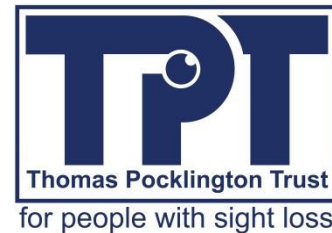




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The Transition Experiences of Young People with Vision Impairment aged 21 to 24

Policy findings to June 2019

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Overview

This is a short briefing drawing some of the key findings from ‘The Transition Experiences of Young People with Vision Impairment aged 21 to 24. Technical report of findings to June 2019’. This briefing identifies key findings from the full report and makes a number of policy recommendations.

The technical report is one of a series from the Vision Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research (VICTAR), Longitudinal Transitions Study.

The study has followed a cohort of young people with vision impairment from 2010 until the present date, as they have navigated their way through from school to their ultimate destination of employment. This briefing and the full report is based on data collected between September 2018 and June 2019 through semi-structured telephone interviews, which explored a number of topics including:

Transitions and current settings

Experiences of searching for employment opportunities

Reflections

Welfare benefits and independent living

When reading this briefing it is important to note that many of the participants shared experiences of being in more than one setting. For example, during the 12-month period since their last interview some participants may have spent time both NEET (Not in Employment Education or Training) and in employment.

Key findings

Transitions and current settings

The transitions that participants have made at each stage has been recorded. A year on from the last interview stage a higher number of the participants surveyed are in employment, with 23 in employment between 2018/19 compared to 14 in 2017. Four participants who had been NEET moved into employment, however, five that had previously been engaged in other activities became NEET.

Thirty-three of the 47 participants made some form of transition, and 14 continued with what they had been doing the previous year.

Setting	Total (2017)	Total % (2017)	Total (2018-19)	Total % (2018-19)
Higher Education	16	34	11	23
Employment	14	30	23	49
NEET	9	19	10	21
Placement year from HE	3	6	1	2
Volunteering	2	4	1	2
Apprenticeship	0	0	1	2
Gap year	2	4	0	0
Leave of absence from HE	1	2	0	0
Total	47	100	47	100

Employment

Of the 47 participants 36 reported having had some form of paid employment and 11 had not. Of these, **nine** had never searched for employment opportunities.

Nineteen of the participants reported they were actively looking for employment because they were either NEET or were in a temporary role and seeking something longer term (10), they had graduated or were to graduate soon (five) or were looking to change their job (four).

Of the five that were not looking for work the reasons given included not having relevant qualifications or work experience, lack of available jobs they were prepared to do, or being unable to work because of a health condition or disability.

Finding a job

Part of the interview sought to understand the methods participants used for searching for jobs. The most common methods adopted to find employment included the use of recruitment agencies/websites and personal contacts.

Eleven of the participants said they had been to a Job Centre to find a job, and five to access specialist support. Ten of the participants said they declared their vision impairment to Job Centre staff, and six didn't.

The experiences at the job centre varied. Four were told by Job Centre staff that they couldn't help a person with a vision impairment. Four had their ability to work questioned by Job Centre staff and were advised that they didn't need to work because of benefits they were in receipt of. Two described inaccessible systems and processes.

Positively, one gave an account of being reassured that the Job Centre would be able to provide support in relation to their disability, and that the centre took account of their range of disabilities when organising a work placement. Three participants that accessed specialist support services spoke positively of the guidance they received.

The study has consistently identified a low uptake of Access to Work, and in this round of interviews only six of the participants in employment accessed this scheme.

Reflections

The participants were asked where they would like to be in five years' time, 41 per cent (12) still had the same aspirations they shared when the study commenced when they were aged 14-16.

A particularly key aspiration for those not in employment was to find a job. Several of those in employment identified a desire to progress in their careers or find a job that reflected their qualifications. A small number of participants said they would like to live independently, buy a

house, or relocate to other parts of the country and have a family. One said that they wanted to be in a positive place with their mental health.

Two long-term NEET participants found it a difficult question to answer and couldn't identify any particular aspirations. A small number were cautious in reporting their aspirations and had concerns about what was realistic as a person with vision impairment.

Welfare benefits and independent living

The participants were asked what benefits they had applied for and which they received. The two most common benefits were Personal Independence Payment/Disability Living Allowance (PIP/DLA) (23), and sickness, disability or incapacity benefits (seven). Three long term NEET participants only received PIP/DLA.

Two participants were in receipt of Universal Credit. One had a positive experience, and the process went smoothly. The other had a very negative experience and had to transfer from Employment Support Allowance (ESA) to Universal Credit. Due to a breakdown in communication between the two offices they ended up in debt of approximately £600.

Independent living

The participants were asked about their current living arrangement. Almost half rent their property, and just over a third were lived in their family (usually parent's) home.

Thirteen of the participants said they had plans to start living independently in the next few years, and seven didn't. Eighteen of 27 participants felt that their vision impairment would impact upon them if they lived independently.

Conclusion

The latest bout of interviews demonstrate that participants are inching further towards the labour market, and with many due to complete their higher education courses in the next year this number is likely to increase.

However, some of the young people remain in low level work or have become NEET since leaving their studies, and in several cases aren't involved in any activities that might help them move closer to the labour

market. More must be done to support young people with vision impairment to fulfil their individual potential.

Recommendations

There needs to be more sustained and continued support for young people with vision impairment to support them through education into employment this should include

1. Clear and tailored careers advice that supports young people with vision impairment to identify the range of opportunities that are available to them
2. Job Centre staff to be trained in the needs of vision impaired clients, so that they can provide appropriate support to help them to find a job, including signposting to appropriate services.
3. More must be done to support young people with vision during secondary education to build their confidence and knowledge base on what they can achieve and to equip them with the independence skills they require.

For further information

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