.2.1 What went well?

When discussing what went particularly well, the participants generally either highlighted particular experiences, or they identified ways in which they had been able to develop as a person. Their responses are summarised in the table below.

**Table 47: What do you think went particularly well?**

<b>What went well</b>	<b>Total (N)</b>
University	9
Gaining independence	7
Nothing in particular	7
Gap year/year abroad	6
Sixth form/College	5
Increased confidence	3
Taking advantage of opportunities	2
Job	2
Apprenticeship	1
Internship	1
Becoming a mum	1

The most common experience highlighted by seven of the participants was university. This included the university attended and the degree subject that they chose, as well as the support that they received whilst there and the qualification that they achieved.

“I guess my undergraduate degree is the standout thing at the moment, in terms of the marks that I got and in terms of how enjoyable it was.”

Seven participants identified increased independence as something that had gone particularly well. This included participants who had moved away for university, moved out of the family home, and one participant who now had a guide dog.

“I’ve had guide dog since I left school – that’s changed things a lot.”

“I moved out. I’m independent now. I moved out of home in 2016. I left college in 2015, and then I moved in March 2016, and I’ve been out of my Mum’s home since then. That’s kind of good I think.”

Seven participants could not identify anything in particular, but not necessarily because things had gone badly; rather because nothing stood out.

“No, I don’t think there’s anything that has gone particularly well – everything’s good.”

Six participants highlighted their gap year/placement year.

“My year abroad in [city] has been like one of the best years of my life, so that’s definitely a highlight”

Five participants reflected back to their time in college, including a time when they received good support, and when they were able to gain the qualifications they needed for their next stage in life.

“Probably my A-levels were the best one. I had a better VI support team, they made sure that whatever other kids did, I could still do. They had all the adjustments in place, they helped a lot more.”

One participant who undertook an Access to University course spoke particularly positively about the opportunities it opened up for her.

Three participants spoke positively of having gained confidence in the years since leaving school:

“I would say I’ve developed a lot personally. I’ve come on quite a lot personally in terms of...I’m far more confident, I’m far more socially...I was always very shy during my school, during like my teenage years, but I’m very confident now and generally much more socially adept, and I’ve got a lot more self-belief now.”

Two participants noted that they benefited from taking advantage of opportunities that came their way.

“I think in general I have been able to take advantage of a lot of opportunities that have come up. I think from 16 and moving to college, I have put myself out there a lot more. That helped when moving to university with the personal statement, just the transition to university in general, being more confident in terms of going for committee positions and that kind of stuff.”

### **8.2.2 What would they have done differently?**

The participants were also asked to reflect back and think about what they might have done differently. Twenty participants responded by saying that they would not change anything.

“No. Hand on heart, no.”

“I think I would have done a few things differently at uni. That was a learning curve as well. I would have done a few things differently, but I still learned a lot. I don’t know. I am pretty happy with how things have gone.”

Two participants said that they would not have done anything differently despite noting that they had faced difficulties. Rather they had benefited from learning through that experience.

**Table 48: What would you have done differently?**

<b>Change</b>	<b>Total (N)</b>
Worked harder	7
Studied a different course, including at a different institution	7
Accepted help/sought guidance	6
Taken a gap year/placement year	3
Advocated more	2
Made better decisions	2
Been better prepared for HE	1
Taken a different pathway	1
Obtained more work experience	1

The table above summarises the different examples given by the participants of what changes they might have made. Seven participants shared that they would have worked harder. In some cases, this was attached to not fully understanding the significance of achieving good grades in school/sixth form. This included those who were unable to pursue certain careers having not obtained sufficiently high grades.

“I think looking back now, academically I would have liked to have done a bit better. If I was nit picking at things. I don’t think through education, especially at secondary school, that I was pushed. I had a visual impairment and I wasn’t initially in mainstream, I wasn’t told about reaching for the highest grades and setting your goals high. I think that’s the biggest shortcoming looking back.”

Seven participants wished that they had studied a different course, or the same subject at a different institution. This ranged from students who wished they had taken different subjects at GCSE, to those who had significant challenges in HE with the accessibility of their chosen subject.

“I would have done a different course, or I would have dropped out after first year... When they started promising me that they would

change things, but didn't actually say what they were going to do, I think I should have seen a few more red flags and transferred while I still could have done."

Six participants stated that they wished they had either accepted more of the help that was offered to them, or sought guidance from those who were well placed to guide them.

"Yeah, I think I would have paid more attention in [college] I think. But at that kind of age where you don't want to really! I would have educated myself whilst I could, if I could go back... Not particularly the [course], because the [course] I think I did pretty well, but they were offering me other stuff, but I didn't really pay a lot of attention to it."

Three participants wished that they had either taken a gap year, or taken the option to do a placement as part of their degree.

"I wish I had done a programme where I could have done a year abroad. Only I didn't really think of it as a student, and I just thought of it as an additional cost, a year where you'd pay an additional cost. But actually, I think, looking back, I never had a gap year either at the end of university and I think that would have been a gap year in itself in that sense."

Two participants wished that they had advocated for themselves more about what they wanted to do. Two participants, who both ended up losing their jobs, wished that they had made better decisions at the time, and prevented this outcome.

One participant wished that she had been better prepared to know what to expect in higher education and that in turn would have made her approach the support she received differently. One participant who went onto an apprenticeship after A-levels would have preferred to have studied longer before going into work. Finally, one participant shared that he wished he had sought more opportunities to gain work experience.

### **8.2.3 How could you have been better prepared or supported?**

The participants were also asked if they thought there was any way in which they might have been better prepared or supported for life after school.



Twenty-two of the participants responded by saying that they didn't think there was. Some took this as an opportunity to reassert how important it is for them to be as independent as possible, and that they didn't necessarily want more support:

“No, I am a kind of person who, independence is very important to me. So if I need help I will ask for it, and I do get the support, but I am not the kind of person to take support if I don't need it. I have been happy with the support I am getting.”

The table below summarises the various ways in which the participants felt they could have been better prepared or supported for life after school.

**Table 49: How could you have been better supported or prepared?**

<b>Types of support</b>	<b>Total (N)</b>
Broader guidance of options available	5
Preparation for living as a person with a vision impairment	4
Support for the transition into university	4
Support for the transition into employment	3
Support to develop advocacy skills	2
Preparation to live independently	2
Earlier diagnosis	1
Revision techniques	1

Five participants said that they would have liked broader guidance of the options available, as they felt that those advising them were pushing them in a particular direction.

“I think not just talking about uni, first talking about other options and things.”

“I do feel uni was pushed at us, and it was the only option...but we were told it was the only option that was viable. And I feel like everyone said “you've got to go to uni so that you get a job.” And I feel like that was false hope.”

Four participants felt that they were not prepared adequately for living in the 'real world' as a person with a vision impairment. All four had attended a special school setting, and observed having had limited opportunity to mix with people their age who did not have a vision impairment.

“I don’t think we had many opportunities to go into the outside world and, kind of live life as a vision impaired person, you know.”

Four participants would have preferred to have had more support for making the transition into university:

“Maybe with a bit more of an explanation about what university work involved, and sort of the differences between that and school life.”

Three participants felt that they could have benefited from more support to prepare for the transition into employment:

“When I left school I don’t think I knew a lot about job searching. I knew a bit about writing a CV, but that comes with experience I guess. But in terms of job searching, it might have been useful to know a bit more about that, about the practicalities of that.”

Two participants would have liked more support to develop advocacy skills, two to develop independent living skills and one guidance around revision techniques. Finally, one participant who also has autism spoke of his frustration of the length of time it took to get a diagnosis, despite his Mum advocating for him to get an assessment.

#### **8.2.4 What would you like to be doing in five years’ time?**

Lastly, the participants were asked what they would like to be doing in five years’ time. The majority of the participants focused on what they would like to doing in terms of work, which is unsurprising given the nature of the rest of the questionnaire. To a certain extent the responses given reflected the stage in life in which each participant currently sat – for example, whether they were already in employment, still in education or NEET.

The aspiration for many of the participants was to find a job. This was particularly true for those who were not already working. One participant who had been NEET for several years expressed his frustration at his current circumstances:

“Hopefully have a paid job, hopefully earning money not just sitting doing what I’m doing basically now, just sitting, claiming. Yeah, hopefully just earning money, having a job, yeah.”

One participant already in employment emphasised that she wanted to find a job that she enjoyed:

“Yeah. I have no idea. Just the same hopefully, just being in a job I enjoy.”

Another participant who was still in education strongly emphasised how important it was to her to be able to work:

“I definitely want a job, I want a job and I want to live an adult life. I know a lot of blind adults, and it sounds terrible, but I wouldn't really consider them to be living adult lives because they are not really doing anything. I don't want to be in that position where I am just existing, I really want something to do and to be busy.”

A small number of the participants described their plans with some hesitation, as they were concerned about how realistic they might be due to their vision impairment.

“Ideally, I'd like to be in employment, that would be fantastic, but I do know that it is so difficult, you know, for blind people to find work, in all total honesty. So, realistically I might not be in employment, but obviously I would really like to be.

Several participants spoke of wanting to find employment in a particular sector. In some cases they were already in work, but just not employed in the sector which they had hoped.

Some of the participants were more specific about their plans, talking about specific sectors that they would like to work in, or continue to work in.

“I'd like to stay in science definitely, because even though I've struggled in the last year, I still really am interested in it still”

Several of those already in employment noted that they would like to be able to progress in their careers, whilst one participant noted that they wanted to ensure they were in a job that reflected their qualifications.

“I'd like a quote, unquote, normal job. I would quite like a job that reflects the fact that I've got a Masters and a [undergraduate] degree.”

A small number of participants spoke about other aspects of their lives, such as aspirations to live independently, buy a house, relocate to other parts of the country and have a family. One participant noted that they wanted to be in a positive place with regards to their mental health.

“I’d be really happy. I’d like to have my own flat somewhere – that’s a big thing... not like a flat that I’ve bought, but I’d you know, definitely like to be renting, I don’t want to be living at home at all.”

Two of the participants who were long-term NEET found this a difficult question to answer, and were unable to identify any particular aspirations that they had for the next five years.

“I don’t really know to be honest. I’m very much like a drifter at this point, I would say. I just kind of go with it.”

## 9 FUTURE PLANS

This publication is part of a series of reports from the Longitudinal Transitions Study, which is following the transition experiences of over 80 young people with vision impairment. The project commenced in autumn 2009, and we have working alongside the young people since 2010. Funding has been received in three phases:

- Phase 1: 2009-2011 - Royal National Institute of Blind People
- Phase 2: 2012-2015 - Nuffield Foundation
- Phase 3: 2015 onwards - Thomas Pocklington Trust

The study aims to track the experiences of the participants as they continue their transition towards the labour market. Around 50 of the young people remain active participants in the project.

It is anticipated that 2019-20 will mark the final round of data capture for this stage of the study, at which point we will have followed the participants for ten years. We still however hope to remain in contact with many of the participants, with the view of following more of their experiences in early-adulthood.

We continue to apply our research findings in more practical ways, such as by developing resources to help both young people with vision impairment navigating various transitions and those professionals supporting them.

## 10 REFERENCES

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