

**An exploratory study of the incorporation of their 'future-self' as part of transition preparation in to and out of further education for young people with learning disabilities**

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## **Acknowledgements Page**

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## Abstract

This research explored the perception of the incorporation of 'future-self' for young people (YP) moving from specialist provision for children where the Local Authority have identified the provision as Moderate Learning Difficulties and additional needs, their parent/carers views, and the perspectives of professionals supporting their transition to mainstream further education. The 'future-self' approach had its basis in social cognitive theory, as the creation of imagined 'future-selves' is thought to influence an individual's behaviour to aid them to work towards their aspired self (Baker, 2015; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Oysterman & James, 2011). Phase one used a case study methodology using semi-structured interviews to explore the YP and their parent/carer's experience of transition planning having included the young person's vision of their 'future-self', at aged 16. Materials were designed to aid their understanding using visual support. Phase two gained the views of YP using focus groups as they approach transition out of FE at aged 19 or older into continued training, employment, and on towards adulthood, in relation to inclusion of their vision of their 'future-self' in this preparation. This phase also explored the perceptions of the professionals for incorporating the young person's view of their 'future-self' using semi-structured interviews. Interview transcripts were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six stage thematic analysis to identify themes in the data. Focus groups were thematically analysed using Ritchie and Spencer's (1994) five stage analysis. A number of themes were found for the YP at both stages, the parents/carers and the professionals. Findings indicated that the YP are more involved in the transition planning and a range of methods are applied to prepare the YP however there are a number of barriers still limiting the options for the YP such as: lack of choice available, protectiveness of others, low aspirations, failure to explore holistic longer term outcomes, insufficient multi-agency involvement, overreliance on parents, and the need for more effective strategic planning and awareness of the systems around the YP. The findings from this research indicate that applying a 'future-selves' approach for YP as a method to generate future aspirations to motivate YP's behaviour has been effective as a tool to add to

existing transition preparations. This could act as a way to overcome the currently existing poorer long term outcomes for YP with this population. Based upon this small scale project, further investigation would be required to assess the benefit for a wider population.

## **Section One: Introduction**

### **Overall Introduction**

This thesis is designed to explore the incorporation of 'future-self' for Young People (YP) with Special Educational Needs (SEN), their parent/carers and the professionals who support this transition when moving in to and out of mainstream Further Education (FE). The YP have moved from specialist provision for children with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) and additional needs. This thesis is divided into two phases with phase one to explore the YP and their parent/carer's experience of transition planning and if the young person's vision of their 'future-self' was included, after the transition from specialist provision into mainstream FE at aged 16. Phase two focussed on gaining the views and experiences of YP as they approach transition out of FE into continued training, employment, and on towards adulthood, in relation to inclusion of their vision of their 'future-self' in this preparation. Phase two also explored the perceptions of the professionals supporting the transition for YP with SEN regarding the incorporation of the young person's view of their 'future-self' as they move from specialist provision on towards adulthood.

This introduction will provide an overview of the research foundation, the current context, the researcher position and finally the research rationale and project aims. Within this chapter, there will be an outline of the terminology used for this thesis, an overview of the past and current political and legislative context, a summary of how the thesis links to the researcher's professional practice with inclusion of their researcher position, and finally a description of the research rationale and aims.

## **1.1 Definitions and Terminology**

There are a number of terms within the research which require some clarity and definition as some terminology can be ambiguous or have meanings to describe the same or similar terms or processes.

### **1.1.1 *Transition Planning***

The transition planning is a process that brings together a student and those individuals directly involved in helping the student prepare to enter a post-school environment, with good, co-ordinated planning and advice which will make positive differences to YP's futures (DfE, 2011). In the UK, annual reviews take place for all children with a statement of educational needs (DfE, 1994; DfEE, 1997; DfES, 2001) or Education, Health and Care plan (DfE & DoH, 2014), and state that transition plans are required for YP with SEN, beginning at their year 9 annual review (Abbott & Heslop, 2009; Carnaby, Lewis, Martin, Naylor, & Stewart, 2003; Cullen, Lindsay, & Dockrell, 2009; Grove & Giraud-Saunders, 2003; Ward, Mallett, Heslop, & Simons, 2003; Williamson, Robertson, & Casey, 2010). The meetings provide the opportunity for all stakeholders to offer their own views regarding strengths and needs, possible provision options, actions to support preparation for the future, and creation of a plan to record decisions and monitor progression (Cullen et al., 2009).

### **1.1.2 Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)**

Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) describes when a young person 'learns at a slower pace to their peers, even with appropriate differentiation' and they can be described as having a cognition and learning need (p. 97; DoE & DoH, 2014). There has been a lot of confusion regarding the terms of SEN, particularly MLD, as the population's needs within this category is so diverse (Kelly & Norwich, 2004; Norwich, Ylonen, & Gwernan-Jones, 2014), providing a less than homogenous group for researching. This is particularly the case for YP who are within special schools as they may have other additional needs, leading to challenges in generalising findings for this group of YP.

### **1.1.3 Social Emotional Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD)/Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH)**

In previous legislation, the term used for YP with behavioural needs was SEBD (DfES, 2001) and has recently been changed to remove the term 'behaviour' as this was considered to suggest the difficulties were within the young person and did not consider the wider causes for the behaviour. In this research, the term Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) will be applied as it replaces the previous term. The previous research regarding transitions for pupils with SEBD is limited (O'Sullivan, 2011), and has identified that poor transition planning and inadequate experience of staff in FE for this population can lead YP to fail to complete education courses (O'Riordan, 2011; Nind et al., 2012).

#### **1.1.4 Explanation of the Term 'Future-Selves' within this Project**

The transition experience can be viewed as being 'complex and multi-faceted and invariably involve changes to self-identity', and not just a 'move from one physical location to another' or 'forward trajectory in age' (Cafter & Maunder, 2012). There is a need for YP to become acquainted with the new environment which they will belong to, and to gain a sense of their changing identity. The origin of the 'future-self' concept is in William James' work on identity, where he suggests that humans choose to aspire to certain possible 'future-selves' and identities to increase their self-esteem (James, 1890; cited in Oysterman and James, 2011). 'Possible-selves' are socially constructed, as Erikson proposed, and include cultural and social connections when the future is imagined (Erikson, 1968). Oysterman and James (2011) discuss the 'future-self' as a 'sense of potential' to strive towards a goal, through using an assessment of one's own 'strengths, weaknesses, talents and characteristics' to select possible 'future-selves'. Markus and Nurius (1986) identified that people generate a possible 'future-self' or who they might become, would like to become, or who they did not wish to become in the future. The generation of this 'future-self' can direct motivation, support self-esteem and build a sense of belonging, and these are based upon previous experiences and beliefs within their own experiences and culture (Vignoles, Manzi, Regalia, Jemmolo, & Scabini, 2008).

Some Educational Psychologists (EPs) have devised a method to explore possible 'future-selves' in their work. This is based on implementation of visual 'future-self' approaches in schools, to help children to 'alter current behaviours' and aid decision-making by linking current actions to future outcomes (Baker, 2015). A description of the use of this technique is provided:

‘imagining possible future-selves is a simple intervention technique designed to alter an individual’s current behaviour and decision-making by building an understanding of the links between their actions now and outcomes in the future’

(Baker, 2015, P. 24)

This research is designed to explore to what extent the concept of ‘future-selves’ is utilised within transition planning, how effective the planning is for including aspirations, and if it covers all aspects of YPs lives.

## **1.2 Local context**

In the local authority where the research has been conducted, there has traditionally been a number of specialist provisions for school aged pupils up to aged 16. Since the national approach to provide training and education for YP until aged 18, many YP are transitioning into mainstream provisions within this urban setting in the South-West of England. The local ‘Children and Young People’s Plan’ (2011-14) has focused on raising YP’s aspirations, particularly for YP not in education or training and for vulnerable populations. The data from the ‘SEN Review and Framework 2015-18’ indicates that the number of children applying to access specialist provisions for MLD and SEMH has been increasing, and has seen an increase in the complexity of needs of the YP accessing these provisions. The report also highlights the need for training and support for mainstream settings to be able to meet the needs of all YP and that the post-16 SEN provision needs to be analysed to assess the effectiveness of provision to meet the desires of the YP and to support progression in to employment. There has been consideration of extending provision at some special schools to provide post-16 learning within the setting, however the report states the need to have a wider choice of courses for YP with SEN leaving school, and an enhanced transition plan to manage their move. These reports have



indicated that at present, the transitions are not as effective as they should be for YP with SEN, and there needs to be strategic planning to provide greater access to suitable options for post-16, with the aim to provide better longer-term outcomes.

The research was conducted in a large city in the South-West of England, where there is a high number of children with statements or EHCPs, with 12% of these being identified as having MLD and 25% with SEBD (Children and Young People Needs Analysis, 2014).

### **1.3 Professional Practice of Educational Psychologists**

The role of the Educational Psychologist (EP) has been described as:

‘scientist-practitioners who utilise, for the benefit of children and young people, psychological skills, knowledge and understanding through the functions of consultation, assessment, intervention, research and training, at organisational, group or individual level across educational, community and care settings, with a variety of role partners’

(Fallon, Woods and Rooney, 2010, P. 4)

This places the EP in an ideal position to have the knowledge and skills to contribute to explore this area of research, as previously most of the research has been from disability groups and the Government, with little from the EP field, although it is a growing research area. The meta-perspective adopted by an EP can help to contribute to the transition planning of YP up to aged 19, however this has been used infrequently in service as the FE establishments have had to purchase EP time rather than having a statutory amount of time offered. EPs have been identified within the Code of Practice (DfE & DoH, 2014; DfES, 2001) as being key to providing contributing evidence for the identification and support of children with SEN, and

there is an expectation that EPs will be involved in the transition preparation meetings as part of a multi-agency team. In addition it is an area which is beginning to expand for providing services for post-16 provisions due to the new EHCPs which require the contribution from professionals to continue (DfE & DoH, 2014) and EP articles indicate this is an area of development (Cameron, 2006; Farrell, Woods, Lewis, Rooney, Squires & O'Conner, 2006). A study by Harding and Atkinson (2009) found that the EP uses a wide range of techniques and strategies to elicit the young person's voice, and that the EP was able to use their professional judgement and psychological knowledge to adapt their approach to meet the needs of the YP. They found the use of personal construct psychology and a range of questions, using verbal and visual aids, helped to gain the view of the YP.

The research findings from this project are designed to be helpful to support the transitions of YP into and out of FE through exploring the experiences of the YP with SEN, their families and the professionals involved in the process. The findings will help to review the use of 'future-selves' as part of the current transition planning and to inform the use of 'future-selves' approach for this population of YP. These results can aid EPs, school staff, FE professionals, Career Services, Parent Support and Advice services, Local Authority planning, as well as the YP and their families.

#### **1.4 Researcher Position**

The research topic was selected due to my previous experience of working with YP with additional needs within a secondary school and my support work to assist with effective transitions into post-16 learning and training. Anecdotally, there were concerns from the YP, their families and the professionals I worked with who were involved with transition planning regarding the inclusion of the young person's genuine aspirations when they move into FE training, such as the range of options

available, focus on getting the YP to the next step rather than planning for all aspects of their lives, and how decisions were made. These concerns and others have been demonstrated in research identified in the literature selection section. With the Government commitments to longer-term outcomes for YP with SEN, such as employment, independent living and social inclusion, and the centrality of the young person's voice and aspirations, there is a need to maximise ways to gain the voice of the YP and support them to realise their goals.

## **1.5 Research Rationale and Aims**

Farrell et al. (2006) have suggested that the EP is expected to contribute to supporting YP with SEN with transitions and contribute to multi-agency work. The legislation from the coalition Government has also identified the role the EP can play with providing a full account of the YP and how they can help to elicit the voice of the YP and act as an advocate for their views.

Due to the large range of needs, the range of research approaches for YP that have been identified with 'moderate' learning needs as well as those with additional SEMH has been little explored (Norwich et al., 2014). The needs of these YP have not been as extensively explored as some other populations of YP with SEN. This is due to challenges to define the population and to gain the views of this group as they have communication and cognitive difficulties (Norwich & Kelly, 2005) and there are challenges in eliciting their voices (Hajdukova, Hornby, & Cushman, 2014; McConkey & Smith, 2004; O'Riordan, 2011; O'Sullivan, 2011). The levels of need may require additional ways to engage the students, such as using visual approaches and media (Hayes, 2004; Taylor-Brown, 2012), and person centred approaches (Corrigan, 2014).

Gathering qualitative data, can provide rich detail about YP's views of what they understand about the process of transition for them, moving from a specialist school to mainstream FE. Using this knowledge, professionals will be able to better support the YP to identify what preparation is needed, before and after they move. The parents are identified as being very important in the process (Dowrick, 2004). The content of transition planning is important to make sure it meets the aspirations of the young person and that they are involved in the process (Carnaby et al., 2003). Historically, the Educational Psychology Service has had limited work with YP past the compulsory school age. The role of the EP can help define practice and understand the implications of working with YP up to 25 years of age (DfE and DoH, 2014).

Transitions are difficult for many YP, particularly as this population are likely to be making a significant change into a mainstream FE (Hornby and Kidd, 2001). Elson (2011) identified the need for more strategic planning for children with MLD to overcome the assumption that the label covers a homogenous group who can all participate on the same FE course while meeting all of their needs and aspirations. Carroll (2015) has stated the importance of exploring the young person's hopes and aspirations holistically to generate effective provision choice and a successful future. A 'future-self' approach could provide a good framework to explore these and ensure a match of provision choice and life goals.

The following section will review and summarise the relevant literature in relation to 'future-self' and the transition for YP into and out of FE, such as the political and legislative context, dilemma of difference, options for provision, longer-term outcomes, selected research on 'future-self', the roles of others and the methods applied to elicit the young person's voice.

## Section 2: Review of Selected Literature

There is a wide range of literature about transitional aspects for the young person with a focus on different populations of YP and differing research questions. This literature review has been generated through reading past and current legislation (DfE, 1994; DfEE, 1997; DfES, 2001; DfE, 2008; DfE and DoH, 2014; DfE & DoH, 2014), reports of evaluation (OFSTED, 2010), and through database searches for relevant journals. The databases used were: PsychInfo, ScienceDirect, EBSCO, Web of Science, British Education Index, and Sage Open. In addition the Thesis search from the University of Exeter Library was used to identify Doctoral Theses which may be relevant.

Initially broad topics and combinations of terms were used to help to build an effective and thorough background of the existing literature and identified aspects of research which still required exploration. Combinations of the following terms were applied to identify relevant research articles:

Terms searched
Transition
Moderate Learning Difficulties
Social, Emotional and Behaviour needs
Further Education
Special school
Annual Reviews
Perspectives
Experiences
Young people
Parents
Professionals
Future-self
Self-esteem
Self- concept

*Table 1: Terms used to search for relevant journals*

As the field is vast, there have been areas of interest which have been studied and reported by different disciplines, such as SEN support, education, disability and educational psychology. This indicates the breadth and relevance of the topic for many stakeholders within the process, and the implications for practice. The articles used for this literature review were selected by assessing their relevance to the population being studied in age, level of need and in connection to the field of educational psychology. The searches included the use of 'future-self' when considering future life choices for YP and studies regarding YP with SEN when planning for transition into or out of FE.

There are many significant factors which combine to create the complex experience of transition for YP and their families. This section provides an overview of the relevant findings from existing research which impacts upon this work.

## **2.1 Political and Legislative Context**

The Children and Family Act (2014) and new Code of Practice (DfE & DoH, 2014) have provided clear guidance on practice to enable positive outcomes for YP with SEN, with particular focus on post-16 provision, due to the need for establishments having to look closely at how they support the most vulnerable YP within their care. The collaboration between health, care and education services is designed to create a robust and comprehensive plan to support the YP with additional needs and their families. YP with SEN who had previously had 'statements of educational needs' or Learning Difficulty Assessments (LDA) at post-16 will be converted into Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP; DfE & DoH, 2014). YP who receive statements or EHCP have been identified that they require the need for differentiation to enable the young person to access the curriculum (DfES, 2001).

Legislation has made it essential for transition planning to be part of the annual reviews for YP with SEN from year 9 onwards. The implementation of the EHCP is designed to provide opportunities for all stakeholders (families, education, health and care) to work together to listen to the young person's aspirations and to plan towards these (DfE, 2011, DfE & DoH, 2014). The preparation is designed to explore strengths and needs, make an action plan to work towards aspirations, and to consider a holistic approach to supporting the YP into FE, training and employment (DfE, 2011, DfE & DoH, 2014). The new Code of Practice (DfE & DoH, 2014) and Children and Families Act (2014) indicates the need for:

- focusing on the wishes of the YP with SEN and their parent/carer views
- participation of YP and their families in decision-making
- supporting the YP and their families to be able to develop and have positive longer-term outcomes

'Valuing People Now' released in 2008 indicated that the number of adults with MLD or Severe Learning Disabilities (SLD) in employment is as low as 17% compared to 47% of the disabled population as a whole (DoH, 2008). The summary reported that there is an increased use of person-centred transition meetings which have contributed to almost a third of those who used a person-centred approach, in gaining paid employment, suggesting a much higher percentage than other reports. As part of the focus towards better longer-term outcomes, the local authorities are expected to provide a 'Local Offer' which is a published document providing 'clear, comprehensive and accessible' information about the available provision in the local area to allow families and professionals to access detailed information about what support and provision is available for them.

'Excellence for all children- meeting special educational needs' published in 1997 set a strategy to improve standards for children with SEN and promoted inclusion

within mainstream schooling, which was re-emphasised in the 2001 Code of Practice. Despite increased inclusion of YP with learning needs within mainstream education, specialist educational provision still exists across the UK. The family and YP have greater choice regarding the placement of children with SEN, with some parents requesting a special school for their child which provides individualised support for YP with additional and complex needs (Abbott & Heslop, 2009). The level of need within some settings has become more complex, with many supporting a learning need and additional SEMH need (Nind, Boorman, & Clarke, 2012). Many specialist provisions are designed to meet the needs up to the previous statutory school leaving age of 16, leading to YP with SEN moving to mainstream FE (Elson, 2011). There is little research about YP with either MLD or YP with SEMH, concerning the changes which they experience during the transition process and how the intervention and planning supports their needs.

## **2.2 The Mainstream to Specialist Provision Continuum**

There has been an increase in inclusion of many children with SEN into mainstream schools and classrooms, which has generated the 'dilemma of difference' between separate provision and full inclusion for all children with SEN (Norwich, 2013; Pitt & Curtin, 2004). The 'dilemma of difference' refers to the tension regarding the use of labels and segregation of pupils into alternative provisions against the inclusion of all children within a mainstream school (Norwich 2013). The pupils who attend the special school will have been identified as having a level of need with a statement or EHCP, and their parents will have requested that their child attend the special school rather than a mainstream school. Kelly & Norwich's (2004) study indicated that YP in mainstream education can have lower views of their own abilities due to them comparing themselves against their more able peers, and they identified a tension of difference from these peers.



Little research has investigated the perceptions of the YP about their school experience and if they experience the tension or negative view of being in a segregated provision (Norwich, 2006). The YP who are currently placed within specialist schooling, will have experienced a peer group of similar needs and abilities, and will have experienced an environment which supports their needs (Pitt & Curtin, 2004). Pitt and Curtin's 2004 study explored the views of YP who attended mainstream schooling and chose to join specialist FE due to feelings of isolation within the mainstream learning environment. The YP felt that they were more self-confident when attending a specialist provision and there were greater opportunities for social inclusion in extra-curricular activities (Pitt & Curtin, 2004). These findings indicate that there is concern about mainstream FE being able to cater for all aspects of learning and social needs, and if these experiences would be positive for the YP (Hornby & Kidd, 2000). Many researchers indicated the need for a more thorough approach to transition planning to ensure all aspects of the young person's life is considered, including social, recreational, and domestic considerations (Dowrick, 2004; Elson, 2011; Macnab, Visser, & Daniels, 2008; Mitchell, 2010; Riordan, 2011; Smart, 2004).

Research by Hornby & Kidd (2000) has followed the outcomes for YP who returned to mainstream education from special school and they indicated that while many YP were happy about moving to mainstream, their longer-term outcomes for employment, independent living and social inclusion were poor. A limitation of this study was that it relied on retrospective accounts of experiences for up to ten years since the event occurred. Mitchell (2010) has suggested that despite being in FE colleges, there is still a lack of involvement with the wider community, such as the use of 'inclusion' onto the campus site rather than 'integration' into the college community.

### 2.3 Provision Options

Research has suggested that the FE colleges are creating segregated courses which are specifically designed to meet the needs of YP with additional needs (Wright, 2006). Wright (2006) asked three practitioners to give their view about inclusion of YP with learning disabilities in in-depth interviews, where they identified that specialist courses are created within FE for particular groups of YP. They suggested that there needs to be greater emphasis on strategic planning for YP with learning difficulties and to offer greater inclusion within colleges. Ofsted (2010) indicated the need for further examination of the provision provided in FE and for enabling YP to access the courses which they wished to study through changes in the support offered by FE Colleges. Dyson, Meager and Robinson (2004) highlighted the 'borderline' between 'mainstream' and 'special' pathways which can leave the YP without the support services required. Mitchell (2010) reiterates this view by suggesting there is a 'narrow and specific set of special options' available.

Research carried out by Elson (2011) found that some participants are concerned that the courses are providing a location to progress to from school but are failing to plan other life transitions, such as employment and independent living. Elson (2011) applied a case study approach with a cohort of Year 11 students moving to FE which was used to identify the attitudes of YP, parents and staff of the provision available for YP with learning disabilities, identifying that for the YP with more complex needs, there were few options. Data were gathered from questionnaires answered by 13 school staff, with additional semi-structured interviews from six of these staff. 23 students were interviewed with visual aids and parents were asked to fill in questionnaires. The case study identified that the YP were marginalised to the specifically targeted SEN courses due to the literacy and numeracy levels of YP with MLD. There was a reported increase in YP accessing the mainstream courses with assistance, from 8% in 2010 to 26% in 2011. The study brought awareness that

some of the FE placements can apply a 'one size fits all' approach with SEN, assuming the group has homogenous needs and the impact of funding restrictions on provision choice (Elson, 2011). Farrell and Polat (2003) indicated that the YP in their study, who had attended a specialist school for children with SEBD, felt that by attending this provision, it impacted on their future training and employment opportunities.

Options for YP moving from special schools with additional needs can be limited, meaning that a suitable choice is required to ensure positive future career options and lifestyle choices are provided (Beven, 2003; Elson, 2011; Watt & Paterson, 1997). McConkey and Smyth (2004) investigated the views of 51 Special School leavers aged between 18 and 21 and their families, about their special school experience, and of their transition to post-school options. The study was conducted in Belfast and the sample size was split evenly between male and female participants, using semi-structured interviews. They suggested that the experience within the special school contributed to the young person's social and recreational needs as well as their learning needs being met versus five of the parents identifying a benefit of mainstream school as offering them the chance to interact with non-disabled peers. This was a subjective opinion of the parents and there was no exploration of what they defined as "non-disabled peer".

Throughout the literature, there is an underlying tension of funding for post-16 options and services for YP with additional needs and their financial constraints. Hudson (2006) explores the 'problem' of transition for YP from childhood to adulthood and the impact of the White Paper 'Valuing People' (2011) to improve the support for vulnerable YP when transitioning. He highlighted the challenges of responsibility for coordinating support and providing a range of options for YP with additional needs, including ensuring the YP move to the next 'life stage', reducing the cyclical courses, and using person-centred planning (Hudson, 2006). Dee (2002)

indicates that funding is a challenge when choosing possible routes towards adulthood and independence.

## **2.4 Progression Towards Adulthood**

As noted in the previous sub-section, there can be limited options for YP with additional needs. Dyson et al. (2004) note the 'fractured' transitions for YP with learning needs, placing them within a cyclical system of supporting them into a selection of forced choices. These have little focus on gaining 'real-world' preparation for employment and no 'opportunities to look to the future'. The failure to match the young person's aspirations with their 'chosen' course which they were currently studying was thought to be a reason for some of them 'dropping out' of training, as well as lack of support to develop qualifications. The YP who succeeded generally had determination to succeed, resilience and knew what they wanted to achieve.

Mitchell (2010) provides a good account of the transition pathways for YP with disabilities and additional needs from special school to FE and beyond, and demonstrates the complexity of the transition for these YP. This involves changes in status and identity as they move towards adulthood, the need for good preparation, and awareness of the shift to increased independence. Previous models of transition from education to work described the change as both a process of psychological and social development, and a phase of provision, bridging childhood to adulthood. The YP moving from special school to FE or other training will have a 'lengthy' and 'graduated' series of steps towards independence and social identity associated with adulthood (Smart, 2004). Hudson (2006) indicates the importance of adolescence being a time of identity formation which is gained

through their social experiences of their disabilities, with a blurring of boundaries and roles for all YP as they are developing independence towards adulthood status.

Stokes and Wyn (2007) have broken transition to adulthood into four areas which are: completing education, entry into employment, leaving home, and forming a couple. These help to create experiences which contribute to their identity. The skills which are developed when making progress towards employment help to provide additional identity through different roles within their lives, such as at work, college, in society, or with family. MacIntyre (2014) suggests that the transition to adulthood is seen to be complicated for YP with SEN. Her case study followed 20 YP with MLD using interviews, after school had been completed, and found that many completed a two-year course at college due to other adults suggesting that they were 'not ready' to become an active citizen. The YP identified that they had hopes and aspirations to gain paid employment and had increased independence but these may not have matched with the provision choice.

Carroll (2015) identified that the transition for YP with SEN has changed over time with an increased range of options after schooling, and decreased paid employment for YP with learning disabilities. The domains of transition into adulthood had been suggested to include: work, education and training, leisure and social life, and family, home and domesticity. Carroll evaluated the research methods of investigating transition, finding that more longitudinal data were required, interviews were most common, and some areas of disability were infrequently explored, such as SEBD and MLD. Some aspects of future lives were left out, such as social life and recreational activities. They suggest the need for greater research to provide a more 'holistic and nuanced account' of YP's lives and experiences (Carroll, 2015).

There has been focus on the longer-term outcomes for YP with SEMH, to identify the aspects of successful transition planning. Curtis, Rabren, & Reilly (2009) found a number of factors contributed to supporting the young person's transition, such as the young person's vision of their 'future-self' to help motivate towards positive outcomes, clear action planning, use of technology and social connections. Some of the barriers were getting access to services and resources, transportation, and friendships (Curtis et al., 2009). Norwich (1997) identified the possibility of 'future-self' as being important when children with MLD perceive themselves and their potential aspirations, which mainly involved the young person's view of their desired job.

## **2.5 Selected Research on 'Future-selves'**

Research by Kaehne and Beyer (2009) found the transition experience for YP is focused on the effectiveness of the transition process, and not on the inclusion of the young person's 'future-self' within the decision-making. The experience of transition is one of identity change and shift in culture, which humans will anticipate and produce images of possible 'future-selves', suggesting that this could be a useful method to explore FE provision choice for YP with SEN. The production of the possible 'future-selves' can assist with problem-solving and action planning, and contributes to a person's sense of self and identity (D'Argebeau, Lardi & Van der Linden, 2012). The 'future-self' can act as a motivator to future goals and aims (Markus & Nurius, 1986), and it can be a positive or negative image, with females producing more feared selves than males (Anthis, Dunkel & Anderson, 2004). The production of negative 'future-selves' can act as a motivator, as well as the positive 'future-self', which is thought to be due to the person's self-efficacy, or ability to make change and control their behaviours. Self-efficacy is the fundamental underpinning of 'future-self' as visualising positive and negative futures can motivate and influence ones behaviours to act positively to achieve these goals

(Bandura, 1993). He theorises that individuals with less confidence in achieving their goals, are less likely to adapt behaviour to make steps towards their goals, as well as their resiliency to keep trying. Self-efficacy is a social and personal construct which can lead to shared efficacy between members of a group, such as a school community, suggesting that environmental beliefs and expectations impact on the aspirations of the YP. 'Future-selves' is influenced by culture, socioeconomic circumstances, family environment and personal past experiences (Markus and Nurius, 1986). Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1977) is discussed more thoroughly in the theoretical section (2.10.2).

The likelihood of changing behaviour to meet the imagined 'future-self' relies upon the person's previous experiences, and at adolescence, tends to be based on the attributes of various adults known to them as a synthesised 'possible-self' (Oysterman and James, 2011). The 'temporal distance', or distance from the actual self and the 'future-self' can inform the level of motivation used (Oysterman and James, 2011; Peetz and Wilson, 2008). Peetz and Wilson (2008) used changes on timelines to alter the temporal distance, and those with focus on closer 'future-selves' were more favourable than more distant positions. Generally, the areas of focus for adolescents aged 13-16 when imagining their 'future-selves', is around school and extra-curricular activities, however they also considered intrapersonal identities (e.g. characteristics), interpersonal identities (e.g. relationships with others), employment, and their possible involvement in crime (Oysterman and Markus, 1990). Oysterman and James (2011) refer to the influence of parents, with the young person's 'future-self', showing a strong association between the parental view of 'ideal-self' and the young person's view of their 'ideal-self'. Dunkel (2002) highlights the change in identity for YP when they are transitioning, with the generation of more 'possible-selves' at this time of instability.

Stevenson & Clegg (2011) found that the more elaborate the 'future-self' was, the more motivated the person was to achieve those goals, such as how specific the

details of their vision was. Academic achievement is linked to the perceived goals as created by imagined 'future-selves' (Johnson, 2009; Prince & Nurius, 2014), and cognitive processes such as memories are used along with cultural references to define the 'possible-selves'. This is a manifestation "of an individual's enduring hopes, fears, aspirations and expectations for their future", and can be used as a motivator and a self-regulatory function (Prince 2014, p. 704). There is a need to link the goal with steps to achieve this, to ensure effective behaviour changes, which can overcome some negative stereotyping which can lower academic achievement for some populations (Prince & Nurius, 2014). Adamson, Ferrer-Wreder and Kerpleman (2007) found the imagined 'future-self' was used by YP for their future education and employment, but not other aspects of their lives. In addition, for it to be useful, the YP need to plan steps to achieve their desired 'future-self'. Oysterman and James (2011) present a summary of findings on 'future-selves' which demonstrates the range of factors which can be impacted by use of 'future-selves' techniques, such as academic attainment, occupation-orientated focus, health outcomes and relationships.

A study by Dovey-Pearce, Price, Wood, Scott, Cookson, and Corbett in 2012, found that YP develop their identity by reflecting on their current identities, future identities and comparing themselves to peers. They used focus groups to gain views and discovered supportive factors were: social support, parent/carer support, a mentor, good school experiences, extra-curricular activities, help from others, and resiliency. The YP needed aspirations to motivate them and those with good coping skills and goal-orientated thinking were generally more successful. Owens and Patterson (2013) suggest that the ability to generate 'possible-selves' is developed in adolescence as they become able to think about abstract and hypothetical situations, and considered the role of realistic and unrealistic 'future-selves' on behavioural change. It was also found that parental involvement appears to provide YP with more salient 'future-selves', thought to be associated with school ethos, and the belief that their child will achieve (Oysterman, Brickman & Rhodes, 2007).



Vignoles et al. (2008) explored 'future-selves' through questionnaires with members of the public in Brighton to identify ten possible 'future-selves' and they found links to self-esteem and belonging in their visions of life transitions. The use of 'possible-selves' as a framework for examining 'future-orientated, identity-relevant, goal-directed thinking in the present' and possible 'future-self' was used to explore identity formation of new teachers (Clinkinbeard & Murray, 2011; Hamman, Gosselin, Romano & Bunuan, 2010). They also noted the potential for 'future-self' research being able to improve and influence outcomes for individuals during transition times. Oysterman, Bybee, Terry and Hert-Johnson (2004) found that 'future-self' acted as method of regulation for their behaviour to aid them to work towards positive 'future-self' when given strategies to apply with adolescents. Manzi, Vignoles and Regalia (2010) focused on groups of YP making transitions, into college and on towards adulthood, and asked the YP to describe their future identities prior to attending and share their thoughts after the transition. Those with a closer relation to their expected experience and their reality, expressed more positive emotions.

Kaehne and Beyer (2009) suggest a key factor in success is self-determination and self-belief. They feel that transition preparation should be focused on preparing for employment, increasing skills, increasing independence, empowering choice-making, and using work experience to help skill up YP. They felt there were limited options for YP with SEN, and that supported employment does exist but it frequently did not meet the aspirations of the YP and there were funding issues with this type of scheme.

As the application of 'future-selves' as an approach is linked to a young person's self-efficacy, and this is based upon social learning theory as proposed by Bandura (Bandura, 1993: see theoretical framework section 2.10.2 for more detail), the EP has the research base and knowledge to design and apply this approach which can be adapted to meet the needs of the YP with SEN. In a study by Moran (2001), they

used personal construct psychology to gain views of 'ideal-self' from individuals to help professionals to support the young person to choose strategies make changes to behaviour.

## **2.6 Contribution of Stakeholders in Decision-Making**

Research shows that there is disparity in the level of involvement of the YP and their families in the decision-making process (Niemi & Kurki, 2014). Several research studies have been critical about the limited extent of contribution from the young person themselves to the plan (Carnaby et al., 2003; Dee, 2002; OFSTED, 2010; Smart, 2004). Dee (2002) used case studies to obtain greater detail about how the decision was made and which actions and aspirations were included in the plan. It was found that it required full engagement of all stakeholders to generate a successful plan, and that YP and their families were faced with 'dilemmas' of sticking to proposed options or considering alternatives which matched the young person's preferred interests. The complexity and intentionality varied across the cases Dee used (2002). Dee suggested that the power and status of the relationships within the meetings often led to some opinions having greater weighting than others. The YP and their family's fears or worries are not always fully expressed or acknowledged in meetings (Dee, 2002). In addition, reference was made to the parental expectations of what the young person could realistically achieve, with their views over-riding their child's views (Dee, 2002). Dovey-Pearce et al (2012) identified that the YP with disabilities were more reliant on their parents to act as a proxy and to make decisions on their behalf. Tisdall (2012) highlighted the accepted view that some feel that YP with disabilities are 'insufficiently competent' to be able to contribute fully and that they cannot give a meaningful perspective. Unfortunately, in a study by McConkey and Smyth (2004) some participants stated they had 'no input in choices' as only their teachers and parents did. Norwich and Kelly (2006) found the school ethos impacted on the level of the contribution of the YP in their learning.

The 'voice of the child' has continued to sit at the heart of SEN legislation (DfE, 1994; DfEE, 1997; DfES, 2001), where the importance of obtaining the voice of the young person when making decisions regarding their education and provision has been clarified.

As shown by the study by Carnaby et al. (2003), there are variations in the perception of contribution of the YP and their families in transition. They observed the transition meetings of 15 YP from an inner city Special School for pupils with mild to severe learning needs and their families, and assessed the level of inclusion of the YP in the meeting. They found that depending on the category of need, the young person was included in the discussion for varied amounts of time, ranging from 4% to 66% of the time, with those with more complex needs having less involvement. It was also found that little emphasis was given to the longer-term goals and aspirations of the young person or their social inclusion although there have been improvements, with greater time offered to practical challenges such as transport (Carnaby et al., 2003).

Power dynamics can also impact on the level of contributions from some stakeholders. Smart (2004) conducted a case study of 44 students from one residential Special School for children with severe and complex learning needs and challenging behaviour who lived in 11 Local Authorities across England and Wales. Parents indicated that the transition planning for YP with severe learning needs and challenging behaviours was a difficult one which required earlier planning and they felt they required more information to enable them to make an equal contribution to professionals during meetings (Smart, 2004). The findings reported parents feel that they see their children experiencing challenges in the move and they can regress in their behaviours, suggesting some preparation for moving is incomplete. In contrast, Ward et al.'s paper (2003) suggested that two thirds of parents felt they were fully involved in the transition planning. The parents reported that they

directly influenced the provision choice however they suggested there were some improvements required. These included a need for more information prior to the meetings, the coordinator to take on more responsibility for finding other options, and to have a copy of the actions planned.

## **2.7 Roles and Responsibilities in Transition Planning**

As part of the Learning Skills Act (DfES, 2000), it was recommended to employ staff who were impartial to the school, to assist with the transition plans and offering all children, including those with SEN, careers advice and guidance. The UK used Connexions Personal Advisors (PA) for this role, aiming to increase positive and supportive transitions towards a fulfilling future (Cullen et al., 2009). The evaluations of the service identified a lack of clarity of the role, difficulties with having staff inexperienced with SEN, and insufficient time to support all pupils effectively (Abbott and Heslop, 2009; Cullen et al., 2009; Dee, 2002). Grove & Giraud-Saunders (2003) interviewed Connexions staff, Headteachers and a Head of Learning Support in a FE college to explore the role of staff during transition. In the study, PA's felt that accountability in the transition planning actions were difficult to manage and the external role of PA can help to coordinate support impartially. The findings of this study need to be considered carefully as the research was funded by the Government who may have needed to justify the cost of PAs to the national budget.

The work of Kaehne and Beyer (2009) found that there can be a focus on the process of transition more than the actual outcomes for the YP during transition planning. This was due to the merging of a variety of different processes and systems combining to attempt to meet their own agendas, which may lose sight of the young person at the centre. Wood and Cronin (1999) found that there was a

higher need for transition planning for children with SEBD, and not just a focus on the 'next step' but a need to look beyond to help the YP succeed. The aim for the EHC process is to align services with the young person's needs and aspirations but there could be competing rather than complimenting agendas. Hudson (2006) agrees there is a lack of accountability for staff working together, and there is a need to 'unpick' the process and systems around transition by using a 'helicopter view'. Abbott and Heslop (2009) have identified the need for joined up working, as have MacNab et al. (2008) and Elson (2011). In multi-agency working, Abbott and Heslop (2009) identified the difficulties with accountability and clarity of roles and responsibilities, in particular the challenges in moving to adult services after aged 16. McConkey and Smyth (2004) found that there was a need for improvements in support for finances, respite, leisure opportunities, and practical assistance at home for YP with SEN transitioning to adulthood, with greater social services support with these aspects.

Smart (2004) emphasised the role of the parent who often becomes the advocate for their child in the transition planning, to support practical skills like travel preparation, to support with decision-making, and to 'fight' for the provision they require for their child. Mitchell and Beresford (2014) noted the importance of parents offering emotional support for the young person, although they also noted that parents can be seen as over-protective in their support for moving onwards.

The research by Macnab, Visser and Daniels (2008), a study to identify and examine practice and provision in FE for YP aged 14-16 with SEBD, identified that there were some concerns regarding the training of staff in FE to manage pupils with SEN and a need for strategic planning to ensure that courses are suitable and meet the young person's needs. According to MacNab et al. (2008), the relationships between pupils and staff were key to supporting YP with additional needs, a finding also held by Pitt and Curtin (2004) who identified that the attitudes of staff in specialist provisions were more supportive to the needs of YP.

Geiger, Freedman and Johnson (2015) concluded that for successful transitions into FE for YP with complex needs, it requires more strategic support, more EP involvement at post-16, clearer systems to support moves, sharing of good practice to FE settings, and early preparation.

## **2.8 Methods Applied to Support YP with Transitions into and out of FE**

The most recent Code of Practice for all YP aged 0-25 years old with SEN (DfE & DoH, 2014) encourages greater acknowledgment of the aspirations of the young person and of parental preference for provision and support packages (DfE, 2011, 2014). It has endorsed the use of person-centred planning to ensure the outcomes are child-centred as recommended in the White Paper (Valuing people – DoH, 2001), and has received positive feedback from a small scale study (Corrigan, 2014), although further evaluation is required.

Hayes (2004) suggested the most valuable contribution to the plan for longer term outcomes for young people with learning disabilities was to gather the young person's contribution in a meaningful way by using pictorial handbooks or Makaton signing, to ensure the accessibility of the plan to all stakeholders. In addition, the previous research regarding transitions for pupils with social, emotional and behaviour needs has been limited due to them being perceived as a challenging population to obtain views from (O'Sullivan, 2011), has identified poor transition planning, and the inadequate experience of staff in FE for this population has led to failure to complete education courses (O'Riordan, 2011; Nind et al., 2012). Taylor-Brown (2012) has researched the effectiveness using person-centred planning for three year nine boys in a Specialist School for SEBD. The researcher used a visual review format in the interview, and found positive responses to this approach for

boys with social emotional and behavioural needs. The use of techniques such as these can benefit all of the stakeholders by offering opportunities to find the best ways of supporting the YP and their families during transition.

Nind et al. (2012) used digital medium to elicit the voices of the YP with SEBD opening up opportunities to 'communicate aspects of their experience'. Ward et al. (2003) suggested the use of pictorial workbooks for increased accessibility for YP with additional learning needs.

Hughes (2012) applied the use of Q-methodology to help to elicit the voice of the young person from 'hard to reach' populations, such as those with a label of SEBD, by encouraging the YP to participate in the development of the research (participatory research). Q-methodology creates a range of statements or items which are then ordered or sorted by the participant from most important to most unimportant. Q was developed by William Stevenson as a method to gather the subjective views from others. The YP in Hughes' work had their responses analysed using software for Q-sorting. The findings suggested that it was complex to add YP as co-researchers but the Q-sort approach generated an alternative way for the YP to participate and provide their view.

## **2.9 Processes for Preparing YP with Transitions into and out of FE**

There have been a variety of suggested methods to prepare the YP for the move, such as work experience, visiting the placement prior to moving, mentoring, careers advice, and introduction to new staff prior to starting.

Work experience for YP with SEN has been identified as one of the supporting factors for maintaining the YP in FE and for longer term employment prospects (Curtis et al., 2009; Gebhardt, Tretter, Schwab, & Gasteiger-Klicpera, 2011; Hornby & Kidd, 2000). The YP who are offered the opportunity to engage in work experience can build skills and resilience. The opportunity for YP to visit the new location can help them to get accustomed to the new location, have new experiences, begin to get a sense of the next step and to help inform choices (Mitchell & Beresford, 2014; Ward et al., 2003). Schools can provide opportunities for YP to have counselling or mentoring sessions both pre and post move to FE to enable them to discuss their worries about their transition (Grove & Giraud-Saunders, 2003; Maras & Aveling, 2006; Mitchell & Beresford, 2014; O'Riordan, 2011). As the earlier section indicated, careers advice is an important method of preparing YP for their transition to FE (Cullen et al., 2009). Ward et al. (2003) indicate the need for YP to know who is supporting their move and for staff to be able to meet them prior to starting (Maras & Aveling, 2006). The staff working with this population of YP require expertise (Macnab et al., 2008), and awareness of how to adapt the course to be accessed by all, including the use of sessions to help prepare the YP for the move (Abbott & Heslop, 2009). If there is mutual respect and understanding between the staff member and young person, there is a better chance of them achieving academically (Kelly & Norwich, 2004). Another preparation task can be to assist the YP in negotiating transport to the new location and is a common theme which emerges with the young person's increased independence (Carnaby et al., 2003). The transition preparation offered is mostly focused on developing independence skills, skills for employment, and wider social development, but these skills can be particularly difficult for YP moving from special schools due to their learning needs (Abbott & Heslop, 2009; Gebhardt et al., 2011; Hornby & Kidd, 2000; Williamson et al., 2010). Barrow (2013) found that the role EPs have to support the YP across a range of contexts places them in a good position to support transition into FE, through offering consultation and supporting the systems. Knox (2011) relates the planning for longer term outcomes for YP with SEN as being supported by EP statutory advice and consultation, with their ability to



pull together a range of views and perspectives and promote positive social narratives for them.

The YP will also be making the move into adult services (Dowrick, 2004), which can require support from staff at transition meetings to assist in negotiating services and funding. The need for identifying the aspects of the transition plan which are supportive for YP with MLD with additional needs, and aspects which are barriers, is essential. This population is one of the largest and most diverse, and it is important to ensure the services are offering the preparation required for their move to adulthood. Psychology can offer knowledge about how to support YP, such as building resilience skills and managing change (Cefai, 2008).

## **2.10 Theoretical Frameworks**

There are two main theoretical frameworks which are applied in this research. The first refers to Ecological Systems Theory as proposed by Bronfenbrenner in 1979, as this reflects the system in which the YP live and operate within and how these systems help to generate culture and support for the YP. The second is Social Cognitive Theory as proposed by Bandura (1977), which forms the basis for 'future-selves' research.

### ***2.10.1 Ecological Systems Theory***

The origin of General Systems Theory (GST) highlights the relationship between biological organisms and the environment (Von Bertalanffy, 1968). GST uses

assumptions and rules from systems theory to apply to living organisms and their inter- and intra-personal relationships (Barker, 1999), which form the basis for Bronfenbrenner's Eco-systemic theory. Eco-systemic study in psychology also incorporates cybernetics (exchange of information and communication) as well as GST, to help to explain the context of relationships and environmental factors. Cooper and Upton (1992) suggest the systems are encountering other systems within their environment, with changes in one section, leading to effects to the whole system. The YP is impacted by the environment and the relationships around them, leading the individual to be affected by the changes in the systems surrounding them. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) provides a number of layers of influence from the individual outwards, with the closer layers acting with greater influence. This theory proposes a layer of systems around the YP which impact upon them:

- **Microsystem** - The level closest to the individual and those structures the individual has direct contact with. For example, family or school
- **Mesosystem** - This level connects the structures of the individual's microsystem. For example, family and school interactions, the local community
- **Exosystem** – This level is the larger social system that the individual does not interact directly with, but that may impact on the individual's development by interacting with some structure in the microsystem. For example, parents work hours
- **Macrosystem** - The outer layer in the individual's development. E.g. societal and cultural norms/values. For example, Government policies on inclusion and the Code of Practice

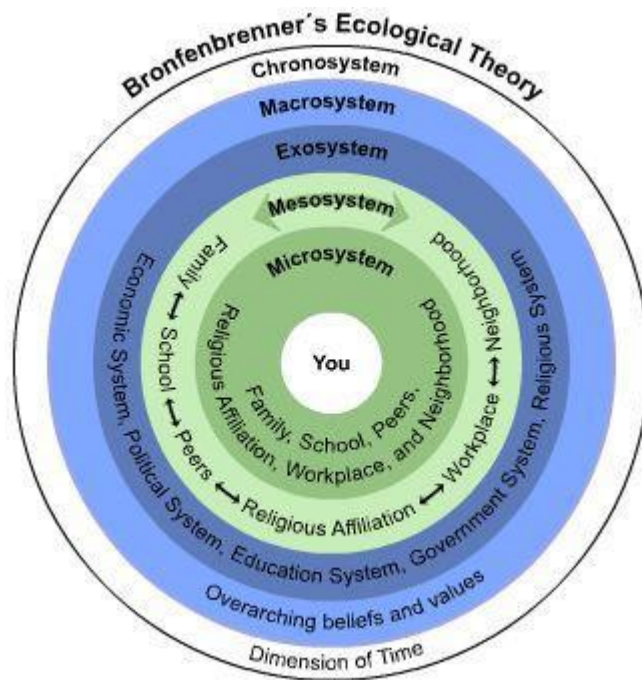


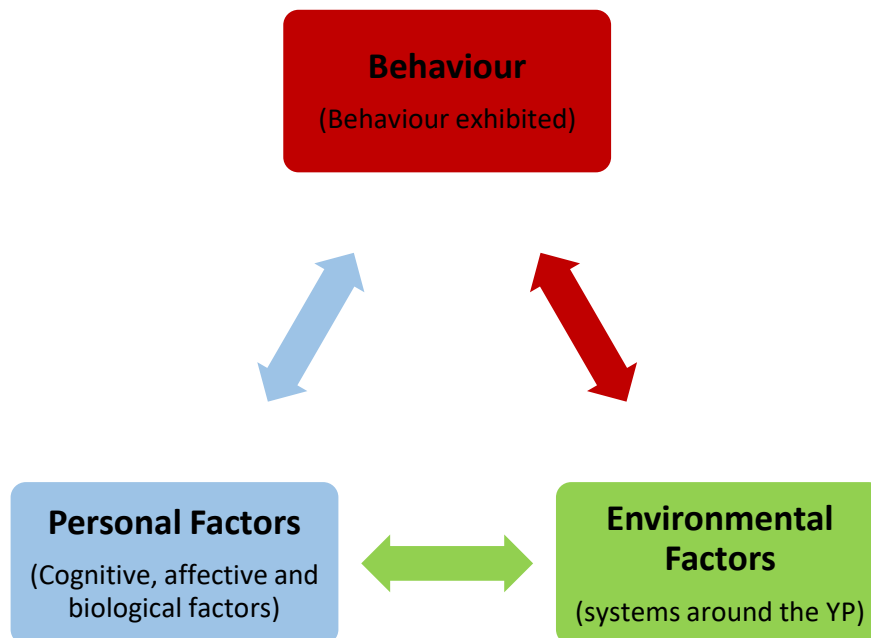
Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory.

Figure 1 indicates that the family and peer relationships will affect the way the young person is influenced by those in the systems around them and that the values, beliefs and views of others can impact on their perspective. In addition, the systemic theory demonstrates how the same event can be perceived differently by others which form a picture, such as the consideration of the young person, parent's and professional's perspectives within this study.

### 2.10.2 Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura proposed the Social Cognitive theory to explain the interaction of behaviour, personal factors and the environment, leading to the behaviour exhibited by the individual. It suggests that individuals have the ability to make choices over what they do, the person's 'self-efficacy' (Bandura, 1977; 1993). The 'future-selves' research has its foundations in this theory, and proposes that the

formation of possible ‘future-selves’ as positive and negative can act as motivators to alter and regulate behaviour to enable greater likelihood of a person achieving desired aspirations and a positive visualised self (Markus & Nurius, 1986). The individual reflects upon past events, integrates their cultural references and forethought, to lead to an exhibited behaviour. Efficacy beliefs influence how others ‘think, feel, motivate themselves, and behave’ (Bandura, 1993), and the application of ‘future-selves’ theory is proposed to generate greater motivation for the young person to make positive behavioural choices.



*Figure 2: Bandura's (1977) Social Cognitive Theory*

The following section explores the thesis aims and research questions to be addressed in the project.

### **Section 3: Specific Aims and Research Questions**

The studies have largely centred around the views of the effectiveness of the interventions used within the transition planning (Abbott & Heslop, 2009; Eaves, Rabren, & Hall, 2012; O'Riordan, 2011), reflecting on the effectiveness of support towards longer-term outcomes (Elson, 2011; Hornby & Kidd, 2000; Smart, 2004; Wood & Cronin, 1999), the role of the transition coordinator (Cullen et al., 2009; Grove & Giraud-Saunders, 2003), and the views of the transition process itself (Abbott & Heslop, 2009; Carnaby et al., 2003; Li, Bassett, & Hutchinson, 2009; Mitchell & Beresford, 2014; Ward et al., 2003).

Previous research has shown that the mode of data collection varied across the different studies based on their aims. For exploration of transition factors, researchers used interviews and focus groups to provide greater understanding of the personal perspectives of the process, to generate new information and insight (Naughton, Rolfe and Siraj-Blatchford, 2001; Robson, 2011). The advantages of this method are that it generates personal views of the participants and provides more information about the topic. However the negative considerations are the limited ability to generalise the findings from single or small case studies (Dee, 2002) and truth is a contested issue for interpretivist research. The researcher has to assume that participants are giving a genuine response and not what the participant thinks the researcher wants to hear, or that the participant with learning needs has been able to suitably make their views understood (Corrigan, 2014; O'Sullivan, 2011). Additionally with interpretivist research, the researcher is interpreting their understanding of the views which may be incorrect (Robson, 2011). Other studies gathering information about the specific intervention effectiveness have used questionnaires and surveys to gather quantitative data to be able to include greater numbers within studies (Crotty, 1998). While the advantage of statistical data can provide wider knowledge about the views of many, it can lack personal experience and opinion when it is analysed (Mertens, 2010).

By seeking rich and detailed data of a particular population case study, the rationale for using semi-structured interviews is to provide relatively open areas for discussion to generate information on focussed aspects of what changes they perceive will occur (Hayes, 2000, Mertens, 2010; Robson, 2011), guided by previous research literature. Case studies can allow the researcher to manage the complexity of life situations for YP with SEN and their families (Dovey-Pearce, Price, Wood, Scott, Cookson & Corbett, 2012).

Within the literature, it has been found that there is a need to increase access and understanding for YP with MLD and possible communication needs, in a research context. Some of the suggested methods are: illustrated information sheets (McConkey & Smyth, 2004), pictorial workbooks (Ward et al., 2003), visual format (Cullen et al., 2009), flip chart paper with words/drawings (Carnaby et al., 2003; Owens and Patterson, 2013), forms of multi-media (Tisdall, 2012), pictorial supports, signs, symbols and technology (Lewis and Porter, 2004), 'ideal-self' images using personal construct psychology (Beaver, 2003; Butler & Green, 2007) and drawings (Moran, 2001). Thus, the use of a range of tools to tailor support appropriately using graphics or visuals is required (Corrigan, 2014). Corrigan (2014) suggests that person-centred planning can improve collaboration, participation, engagement, and enjoyment and influence longer-term outcomes. Some of the effective methods to gather views have been using semi-structured interviews with topic guides (Mitchell and Beresford, 2014), focus groups to elicit voices (Hajdukova et al., 2014), observation, interview or self-report questionnaires (Carroll, 2015). Others have used groups for interview to help YP feel more comfortable (Lewis and Porter, 2004), and interviews over time using case studies (O'Riorden, 2011). Many researchers have indicated there is a challenge to elicit the voices of YP with SEN, especially MLD (Grove and Giraud-Saunders, 2003; Norwich and Kelly, 2006), and suggest talking with the child using adult scribes to gain the child's unique perspective meaningfully (Moran, 2001). Wright (2006) emphasised the need to gather lived experiences and to get the YP's voice regarding hopes and aspirations.

Transitions are difficult for many YP, particularly as this population are likely to be making a significant change into a mainstream FE (Hornby and Kidd, 2001). Carroll (2015) has stated the importance of exploring the young person's hopes and aspirations holistically to generate successful future provision choice and lifestyles. 'Future-self' research could provide a good framework to explore these and ensure a match of provision choice and life goals.

This research explored the contribution of the young person's vision of 'future-self' for YP moving from a special school, in the transition preparation into FE and as they prepare to leave FE aged 19+.

### **3.1 Research Questions**

The research questions sought to identify if the concept of 'future-selves' was known about and if it was applied by the professionals supporting the transition into and out of post-16 education for this population. The existing research indicates that this approach has not previously been applied to this population. In addition, existing research for this group of YP have not gathered both the parental and young person views of the same situation or experience. The study is designed to obtain the perspectives of multiple individuals, including professional views.

The research questions for phase one are:

1. To what extent do YP feel that the transition planning supported their views of their 'future-selves' having made the transition to FE from a special school for MLD and SEBD?
  - Was their view of their 'future-selves' obtained?

- To what extent was their view of 'future-self' used for the FE course choice (decisions for FE training)?
  - Were longer term life goals incorporated in these decisions, including all aspects of adulthood? If so, how were these incorporated?
2. To what extent do parents/carers feel that the transition planning supported their views of their child's 'future-selves' having made the transition to FE from a special school for MLD and SEBD?
- To what extent was their child's imagined 'future-self' obtained?
  - To what extent was the parent's/carer's view of their child's 'future-self' obtained?
  - To what extent was their child's 'future-self' considered when choosing an FE course (decisions for FE training)?
  - Did parents/carers feel that longer term life goals were incorporated in these decisions, including all aspects of adulthood? If so, how were these incorporated?

The research questions for phase two are:

3. To what extent do YP feel that the transition support for progression at aged 19+ has prepared them for adulthood and longer term life goals as imagined by their 'future-selves'?
- Was their view of their 'future-selves' obtained?
  - To what extent was their view of 'future-self' used for the FE course choice and planning for beyond education?
  - Were longer term life goals incorporated in these decisions, including all aspects of adulthood? If so, how were these incorporated?
4. What are the professionals' perceptions of how well the transition planning prepares the YP for adulthood and longer term life goals?



- To what extent were the young person's view of their 'future-selves' obtained in transition planning?
- To what extent was their view of 'future-self' used for the FE course choice and planning for beyond education?
- Were longer term life goals incorporated in these decisions, including all aspects of adulthood? If so, how were these incorporated?

The following sections, four and five, will provide information about the research methodology, research findings and discussion points for phase one and two of the project.

## **Section 4: Phase One**

### **Introduction**

The focus of phase one was to gather and explore YP and their family's views and experiences of transitioning from a specialist provision for YP with learning disabilities into FE, considering the inclusion of 'future-selves' when planning for this move. The following sections describe the methodology and design chosen for this phase including how this will contribute to existing knowledge and practice.

### **4.1 Research Methodology and Design**

#### ***4.1.1 Ontological and Epistemological Position***

This research predominantly has a social constructionist philosophy as the researcher believes that the experience of transition for YP and their parents is subjective, can be co-constructed and is immersed in the culture and social world around them (Crotty, 2009). The researcher takes the assumption that the participants are constructing their own reality based on the world they are engaging with, and therefore by using an interpretivist paradigm the researcher was able to elicit meaning from their views. The experiences and meanings are thought to be constructed through the social interactions and encounters the young person has had with their social world, leading to shared understandings of reality. The project was designed to gather the views of the young person and their families' experiences of the incorporation of the young person's 'future-self' during

the transition process. The interpretivist paradigm has a focus on how meanings are made and looks for the personal experience from their social world (Crotty, 2009).

The research will draw upon the YP and their family's experiences to provide knowledge of the particular process at a particular time and place to generate understanding. This places the epistemological stance within the interpretivist framework to generate the depth and understanding from personal knowledge for each of the YP and those supporting them within their system (Naughton, Rolfe and Siraj-Blatchford, 2001). Through using several perspectives on the same phenomena, the project aims to get the authentic lived experience (Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton-Nicholls and Ormston, 2014).

The epistemological position of this research is interpretivist, with the researcher deriving understanding from multiple perspectives (Mac Naughton, Rolfe, Siraj-Blatchford, 2001). This research determines how the YP and their parents perceive the effectiveness of transition planning and if the young person's 'future-self' was incorporated in this. The research questions sought to gather an in-depth understanding of how YP and their family feel about this experience which therefore means it has a basis within an interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivism has been described by Richie, Lewis, McNaughton-Nicholls and Ormston (2003) as:

'Understanding and studying people's lived experiences which occur within a particular historical and social context'

(2003, p. 11)

Through gathering an understanding and a detailed account of this particular process, the research can help to generate knowledge using the voices of those involved. Interpretivism allows the researcher to gain this deep level of

understanding using qualitative research methods such as case study (Robson 2011).

#### **4.1.2 Methodology**

The research methodology was based on the project aims and philosophical underpinnings, which required a methodology that allowed the key themes regarding the incorporation of 'future-self' during the transition planning process to be obtained from the YP and their families. The data from transcriptions were analysed to create findings which will help to inform good practice and for 'future-self' approaches to be included in transition planning. Although each individual makes the same transition into FE, the personal experience is different and therefore the methodology required the flexibility to 'illuminate' experiences rather than providing a generalised view (Robson, 2011). By using methodology which is recognised by the interpretivist approach, the research was able to provide information to potentially create change to the process of transition through identifying if the systems really support the aspirations as viewed by the YP. Greater exploration of the influences for the research methodology are explored in appendix 2.

The Research was designed to ensure that the YP and their families were able to explore their experiences regarding their perceptions of the incorporation of 'future-self' in the transition planning process which required careful consideration of materials and approaches that were most accessible. Person-centred planning and visual approaches were applied to the design of materials which can be seen in appendix 12 (Corrigan, 2014; Taylor-Brown, 2012). A number of personal construct psychology approaches, such as rating and the miracle question, and a variation of the Q-sort activities were devised to complement the interview questions to aid engagement of YP and to add visual support. Having considered a range of possible

research methods and ethical considerations, the researcher concluded that using a qualitative method would be most appropriate due to the nature of the research aims. The method of exploration was a case study approach for the individuals who had left a special school prior to going on to FE or training, by reflecting back on how well the preparations supported their imagined 'future-self'. Each young person and a parental/carer view became a case, with two cases interviewed. Each case comprised of the young person and their parent/carer however, the researcher aimed to additionally identify if there were common themes between all of the YP and between all of the adults. This explored the effectiveness of the systems to include the young person's views of 'future-self' when they transitioned to FE. Case study methodology was chosen as it is most appropriate to be able to gather detailed knowledge from the YP and their families acknowledging that the social reality for each case will vary requiring a focus on each case individually, using thematic analysis.

#### ***4.1.3 Participants and Sampling***

The research took place in a local authority in the South West of England. Three YP in year 11 from a specialist provision were asked to participate in the pilot study. In addition an exploratory interview was conducted with a parent of a young person who had left FE, to identify factors which influenced the young person's adulthood. Phase one required two YP who had transitioned from a specialist provision for additional learning and behaviour needs into FE, and their parent/Carer.

Pupils were identified from specialist provisions in the local area through making links to professionals who were responsible for supporting transitions within these provisions. In addition local FE providers were contacted to recruit additional YP and families for the project. The pupils were aged between 16 and 18. Parent(s) or Carer(s) of the YP identified were also asked to contribute using semi-structured interviews to provide each case study with a triangulated view point of the same event.

Advertising posters and information letters were sent to families identified by the specialist provisions or FE colleges to inform them about the research and provided contact details to be involved. The YP and their parents for the case studies were self-selecting. It was hoped to have an equal gender split, however the participants who volunteered were both male. An additional interview was added for each of the YP and parent participants to increase the amount of content and to check if analysis from interview one was accurately represented.

#### **4.1.4 Ethical Aspects**

The research met the code of conduct as stated by the British Psychological Society (BPS) in the four ethical principles: respect, competence, responsibility and integrity (BPS, 2009). The research met the University of Exeter guidelines, and an ethical approval form was submitted and agreed prior to starting the project (see appendix 8 for a copy of the approval certificate).

All data obtained have been anonymised to ensure confidentiality of those participating (Robson, 2011). All transcribed recordings have been kept on a password-protected memory card and will be destroyed after completion of the thesis. Informed consent was gained from participants within the study (BPS, 2009, 2014; Robson, 2011), which was the YP and parents, with additional parental consent for all YP as they were not 18 years of age, when they can legally agree to participate (see appendices 3 to 5). The population that was asked to contribute were potentially vulnerable due to their additional needs, so there was careful explanation of the choice to participate and their right to withdraw (see appendix 6; BPS, 2014). This was through having clear and minimal language to explain the study and the way they would participate, with some visual images to assist

understanding on the consent form. Each participant was asked to repeat back what I would do in the study and asked if they still wanted to take part. I ensured that ethical guidelines were identified and adhered to (BPS, 2009), such as being open and transparent regarding the nature of the research, its contribution to knowledge, and the safety of the volunteers. This was through sharing the purpose of my research, how it will be used and how their information would be used before confirming that they wished to continue to take part. The research methods selected are most appropriate for the topic and the population of YP involved in the study. Finally, I ensured that any organisation or participants were aware of the nature of the research, the planned use of the data obtained, and the commitments to the interview (BPS, 2009; Robson, 2011), to ensure there was no harm to those involved.

#### ***4.1.5 Data Collection***

The research gathered YP and their family's views meaningfully and used pilot interviews to check the effectiveness of interview materials prior to project data collection. Based on the desire to gather rich data, and the personal experiences of the participants, semi-structured interviews were used. Pilot interviews took place in the Autumn Term 2015 and Phase One interviews with YP and parents took place after the findings from the Pilot and exploratory interview had been analysed.

##### ***4.1.5.a Pilot Interviews***

Pilot interviews were conducted with three year 11 pupils in one of the specialist provisions, which is a school designed for pupils with MLD and SEMH. The changes made from the pilot interview can be seen in appendix 9. Piloting the interview materials was completed during school term time at one of the specialist school

with permission from the Head Teacher, the YP, and the parents of those involved. The interviews lasted between 25 and 40 minutes.

The pilot interviews were conducted to ascertain the effectiveness of the materials designed to elicit the views of the YP due to the need to ensure that the questions asked met the communication and cognitive levels of the YP (Norwich & Kelly, 2005).

#### ***4.1.5.b Exploratory Interview***

An exploratory interview was held with a parent of a young person with MLD and Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC), who was now in his early 30's, to gain information about the areas of difficulty which she and her son face with regards to everyday life. The findings of this and how it influenced the interview content are discussed in appendix 10.

#### ***4.1.5.c Semi-Structured Interviews (SSI)***

In this section, the effectiveness of SSI is discussed to validate the decision to use this method of data collection. SSI was chosen due to the epistemological and ontological stance of the interpretivist paradigm as this method of data collection provides the flexibility and exploratory nature that this research aimed to elicit (Hayes, 2000; Robson, 2011). As noted in the Literature Review section, previous research indicates that there are very few studies which consider both the young person and the parental view of the same experience. This research seeks to enable the comparison of views and the use of SSI can support this (Ernest, 1994). SSIs were chosen in order to have areas of the topic to discuss using the schedule, while



also allowing the freedom to build rapport and to enable the flexibility to amend the questions to the correct level for the YP to access (Cullen et al., 2009; Norwich et al., 2006; McConkey & Smyth, 2001; Ward et al., 2003). The use of SSIs supports the project's aim to gain meaningful life experiences and provides the opportunity for identifying common themes during analysis. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis. Current EPs were asked to read through a page of coded transcript for inter-rater reliability, and the feedback from this can be seen in appendix 22.

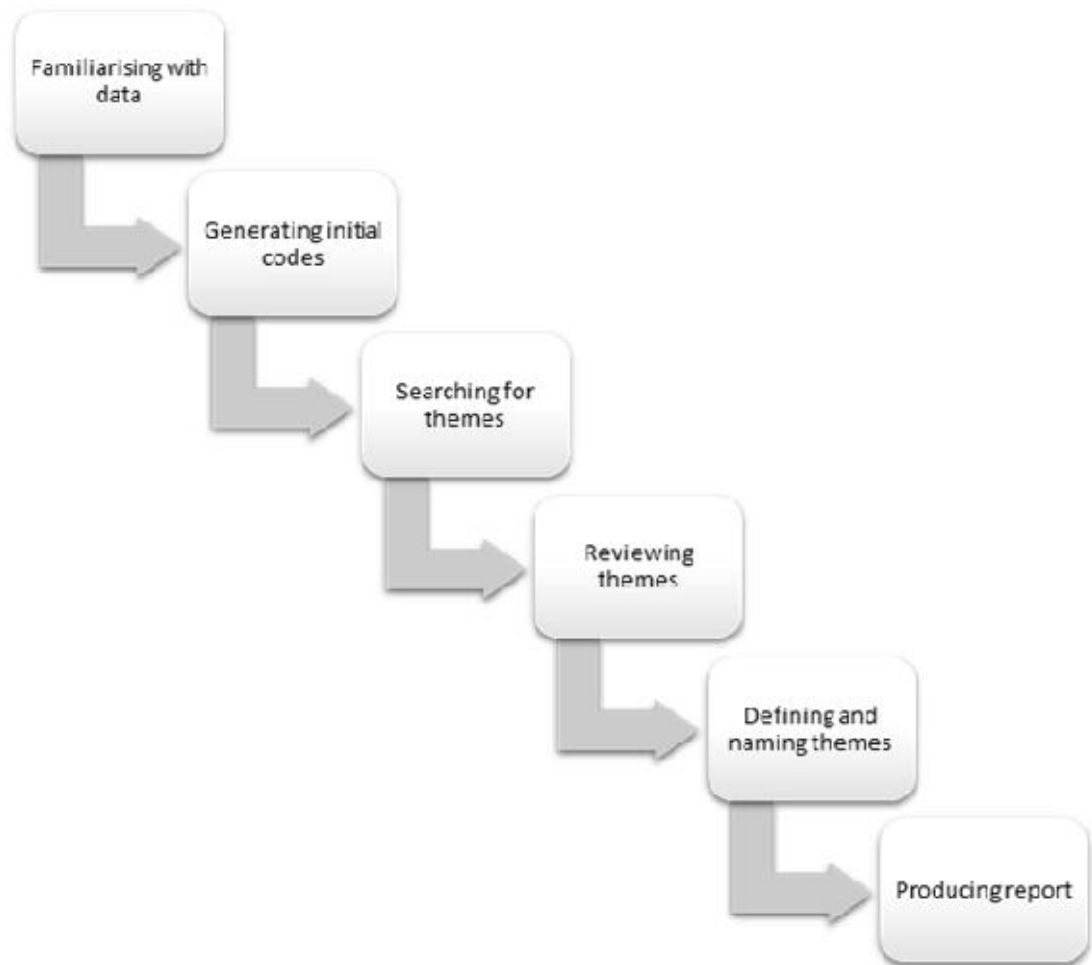
Through evaluation of current literature, relevant aspects of transition were identified and combined with the informal information exchange gained through speaking with professionals and YP who had experience or work within this field, to create the areas to be explored during SSIs. Interviews included tasks based on personal construct psychology, such as the miracle question and rating, and a Q-sort style task, with visual support, all of which were used to aid understanding (see appendix 11 and 16). Interviews lasted between 40 and 50 minutes. The first ten minutes focused on gaining rapport with the young person, with the remainder of the time to explore the previously identified question areas.

Semi-structured interviews for the parents/carers covered the same areas as the young person's however did not require any visual prompts. The interviews were held at the home addresses at the request of the interviewees and the interviews lasted between 45 minutes and an hour, the schedule can be seen in appendix 13.

#### **4.1.6 Phase One Data Analysis**

The SSIs were designed to have a range of open and closed questions and used inclusion of 'future-self' as a framework for the questions. The questions for both

the YP and the parent interviews, focused on the areas which have been found in existing literature about transition effectiveness and progression to adulthood, such as employment, community involvement, family and social relationships, living accommodation, level of independence, and recreational activities (Carroll, 2015; Elson, 2011; Mitchell, 2010). The interviews took place at the family home although they were offered the choice of where they would be most comfortable to have the interview. Transcripts of the Phase One interviews were used to identify common themes using thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). Braun and Clarke's analysis uses six phases to generate themes inductively to allow the data to be coded based on the findings from the data itself, rather than on pre-identified topics. Once data had been made familiar and initial codes generated, all data was analysed in this way and attached to these codes. New codes could be created as data was read through. Once the codes were created, themes were identified and made into a thematic map. Some themes overlapped and were altered during analysis. The computer program NVivo was used to assist organisation when placing items into categories, using a systematic approach of identifying themes and then re-checking previous transcripts for evidence of that theme (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Hayes, 2000). Once themes had been established, a definition was created for each of the themes of data (Hayes, 2000).



*Figure 3: Braun and Clarke (2006) Steps for Thematic Analysis*

Each individual had a thematic map created which can be seen in the appendix (appendices 29 to 32), with six main themes identified throughout all of the interviews. The table in the appendix (Appendix number 23) provides a summary of the overall themes and the associated subthemes, with examples found within the text, which are explored in-depth later in the findings section (Section 4.2).

#### ***4.1.6.a Phase One Application to Professional Practice***

After the interview had been analysed, a session was arranged with the same specialist school that the pilot study was conducted in to deliver the created

assessment. Details of how this was devised can be seen in appendix 18. More detail can be found in section six.

## **4.2 Phase One Findings**

### **4.2.1 Overview of Phase One Findings**

Phase one of the project consisted of two cases of YP and their mothers where semi-structured interviews were used. A summary of each of the participants in phase one are described in section 4.2.2 and 4.2.3.

### **4.2.2 Case Study One Overview: Chandler and Cate**

Case one consisted of Chandler aged 17 who previously attended a specialist provision within the city until age 16 and who now attends one of the city's colleges on a 'Skills Development' programme, and Cate, his mother. Chandler has a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC), learning needs and associated communication and behavioural needs.

During the interview with Chandler, he identified some of the personal attributes which he felt described himself, such as being 'a nice kid', 'respectful and kind' and finally, he felt that a need of his was 'I can't decide or choose'. Chandler made no other reference to his learning needs. He referred to his enjoyment of 'cooking and baking' and his desire to work in a 'kitchen', which had led to his choice of course, as he thought it would provide opportunities to allow him to practice these skills ready for later opportunities in this industry. The type of preparation for FE which he recalled as being useful for him were the visits and 'taster days' when he was able to go into the college and view the facilities, such as 'a kitchen and it had some very nice chefs, nice people to help'. He tried a range of 'taster' sessions which helped him to choose a preference but identified that he may have benefitted from

having more chance to ask about the course. For example, 'I could have asked them if I could, um get a chance to actually make something in the-- in the kitchen'.

When gathering his views, he felt that the use of technology or media could be utilised to help gain his views and assist him to choose possible options, however he felt his views were listened to well overall. He also recalled a teacher who listened to his desire to cook and who helped him to find a course which had cooking as part of it. The course is designed to develop life skills, such as dealing with money, experiencing a range of activities, supporting social skills, and learning independent living skills, like cooking, cleaning and shopping. He valued work experience, which led to a part-time job for him in a local pub:

'I'm the kitchen assistant, I do washing up, I'm cutting things, grating things um, um wash up dishes and stuff. And taking out-- taking out the rubbish that--that's all I do'

(P. 20)

In the interview, Chandler explained that he wanted to 'to learn to look after little ones' (study childcare) instead of his current course, however he identified some restrictions in his ability to choose the course he wanted to do due to having to attend a different college to do a childcare course and that it was held on different days. He said that there was not much choice for him when he was choosing a course for FE. Chandler demonstrated some things which he does in his spare time, which mainly relied upon his parents taking him there and spending time with him to involve him in activities, such as 'every Tuesday I go gym to do boxing' and 'we like playing Mario games'. When asked if anyone had asked him to imagine himself in the future, Chandler was quite adamant that he hadn't been asked about this:

'Where do I see myself doing and working? [Sighs] No one has ever asked me that question before'

(P. 28)

Although despite not feeling he had been explicitly asked this previously, he was able to identify a range of things which he could visualise himself doing in the future, with some aspects relating to his personal and social life, employment, independent living, and his involvement in his local community. In the second interview, later in the academic year, the staff at the FE College had identified that Chandler's academic skills were higher than some of his peers on the same course saying 'It's tough. Because I'm too good', and were looking to support him to move onwards to more work-based training. Chandler was able to imagine some aspects of himself in the future however he suggested that he had never been asked to do this before the interview.

The interview with Cate, Chandler's mother, provided details of lots of positive aspects about Chandler, such as:

'he is thoughtful, he's clever at the things he knows, he is very well-behaved and well mannered. He's caring and his considerate. And I think that he is pretty sensible'

(P. 1)

In addition, Cate highlighted some of the perceived differences which she felt Chandler had in comparison to other YP, such as 'Chandler is of higher ability than the other children that are in that skills development group'. Cate mentioned what she felt were Chandler's needs, such as 'a child with learning difficulties, autistic'. She explored her feelings about the lack of provision choice and options, for example 'I think that that is possibly is a set route for children who are in special provision' and 'we just followed suit'. Cate indicated that there was focus on moving the young person on towards FE College however there was not clarity over the next stages 'has been put there for the next three years and then there's the what next' and questioned involvement of other services, such as social services

and health as she feels 'I think education has always been the primary focus'. The aspects which Cate felt influenced their choice of course were linked to 'being able to access Chandler in an emergency', 'he'll be learning all those things that he needs to know like social, recreational, and his English and his maths' and 'we just based it on Chandler really and what was best for Chandler at that time'. In the second interview, the view of choices had changed, with Cate saying 'suddenly they want to move him because they have realised that actually perhaps he is a little bit too bright for where he is and they need to move him on', which was difficult for Chandler to get used to. She noted the advice given by other agencies like school, FE College and the Careers services, the 'different transition meetings' and the visits to settings. Cate talked about work experience and the option it opened for an apprenticeship however she was concerned about the dilemma it left for her in over-ruling his preference:

'I'm taking away from Chandler something that he really wants to do. I'm taking away that choice, I'm trying to make it for him. And so then I did speak to Chandler and like say, that apprenticeship could still be there in three years' time or in fact you may find something different you know an internship somewhere or something like that ... I think it is important he does skills development'

(P. 5)

Cate recognises that she can be protective of Chandler due to his needs, and the impact of having realistic goals, such as 'he would have to have C grade maths and English and again for Chandler to achieve that it's just not reachable'. She talked of the limited options available for Chandler. For example the suggested needing to:

'play him towards things he is interested in rather than the childcare because they're not realistic but they are what he dreams of doing'

(P. 6)



She felt he contributed fully to the transition as she said 'he was always there and he was always asked his opinion'. Cate indicates that she feels that some of his social interaction needs weren't being met as she felt:

'I was hoping that Chandler would go to college and make some new friends and finally discover a little bit social time and that hasn't happened'

(p. 9)

She feels that she would 'hope in the future that Chandler would find a friendship group that he could do that and things with' to enable him to have a good social life.

Another key aspect for Cate was the independence of Chandler as she felt he was 'vulnerable' and therefore her vision of him in the future was of him being less independent than other peers his age. An example of this protectiveness was:

'I couldn't just put Chandler on the bus and just say you crack on into town and go off to Pizza Hut and meet your mates, it would never happen, it ain't ever going to happen'

(P. 9)

She shares the gradual approach to building independence skills, such as 'He washes his own clothes and stuff'.

Finally, Cate was able to suggest progression for Chandler ('I want to him to have a job'), however she was still aware of her desire to keep him protected. For example, she says 'do his little job and then come home and then be as happy as he is now',

‘take him there and sit into an interview with him and talk for him than I would do that’, and ‘, ideally it would be a home with us and, but I know Chandler would want something different’. Cate recognises that she has greater concerns than Chandler, as ‘I think, it's our fears rather than Chandler, which impacts on some of the decisions made.

#### **4.2.3 Case Study Two Overview: Ian and Amy**

Case two consisted of Ian aged 17 who previously attended a specialist provision within the city until age 16 and who now attends one of the city’s FE colleges on a ‘Skills Development’ programme, and Amy, his mother. Ian has a label of MLD and associated communication and behavioural needs.

Ian was very articulate about his areas of strength (‘I started dancing and everybody's jaws just dropped like whoa’ and ‘dance classes and teach other kids’) and weakness (‘got really bad dyslexia and problems’ and ‘I have anger problems’). He was able to state preferences for certain ways to use his strengths and needs. Ian is very confident with his dancing ability and makes good use of this skill, such as ‘after we've liked danced and everything people got up and started clapping and cheering. And it's like the best feeling in the world’. He is very sociable (‘I love being sociable’) and feels he is able to make new friends easily, for example he says ‘I go out with mates. I dance on Fridays’. He also noted that he sometimes he finds it hard to tell the authenticity of peers which is an area of concern for him and his mother, as he said:

‘We've had a couple people that I've met and I think they're really decent and then they act like goons’

(P. 16)

The course he is currently taking was chosen based on his learning needs, as Ian explained:

'I couldn't read and write they decided to put me forward for the key course to help me to get better with my reading and writing'

(P. 4)

It was also on the advice of others who said 'this course is better for you because of your problems', however he said he had to agree the course was 'fun' and 'I'm going to have to enjoy it otherwise I'm not going to go'. He suggested that the college taster days and advice from others helped him to choose the course. Ian indicated the input he received from the Dance Company he plans to work for was invaluable in helping him to get the support he needs and tailored to his interests, such as 'She came for a meeting quite a lot of times', 'Claire is trying to fit dance in my schedule in college', and 'before if I went to dance I wasn't like talking to anybody'. Ian wanted to go straight to Dance training however his mum and nan persuaded him to complete this course first.

'I wanted to go straight into my dance career and everything but they were like you can't do that because you can't read or write yet'

(P. 4)

He recognised the possibility that he would have been unsuccessful if he had not improved his literacy and numeracy as he said 'I would have failed miserably because of the reading and writing and stuff'. He felt his choices were limited as 'the people that are dancing were on Level 3' and therefore he was not able to apply for the course he wanted to, with none being available at his academic level.

Ian was keen to demonstrate his determination to achieve independence, for example when looking for part-time work:

'I went in there and said 'I'm out of college and I'm bored, is there anything you've got for me?' and he said 'Yeah you can come in and stack the shelves'

(p. 12)

Ian was assisted by his mother to ask for work, suggesting he still felt the need for additional support on some tasks, and he relied on support from family for help as he feels 'I would mostly struggle by myself'. He is keen to get involved with different activities which are active, such as swimming, volunteering and Duke of Edinburgh Award, with an attitude of working to his strengths. He has definite aspirations for the future and was able to imagine himself being very independent.

In the interview with Amy, she was keen to share his strengths, such as 'great sense of humour', 'caring', and 'very good at teamwork'. Amy identified his weaknesses as 'struggles with reading and writing' and is 'easily led'. Throughout the interview Amy made it clear that she had high expectations for Ian, saying 'disability for this family is not about holding you back' and it is about 'working to strengths'. The decision-making of the course was based upon the advice of others and meeting his needs:

'the tutors worked with him as to which would be best for him. Um as I say he does struggle with reading and writing and so the essence for Ian was to find a course that allowed him to do physical stuff as well and showed him that it didn't really matter that much if he couldn't read or write properly or as well as his peers'

(P. 2)

Amy stated the need for support for Ian, which was discussed during the transition meetings and taster visits, which made special amendments for him to continue to incorporate dance into his learning. For example, she said 'they've actually worked (it) into his course'. She felt that Ian was listened to when choosing the course and that it builds his independence skills to be able to progress on ('his self-confidence and his self-esteem which has grown quite a bit over the last year'), however she was still aware that there was limited options for him to study as he said 'I don't really know there are any other courses available for-for him', which was a concern.

Amy talked about Ian's involvement in a range of social and practical activities, such as swimming, cadets and Dance, however she suggested that he can sometimes misread the intentions of others as he can 'get into trouble' due to his vulnerability, leading to her supporting him to resolve issues and is an area of concern for her in the future, ('I'm worried about him falling into the wrong group of people'). For example she says 'he's not allowed out every day because as I say he's-- he gets himself into trouble'. She feels he will be independent in the future and he has said to her that he would like to 'live on his own and he would like to earn his own money'. Amy feels he will find employment in Dance, as this is where he feels he belongs and where he doesn't feel different from his peers. She can't see him being able to live alone for a long time yet as:

'he's really bad with money so he-he knows that he wouldn't be able to um live independently. He doesn't cook. He eats raw food'

(p. 21)

However she hopes in the future he may be able to – 'I mean he might not move very far away from me but I'm hoping that he will in time' and visualises him being settled with a family of his own, as he has said 'he doesn't want to be strapped to me as he puts it' and has desire to be independent.

#### 4.2.4 Phase One Themes

The following sub-sections provide explanation of the themes generated from the analysis of the YP and parent case study interviews. The thematic maps for each young person and parent can be found in the appendix (appendices 29 to 32) and figure 4 displays the identified themes.

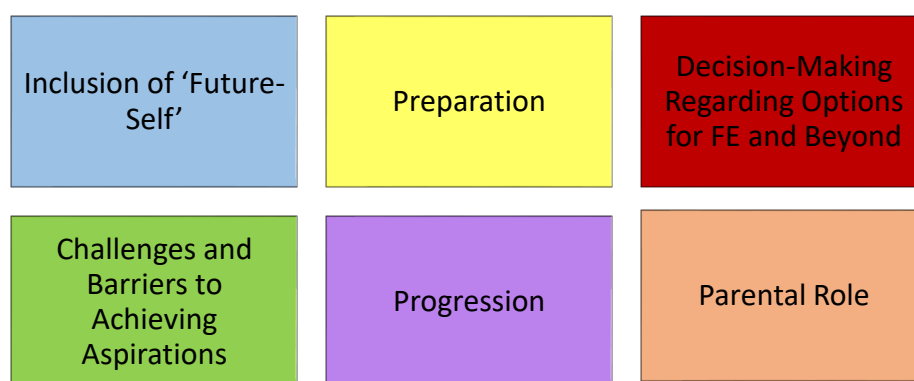


Figure 4: Themes generated from phase one case studies

The identified themes are discussed in detail in the following sections.

##### 4.2.4.a Inclusion of 'Future-Self'

Both of the YP were able to mention a range of aspects of their imagined future lives, such as 'a good baker', 'go out and hang out', 'do my dance career', 'teach other kids', 'I'll still swim', 'I'd like to learn how to drive', 'want a job', have 'a misses', and 'have my own house'. Chandler mentioned 'where do I see myself doing and working? [sighs] no one has ever asked me that' however he was keen to share what he thought he would like to do for a job. Some of the other aspects of

their lives, such as social, recreational and living opportunities, had to be asked explicitly as most of the aspirations were linked to possible future employment. Both YP had ideas of what they wanted their lives to include, although their views had not always been gathered in the plan with all aspects planned for, with more focus on their education, training and employment.

The inclusion of the young person's voice appeared to be positive and they had felt listened to, with comments like 'I picked it myself', 'it had a kitchen', and 'I wanted to go there so I put my foot down'. The parents felt their child was included too, with comments, such as 'Chandler was always present', 'we based it on Chandler really', 'Ian made the decision and told me', and 'at the annual review there's a section that Ian gets to do'. In both cases, the YP had an idea to pursue a different route to the actual choice and had assistance from parents to amend their idea to something thought to be more 'realistic' to enable the young person to succeed. For example Ian had a preference for a dance course but there were none available, 'dance, I wanted to do dance really badly'. The courses allowed for acknowledgement of the young person's preferences and interests, such as including practical aspects 'wide range of activities', interests like 'loves cooking and baking' and meets their aspirations like 'volunteering'. These preferences did appear to be reflected in the courses. This was also found by the ratings from the YP and parents indicating they felt very involved in the transition planning and choices made, and the rating tables of these can be seen in appendix 17.

The YP could identify many interests however only Amy mentioned having these interests represented in the transition planning. All of the interviewees could identify personal characteristics which the YP had now and would have in the future, such as 'thoughtful', 'caring and considerate', 'good with others', 'helpful' and 'kind', and these aspects appeared to be associated with some possible future employment, like 'see him in a caring role' and 'they actually worked that into his

course that he does dance' indicating the inclusion of the young person's voice for some life aspects.

The beliefs and values of the young person and parents were varied and either supported a positive approach or acted as a way of protecting them, such as one parent view 'put out a set of courses which are realistic for those children' and 'stuck between mainstream and specialist provision', or the other parental view that 'disability is not an excuse in this house'. The influence of the young person and parental views appeared to direct some of the imagined future aspirations, either towards reaching their potential or limiting options, as Oysterman and James proposed (2011).

#### ***4.2.4.b Preparation***

All of the interviewees talked of the transition meetings which they held prior to transitioning into FE ('once a year to see how he was progressing' and 'we had lots of meetings'). Information sharing was vital in supporting the YP, such as for travel arrangements, pastoral care, linked to interests, and involvement of the professionals involved. The YP and the families mentioned the effect of having advice from others to help to guide them with preparation, such as 'I have literally relied on school', 'they basically explained what's going to happen', and careers advice where one parent felt 'she was very good. We met with her quite a few times' to guide them.

Both parents mentioned advice seeking to gain greater understanding of options available, but only Ian mentioned seeking information about possibilities, and there was uncertainty about which services should be available to the family, such as 'we've never had a disability social worker involved and I don't know why, I don't



even know if we should have?' This confusion of what is available had been found in previous research by Dee (2002) and Elson (2011).

Another aspect of preparation was visiting settings and attending 'taster days' at the FE colleges to help to provide opportunities to meet staff ('he'd been down and met with staff', 'we met our TAs', and 'very nice people to help'), try new activities ('they were showing what they were doing' and 'that's why he knew he wanted to go'), and to get acquainted with the setting ('we were freely able to go and look at colleges' and 'he already knew where the college was'). The YP and the families mentioned the need for additional support to meet the needs of the young person, such as 'they're vulnerable children', 'adapting the course to fit him', and 'getting the help and support he needs'. This preparation enabled the young person to feel safe and reduce their anxiety.

Both YP had the chance to do work experience, which was felt to be helpful by parents ('for a week in a pub/restaurant and they were so impressed with his skills' and 'he did his work experience over the school'), and the YP ('it's going to get me ready'). The parents had hopes that the FE course would help to prepare the young person for future life skills, such as 'teach him how to manage his money', 'personal, social and emotional skills will need to be developed' and 'prepare him in some way for the interview type process' as part of the course.

All participants mentioned previous aspirations, which helped to inform options based on changes in interest or greater awareness of the skills involved in the career, like 'I didn't know you had to do paperwork' and 'that got boring'. The opportunities provided greater awareness of training and employment requirements.

The final aspect noted regarding transition preparation was not utilising technology in preparing ('didn't use media at all to get your views' and 'good to have- use a computer'), despite both of the YP mentioning their use of technology for communication, like 'Chandler has a mobile phone' and 'I do text her on my phone, ring her', and in their spare time, such as 'like playing Mario' and 'playing on my PS3'. This is an area which could be utilised to aid effective transitions, such as using voice and video recording views, sharing of information through technology, and computer programs, as well as using communication to explore options available for YP.

#### ***4.2.4.c Decision-Making Regarding Options for FE and Beyond***

The Q-sort based activity provided some information regarding the factors which impacted on the course choices for the YP and can be seen in the chart below.

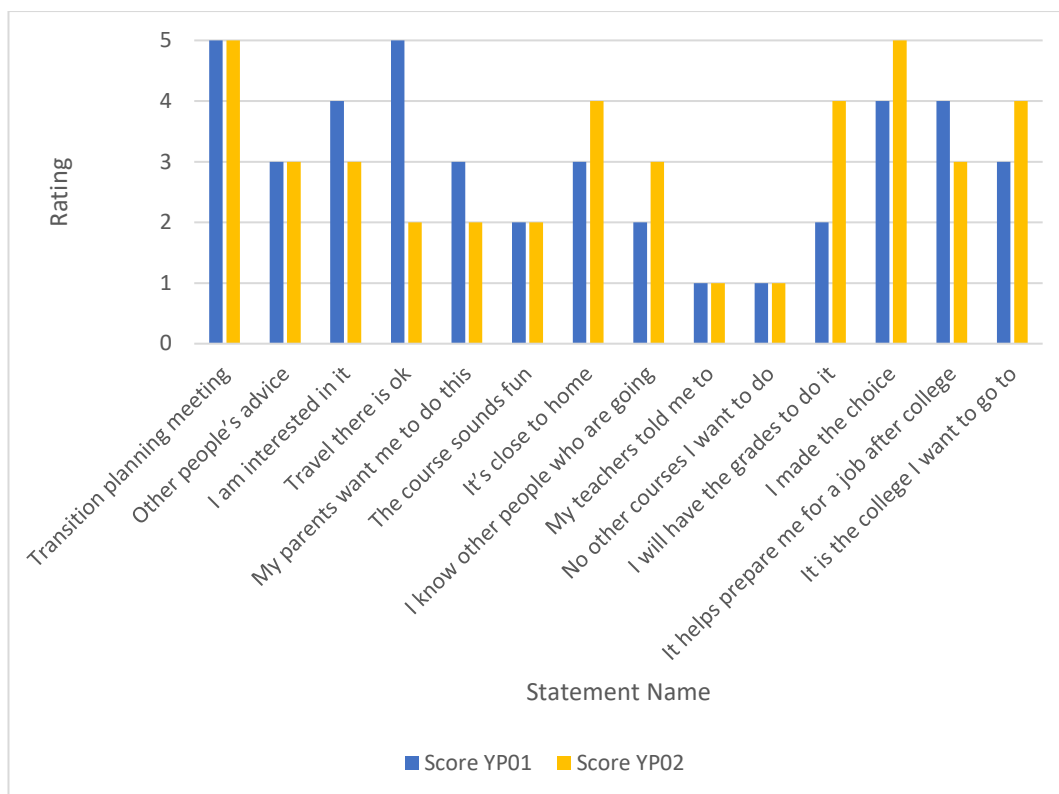


Figure 5: Q-sort based activity scores for Chandler, Ian and average score

The YP both felt the most important factor in decision-making was the transition planning meeting, whereas the other highly rated factors varied for each of the YP. Some of the most important were making the choice themselves, being a course which will help prepare them for employment, being interesting to them, and being close to home. The least important factors in decision-making for the YP were agreed as being teachers telling them to do it and no other courses I wanted to study, indicating the YP felt they were able to make choices themselves and that they felt they were able to study a course that they wanted to. More details regarding the Q-Sort style activity can be seen in appendix 16.

The parents referenced the statutory meetings as being the main place to discuss options for next steps, such as 'the annual review' and 'education, health and care plan'. There were a range of aspects which appeared to impact on the course choice, such as the facilities ('it had a kitchen'), it met the young person's needs ('he

needs to develop his skills' and 'going to care for him while he is there'), and they were unaware of other choices ('I don't know what options are available').

All of the participants indicated that they or their child enjoyed the course, using terms like 'he's happy with what he's doing' and 'I just really enjoy it'. However, there was also a feeling of limited options, with one parent saying 'he was always going to go to skills development along with every other child' and 'we just followed suit'. There appeared to be some limiting aspects due to the young person's academic levels, such as 'he's got a long way to go before he's even GCSE level', 'I failed all my exams', and 'what stuff you are able to do, because I couldn't read and write'. One young person mentioned he thought he should have had more help with reading and writing at school and this would have given him more choice. The limited options of FE course for the YP were reflected in the literature review research.

There was optimism about possible future options after this initial course, like 'after three years of skills development and then go on to do an apprenticeship of catering' and 'I want to do that before moving onto anything else'. Cate and Chandler both mentioned the lack of variety of courses available for him, with many not being 'suitable', or failing to provide training for jobs which Cate felt Chandler may be destined for, such as 'is there a course anywhere for learning how to work on a shop floor?' As noted in the previous section, both YP were unable to study what they had originally wanted to study in their area of interest, such as dance and catering. Cate indicated that she felt that she would see Chandler being involved in supported training, such as 'internship at [name] hospital' or working for 'Royal Mail', however she also suggests that he may stay on in college to complete more courses. The cyclical system of training previously seen for YP with SEN appeared to still be a route for some YP like Chandler.

A significant factor in decision-making was the accessibility of the course, with interviewees mentioning easy access to the young person, such as 'being able to access Chandler in an emergency', and accessibility to get to the college for the YP, such as 'he had been travel trained and so he knew he could catch a bus to where he is going now', 'its local' and 'it's close to home'. The parents commented on the course being accessible for the young person in terms of their learning needs, such as 'they kept to the same routine every day', and fitting into their home arrangements, such as 'the problem was, going to the same college at a different day so I had to pick catering'. These factors limited the possible options further for the YP.

There was reference to the environment of the college course as supporting the YP, saying 'I knew he was going to be safe there', 'learn in a different environment that's not so rigid', and it was 'the specific place you wanted to go'. Both YP and Amy mentioned working to strengths as being helpful in deciding future options, such as 'I like being sociable' and 'they're teaching me more'. All interviewees commented on the alternative provision which they are on rather than a mainstream course, with some positives ('they did get it right') and some feelings of what else could have been ('I would have gone somewhere completely different' and 'there is almost that gap'). This emphasised the dilemma of choosing the segregated provision compared to a mainstream course where there would be less support.

Both parents commented on the level of social inclusion which their child had while on the specialist course saying 'children with varying abilities ... finally discover a little bit (more) social time and that hasn't happened' and 'I don't think he clicked with anybody in the new group'. These factors indicated that decision-making was complex and involved a large number of factors.

#### ***4.2.4.d Challenges and Barriers to Achieving Aspirations***

The needs of the YP were identified as being a challenge to their inclusion in some courses, such as their academic ability, their social skills, their need for support and independence skills. Both parents indicated that some of their child's needs acted as a barrier to accessing some courses, saying 'his understanding of things that are happening', 'difficult to tolerate difficult behaviours', 'same routine every day', 'struggles with reading and writing', 'he's easily led', and 'he's quick to anger'. They indicated that skills needed to be developed to aid their child's progression 'ongoing support', 'working with him that are there for behaviour issues', and 'he's got a support network'. The parent's comments regarding the needs of their child indicated that they felt that extra support would be necessary to access learning which they felt would not be met on a mainstream course.

Both parents identified differences between their child and their peers, saying 'other children had different needs to Chandler', 'the world is made up of all sorts of normally developing people', 'he knew that his grades weren't going to be fantastic', and 'he will need someone to support him'. Both parents also used labels of need to describe their children, with one suggesting that due to this their child had been 'sheltered', but with both parents using conditions to explain their child's need rather than indicating the label was unhelpful or restricting. Cate did suggest that despite the entry criteria for the FE course, the children were of 'varying abilities'. This was reflected by the literature indicating that assuming the needs for all YP with MLD are the same does not assist when meeting the needs of the YP.

One of the YP was able to identify how his needs affected his learning, such as literacy and numeracy difficulties, and he said that the adults around him are required to 'help me with my problems and suggest a lot of things'. This young

person applied labels of need to himself, such as 'dyslexic' and 'anger problems' but did not appear to use these as barriers to achieving. He is confident he will make progression despite recognising his needs as he works to his strengths.

Finally, both parents referenced finances as a limiting factor, with one parent considering the financial implications for the family, such as 'in terms of Chandler financially, I have no idea', with the other parent focusing more on practical independent skills, such as 'he's bad with money'. No reference was made towards course availability due to funding by the YP or their parents.

#### ***4.2.4.e Progression***

The theme which was the largest and most diverse was the section related to progression and development of the individual. There was a big focus on the young person developing independence in a range of life aspects, such as developing life skills, preparing to move on, employment, social opportunities, recreation and leisure, living arrangements, and relationships.

All interviewees referred to developing skills. Some of the skills which they felt had developed were simple, such as 'going off and getting a cup of tea on his own', having 'more freedom', cooking and cleaning for himself, and 'independent travel', and others were more complex, such as 'making his own decisions' and handling money. There was parental expectation of developing the young person's skills, such as 'we're trying to encourage independence at home' and giving responsibility to the young person to prepare for a job ('he knows he has to have a shave'). Both students were preparing for a new course next year due to their progression over this year ('we will be looking at a workplace program' and 'I'll be doing my dance'). Both YP mentioned they appreciated support from others to get started or develop skills, such as careers staff and family.

Employment preparation was referred to by all interviewees, highlighting what they thought they wanted to achieve in the future. There was reference to developing skills for employment, such as 'based on his work experience ... and they have kept him on' and 'given the opportunity, he'll be helping'. Both YP referred to their contribution to decisions, like 'I picked it myself' and 'I didn't listen to the teachers'. They both have part-time jobs which they had help to get initially but are now attending alone, with interviews being conducted and being based on their interests. Both were very motivated to develop their skills for employment such as 'they are teaching me more', 'I teach kids how to hip-hop', and 'practicing', as they both felt it was key to gain employment.

Both parents noted the social interaction skills which they felt were being worked upon to increase their child's inclusion in the community. Cate comments on the young person's ability to tolerate the behaviour of others, such as 'he doesn't like bad behaviour' and Amy suggesting that Ian likes the social interaction with his peers, demonstrating his awareness of the pro-social actions of including others during Ten Tours as he 'waited at the end and brought them all in together'. Both of the parents noted their son's lack of social awareness, such as linked to self-care, knowing what is socially acceptable, and developing skills when interacting with others. This development of social awareness is an area being developed for adulthood and employment.

Cate commented on the lack of social opportunities which didn't involve her family (if we go out he does come with us, just into town. If there was none of that going on that would be all Chandler does' and wanting a 'happy and healthy social life'. Chandler notes that he sees a few friends occasionally to play 'Mario' or go out for dinner, and communicates using his 'mobile phone'. Amy suggests that her son is very sociable and involved in activities however none of these aspects are planned for through his EHC, she suggests he is always doing something active like



'swimming', being at the 'Skate park', 'dance groups', and 'volunteering'. Ian also commented about his social side, like 'going out with mates' and 'meeting girls', mainly since being more confident to talk to others since joining his dance group. He also feels included in the wider college community, such as 'I want to be on the rugby team for college. I spoke to them about that'. The access to the local community tended to be through individual support to access a group or an activity, set up by themselves or their family, which may not be the case for all YP. For example, 'he's looking to volunteer' and 'I went to the dance company with [name]'. The lack of inclusion of these aspects within the transition planning may have limited the opportunities open to them.

All of the interviewees commented on their interests and leisure opportunities they currently have a wish to continue as well as suggesting they have some ideas of what they would like to do in the future. One parent described their child as 'always out and about'. Both YP noted they would like to be involved in social activities, such as 'go and watch a movie', 'go ten pin bowling', and 'dance group', although none of these aspects had been placed into a plan.

In terms of progression within their personal life, there was reference to living independently, such as 'hopefully by himself, or a partner' from one parent, although the other had hopes to retain her child living with them for longer. Her feelings are strong about other professionals getting involved and taking Chandler's view over hers, as she said 'I always worry some do-gooder social worker will say his views need to be listened to'. Both YP currently live with their mum and siblings, but both stated that they wanted to live independently in the future despite recognising that it was too soon for them at their current ages. For example, 'it would probably take a bit of time' and 'when I'm old enough to move out, I will'. All of the interviewees felt they were likely to have a relationship, or their child would, in the future, with comments such as 'probably have a misses' and 'I knew he would find a girl'. These opinions of what they wanted for the future

had not been discussed formally or in detail with the YP, with more focus on the next steps rather than longer-term.

#### **4.2.4.f Parental Role**

Both parents mentioned their concerns regarding their child, with a range of concerns from: independence of the YP, wanting to provide the opportunities for them to build some skills before moving on, protecting the young person, to the impact of their needs. Cate focused on the need to provide support for her child, despite the son wanting to be more independent. Some examples were, 'in terms of Chandler financially, I don't know', 'he seems quite vulnerable in terms of his understanding, socially, his interactions, people', and 'he had ongoing support'. This protectiveness had caused some preferences of the young person to be over-ruled by the parent's choice.

There was a role which parents were taking in the absence of other services, such as helping with interviews 'take him there and sit into an interview with him and talk for him then I will do that' and 'I was there while he asked' when one young person inquired about a part-time job.

There was an awareness that the parental view may be in opposition to the young person's, like when one parent said 'Chandler's view is quite strong that as an adult you don't live at home...we will try and encourage Chandler to live with us forever!' In contrast the other parent was more concerned regarding her son's independence skills, such as 'he doesn't cook. He eats raw food' and being able to manage his social interactions, as she says 'he can't handle a relationship', 'he doesn't read a situation well', and 'providing he gets in with a good group, he'll be fine, he'll be absolutely fine. If he gets in with a bad group, then he won't be'. The parents both felt their views were taken into account when choosing options, such as 'it was all

piled into that meeting' and 'I think everybody knew at that meeting what we wanted and they kind of put it in place'. Both YP valued the input from their families, such as 'my nan and mum had a good input'. It appeared that the parents did make the decision for the young person at times, usually when it was related to them succeeding ('for us to make a decision based on what we think is best for Chandler' and 'as soon as my mum or my family thinks I'm ready'). Some of the planning had not been person-centred and information had not been elicited from the YP, therefore some of the young person's views may not have been fully represented.

Parental expectation was varied across the two parents, with one parent suggesting that she felt there were limited options for her child and that she saw him working in more menial task, like 'stacking shelves' and that he will work on support assisted employment. She was able to suggest that some of the self-care independence skills were present ('hygiene is good') but she still wanted him to be staying with the family to ensure he is close ('I just want Chandler to be safe' and 'knew what to expect from a child like Chandler'). Both parents commented about being protective of their child, with one parent considering the practical aspects of developing skills like travel skills and finances, while both parents worried about their child's vulnerability with their understanding of social interactions, like 'understanding socially, his interactions' and 'he's not allowed out every day because he gets himself into trouble'. One young person commented on his need to protect himself from 'strangers' and build his understanding of social dynamics.

In contrast, Amy had very high aspirations, such as 'the only person that holds him back is himself' and 'I think he's like to help with younger disabled students... he's very good with them... he understands'. She can see her son having independence, living by himself, having a relationship, and children of his own ('it would be a real shame if he didn't have any of his own, I think he will'). The positive aspirations had

already led Ian to make significant steps towards the career and lifestyle which he desired.

### **4.3 Phase One Discussion**

The themes found were discussed in the findings section and shown in figure 4, section 4.2.4. The research questions explored in Phase One sought to explore the following aspects:

1. To what extent were the YP's view of their 'future-selves' obtained?
2. To what extent did the parent/carer think their child's imagined 'future-self' was obtained?
3. To what extent was the YP's view of 'future-self' used for the FE course choice (decisions for FE training)?
4. To what extent were longer term life goals incorporated in these decisions, including all aspects of adulthood? If so, how were these incorporated?

#### ***4.3.1 Phase One Discussion of Inclusion of 'future-self'***

The results indicate that YP were able to identify some of the things which they desired to achieve in the future when asked to think about this, for example 'teach other kids' and 'want a job'. They could create versions of what they wanted to achieve as suggested by Markus and Nurius (1986), Bandura (1977; 1993), Oysterman and James (2011), and Kaehne and Bayer (2009). During the case study interviews, none of the individuals had experienced having an awareness of taking part in 'future-self' approaches. The YP and parents were clear that they had not experienced this type of approach, as one young person said 'where do I see myself doing [sighs] no one has ever asked me that', although one of the parents indicated that they thought it would be good to use and the other parent suggested that questions had been asked concerning what they would like to do in the future but was asked in relation to education. They were never asked to visualise what they wanted to become in the future. This matched with findings from Adamson et al,

(2007). In addition, very few areas of progression were considered within the transition planning with the focus being on the 'next step' and referring to aspects of their lives, such as employment and education rather than social and recreational, as found by Smart (2004).

Markus and Nurius (1986) emphasised the importance of the systems around the young person influencing their versions of future-selves, as Bronfenbrenner's eco-systemic theory would suggest. The parents were able to visualise their child in the future, however they had not been explicitly asked to do this previously. The parents expressed both positive and negative 'possible-selves' for their child, with one parent only referring to the YP in positive expectations of what they wanted him to achieve and not letting his needs 'stand in his way'. This positivity may help the young person to overcome the impact of cultural stereotypes on the 'possible-selves' created by wider society that limits the views of possible aspirations, suggesting that YP with SEN may be limiting their vision of their 'future-self' (Oysterman and James, 2011). There has not been any research on the difference between aspirations for this population to date. Both parents had thought and visualised their child and could be supported to help to raise their child's aspirations and encourage high achieving 'possible-selves' for them by having high expectations, as Kaehne and Bayer suggested (2009).

All of the interviews indicated that the new EHCP process had helped the YP to feel that they were included in the planning (DoE & DoH, 2014), as suggested by Corrigan (2014). They felt that they were able to include their interests into the potential courses they wished to study, however it was not always possible to study these desired interests due to limited options for the YP, as stated previously by Wright (2006).

#### ***4.3.2 Phase One Discussion of Use of 'future-self' in Decision-Making for FE***

As in the literature section, a range of methods were applied to assist the YP to prepare for moving onto FE or training, such as visiting the setting, having taster sessions and attending college prior to leaving school were applied (Abbot & Heslop, 2009; Wood & Cronin, 1999). The application of the statutory meetings provided an opportunity to share information and look at 'strengths and weaknesses' (Dee, 2002; DfE & DoH, 2014; Dyson et al., 2004). The meetings included the young person and they were asked to share their views however decisions were not always made on the young person's best interests as there were 'limited choices' or 'not knowing the options available'. This was noted by Elson (2011), Mitchell (2010), and O'Sullivan (2011) as being a key factor in decision-making for YP with SEN. There was also comment about the 'gap between mainstream and specialist provision' from one of the parents, as Dyson et al. (2004) suggested.

The families discussed having help from outside agencies such as 'Careers services' to make choices and to gain information, and one said they 'relied on the school' to help with their choices. The YP felt they were able to contribute, which was in contrast to what Carnaby et al. (2012) and Dee (2002) felt was the case in previous studies. They were not always able to take the courses they wished to, as other people were guiding them towards making certain choices opposed to what the young person wanted. For example, Ian said 'dance, I wanted to do dance really badly' but relenting to the advice of his nan and mother and staff, he decided to follow their advice, which was 'this course is better for you because of your problems'. He recognised that some courses may be too challenging and said it was based on 'what stuff you are able to do, because I couldn't read and write'.

The location and environment was a large factor in deciding the choice of course, as suggested by Kaehne and Bayer (2009). The parents felt they required a place which was accessible and had the facilities which the YP required. Travel was a big concern leaving limited options available when decision-making, as Smart (2004) found. Some of the concern regarding accessing services and support to access wider opportunities were present, as found in McConkey and Smyth's study in 2004.

Despite the YP appearing to have greater inclusion in the process of transition planning, with presence at the meetings and prepared information to share, based on interests and preferences, there was no explicit use of imagined 'future-self' involved in the planning or these meetings. The results of the assessment indicate the YP had not covered some of these areas previously within the current support in the school, and that the YP were able to understand the concepts when supported to do so. There may be additional work required to explore possible options over several sessions to ensure it gathers a genuine picture of their desired future-selves.

#### ***4.3.3 Phase One Discussion of Inclusion of Longer-Term Adulthood Aspirations in Transition Planning***

In the literature, Elson (2011) found that there was no planning of the next stages of the young person's life and only a focus on the next stage, mostly based on employment or education. The families in the study indicated that they felt that the YP were aided to get to the 'next step' into college and then thought that they would have assistance to develop independence and skills for life during their time at college. Dyson et al. (2004) suggested that the fragmented transitions would see the young person move from course to course, rather than moving on. The results



from the cases have shown that they were aided to move on 'we will be looking at a work-based program' and 'I'll be working with Claire after the BTEC', although these aspects being planned were directed towards education, training and employment. There was a role for parents to aid their child's independence and they took on additional roles to support this, such as attending interviews and helping them to learn skills like washing and cooking. This was suggested to be the case by Dovey-Pearce et al (2012), with parents having to advocate for their child.

Research by Stokes and Wyn (2007) showed that all areas of life should be planned for however this appeared to not be that case with the interviewees. The interviewees had many hobbies however most of them were with families or had been arranged through families and not from college or the EHCP. One young person, Ian, felt included in the wider community at college and asked to join the rugby team, however the other young person felt he lacked inclusion in the rest of the college. The YP were active and involved in their community due to their motivation to have a part-time job, develop skills, be involved in groups, and to live independently. The services to support the development of these skills would be social services and often the families do not have access to this service if they are 'functioning without' (Elson, 2011). The only aspects discussed in the meetings were related to future living arrangements however they did not become part of the plan, with parents left not knowing what is available.

The study by Curtis et al. (2009) included the vision of 'future-selves' as part of transition to help motivate the young person, but from the results of phase one, this was not part of their preparation. The EP can help to elicit the voice of the young person and can use interventions to aid them to view 'future-selves' and act as a motivator (Baker, 2015).

Further discussion is provided in section six of the thesis, which combines findings from phase one and two of the research.

## **Section 5: Phase Two**

### **Introduction**

The focus of phase two was to gather the views of YP who are preparing to progress on from a college placement having moved at age 16 from a Specialist provision for YP with learning disabilities, and the consideration of the level of inclusion of their 'future-selves' when planning for this move. In addition, a range of Professionals who support the transition for YP with SEN into and out of FE were asked about their roles and views of the incorporation of 'future-selves' as part of the young person's transitions. The following sections will describe the methodology and design for this phase in the project.

### **5.1 Research Methodology and Design**

#### ***5.1.1 Ontological and Epistemological Position***

This phase of the research can be described as having a basis in social-constructionist philosophy as the process of transition is subjective and will be experienced differently for each young person and for each of the Professionals supporting this transition. This research seeks to discover how transition:

'is concerned with how individuals construct and make sense of their world... indicating a focus on how the social world is interpreted by those involved in it'

(Robson 2011, P.24)

The participants within this research have constructed their own reality of their experience of transitioning and/or preparing for transitions towards adulthood and this research used the interpretivist paradigm to elicit meanings from others' accounts. The reality for individuals is subjective, indicating that the ontology is interpretivist as the researcher acknowledges that each experience is unique and is assisting the individual to construct the reality with the researcher (Robson, 2011). The purpose of this phase is to gather an understanding of the young person's views of how the transition planning incorporated their 'future-selves', as well as gathering the perspectives of a variety of Professionals who support these transitions from secondary school into college and beyond into adulthood. Having identified these areas of focus, the researcher believed that this placed the research within the interpretivist paradigm due to the nature of the research being constructed through social interactions (Ritchie et al., 2014). Interpretivism provides the opportunity to generate knowledge from the experiences shared, and offers the chance to create in-depth understanding, using focus groups and semi-structured interviews (Robson, 2011).

As this research phase was seeking information from individuals about their own subjective experience and knowledge, it sought to explore the unique features and experiences of those individuals (Ritchie et al., 2014). This places the epistemological position within the interpretivist paradigm as the project was designed to generate understanding and knowledge of the YP and the Professionals supporting them within their system (Robson, 2011). The use of interpretivist epistemology provides the opportunity for the participants' accounts to lead the results using inductive processes.

### **5.1.2 Methodology**

The project required a methodology which allowed the voices of the YP to be heard and analysed to identify aspects of the transition planning through to adulthood which support the inclusion of the young person's aspirations. In addition it was important to be able to gather the views and experiences of the professionals in different roles in relation to the inclusion of holistic planning and incorporation of the young person's view of their 'future-self'. The methodology selected required the ability to generate in-depth details of the subjective experiences rather than a generic finding (Ritchie et al, 2003).

In this aspect of the research project, social constructivism and interpretivism underlie the approaches of data analysis. Social constructivism assumes that the reality is created through the interactions with others which eventually leads to a cultural understanding for that individual and utilises techniques such grounded theory, which creates themes within data and leads to theory generation (MacNaughton et al, 2001). A grounded theory approach could have been appropriate to analyse the data generated, however as this project was designed to elicit the individuals' personal experiences of that transition context and was based on only two data gathering sessions, it would not have created the data to apply a grounded theory approach (Robson, 2011).

Interpretivism provides the opportunity to gain 'real' views of the YP and the Professionals within their support system, while recognising the participant exists within a wider social system and can provide the focus to gain understanding of their experiences and their views (Robson, 2011). Individual interviews and focus groups can both be applied under this type of methodology as the primary desire is to illuminate individual views and for the focus group, knowledge is created based on the dynamics within the group present. Thematic analysis can be applied for an

interpretivist approach and can generate new understanding of phenomena, which this project was designed to do.

The research was designed to create a real exploration of the views of the YP and the Professionals supporting them and therefore consideration was made towards the type of materials used with the participants to ensure they were effective (MacNaughton et al., 2001). Materials for the focus group were designed based upon person-centred planning principles (Corrigan, 2014), the use of visual approaches (Taylor-Brown, 2012) and activity ideas suggested by Colucci (2007), and were created with knowledge of the YP's academic levels and learning needs. A range of psychological tools for eliciting views were applied, such as 'rating' and the 'miracle question' were included based on the work of Beaver (2003). In addition, previous work on 'future-self' was adapted to meet the needs of these YP (Baker, 2015).

Having considered a range of research methods, a qualitative method was thought to be most appropriate to meet the research aims. The method of exploration included three focus groups with the YP preparing to transition towards adulthood out of FE College. These groups focused upon the incorporation of their imagined 'future-self' when preparing to move on towards adulthood. The findings of the three focus groups were combined to provide a thematic map of a range of YP and their views. The Professional interviews were held with eight Professionals in a range of roles who support YP with their transition towards adulthood, and through using semi-structured interviews, the research aimed to gather in-depth understanding of the process and inclusion of the young person's 'future-self' when planning for the future. Through the eight interviews, themes were generated using thematic analysis. The use of individual semi-structured interviews and focus groups were selected as being appropriate to gather in-depth, detailed knowledge from the participants.

### **5.1.3 Participants and Sampling**

The project was conducted in a city in a local authority within the South West of England. Phase two consisted of three focus groups of YP aged 19+ currently preparing to transition out of FE provision having originally attended a specialist provision for additional learning and behavioural needs up until the age of 16. In addition, eight Professionals in a variety of different roles, who support transition for YP with SEN, either into or out of FE provision, were interviewed using semi-structured interviews.

FE colleges and an alternative vocational provision in the local area were approached to ask their YP currently studying at aged 19+ if they were willing to participate in the focus groups within the settings. The parents/carers of the YP involved in the focus groups were also asked if they consented to the young person taking part in the focus group. The focus groups had between two and four participants in each due to the communication and learning needs of the individuals taking part in the project. In traditional focus groups, it would be expected to have more than five participants, however it was acknowledged by Ritchie et al (2014) that:

‘a smaller group is more accessible to people with communication difficulties’

(2014, P.234)

All participants for the focus group had completed at least two years of FE or alternative vocational provision and they were approached through conversations with supporting staff at the college and subsequently were invited to participate. A letter was sent to the individuals to inform them about the research and provided contact details, and a date to come and meet prior to interviews. The research benefited from having a minimum of three focus groups to gain a variety of views,

and this was self-selecting as all the YP within this age range at the setting were approached to take part in the research. The researcher aimed to get an equal gender split, however this was dependant on the young person being willing to take part. The overall ratio was two females to six males.

The research incorporated a range of Professionals who support YP with SEN at different stages within the transition process from secondary school at a specialist provision for learning and behaviour needs, through FE provision, and on into adulthood. The professionals were in roles which supported both stages that the YP will be transitioning: from specialist provision into FE or training, and from FE or training on towards adulthood. Professionals from the careers service, the specialist secondary school that the YP are transitioning from, and members of staff from local colleges and vocational provisions were approached to be invited for participation in the study. The professionals who have a responsibility for supporting the transitioning of YP were asked to discuss their experiences of their role, as well as the inclusion of the young person's future aspirations when planning for the next stage towards adulthood. The method chosen to gather these views were semi-structured interviews to gain in-depth knowledge of the Professional's experiences. The project was discussed with all participants prior to taking part.

#### **5.1.4 Ethical Aspects**

The ethical considerations for phase two of this study mirror the principles of the first phase of the study. The research was proposed to the University of Exeter Ethical Approval Board to ensure it met the University of Exeter guidelines, and the approved certificate for ethics can be seen in appendix 8.



As stated in section 4.1.6, all data was anonymised to ensure confidentiality, the recordings have been kept on a password protected memory card and will be destroyed on completion of the project. Informed consent was gained from all participants (BPS, 2009, 2014; Ritchie et al., 2014; Robson, 2011). In addition the participants' right to take part and withdraw from the study was carefully explained due to the nature of some of the participants' vulnerability, and detailed information was provided prior to consenting to take part as required by ethical standards. The methods chosen for the project ensured that the YP were able to contribute meaningfully without harm. The consent forms and information sheets can be seen in appendices 4, 6, and 7.

#### **5.1.5 Data Collection**

The research planned to gather meaningful experiences of the participants and to obtain detailed and rich data. The researcher used focus groups and semi-structured interviews as a way of gathering this data. The interviews took place with professionals between December 2015 and February 2016, after phase one data had been collected.

##### **5.1.5.a Focus Groups**

In this section the decision to use focus groups is explored and the benefits and challenges are identified. The focus group is a discussion-based interview to produce verbal data from a conversation between participants based upon the specific context of their transition experiences. This falls in line with the ontological and epistemological stance as it provides the opportunity to explore the phenomena of transition and it creates 'understanding and explains meanings' of

individuals' feelings, attitudes and behaviours (Rabiee, 2004). In many existing studies of YP aged 19+, the focus has been to retrospectively reflect upon the transition from school to FE or training, or has been to obtain the young person's view about their move to adult services (Smart, 2004). This research gained the young person's opinion of how much their aspirations in all areas of their life were included in their EHC transition plan, and identified if the method of using 'future-selves' as an intervention was applied. The use of focus groups allows the flexibility to follow the lead of the YP and to gain their voice as proposed by the Code of Practice (DfE & DoH, 2014). The groups were comprised of participants with a pre-existing relationship to provide an environment where the YP felt comfortable to share their opinions. Additional visual materials were also used to support communication (Taylor-Brown, 2012). The focus groups were recorded and transcribed for analysis using Krueger's guidance (Krueger, 2002).

Through evaluation of current literature and analysis of phase one data, certain areas of interest were chosen to explore with the YP during the focus groups. Materials used and questions asked were amended after the first focus group based on their effectiveness and accessibility to the YP. Permission was obtained from the course manager and the YP using a consent form, with verbal agreement from the parent/carer. The focus groups lasted between 20 and 40 minutes and were held in the young person's setting.

#### ***5.1.5.b Semi-Structured Interviews (SSI)***

Based upon the epistemological and ontological position of this research, semi-structured interviews were created to elicit the subjective experiences of the professionals supporting YP with their transition into or out of college and on towards adulthood. This method provided the opportunity to gain real perspectives of the process for the individuals and the interpretivist framework allowed the

researcher to use psychological skills of analysis to interpret meaning (Crotty, 1998). This research aimed to generate knowledge about this particular process and to explore areas previously identified in the literature section as requiring further exploration. The schedule for the SSI was created through existing literature and the findings from the emerging data in phase one of the project and allowed the flexibility to respond to comments from the individuals to gather detailed accounts (see appendices 14 and 15). The data provided themes from the recorded and transcribed interview scripts.

The interviews were conducted between December 2015 and February 2016 with the duration of interviews ranging from 35 minutes to one hour. The SSIs for professionals consisted of verbally delivered questions, with the first three to four minutes being used to build rapport. All professionals met with the researcher prior to agreeing to take part in the project and signed a consent form before commencing the interview. The interviews were carried out at the work place of each respective member of staff in a suitable location for recording purposes.

#### **5.1.6 Data Analysis**

The focus groups and interviews were recorded using a dictaphone and these were transcribed to allow for analysis. In addition the researcher had the annotated flip chart display of the young person's responses during the focus group which were created to allow the YP to visually see their responses during the group session. This was done as an additional visual cue to remind respondents of their previous answers to help the YP access discussions.

### 5.1.6.a Focus Group Data Analysis

The focus groups consisted of open questions with associated visual props on flip chart paper for the YP to see during the session. The focus groups covered the areas of preparation for the transition to adulthood including the inclusion of their vision of their 'future-selves'; aspirations for independent living, social inclusion and opportunities; further training/education and employment; how decisions were made; and hopes and fears for this transition.

The researcher made field notes in addition to the annotated responses for the YP to see, which helped to identify key points of the discussion which helped to focus the systematic analysis of the transcribed data (Kreuger, 2002). The use of a framework analysis, as proposed by Kreuger (1994; 2002), provided 'a clear series of steps to manage the large amount and complex nature of qualitative data'. Ritchie and Spencer (1994) suggest there are 5 key stages of data analysis which can be seen in figure 6.

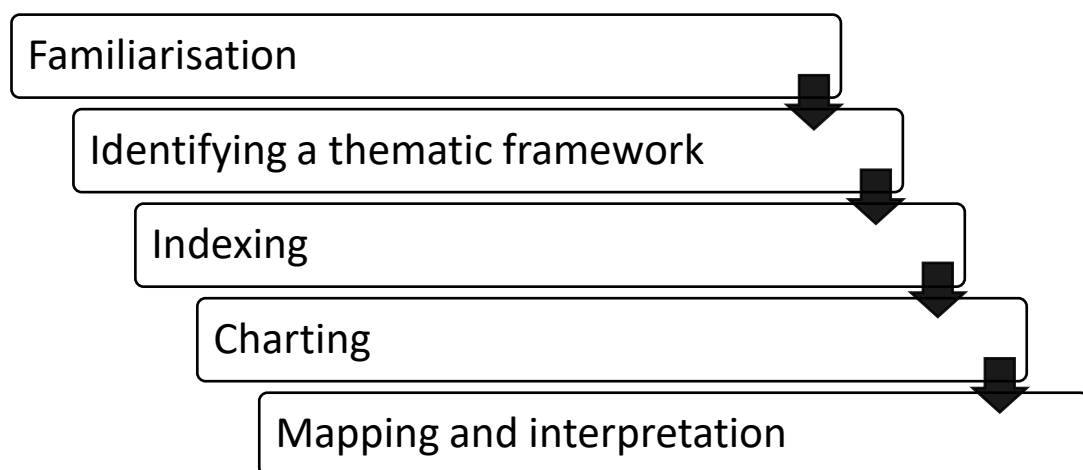


Figure 6: Ritchie and Spencer (1994) Five Key Stages of Data Analysis

The Richie and Spencer approach was chosen to provide a structure for data analysis using a framework for analysis, as recorded in Rabiee (2004) as a possible option for exploring focus group data. It provides an alternative structure from Kruger (1994) which was applied for the case study interview analysis and it offers the linear approach required to explore the focus group data.

Once the researcher was familiar with the data (familiarisation) and had incorporated the field notes made at the time, the transcribed data was analysed for themes, ideas or concepts (identifying a thematic framework). The data was then reviewed more thoroughly by gathering quotes to reflect the themes using NVivo software (indexing). Once the focus groups were coded initially, the extracts were placed in to their themes (charting) with a final focus on organising the data into hierarchies using thematic maps (mapping and interpretation; Rabiee, 2004; Kreuger, 1994).

#### ***5.1.6.b Semi-Structured Interview Analysis***

The semi-structured interviews for professionals who support the transition of the YP with additional needs were constructed from the findings from phase one of the project, anecdotal experiences from professionals encountered during the researcher's EP practice and were combined with areas to explore from the literature selection section of this thesis. The areas explored were their role within transition planning; materials used to support transition including if the 'future-selves' technique was applied; the areas covered within transition planning; the inclusion of the YP and family voice; the impact of the new Code of Practice; and how decisions were made for 'next steps' for the YP.

The data from the professional interviews were analysed using Braun and Clarke's six stage analysis as applied in phase one (see figure 3 in section 4.1.5.). The

researcher familiarised herself with the data, generated initial codes through analysing the transcriptions line by line, and the addition of new codes as they emerged. Previous transcripts were reviewed to include new codes. After all data had been coded this way using the computer program NVivo, themes were created based on the links between codes and based on the research questions (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Once the final themes had been created, a thematic map was made. Hierarchies of themes and sub-themes showing links between codes and areas of interest, with clear description of each theme as described in Hayes (2000) were made. The analysis of the themes found in the focus groups can be found in appendices 24 and 25. A thematic map reflecting the professional's views was created and can be seen in appendix 33, with nine main themes identified within all of the interviews.

## **5.2 Phase Two Findings**

### **5.2.1 Phase Two Overview**

Phase two of the project consisted of three focus groups and eight semi-structured interviews with a range of professionals to explore their views of transition for YP with MLD and additional needs into and out of FE and the inclusion of 'future-self'. A summary of each of the participants in phase two are described in section 5.2.4.

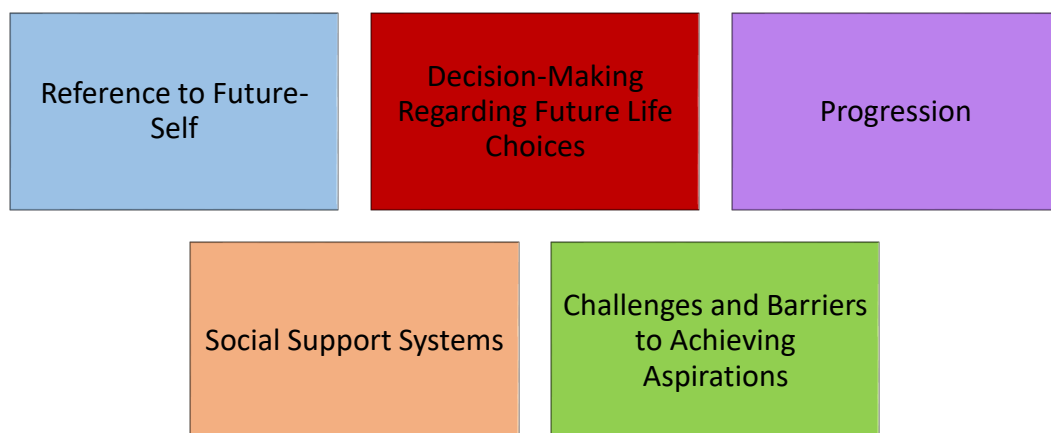
### **5.2.2 Focus Group Overview**

This part of phase two of the project consisted of three focus groups with YP in FE settings as they prepare to move onwards towards adulthood. The YP participating in the study had previously attended a specialist provision within the city and have

been in mainstream FE for several years, leading to them preparing for their next steps. The feedback from the focus groups has been formed into a thematic map which can be seen appendix 33, with five main themes identified.

### **5.2.3 Focus Group Themes**

The identified themes from analysis of the YP's focus groups are explored in the following sub-sections. Figure 7 shows the themes found from the focus group analysis.



*Figure 7: Themes generated from analysis of YP focus group*

#### **5.2.3.a Reference to 'Future-Self'**

During the focus groups, the YP were asked if they had considered themselves in the future and if they had had assistance to explore and visualise themselves in the future as part of their planning towards adulthood, in relation to education and

training, relationships with others, and independence. All of the YP within the focus groups were able to identify a desired job which they would like to do, and many of the YP had chosen some additional training or work experience which would aid them to work towards their identified employment, such as 'I'm going to be doing an apprenticeship in gardening' and 'well I chose it because it's what I want, it's like what I want, my passion'. The majority of YP had chosen a further course to go on to which would help them to get the job which they had said they wanted to do, although only three YP provided understanding that the next course they would be doing was at a higher level, with other YP planning to complete studies at the same level. For example, 'I would probably like to stay here and get higher up in my education', 'I think I will probably be going to higher education', and 'it was entry level three and then on to level one now'. The YP all suggested that they had a say in which careers and education they would be taking part in next, with comments such as 'Jean listens very well' and linked to gathering the young person's voice, 'she said, what would you like to do', and listening to him about 'what I wanted to do after college, yes', showing their voices were gained.

Despite a focus on particular jobs which they wanted to do, some of the YP had desires to do an alternative role when asked the miracle question. They suggested there were other employment choices and courses they wished to do if they could do anything but did not see these as realistic jobs for them. An example was:

L: probably, well I might study the meaning of life

I: Ohhhh philosophy

L: because I've wondered what is life and what we built for and why we here'

(P. 21)

This quote was followed by details of how his was not a viable option for him to study. Other YP could identify a preferred choice of training and employment and



appeared to select some courses over other more favoured ones, due to the 'help they give you'. The YP could not see themselves achieving these professions as they suggested they wouldn't be able to work in their desired career.

The YP had some ambitions which they wanted to work towards which were associated with their personal lives, such as 'I would travel around the world' and 'I want to be trusted to do my stuff on my own and be more confident to do it'. There was a divide regarding if the young person had thought about other aspects of their lives beyond employment, with some YP imagining themselves with a partner and family, while others had not considered these aspects yet, such as 'I don't know yet, I'm a bit too young to know yet, I'm only 20'. Most of the YP indicated that they thought they would like to have a relationship and children, although only three had ever been helped to think about this aspect of their lives prior to the focus group. An example of this was one young person who suggested 'I haven't even thought about being in a relationship you know, being a family, being a dad. I've never thought of that', and another who said 'I've not talked about this with anyone except you guys'. One young person had talked things over with her parents but not the professionals supporting her, saying 'I think I've talked about all of this with my mum and dad but not with the college'. There appeared to be support to the next steps for YP, such as 'just thinking about what am going to do next', and two YP indicated that they relied upon others to aid them to decide when the 'time was right' to make important decisions and 'when you feel ready'. A few YP referred to a process of steps which they thought they should work towards, as one young person put it: 'when you're a kid, you grow up, get a house, get a wife, get a job, have kids and that's it', and another said 'College first, and work first, and then it will be get a job and then a house and there may be a relationship' as an ordered process.

The YP in the focus groups were able to talk about many social activities which they enjoyed doing with their friends currently, like 'going shopping', 'hang out with

friends', and 'going to town with my friends', and many thought they would carry on socialising with friends in the future, although none of the YP shared that this was an area of their lives which they had previously considered when thinking of the future.

The final aspect discussed the young person's vision of their 'future-self' in relation to where they saw themselves living in the future. Again the YP were divided between those who had thought about options before the group session and those who had not thought about their future living arrangements. One of the YP who had considered her future living arrangements had said 'I would like to live independently and have a partner so I can live away from dad really' and another who said:

'you want to live on your own. You might want to live with your parents for like, you never know really, it's when you feel ready for that. It's a big step'

(p. 9)

Some other YP had not considered options of alternative living arrangements, such as 'I haven't even thought about it yet' and 'I don't have any ideas of what I'll be doing in the future, like in that area, but I would like to maybe one day'. The YP had said these aspects had not been discussed in planning meetings with the YP for their transition plans, although this may have been talked about in planning meetings with their parents.

### ***5.2.3.b Decision-Making Regarding Future Life Choices***

The YP's decision-making into the current course they were studying mainly linked to them taking 'taster sessions' and 'tours' or 'visits' to the colleges to consider

what the campus was like, what the course offered and if they would fit into the course. The YP mainly had taster sessions arranged by their specialist school and looked at two or three courses prior to starting their course, such as 'I did three college taster days and I chose this' and 'I did a bit of time here'. The YP had viewed several potential courses prior to starting college which were designed to support YP with additional needs, and some of the YP expressed that they would have liked to study some other areas of interest if a course had been available to them, such as 'creative writing', 'involving singing and rapping', and 'I would probably do something with art', suggesting that there may be fewer options for courses considered for the YP. Some of the YP also indicated that other people influenced their decisions, like one young person saying a teacher had said 'I don't think you're ready for college yet' and 'Harriet came to me as I was looking around this place and she said this place would be really good for me', which guided the YP.

The YP discussed how their views and interests were taken into account when making choices for their next course options, with some YP sharing these thoughts of how they were involved in decision-making, with one young person saying 'I chose this because of the gardening' and another saying '(I'm) good at cooking and I thought this course would be good for me because it's something I can do'. Another factor involved in their decision-making was the level of help which they received on the courses. For example, one young person said 'there was another course that does gardening but I liked this one better because it had more, it was, it had more help'. There were comments about the way the staff supported the YP, such as 'they want the very best for us' and 'they always look after you and they are friendly, and they would actually see you grow', which influenced their choice.

The final significant aspect discussed by the YP as being influential in their decision-making for where and what they would study was the environment. A lot of the YP indicated that they had visited other options but had chosen their current course due to the smaller size and fewer students. For example 'I picked here because it's

smaller and I don't really like big groups of people', 'this is great, it's smaller, there's not too many people', and 'it's not too packed'. The YP felt that to enable them to feel safe and meet their needs, they required a smaller and less busy campus for them to thrive.

### ***5.2.3.c Progression***

Many of the YP highlighted the skills they had learned to help them to be able to progress towards adulthood, from academic skills, practical experience, and personal development and life skills which will aid them. The YP shared a variety of different personal areas of development which has helped to prepare them to move on, such as 'lot more confident', 'good organiser', 'helped me talk to people', 'mature', 'self-esteem', and 'independent'. The YP recognised that they had built a number of personal skills which they will benefit from to help with adulthood while studying their current courses. Several of the YP indicated that they enjoyed certain interests and these were aspects which they wanted to incorporate into their employment aspirations or influenced their personal choices, such as 'my passion. It's something I'm good at and it's something I can really benefit from that skill set' to include in future plans.

The YP had also identified a range of skills which helped them to prepare for employment, such as work related skills and completing work experience. They all felt the current course had offered them skills within their area of planned employment, such as learning about 'cooking', 'horticulture', 'performing arts', 'money', and 'Maths and English'. Many had taken part in work experience which developed some skills to help them with future job roles, such as 'I work on the tills', 'I'm like a manager', 'I've already got some work experience gardening', and 'helping customers'. All of the YP felt that getting employment was a priority for them, with all of the YP viewing that having a job is a key part of adulthood.

In addition, the YP discussed the skills for life which they have been developing to aid their progression into adulthood, such as the skills for living away from parents and carers, and to have the skills to be more independent. Some of the significant skills which they have been preparing for were: 'helped with independent travel', 'how to live a life, how to make friends', 'cooking' skills, 'ICT' skills, 'going to the shops' independently, 'health and safety and things like that', 'getting ready for working life', and 'how to be more mature'. Some of the YP talked about some of the preparation for gaining social awareness of how to manage particular circumstances and concerns, such as 'don't quite know the value of money', 'not to drink too much' and 'about being in a relationship. Safety when with a significant other, you should have protection', were more explicitly taught to them rather than their mainstream peers.

During the focus group discussions, some YP indicated that they would like to build their independence and were largely looking forward to some aspects of progressing. One young person said 'at a certain age you have to move on, you can't just stay' and others said they were 'excited' or that it was 'both amazing and terrifying at the same time', indicating they were keen to develop.

#### ***5.2.3.d Social Support Systems***

In a noticeable change to the YP moving into FE, the YP preparing to move onwards expressed the benefits of having a system of social support around them to help them to prepare to move on. There were a variety of different types of support indicated as being significant to helping them, with most of the YP indicating their family, friends, professionals and peers. The YP talked about the support which their family has provided to spend time with them, such as 'the main person that's kept me going is my grandmother, Sue', 'I live with my foster aunt and uncle', and 'I

with my family, I go out with them quite a bit', and help them to make choices, like 'sometimes you might go and ask your mum or your dad if you're not sure of something', when decision-making.

The YP all shared information about their experiences of socialising and spending time with friends currently and that this support has been of benefit for them when preparing to move on. One young person said that the group of friends were 'like a really big family' and 'they make you wanted', and that this was particularly important for this young person as he was in foster care. One focus group talked about the friends as being supportive in helping them to avoid discrimination from others. One young person said 'if (they) has a go and says something like you're fat, well you do not, it's all of us (together)'. Other YP suggested that previously they had found it hard to maintain friendships and that the course had worked on 'keeping relationships'. All three groups had some YP talking about 'keeping in touch' and 'staying in touch' as they were concerned about 'leaving them behind' when they move on. The YP expressed enjoyment from spending time with friends doing a variety of different activities, like going to the cinema and into town, and felt they would miss them in a new place, such as 'I will miss it with people chatting to them' but also positivity in 'new beginnings, but you don't have to lose touch'. The YP had social opportunities with peers from the course and peers previously known to them and most of them suggested they would like to continue to socialise as adults after the course had finished. They had aspirations to attend more social events based on their areas of interest when they are more independent, such as 'gigs and stuff', 'visit any places' and 'go to nightclubs', like their peers.

The support from professionals and other adults in their lives was also noted as being relevant to helping them prepare to move on. The professionals at their courses helped the YP to have aspirations and to feel that they are included, such as 'people like Joan make us all feel wanted' and 'they are so welcoming', and also helped them to develop skills for the future, like 'teaching me if I get an answer

wrong'. They also helped them to make decisions for the future, such as 'thanks to my teachers for helping me with my options' and 'Joan, can you help look after my money?' Some of the YP indicated that they saw some of the supporting adults as role models for them, such as 'make us people like them' and 'the main person that's kept me going is my grandmother, Sue, because she's 68 but she's got three jobs'. Some discussion was held around the perception of others as being 'different' and how the YP felt that they wanted to help teach others to be more tolerant and not to be discriminatory towards others, such as 'racist', 'gay', 'disabilities', and to 'stop with people name-calling to other people', especially those with differences from others.

The YP indicated the influence of technology and social media as an additional aspect to their support circle, and commented on positive and negative experiences with technology. The YP suggested it was a positive way to stay in contact with peers and friends, such as 'speak quite a lot on the phone' and 'have them on Facebook'. Some others recounted occasions where contact had led to negative social interactions, such as someone 'starting on me' on Facebook and meeting someone who asked for money based on an online friendship. There were several accounts of the YP learning about others taking advantage of them through negative experiences both online and in person due to their needs, and leading to the YP finding it hard to trust other peers. The YP explained the adults supporting them were assisting them to understand the complex dynamics of interactions with others who may try to take advantage, such as 'now my foster carer says you're not allowed to come in the house', 'learn from your mistakes', 'I say, not being funny but I can't put up with your schemes', and 'I have a text on my phone from her and the police told me all right we can see her now', which shows their vulnerability.

Some of the YP talked about relationships being another aspect of their support systems, as one young person said:

‘we will go through all of that, all of those stages in the future but we never know. With us, you know, its, we, you know we all kind of don’t know when that will be. Like some of us have relationships but you know, we never know when this, that could happen in the future’

(p. 21)

They felt that a partner would act as someone to help them through life and would help with their independence, although they suggested that this may not be ‘straightforward though’. Most of the YP said they would want a relationship and family in the future, however some indicated that it was not something which they were thinking about in the present, such as ‘yeah one day, a family’ and ‘marriage and all that. I think when I’m older I would like that’, and that it was more distant for them.

#### ***5.2.3.e Challenges and Barriers to Achieving Aspirations***

The other main theme identified during the focus groups was regarding some of the barriers or challenges the YP faced when imagining the future or in preparing for the future. Two of the three focus groups talked about some previous negative experiences which impacted on their ability to move on, such as with their family or with the expectations of others. One young person shared that some of their family relationships could be difficult, such as ‘I have a real brother but I don’t have anything to do with him because that’s my wishes and that’s my choice’ and ‘if I’m going to live in London, they can stay on their side and I’ll stay on mine’. There were some discussions about how others had treated them, with one young person saying they had been told they were ‘dumb’ and ‘not worth anything because of my problems’, and another saying they were called ‘stupid’ by others which impacted on their confidence to have high aspirations. One young person suggested that previously they didn’t have friends, as they said ‘I never used to have friends when I was at school very well and they always used to like me for my money’. None of the



YP offered labels of need, but one supporting teacher referred to the YP as having particular types of need, such as 'SEN', 'anger management issues', and 'looked after child'. Some of the YP identified that supporting adults who had high expectations aided their progression, such as 'any time Joan needs help with students, I usually chip in and be like a TA (teaching assistant)'. The YP referred to themselves as having some preferences in the way they learn, such as 'I freaked out when they told me I'd have to do lots of reading and writing' and 'it's not too packed', as well as comments regarding their own difficulties, such as 'because of my back problems', 'got quite a bit of memory loss', and 'I'm not Mrs genius'. Their learning and physical needs were shared but there was not an expectation that this would stop them achieving their goals of employment and greater independence in the future.

The final aspect felt to be a challenge for the YP was their concerns of the future, regarding losing their support systems, finances, being taken advantage of by others, becoming more independent, making choices themselves, and going on to have families. All of the focus groups talked about their concerns about leaving both friends and professionals in their current places behind them, such as:

'both of us are worried and upset about leaving here because we've got so much support now and going out into the big huge world, we've got no one there to help us'

(P. 13)

Regarding peers, one young person said, 'leaving everybody behind really'. One group talked about past experiences of being taken advantage of and felt that this would continue to be an area they were worried about, such as 'the main worry that I'm going to have is trusting people' and 'school was so bad that I actually put myself into hospital because of it'. One group of YP talked about some of their worries about becoming more independent relating to using transport ('trains') alone and another peer commented about them living independently and having to

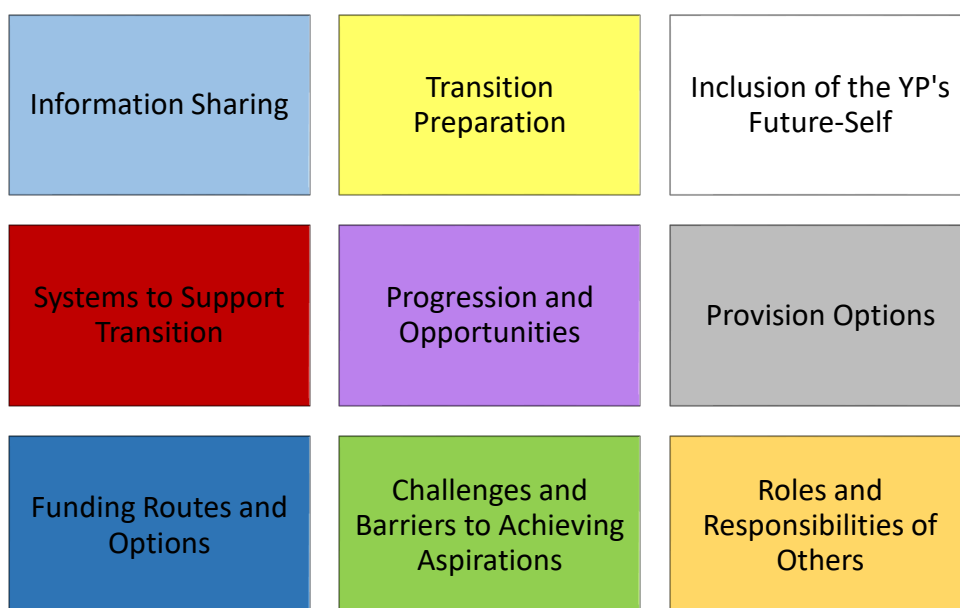
make choices and decisions without her parents being there. The group said they would refer back to other adults to help, such as ‘when I’m ready in myself and I think it’s like when my friends and family can see that as well’ and ‘learn from your mistakes’, based on advice from others.

#### ***5.2.4 Phase Two Professional Interview Summary***

Eight professionals were asked to participate in the research from a variety of professional backgrounds, who all support YP with SEN with the transition into or out of FE. There were two members of staff from the local Careers Service, two SEN leaders from two different local FE colleges, two staff supporting transition from a specialist provision into mainstream FE, and two leaders and teachers supporting YP in a work-based alternative provision for YP with SEN. These professionals were thought to demonstrate a range of views.

#### ***5.2.5 Phase Two Professional Themes***

The following sub-sections describe the themes generated from the analysis of the professional’s interviews. The thematic map of the themes can be found in the appendix (appendix 34) and figure 8 displays the identified themes.



*Figure 8: Phase Two Professional themes*

#### **5.2.5.a Information Sharing**

One of the main parts which all the professionals emphasised was the use of communication and information sharing to aid the transition for YP with SEN into and out of FE and beyond. Both careers staff indicated their knowledge of the systems which supported the transition planning and identified the multi-agency aspect as being vital to find the correct provision and set a good plan for supporting the YP, such as ‘working in conjunction with other organisations to make sure we know what is happening for that young person’. They note that when this is done well, it works much better, and if ‘people don’t talk, they fall by the wayside’ Their role was to offer advice and ‘make sure that the YP and their families have all of the information they need to make some good informed choices’. They both emphasised the need to work with parents too.

All of the professionals referenced the statutory processes as being when most information is shared and the plan is made, although several setting staff

mentioned they had an 'open door' policy to help parents to come in and ask questions to gain information. They referred to careers services as being helpful when considering options. They also talked of meeting prospective parents and YP from invitations to the school, such as at a 'parents evening'. They all created files for reference which were referred to and updated, alongside the statutory plans. Only two members of staff mentioned disseminating information to relevant staff so 'they are aware of the young person's needs', although others may have assumed this was automatic. One member of staff said there was 'a lot of communication' and that working with other professionals to meet the young person's needs was essential for success, however they noted a challenge to get everyone 'in the right place at the same time'. Information was communicated verbally and using written form, none mentioned technology as a method.

Six professionals mentioned the personal attributes and characteristics as being important to share, such as 'strengths and weaknesses' and sharing information about their needs to support any moves.

#### ***5.2.5.b Transition Preparation***

There were a range of ways which supported preparing the YP with SEN for transitioning into or out of FE. Some of the settings made use of specific materials, such as 'listen to me booklet' and forms/information sheets which contributed to the statutory processes. All of the professionals noted that the paperwork was passed on to help with planning and it was helpful to know strengths and needs of YP prior to attending. Generally, the professionals felt transition planning was 'successful' but wanted the information earlier to plan better. One setting prepared for the move by having assessment days where they met the YP and saw them in the college to find out what needed to be in place for them. All of the professionals used the young person's verbal feedback to help to inform what possibilities could

be explored, with some awareness that they required different ways to ask for information, such as 'you have to work in a different way, you know your questions have to be different'. Gaining the young person's aspirations was important to help choose next steps however all staff recognised that they could not always support the YP into the area they wished to enter and required 'reframing' or noted that 'there were few options' available. Communication between setting and professionals was important and this was said by all interviewees. Using 'person-centred' approaches appeared to help with sharing information about the YP. External services were viewed as hard to access, using 'referrals', with less access to services which supported 'social and recreation'. Learning support was tailored for individuals, with 'different aims' and helped to prepare expectations for the YP.

All of the professionals referred to 'taster days' and 'visits' to the new settings to help prepare them for the move. The professionals working within the schools and careers advisors shared that the YP went to college for a day a week in year 11 to help them to see what it is like and get ready for the move, such as 'getting used to the college'. Meeting the staff before moving was important to reassure the YP about who will help them. The professionals involved all mentioned the inclusion of a 'career's advisor' to work with the YP to decide on options and gather the young person's voice. Two professionals involved the use of 'research' and 'going online' to search for options. Five of the eight professionals included helping develop skills, such as travel or interview preparation, as part of the transition process.

Work-based training was said by seven of the eight professionals to be helpful to prepare the YP to progress, such as 'work-based internships' and 'placements'. Work experience was also used to help develop the YP's skills or use of alternative placements, such as working in a school. Three professional's stated how hard it was to get placements and felt parents and YP needed more help to find the experiences. Two also said they made links with employers to help support the transition.

Five of the professionals commented about helping to plan for the 'next stage' and suggested that some aspects are 'dealt with later on'. There were some questions regarding adulthood, such as 'Do you always want to live with mum and dad?' Some personal lessons were used to talk about adulthood, like 'PSHE lessons'. Three professionals fed back that positivity was important to encourage the young person to think forwards, such as 'it's not 19 to a sofa' or suggesting the YP goes from training to staying at home without career aspirations. Only two professionals mentioned the use of visualisation to support the YP to think beyond the course for all aspects of their lives.

Technology appeared to be under-represented as a way of supporting transitioning, with only four staff mentioning this and usually in relation to their own systems and communication methods. One professional did suggest 'letting the technology be part of that' when planning for transition.

#### ***5.2.5.c Inclusion of the Young Person's 'Future-self'***

From the interviews with the careers advisors, they suggested that gaining the young person's vision of their 'future-self' is part of their role and one suggested they help them to 'visualise themselves in the future', although she said 'I haven't had any training'. Four of the staff commented on the difficulty of imagining the future for some of the YP, due to their learning needs, especially YP with Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC). There was a link between the young person's enthusiasm and their view of the future made by one member of staff. One of the FE alternative providers said that she helped the YP visualise their progression using 'a train track' however there may be stops and changes but it's still 'a journey' and felt this helped the young person. All of the staff shared that they help the young person to think about what they want to do in the future and this mainly revolved

around training and employment, with some focus on living accommodation. Most of this work was based on discussion and lacked the structure of a 'future-selves' intervention, with some saying they had 'never come across it'. Three professionals felt that the YP with MLD would not have the level of understanding for this type of work.

All of the professionals referred to the need to have the child at the centre of the plans and to be listening to their views on the areas of interest that they wanted to pursue for FE courses and as possible later employment. For example, 'making sure the YP are doing what they want, that they like' and 'being person-centred'. There was a tension between professionals about the influence of the parents as all stated that they need to be included ('the school, the family and the YP') but five also mentioned the need to put the young person first, 'listening to them and not necessarily the families', and 'what is important to them'. The professionals attempted to find 'common ground' for decision-making, but suggested it can get 'tricky'. All professionals commented about the young person having preferences, although some require assistance to be 'realistic' especially for the careers advisors work ('you have to challenge that, the aspirations'). The EHC has a section to cover their aspirations which some of the professionals referred to as helpful to ensure the YP's views were included. One setting emphasised that their work was to help YP to reach their aspirations and not just teach life skills.

The careers staff talked of finding something 'they are interested in to get the right course and get the right outcomes', but all professionals highlighted the importance of listening to the young person and getting their view, using the relationships with staff to get 'understanding' of what they would want. Information sharing of these views was key to help the processes around transition, such as:

'it starts with the young person. Then a discussion will have taken place at parents evening with the parents present'

(P.3)

The school and FE settings appeared to have a much more formal method for collecting views, such as 'listen to me booklet' and 'the EHC, we ask those questions', rather than a more informal version during a group discussion or on a one-to-one basis in other settings.

When looking beyond college, one professional explained the need to support YP to move on but always had a belonging at the current provider, like 'if they don't like it, they come back here ... then we find another place until it works'. The careers staff and the staff from alternative post-16 training commented on the young person's self-perception as an influence for success on FE courses, such as 'it got overwhelming' and 'he couldn't cope'. Some staff speak of the need to have an ethos with high expectation and support for YP to challenge themselves, such as 'there's a strong sense of ambition' and 'the (high) expectation'. There was focus on labels impacting on the young person's perception, such as 'as they get older they see it as a stigma' and 'they think they are labelled', or the YP not expecting it to be what they thought ('it's perhaps not what they thought it was').

#### ***5.2.5.d Systems to Support Transition***

All of the professions indicated that there were systems set up to support the YP and these depended upon the setting and role, however all referred to the statutory processes which matched the EHC plans. When referring to the legal systems, there was generally positivity about the new EHC as covering more aspects of the young person's life ('whole transition planning has moved forward' and 'it's automatic funding') but some feel it is too soon to know their impact ('it's too new'). Some concerns were around time ('it's a lengthy process') but it was felt that professionals 'will get used to it'. Some aspects were ambiguous regarding extending education to aged 25 and one professional thought this added confusion



to parents. There were set points where professionals became involved, such as the careers service getting involved at year 9 or 10, and the systems were designed to get the young person's views and preferences over time prior to choosing the next step. The school working professionals explained they had used some methods to prepare the YP using 'work experience', 'taster days' and 'attending college one day a week in year 11'. The careers service helped by meeting the YP over a period of time to seek information and then offer some suggestions for options, and also helped with areas of difficulty such as 'travel training'. The colleges of FE felt that their course for skills development provided 'progression' towards next steps and they regularly held meetings with stakeholders to plan targets for the young person and help to plan for next steps. There did appear to be a focus on 'getting them to the next step' and 'next couple of years' rather than longer-term planning, as well as mainly focussing on education targets and employment options rather than thorough planning. Finally, the staff from the work-based training were more aware of helping the YP to become involved in extra-curricular activities and part of the community, such as 'what are you interested in? And try to fit that in'. All of the professionals suggested they would offer support with accessing the next step, such as 'attending interviews' and 'travel training'. They also questioned the longer-term support for YP once the young person has completed the courses available to them, such as 'what happens ... at 22'. Several professionals talked of the individuality of the YP and offered support based on their need ('it's done on an individual basis'), but within a wider system with timelines for action.

One difficulty found by three professionals is when YP are wrongly placed with them, leading to a failure to meet the young person's needs and the need to find 'alternatives' for the young person if they don't meet the criteria of some placements to 'find the best solution'. Decisions were generally made during the set meetings and appeared to involve most of the relevant professionals to help plan, such as 'through the education plan and the statement/EHC'. New settings tried to go to the YP rather than expecting them to come to an unfamiliar location. The beliefs and values of the professionals heavily influenced their views of what the YP

could achieve, such as 'we think of the whole child', 'how do we work around this?' and 'we're flexible'. However other views created barriers to involvement, such as 'heavily mothered at [name] college', which was thought to impact on the YP.

#### ***5.2.5.e Progression and Opportunities***

There was discussion of increased independence expected and being supported to develop this from six of the professionals, such as 'seeing huge changes in them', 'prepare them for the world and life' and 'not treated like kids anymore'. This independence was on a range of skills, like 'cooking', 'travel', 'timekeeping', 'riding a motorbike', and 'looking at jobs and next steps'. Some professionals felt the ethos and expectation of the setting led to better outcomes for the YP being independent and builds 'confidence' for the young person.

Employment was an aim for all of the professionals to assist with getting the young person towards a job, and on 'work placements'. Three of them commented on the availability of jobs which the YP with SEN 'could do' and the need for more opportunities for supported work. There were some schemes mentioned by some professionals as helping but these had limited areas of work, such as cleaning, filing and catering. Two professionals felt employers did not have the skilled knowledge to support YP and they require 'Government funding' to help.

All of the professionals talked about the social opportunities and suggested that some settings try to create some opportunities, such as an 'afternoon tea' or 'up to the farm shop'. Some of the professionals were unsure of the amount of social opportunities within the local communities without the parents assisting them to access and seek these opportunities ('they struggle socially', 'they go with families' and 'youth clubs'). They felt the social experiences were important for the YP but rarely planned for during meetings. Schools were thought to 'provide social

opportunities' for their school community which were not matched in colleges. Social media was mentioned as a way to have contact with peers. Two professionals reported they felt it was their role to aid the young person's understanding of social interactions, such as 'politeness' and 'how to behave in their local community'. Several noted the increased possibility of the young person having relationships and becoming couples at this stage, like 'they might meet a boyfriend'. By building skills, they felt they were opening opportunities.

#### ***5.2.5.f Provision Options***

All of the professionals commented on the provision options for the YP with many suggesting that there was 'not enough ... for YP with SEN', 'the provision just isn't out there', and 'there's not a high amount of choice ... most of them will be told to go to [name] college'. Some professionals, including those working in schools, supporting both transitions and FE professionals, felt there should be 'something between' mainstream level two and specialist courses' for the YP.

Five of the staff commented regarding altering the young person's aims to be more 'realistic' to 'what they can achieve' and to what is 'in the market place' that meets their needs and is at the right academic level for them. One also noted that not all aspects were covered in preparing them for adulthood, such as 'work experience placement and there's no support there for them to do that'. One staff member from an alternative provision which is work-based noted the difference in outcomes from a skills development course versus a practical, work-based course. Several staff mentioned the ethos of the setting in supporting YP to achieve and have high expectations, such as 'open door policy', 'flexible', 'small', 'community environment', 'feel safe', and 'suitable environment'. For the larger colleges, there was comment about 'access to the whole' community but also keeping a small

group environment or 'small campus'. Professionals felt the location of the course was key for many YP, mainly based on accessing for transport links and providing the environment which the young person requires.

Several commented about supporting the YP to the 'next stage', which usually was related to the next educational course rather than looking at all aspects of their transition, like 'let's keep them busy'. Three staff also mentioned that they felt the YP were not treated like individuals for course choice and that they tried to fit the 'round peg in the square hole' and 'I don't think it's individual, I think it is again dependant on who the young person is'. One member of staff at FE did feel the new EHC would help the young person to 'stop going round and round' on FE courses due to the need to see progression from the young person.

#### ***5.2.5.g Funding Routes and Options***

All eight of the professionals mentioned funding as a factor for YP when they were transitioning or planning to transition into or out of FE. The careers staff specifically noted the pressure on the local authority to reduce spending, saying 'the local authorities are being squeezed for funding so there's less of those places available', and 'we consult with the local authority to say how about this?' One commented on the reduced access to YP with SEN saying 'year 11 becomes the year we will see them for the first time' rather than previous years where they have become involved in year 9 to help prepare. Six of the eight interviewees noted that transport funding which was available for most of the YP attending specialist provision was no longer available and therefore created a barrier for YP accessing courses they want to. For example, 'we can't magic up transport' and 'its forcing the hand for some families that need transport'. It led to one professional saying 'my kids go to the sweetshop window but they are not allowed in' when referring to options out there but with very few actually available due to set routes for

funding. One of the FE staff did mention that accessing funding for these routes were 'easier'. Two professionals also commented on the levels required for courses being too high and stopped access for some YP. One professional noted the discrepancy between some specialist provisions having funding for 6<sup>th</sup> form and others not, leading to some YP being left without suitable provision.

Some of the participants referred to the challenges for YP and their families to access services once the young person has reached the threshold into adult services. For example, 'it could be finances, umm support from social services may not be possible for whatever reason' and 'social services haven't got the resources'. Several professionals also commented on the impact of having a service involved as there is an assessment of benefits which means 'looking at the family budget' and this seems to worry families that they will be left with less money and they can be 'reluctant' to explore this. Professionals appeared to be unsure of how YP access some support for recreational and social activities, suggesting parents may also be unsure.

Another aspect which was raised by a member of staff from an FE college regarding the impact of YP trying new courses and supported training as this reduced their benefits, seeing some parents worrying that if they lose their benefits and the placement doesn't last or ends, they will be left with no financial support. For example, he said 'it could be for the young person to move on in some way, say employment they will lose their benefits and that could be a barrier for parents allowing them to move on'. Two professionals working in an alternative provision commented on the lack of support available for YP when they start employment and suggest the Government needs to look at improving this to help YP to access employment and contribute to the economy. One said 'if you took a young person and trained them and paid them while they are working, let's do that with some special needs', another said 'Government funding, give it to the employers' to get them support.

Several of the professionals working in the special school or in alternative provision noted the need to be creative to be able to achieve funding for the YP they cater for. There is a local offer which provides funding for the separate, specialist courses at the two large city colleges, leaving some YP with no option but to attend one of these courses. The alternative provision requires funding to be obtained through a local 6<sup>th</sup> form who take gain the funding and pass it on. This creates quite a lot of tension and frustration from some professionals who felt it was discriminatory. Some comments made were ‘someone who can draw down funding’, ‘basically saying you don’t have a choice’, and ‘some kids don’t have that opportunity because of funding, we don’t draw down our own funding, and the special schools don’t all have 6<sup>th</sup> forms’, leading to less choice.

#### ***5.2.5.h Challenges and Barriers to Achieving Aspirations***

All of the professionals referred to the need to help YP to reframe their aims, but not ‘burst their bubble’. Being realistic was echoed by all staff. There is delicate discussion regarding the reality of getting onto some courses to do the job they want to do and one says ‘you have to challenge that, the aspiration side’. Half of the professionals approached the barriers positively, saying things like ‘not limiting them, no, but keeping it realistic’, while the other half were more negative, saying things like ‘that will never work, how are we going to get him into that college?’ which was less aspirational.

The use of labels was used by all professionals and some felt that this could add a ‘stigma’ to the YP’s ability to achieve. They referred to the conditions as a description or as a limiting factor of needs, such as behaviour difficulties and ‘can’t do sport’. The needs of the young person was seen to be a barrier to achieving for some of the professionals with some indicating the ‘limited options’ and ‘he

couldn't cope'. Other professionals suggested you needed to be 'more creative' and 'adapting' the work to strengths instead of looking at the negatives. Some needs may cause a challenge to learning, such as mental health needs. Two staff emphasise the YP being happy and enjoying their college time, and developing their skills to overcome their needs. Time and staff knowledge can be identified as being a challenge to work in this way.

The protectiveness of the parents is mentioned as a possible barrier to progressing the young person, some examples given were 'if they (the parents) don't reinforce what's said', 'sometimes that parents will say that's ridiculous', 'parents are terrified', and 'concerned about leaving the house'. The setting staff can also be said to be over-protective, like 'they babied the students' rather than developing independence.

Two professionals commented on the young person's lack of inclusion within the wider community in college (it's harder to get involved in things' and 'going to a big college, then being part of the small skills development section'). It evoked some strong views in the professionals regarding the barriers, such as 'frustrating that the path isn't smoother', 'I'm very frustrated', and 'there is a stigma'. One had very strong opinions regarding the lack of options and felt 'it's wrong' and 'it's discriminatory'. One aspect raised by one professional was the conflict of interest for some local authority employees who are supposed to be independent advocates but can be required to deliver the local authority line, such as 'not much separation from the SEND team and the local authority' and 'they are nowhere near as vocal as before', rather than previous independent views.

Challenges of adult services being less common and available was a key concern of staff ('they just disappear') and when too many people are 'in the mix', communication can be poor. Accountability can be varied with one professional

suggesting 'it's only when we meet up again when we realise something hasn't been done' and 'they can fall off the radar'. Time is a challenge to organise professionals being present for meetings, meaning some information gets missed. Funding is also difficult for some YP, such as 'benefits' and 'cut services', which have been thought to have affected choices for YP.

#### ***5.2.5.i Roles and Responsibilities of Others***

From the interviews, there was agreement that there are a number of professionals involved in the transition process. The range of roles of professionals interviewed indicates some of the roles involved. They all referred to the inclusion of the careers service as supporting the transition for YP with SEN out of specialist provision and during their time at FE College, such as 'they play a huge part in transition planning'. Their role was to gain information from the YP about what they are interested in with the intention of providing some ideas for what they may study or spend time doing after school, and other professionals looked to them to aid option choice as well as offering advice themselves when appropriate. They 'monitor' the YP when making transitions. They suggest most of the focus is on educational provision or employment ('what happens next, Job ideas'), but also have to be careful to 'not wreck their dreams' but offer 'alternatives'. They reference adult social services as supporting the YP with other aspects in their lives ('I link with a social worker'). Not all of the YP meet the threshold for support though, such as 'they have to fall into one of those categories. There has to be evidence they need our support'. Sharing of good practice is important to help with progression and getting the right support for the YP. All eight professionals mentioned the use of staff training, with some suggesting that they attended some to increase skills ('I've done some training recently', 'I'm going on a course in March to secure knowledge', and 'we invested in two days person-centred planning'). Others mentioned the need for more training, such as 'dealing with behaviour', 'I



don't know the changes' of the EHC process, 'the right specialist training', and 'understand the complexities of YP coming through' for the staff.

There was consensus about requiring multi-agency support to aid the planning and continued support for the YP in all aspects of their lives 'you try to cover all aspects'. Various agencies such as social workers, mental health professionals, health professionals, occupational therapists, and educational psychologists were also mentioned as supporting the plan. Several professionals talked of their systems of support for the YP when they move, to act as the main point of contact, such as 'supported by their main tutor, by learning support staff and teaching staff'. Staff are used to help the young person with preparation to move and offer their advice and guidance for supporting the young person, although there seemed to be divides regarding responsibilities for providing services to support the young person once they had moved on from school, such as 'that's the social worker's responsibility'. The EHC is hoped to add more accountability for the professionals in the 'action plan' and meeting needs, but one professional feels that 'the EHC doesn't contribute as holistically as it could' due to the lack of presence from health professionals. All professionals noted that they enjoy working with the young person and their families to help them to progress, with some settings being able to offer greater support for the young person to progress, such as 'the employer gets as much help as they need'. Other settings wish to offer more but have restrictions of 'time' and 'staffing'. There are still limitations of the funding through the local authority and some ideas have to be 'negotiated' for the young person.

One significant role identified by settings and professionals was the role of the parents in the process, with all professionals noting this. Their influence was varied regarding meeting the young person's aspirations verses their views of what their child should do. All offered opportunities for the parent to 'phone', 'meet' or 'visit' to ask questions and be involved. All professionals involved the parents in the planning and supported them with advice giving and creating a plan, such as 'we

meet with the families, discuss with them'. Some staff suggest that the parents don't always want to be 'involved' and others wish to 'make decisions' for their child. Two professionals commented on the transition 'for the parents' where they see their child build independence. Six of the eight professionals commented about the effect of the parental expectations which can be supportive and positive ('pushing the children all the way') or negative ('my mum says I can't do it because I've got this condition') leading to different outcomes.

### 5.3 Phase Two Discussion

The themes found were discussed in the results section and shown in the appendix. The research questions explored in Phase Two sought to explore the following aspects:

For the YP focus groups:

1. To what extent was the young person's view of their 'future-selves' obtained?
2. To what extent was the YP's view of 'future-self' used for the FE course choice and planning for beyond education?
3. To what extent were longer term life goals incorporated in these decisions, including all aspects of adulthood? If so, how were these incorporated?

For the Professional interviews:

4. To what extent were the young person's view of their 'future-selves' obtained in transition planning?
5. To what extent was their view of 'future-self' used for the FE course choice and planning for beyond education?
6. To what extent were longer term life goals incorporated in these decisions, including all aspects of adulthood? If so, how were these incorporated?

### **5.3.1 Phase Two Discussion of Inclusion of 'future-self' of the Young Person**

The YP in the focus groups had made plans to move on to another course or training for future employment, which may have kept them in education for longer than some of their peers, as suggested by Smart (2004) and Mitchell (2010), although the types of training identified appeared to be progressive for many rather than cyclical, or a series of different courses all at the same level with no identified progressive nature towards a chosen career, like Hudson (2006) and Dyson et al. (2004) found. They did have an overall goal to work towards, however the application of an imagined 'future-self' approach may assist the young person to help create steps to aid towards their desired future-self, as suggested by Stevenson and Clegg (2011), Oysterman and James (2011) and Markus and Nurius (1986).

The YP commented on their involvement in the planning for their future and generally showed that their voices were listened to and there was a young person centred approach when looking to the future, as advised by Code of Practice (DfE & DoH, 2014) and through research (Corrigan, 2014; O'Sullivan, 2011). None of the YP in the focus groups had experienced imagining their 'future-self' when planning for the future, and felt that there had been a greater focus on their future education or employment outcomes than for other areas of their lives, as found by Dee (2002). The YP had a variety of goals and aspirations beyond education and employment, such as travel and independence, which they commented had not been an area of focus in planning so far, with more focus on planning for the 'next steps'. This was one of the noted findings from Mitchell (2010), Wood and Cronin (1999), and MacIntyre (2014).

A clear source of support and enjoyment was gained from their support systems of parents and particularly peers, which differed from the YP entering FE. There were

comments regarding their friendships and not wanting to lose touch with those they study with, with many YP mentioning the use of technology to aid this. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) eco-systemic model indicates the influence of the different systems around the young person and the importance of including the views of all stakeholders when planning, as noted by Hudson (2006) and Abbott and Heslop (2009). The YP felt that the support of others, as role models and supportive peers or family, aided their determination and confidence to challenge themselves to reach higher aspirations. Pitt and Curtin (2004) and MacNab et al. (2008) had also found that the relationships they had, influenced their future success and determination when they were challenged.

The young person's imagined 'future-self' was not gained explicitly and the areas planned for did not cover all aspects of their lives, such as social and recreation, living accommodation and community involvement, which Carroll also found (2015).

### ***5.3.2 Phase Two Discussion of Inclusion of 'Future-self' as Part of Planning Towards FE Training and Employment***

The YP were all planning to continue with education and training after the current college course, with most indicating a higher or more specific level of training to prepare them for their planned employment. The planning so far had provided choice and options which the YP could access next, with no longer-term plans for accessing employment or becoming completely independent, despite many of the YP accessing the identified 'specialist' courses that Mitchell (2010), Wright (2006) and Elson (2011) presented in their research. These courses have professionals who have an understanding of YP with need and the importance of helping to support them to progress as part of their course to build independence however even on

this course, the YP were only planning for the 'next steps' and not exploring their social and community opportunities.

The YP had chosen their current courses to help to build their confidence, academic, and independence skills to help them move on to more specific courses. They felt that they had contributed to their plan into FE with the help of others, as Dee (2002) and Carnaby et al. (2003) suggested, with some consideration of the YP's interests. Their options were still expressed as being limited during the focus group discussions.

The YP identified their needs in relation to their learning and independence, however they did not appear to feel that these stopped them achieving their goals over-time and they felt that it was likely to take them longer to become independent compared to some of their peers, as found by Mitchell (2010). There were fewer opportunities for supporting YP into work experience and the trialling of new employment placements than they had in school, such opportunities could be another way to aid the young person to be better prepared for employment, as noted by Ward et al. (2003).

### ***5.3.3 Phase Two Discussion Inclusion of 'future-self' in the Longer-Term Planning for Adulthood***

As noted in 5.3.1, the YP had not encountered a 'future-self' approach to gathering their view of their 'future-self' when preparing for adulthood, although the YP had been asked about what they wanted to do in the future, with the questions mainly being focused on employment. Many of the YP in the focus groups commented that

they hadn't thought about some aspects of their lives yet as they felt they were too young, which was what MacIntyre (2014) found.

Many of the previous researchers (Dowrick, 2004; Elson, 2011; MacNab et al., 2008; Mitchell, 2010; Smart, 2004) have suggested that the planning is not as holistic as it could be, and this was an issue which was also found in the focus group discussions. The YP had been supported to consider their education and training and some conversations had been held regarding their future living arrangements, however little consideration had been given regarding the YP's social and recreational or community involvement needs would be met during the planning for adulthood. The YP felt their social and family relationships were important and supported them with their goals and aspirations, however this was not reflected in the planning. Some YP felt that their parent took on the role to meet their social and recreational needs and for their involvement in their community, which was a finding in the work from Smart (2004). Carroll (2015) felt that selected planning took place when preparing for adulthood, however all aspects of the YP's lives need to be included when planning. There needs to be greater multi-agency planning for the young person as they move on towards adulthood, as identified by O'Sullivan (2011) and Kaehne and Bayer (2009), to negotiate all aspects of their development, including health, education and care services.

The following sub-sections will explore the discussion from the professional findings.

#### ***5.3.4 Phase Two Discussion Inclusion of 'Future-self' in Professional's Practice When Supporting YP to Move Towards Adulthood***

It was found that all of the professionals felt it was important to include the young person's voice and aspirations when planning for transition into and out of FE,

however there were only two staff who were applying and aware of the use of 'future-selves' as a method to support YP. The remaining staff were not aware of the concept and some felt it would be 'too hard' for the young person to understand. One of the members of staff used a train set to help to visualise the future and another applied questioning to gain a picture in the young person's mind, but none had received training on this. There was no reference to any theory of why the concept may be useful but one professional did feel it helped with understanding, reassurance for the young person, and for positive behaviour. Markus and Nurius (1986) and Bandura (1993) have indicated that the young person's self-efficacy can be altered to more favoured behaviours when they have a clear vision of what they wish to be like and what they don't wish to be like in the future.

There was an awareness of person-centred planning, as advised in the Code of Practice (DfE & DoH, 2014), with some schools receiving training on this to apply within the school. The method elicited some responses regarding all areas of their lives but frequently the professionals talked about getting the YP to the next step and looking at education, training and employment opportunities. Other aspects were felt to not be their responsibility, and they commented about challenges to access other services to help to support the young person with these areas. All aspects of the young person's life can be explored using 'future-selves' research.

Some settings referred to the ethos and beliefs of setting staff to help the young person to have high aspirations and to build the young person's view of possibilities. If there is use of 'future-selves' theory within settings, the staff can help the YP to have positive outlooks to achieve better longer-term outcomes, which researchers have suggested is currently poor (O'Sullivan, 2011; Smart, 2004). The impact of the environment and professionals around them are likely to impact upon their views of themselves, as the eco-systemic system shows that the interactions with the systems around the young person impact upon their



experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In addition, the YPs behaviours, which is based on their previous experiences, beliefs, and forethought will impact upon their views of what they can achieve, as posed by social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977). Offering information for professionals regarding the impact of their attitudes and beliefs on the young person may promote better outcomes and expectations for YP with SEN, as Kaehne and Bayer found in 2009.

### ***5.3.5 Phase Two Discussion of Professional's Practice for the Inclusion of YP's view of 'Future-self' in Decision-Making for FE and Beyond***

The systems applied to support the YP with transition planning reflected the requirements of the Code of Practice (DfE & DoH, 2014), and incorporated progression to the next steps. Professionals reported that they tried to include the young person's voice using person-centred planning as Corrigan (2014) recommended, and the young person's needs to inform support and options. The professionals used a range of tools and approaches to gather the views of the young person and present them to the multi-agency team supporting the young person with their transition, as found by Moran (2001), Smart (2004), and Taylor-Brown (2012). The preparation was generally felt to be good, with several indicating that it was 'excellent here' or that it was dependant on the individual and the professionals involved with that young person, as noted by Abbot and Heslop (2009), Elson (2011), Farrell et al (2006), MacNab et al (2008), and McConkey and Smyth (2004). There were visits to new placements and staff realised the importance of supporting them to become acquainted with the new setting and staff, as well as practicing some of the skills to aid the move. All of the professionals rated the importance of communication as essential to help with the transition of YP with SEN to ensure they succeeded in getting the right support for the YP, as indicated by Gebhardt et al. in 2011. The ways in which the staff gained views was predominantly using verbal questioning and some booklets to help feedback to

staff in meetings or to send for information, although none used technology to aid this process, such as voice recording devices, computer programs and alternative methods to communicate effectively. There was a wide range of professionals mentioned as being useful to the transition planning with each adding their own piece of information to the multi-agency work. Several are thought to bring the young person's voice to the meeting, such as the careers advisor, the setting staff, the parents and the EP, with various skills and experience of gaining their views. The parents played a huge role in the process of decision-making and some professionals recalled having to help the parents to alter their views to meet the young person's aspirations, as Dovey-Pearce et al. (2012) found. The professionals spoke of the positive and negative attitudes which they can hold for their child which influences the young person's view and motivation, as would be expected using the Social Cognitive Theory of Bandura (1977). The experiences and interactions they have experienced previously would affect the ways they view themselves and the aspirations they feel they can achieve.

None of the professionals addressed any potential identity change the YP may experience when they moved from specialist school into post-16 or on towards adulthood but felt their systems of support provides this discreetly rather than explicitly through their expectations and their encouraged independence. Oysterman and James (2011) cover the identity shift and suggest that this feeds into decision-making through social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977). There were a number of staff involved in the advice giving and decision-making processes, with many feeling they have very few options to offer to the YP due to limited courses, needs of the YP, accessibility, funding and available opportunities. All of the professionals talked about having to 'reframe aims' of YP to be 'realistic' with the options available, which can be limited (Elson, 2011: McConkey and Smyth, 2004). Labels of need also was referred to as a challenge, as they felt it can have a 'stigma' for the YP.

Work-based training and work experience was recommended by all but one of the professionals, as a way to develop skills and independence, although not all of the experiences were in their area of interest as there are limitations to them accessing the range of options they wanted to study (Elson, 2011; Wright, 2006).

One of the largest areas of concern was related to the funding, which was previously explored by Hudson (2006). There was a lot of emotion linked to the feeling that some of the YP with SEN fell through a 'gap' or there was a sense of having to make do with 'best fit' due to the lack of options available for post-16. There are set funding routes to the post-16 courses, with some YP missing out due to restrictions to them being able to access them. There is also a lack of resource as they move into adult services, which can act as a barrier if the young person needs this support. Hudson (2006) talks of the challenges to families for accessing the funding and services they need, with some professionals in this study suggesting that some parents forego opportunities for the young person in case it leads to losing benefits. There is also inequality across the city regarding which YP can access which placements, which led to some professionals feeling very frustrated for the YP.

### ***5.3.6 Phase Two Discussion of Professionals View of the Inclusion of Holistic Planning for YP When Preparing for Leaving FE***

As found by McConkey and Smyth (2004), there was little inclusion of the young person within the wider community when planning, and once moved, into the FE setting. There were occasions where life opportunities were discussed but were not often put into the planning, such as interests and developing independence. There was an expectation that the training course would teach some skills for life and increase their learning to help them to move on to more training or employment.

There was little focus on covering all areas, as suggested by Stokes and Wyn in 2007, and more on planning for the YP's employment and education. Social and recreation opportunities were mainly thought to be someone else's role and did not get planned for frequently, unless it was linked to their possible employment. Relationships were not discussed and living arrangements were discussed in some meetings but not placed in the plan. The new EHC may generate greater use of action planning for all areas of the young person's life and a more holistic approach. The EP frequently holds the 'helicopter view' or 'meta-perspective' and it will be helpful for them to be included in the planning to advocate, offer advice, and raise awareness of all aspects of their life to be included.

The final section will bring together the implications for findings of phase one and two and will explore overall conclusions, limitations, implications for practice, future research opportunities, and researcher reflections.

## **Section 6: Overall Discussion for Phase One and Two**

### **6.1 Summary of Discussion**

The findings and discussion from both phases of the project indicated that there is a wide range of methods and systems applied to support the transition planning than there has been in previous research, such as meetings, support advisors, visits, work experience, and taster sessions (Carnaby et al., 2003; Cullen et al., 2009; Dee, 2002; Kaehne & Bayer, 2009; O’Sullivan, 2011; Smart, 2004; Ward et al., 2003). The change in legislation over the past decade has helped to improve the systems for the young person transitioning, such as the new Code of Practice (DfE & DoH, 2014), however the transition appears to continue to present some challenges for YP with SEN in accessing provision and to have a wide choice of options for them, as Smart (2004) and Mitchell (2010) have recorded before. It still requires greater options to be available and creation of more opportunities to study courses which have links to their chosen careers. This will require systemic and strategic changes, as indicated in previous studies (Elson, 2011; Geiger et al., 2015). The influence and support of others in a multi-agency team has been well received from the stakeholders, however there is still a protectiveness from professionals and parents to ensure the young person has ‘realistic’ aims which can be met through the courses available to them to access. At times the protectiveness can act as a barrier to opportunities, as well as barriers of accessibility, funding, the needs of the young person, and lack of choice.

There still appears to be a lack of inclusion of all aspects of the young person’s future when transition planning, as found by Stokes and Wyn (2007), as well as restricted focus to get the YP onto the next steps rather than providing longer-term planning (as found by Mitchell, 2010), and accessing wider social and recreational opportunities unless being aided by their parents/carers. This has been found to be

the case in previous studies, such as Wright (2006) and Elson (2004), and the YP involved still feel they don't know where to get the help to be able to access more, especially if they don't have social services and other support services involved to guide them. The FE settings may be expected to take on more of this role with the new EHC but this hasn't occurred yet, perhaps due to the early stages in the implementation of the statutory process.

One of the significant findings from phase one and two regards the tension which occurs between the parent and their role to support their child to progress and their desire to protect their child. The parents in phase one identified they wanted to encourage their child to progress towards increased independence however they felt that they also faced the dilemma of managing their feelings of needing to be protective due to their child's vulnerability. There was also an identification of the effect of other wider systems supporting this through having 'set routes' and following advice from professionals to attend the specialist courses and to be 'realistic' about their child's aspirations. This views and the influence of these views have on the options for the YP can limit the opportunities considered and accepted by the YP.

As noted in the two discussion sections linked to phase one and two, there has been little evidence of the inclusion of 'future-self' within the transition preparation of the participants in this study or from the professionals. There was an awareness of the concept being helpful for supporting YP to imagine what they could achieve in the future for two professionals, who applied this approach sometimes, although they had received no training on this approach or knew the theoretical underpinning for its success. There had been some focus on asking the YP and their parent about what they would like their child to achieve in the future through questioning during meetings and sessions, however none were explicitly asked to visualise their child or themselves in the future. Some of the staff suggested that they felt the YP would be unable to use the technique as it is too advanced and

abstract for them. One of the previous researchers (Osterman and James, 2011) had suggested that at adolescence is when YP can start to imagine themselves into the future, and perhaps this may be why this technique has not been tried with this population of YP due to some of their learning needs, as well as lack of knowledge and training in this approach.

## **6.2 Feedback from the Implementation of 'Future-self' Assessment**

An assessment which is based upon the theory of 'future-selves' and the findings from this research was created and delivered to a group of three YP in the specialist school the pilot study took place in, to assess effectiveness to add to the existing transition planning for the YP in year 11. More details of the tool construction can be seen in appendix 18.

This assessment was explored with three YP to utilise the materials developed within the project and focused on the areas of interest based on research findings and 'future-selves' theory. The session was designed to apply the technique of 'future-self' for the YP in year 11, so this can be incorporated into the transition planning for YP at this specialist provision.

Some of my observations of assessment delivery noted that there was a lot to cover in the session and one YP required a high level of support to access this, although he was able to access this with support from myself using effective scaffolding and questioning. It would be advised that for future use, amendments of one of the materials based on the YP feedback to make it more professional-looking would be positive, and to hold the assessment over a number of shorter sessions to

encourage participation and check understanding. The staff supporting it will need to have a good understanding of YP's needs and the ability to elicit their views.

The feedback from the YP participating in the approach was generally positive, with some useful comments to improve which can be seen in appendix 19. The staff member was not the arranged transition coordinator as she had been called away to deal with an incident, which led to the member of staff being less knowledgeable regarding their current transition processes and materials. The feedback from the staff member felt that the materials did explore some areas which the current transition work did not cover during the conversations and planning at school, although she was unfamiliar with all of the transition processes and materials. She was interested and surprised by some of the information gathered from the YP which were not normally explored with the YP. The teacher noted the speed of the session, as I had also reflected on, and felt this could be addressed. She felt it would be a useful compliment to the existing transition support in the school. Further feedback can be seen in appendix 19.

In addition, a meeting was arranged in June 2016 to meet with the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, school EP, Transition Coordinator and relevant teaching and support staff for year 11 pupils, to feedback the research findings and present the assessment materials to the staff for this to become part of transition preparation. The materials created have been offered to the specialist provision used for the pilot and another setting to assess the effectiveness of this approach, with the intention to expand this to other settings if they are received well.

An additional meeting in July 2016 delivered the research findings and the concept of 'future-selves' to the strategic lead and other professionals involved in the working group for developing the post-16 provision pathway in the local authority to assist with guiding decision-making. The professionals present were keen to



develop this further and use this approach as a lens to support the progression of the 16+ pathway.

### **6.3 Application of 'Future-Self' Approach**

This research has provided information regarding the inclusion of 'future-self' within the transition planning for YP into and out of FE and beyond for YP with MLD and associated needs. It has found that while there is a focus on including the young person's view, there is not yet consistent use of a 'future-selves' approach to aid the transition for YP with SEN. There is an opportunity to explore further the use of this technique to help YP to guide their decision-making towards positive behaviours and to raise longer-term outcomes for these YP. Many researchers have noted the potential benefits of using this method with YP to improve behaviour in education and longer-term life outcomes, like relationships and living choices (Bandura, 1977; 1993; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Oysterman & James, 2011). The method can be applied to consider all aspects of their lives during planning and may aid the knowledge of what aspects need to be included within the EHC and transition action plan. Using both Bronfenbrenner's eco-systemic approach (1979) and Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1977), EPs can explain the potential impact of this approach as they have knowledge of the theories which underpin them and how they can be applied within setting to aid positive approaches to help YP as they move towards adulthood.

There is potential debate regarding whether or not the YP with MLD would be able to access this technique however the findings from the interviews and the results from the assessment suggest that the YP were able to imagine many of the aspects of their future with appropriate materials and effective supporting discussion from staff. The YP do require adapted materials and staff with knowledge of ways to

elicit their views. The EP can apply skills and knowledge from areas of psychology, like person-centred planning, personal construct psychology and a range of visual techniques to aid access for the young person. These tools can be applied by the EP and through training to supporting adults in the settings. Additionally, many of the YP and some of the professionals commented about the use of technology for the YP, however this was not applied in current transitioning planning. The use of technology to explore the young person's 'future-self' may be a positive way to present the assessment tools to the YP. A number of tools could be used, such as computer programmes, tablets, voice recording and video recording devices to aid this approach.

#### **6.4 Project Limitations**

There have been a number of challenges with this research project, such as recruitment, access to YP, and choice of a small scale, qualitative methodology.

During the recruitment process, there had been over 150 letters sent out to pupils who had recently left a specialist provision to move into mainstream FE. There were visits to schools and FE settings to encourage YP to become involved in the project with posters being made to encourage participants, as well as all of the professionals involved being asked to pass on recruitment packs to families they work with to raise awareness of the project. Despite there being over 50 possible participants available, only two families agreed to take part in phase one of the project. The decision to offer a 'self-selecting' methodology leads to concerns about gathering a range of views from all YP and families who are in this phase of transition, as the families who volunteered may have a different view to those who did not. As the findings are not designed to be generalised, it is hoped that this will not affect the results. For the focus groups in phase two of the project, there had

been a bereavement and illness of some of the professionals organising these sessions within their setting, leading to a delay in getting access to the participants which in turn made the analysis later than planned.

The project was designed to be small scale using case studies for gathering 'rich and detailed information' (MacNaughton et al., 2001). The challenge with this type of research method is the lack of generalisability because the cases are very unique and based on individuals who volunteered to take part. This is reflected in the choice of methodology. There may be different results from another location or from the families who didn't engage with the recruitment. The decision to use a qualitative data method was to be illuminative, however it does not permit extension of these findings elsewhere, although the results appear to match some of the previously found research findings. More research would need to be conducted on a wider scale to explore if these findings are applicable elsewhere. In addition, it would be helpful to conduct longitudinal data collection over a number of years to see the longer-term effects for the YP in the research. The decision to conduct two interviews for the YP and parents in phase one over a period of six months, was designed to offer the opportunity to clarify interpretation of interview one and to gather participant views at two points in time and experience. The chosen methodology provided the depth of views desired from the participants.

Focus groups may also restrict the findings from some YP as they may not wish to share information in an open forum, however it is also found to be helpful to some YP to share views (Raibee, 2004). The methodology for phase two of the study had to be altered to ensure access to enough participants, from individual interviews with YP to focus groups, which may have affected the information shared by the young person in front of their peers.

## **6.5 Implications for Practice**

As stated in the introduction section, the EP has the ability to combine research with practice (Fallon et al., 2010), and to disseminate these skills to others through training and multi-agency work (DfE & DoH, 2014). The legislation indicates that the EP should be involved as part of the professional team around the young person, and can act as an advocate for them within planning. There are challenges with EPs having access to FE settings to support YP, however the new legislation is hoped to improve this (DfE & DoH, 2014), and research appears to suggest it is an area which is developing (Cameron, 2006; Farrell et al., 2006).

The EP has the research knowledge of the theories underlying 'future-selves' and can combine this with expertise in techniques to communicate with the young person, using techniques such as personal construct psychology (Beaver, 2003; Butler & Green, 2007), person-centred planning (Corrigan, 2014), and methods to elicit views (Harding & Atkinson, 2009; Norwich and Kelly, 2006). The research findings from the intervention indicate that a high level of skills are required for some YP to have their views meaningfully gathered, which EPs and skilled staff have to enable them to explore the more abstract concepts. The method to explore possible 'future-selves' in their work, based on implementation of this approach in schools, may help children to 'alter current behaviours' and aid decision-making by linking current actions to desired future outcomes (Baker, 2015).

## **6.6 Future Research possibilities**

This research has explored the inclusion of 'future-selves' within the current transition planning for YP with MLD and additional needs, into and out of FE. The

research has made some steps towards understanding the impact of this as part of the planning. Some potential aspects to follow up this project would be to: increase participant numbers, test the assessment tools success in other locations, reviewing findings at a later point in the young person's life, and creating a longitudinal project. By increasing the number of participants using a larger area or by having more strategic planning, there may be a variance in the findings. By testing the project in another location, there can be an exploration to see if the results can be generalised to a wider field. The study was completed over two sessions with the YP and would benefit from revisiting the young person over time to assess if their perceptions change. This can also include a longer-term longitudinal study to see if the outcomes are more positive after applying this approach.

Oysterman and James (2011) identified that there was an impact of cultural stereotypes on the 'possible-selves' created, suggesting that YP with SEN may be limiting their vision of their 'future-self' based on what others tell them about their potential achievements. As there is little current research on this, and the findings appears to indicate that this is a significant influence, it would be useful to explore more fully using a greater number of participants.

Future research could make use of increased use of YP participation within the designing of the research, as suggested by Hughes (2012), with greater emphasis on designing materials and applying a methodology which encourages the YP to generate the basis of the research, and applying person-centred approaches as proposed by Corrigan (2014).

## **6.7 Researcher Reflections**

During my time researching, designing, delivering and analysing this research, I have learned many things. This experience has been exciting and illuminating on one hand, and challenging and all-encompassing on the other. I feel very appreciative for the families and individuals who gave up their time to talk to me and work with me to complete this project. At the start of this project, it was a journey which I had never travelled before, as I was a novice researcher, especially in qualitative research methodology and feel that I have achieved a lot of new skills and experience. The psychology service I worked for have chosen to apply these materials designed within the assessment section of phase one to support transition in the specialist provision used in the pilot, suggesting that a longer-term systemic change may occur and be applied elsewhere in the city through the local authority working group.

This research project has tested my skills and abilities, as well as increasing my knowledge and experience in communicating with a population previously thought of as 'challenging' for eliciting views, and in delivering an intervention. It is hoped that many YP and their families will benefit from the use of 'future-selves' approach as part of their transition, however I have already applied this technique with a range of other YP who wish to make some positive changes. I will continue to apply this technique and share this with other professionals.

## **6.8 Concluding Points**

This research project found that the YP moving from a specialist provision into and out of mainstream FE will benefit from consideration of the following aspects.

Effective transition planning, with multi-agency and all stakeholder involvement, which is holistic, timely and places the young person at the centre of the plan, as well as being aware of the learner's strengths and needs. The planning should include a range of effective ways to elicit the young person's voice, such as personal construct psychology, rating, and motivational techniques, as well as a range of communication tools, such as visual and practical materials, to aid involvement of the young person. The process may be improved by the application of the 'future-selves' approach to help YP to identify their goals and aspirations, with guidance of how to support the YP to reach their potential, including encouraging positive role models and attitudes. The planning requires full consideration of the systems of support around the young person and how to include all aspects of their lives, including social, recreational and domestic dimensions, and has longer-term preparation for the YP. Finally, strategic planning from Local Authorities and Government for the YP as they move towards adulthood is required, with greater options and flexibility for choice and more funding options and support.

The EP service can assist settings to prepare YP for longer-term outcomes through supporting systems change, offering psychological tools and knowledge to aid eliciting the young person's voice, provide an evidence-base for interventions such as 'future-selves', and through consulting in multi-agency meetings.

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# Appendices

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## **Appendix 1: Further Information regarding Legislation and Policy**

The transition from school into education, employment or training has been the focus of the current and previous Governments where there has been an emphasis on supporting children to achieve more positive longer-term outcomes (DfE, 2011, DfE & DoH, 2014; DfEE, 1997; DfES, 2001). The transition from one educational setting to another can be challenging for the most resilient young person due to the complexity of the changes which occur during this time, and for the most vulnerable YP this process can be harder (Bostock and Wood, 2015). For particular populations of YP, such as pupils with SEN, careful planning is required to ensure that the young person's needs are met while making significant educational moves (Corrigan, 2014) with Government policy continuing to make transition planning statutory (DfE, 1994; DfEE, 1997; DfES, 2001; DfE & DoH, 2014).

During the coalition government, the Education and Skills Act (2008) outlined the plan to increase the education leaving age to age 18 rather than the previous age of 16, with the aim to provide additional opportunities for all YP, but with particular focus on supporting YP with SEN. OFSTED (2010) identified the need for greater focus on what YP with SEN can achieve in education and employment rather than the barriers, and the need for clear transition planning to identify what support is required to aid the young person to access continued learning or employment opportunities.

The application of person-centred approach to transition planning has been in response to government statistics for adults with a disability, with only 46% gaining employment in comparison to non-disabled adults (76%) in 2012 (DfWP, 2014), although this does not break down details into specific disabilities suggesting it is likely to be lower for some populations of need. There are also findings from the same report which indicated that a quarter of adults were not happy with their

level of independent living and control, and were three times less likely to have a formal qualification at aged 19.

## **Appendix 2: Further detail for phase one methodology**

The main influences in this research are social constructionism and interpretivism for the methodology and data analysis, although it had some broad ethnographic approaches in design as the participants were re-interviewed over two time periods. Social constructionism indicates that the individual creates their own understanding through their social interactions with others, creating multiple meanings which are tied into social and cultural understanding. Social constructionism can apply techniques of analyses such as grounded theory to help to identify themes and generate theories (Mac Naughton, Rolfe, Siraj-Blatchford, 2001). The research was designed to gain the individual experience of transitioning to FE and its incorporation of 'future-self'. I believed it was not appropriate to apply grounded theory approach to analysis due to the fact that I was hoping to illuminate the personal experiences of those involved in the research and to help to inform practice. A grounded theory method of data analysis is applied to generate theory based upon a particular set of procedures and techniques which when applied to data, allows analysis which can create theory (Robson, 2011). Grounded theory requires particular processing of analysis over time and requires extensive time gathering field research data (Robson, 2011). Therefore as I required a more flexible approach which was illuminative and also conducive to being able to access participants over a sustained period time, grounded theory was not appropriate.

Social constructionism forms the basis for interpretivism and indicates a focus on the individual and how they make sense of the world (Robson, 2011). This research methodology acknowledges that YP and their parents/carers experiences will be subjective to them. Interpretivism enables single cases to be studied and can use multiple perspectives of the same phenomena (Ernest, 1994; Ritchie et al., 2014), and approaches such as thematic analysis can be applied. This form of analysis gives the rich details that the project is designed for.

Finally other researchers in this field have applied ethnographic methodology as this provides the researcher with the opportunity to have sustained contact with participants to gather rich data over time (Robson, 2011). While this may have been an effective method to apply, due to the constraints of working for a Local Authority whilst conducting this research, the participants and I were unable to commit to this level of engagement.

## Appendix 3: Consent form Pilot study Phase 1 and Focus Group Phase 2



**Researcher name:** Melissa Parry

**Researcher role:** Trainee Educational Psychologist

**Project title:** *An exploratory study of the incorporation of “future-self” as part of transition preparation in to and out of further education for young people with learning disabilities*

---

### CONSENT FORM – Headteacher/Teacher

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project and agree to allow pupils to take part in the pilot of the project.

#### I understand that:

- there is no compulsion for the pupils to participate in this research project and, if they do choose to participate, they may at any stage withdraw their participation and may also request that my data be destroyed
- they have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me or my child
- any information which is given will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications or academic conference or seminar presentations
- if applicable, the information, which is given, may be shared between any of the other researcher(s) participating in this project or for transcription in an anonymised form
- all information given will be treated as confidential
- I agree to have the pupil interviews recorded and transcribed for analysis
- the researcher will make every effort to preserve anonymity of all involved
- I agree for the pupils to take part in the research, if they wish and consent to

**Signature of Headteacher/Teacher:** ..... **Date:** .....

**Printed name of Headteacher/Teacher:** .....

**Names and signatures of pupils involved:**

Name: ..... Signature: .....

Name: ..... Signature: .....

Name: ..... Signature: .....

Name: ..... Signature: .....

One copy of this form will be kept by the school; a second copy will be kept by the researcher

**Contact phone number of researcher:** Plymouth Community Psychology Service 01752 224962

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

**Melissa Parry – Trainee Educational Psychologist**

Data Protection Act: The University of Exeter is a data collector and is registered with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as required to do under the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for research purposes and will be processed in accordance with the University's registration and current data protection legislation. Data will be confidential to the researcher(s) and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties without further agreement by the participant. Reports based on the data will be in anonymised form.



**Appendix 4: Consent form YP Phase 1**



**Researcher name:** Melissa Parry

**Researcher role:** Trainee Educational Psychologist







**Project title:** *An exploratory study of the incorporation of “future-self” as part of transition preparation in to and out of further education for young people with learning disabilities*

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**CONSENT FORM – Young People**

I have been told all about the research.

**I understand that:**

- I don't have to talk to the researcher if I don't want to - I can say no 
- I am happy to talk about my future and further education 
- My words might be used to tell others in education about what I think but my name won't be used 
- My interview words will be safe and not told to people who don't need to know 
- I know I will be recorded when I talk to Melissa so she gets all of the words I say 
- I know I can stop the interview at any time and say no to any question 

**Signature of young person:** .....

**Date:** .....

**Printed name of young person:** .....

**Signature of parent/carer:** ..... **Date:** .....

**Printed name of parent/carer:** .....

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher

**Contact phone number of researcher:** Plymouth Community Psychology Service 01752 224962

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

**Melissa Parry – Trainee Educational Psychologist**

Plymouth Community Psychology Service, Windsor House, Tavistock Road, Plymouth. PL6 5UF

University of Exeter, St Luke's Campus, Heavitree Road, Exeter. EX1 2LU

Data Protection Act: The University of Exeter is a data collector and is registered with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as required to do under the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for research purposes and will be processed in accordance with the University's registration and current data protection legislation. Data will be confidential to the researcher(s) and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties without further agreement by the participant. Reports based on the data will be in anonymised form.

**Supervisor Name:** Tim Maxwell, University of Exeter

**Supervisor details:** 01392 722719

## Appendix 5: Consent form Parent Phase 1



**Researcher name:** Melissa Parry

**Researcher role:** Trainee Educational Psychologist

**Project title:** *An exploratory study of the incorporation of “future-self” as part of transition preparation in to and out of further education for young people with learning disabilities*

---

### CONSENT FORM – Parent/Carer

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

**I understand that:**

- there is no compulsion for me or my child to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation and may also request that my data be destroyed
- I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me or my child
- any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications or academic conference or seminar presentations
- if applicable, the information, which I give, may be shared between any of the other researcher(s) participating in this project or for transcription in an anonymised form
- all information I give will be treated as confidential and I can choose not to answer any questions asked
- I agree to have the interviews recorded and transcribed for analysis

- the researcher will make every effort to preserve my anonymity
  
- I agree for my child to take part in the research, if they wish and consent to

**Signature of Parent/Carer:** ..... **Date:** .....

**Printed name of Parent/Carer:** .....

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher

**Contact phone number of researcher:** Plymouth Community Psychology Service 01752 224962

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

**Melissa Parry – Trainee Educational Psychologist**

Plymouth Community Psychology Service, Windsor House, Tavistock Road, Plymouth. PL6 5UF  
University of Exeter, St Luke’s Campus, Heavitree Road, Exeter. EX1 2LU

Data Protection Act: The University of Exeter is a data collector and is registered with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as required to do under the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for research purposes and will be processed in accordance with the University’s registration and current data protection legislation. Data will be confidential to the researcher(s) and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties without further agreement by the participant. Reports based on the data will be in anonymised form.

**Supervisor Name:** Tim Maxwell, University of Exeter

**Supervisor details:** 01392 722719

## Appendix 6: Parent information sheet Phase 1 and 2



**Researcher name:** Melissa Parry

**Researcher role:** Trainee Educational Psychologist

**Project title:** *An exploratory study of the incorporation of “future-self” as part of transition preparation in to and out of further education for young people with learning disabilities*

---

### INFORMATION SHEET

#### **Purpose of this research:**

With the introduction of Education, Health and Care Plans, there has been an increased focus on supporting the Young Person from statutory school age up to 25 years of age to enter further education or training, and to assist the Young Person to transition effectively to adulthood. There has been greater awareness of needing to gain the Young Person and their family’s views during the process of this education planning after the age of 16.

This research project is designed to gather the views and experiences of young people and their parents/carers as they move into further education, and after completing two years of further education. The focus will be to explore with the young person and their families the extent that transition planning has included the aspirations and views of how they see themselves in the future. In addition, professionals in further education will be asked to contribute their views.

#### **Why is this important to study?**

Previous research indicates that it is important to have effective transitions into and out of further education for young people with learning disabilities as this can impact on their futures. It will be beneficial to explore how the Young Person visualises themselves in the future and identify if the transition planning was able to include this when preparing for the move into or out of further education. My research is designed to benefit professionals, families and young people through gaining a greater understanding of the process, and it intends to explore the strengths and potential barriers involved, to see if improvements can be made.

#### **Why am I conducting this study?**

My name is Melissa Parry. I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist working within Plymouth Community Psychology Service and am studying for a Doctorate with the University of Exeter. I have been interested in the transition process for some time and since beginning my training, I have chosen to explore this topic for my thesis.

**My contact details are:** Plymouth Community Psychology Service

Windsor House

Tavistock Road

Plymouth

PL6 5UF

Tel. 01752 224962

**Supervisor details are:** Dr Tim Maxwell

University of Exeter

St Luke's Campus,

Heavitree Road

Alternatively, I can be contacted at the University of Exeter using my supervisor's details above.

### **Whose views will be included in this research?**

The research aims to gather the views of young people, their parents/carers and some professionals involved in the system through interviews. The reason that I have chosen to explore the views of these people is due to them being the main stakeholders in the process.

### **Do I have to be part of the research?**

No, you are under no obligation to be involved in this research and even after you have agreed to take part, you are entitled to change your mind at any point.

### **The project is being supported by:**

**Dr Tim Maxwell:** Lecturer and Tutor of Educational Psychology at Exeter University

**Dr Shirley Larkin:** Senior Lecturer, Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter

**Dr Alan Fuller:** Principle Educational Psychologist Plymouth Community Psychology Service

**Alison Always:** Senior Educational Psychologist Plymouth Community Psychology Service

### **I'm interested in taking part, what's the next step?**

If you have decided that you would like to participate or would like more information about the project, please complete the attached Interest Form and return to me in the envelope included, at the address above, or by returning the form to School marked to the attention of: **Melissa Parry, Trainee Educational Psychologist.**

By selecting the box to gain more information, this **does not** commit you to being part of the study. Once I have received your Interest Form I will contact you directly to arrange an occasion to discuss the project prior to starting.

### **If I take part, how long will it take?**

If you're interested, I will contact you to arrange a time to briefly discuss the project which will allow you to find out all about the project and ask any questions. This can be as short or as long as you wish and can be in person or by telephone. Once you have agreed to take part, there will be an interview with the Young Person which is likely to take between 30 and 45 minutes. The interviews for parent/carers and professionals are also expected to take about 45 minutes, for each participant. The location can be discussed for your convenience. I aim to conduct all interviews between September 2015 and January 2016.

### **What will happen with the interview data?**

The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed to allow the data to be analysed. All transcriptions will be coded anonymously to ensure confidentiality. These will be coded by themes using NVIVO (a qualitative data analysis software package). The data will be kept securely on encrypted computer storage. The data could be stored for up to a year, and will be destroyed after completion of the thesis.

### **Will my interview be confidential?**

Yes. The interviews will be completely confidential with no names being used in the transcripts or the write up. There will be no identifiable information included in the thesis and data protection procedures will be applied. Some quotes may be used in the write up to demonstrate a theme, however these will be anonymous, only using the allocated code or pseudonym rather than names or details. You can refuse to answer any questions asked during interview if you do not wish to answer them. The final thesis findings may be published or presented to professionals within the field of Educational Psychology however no identifiable information will be included. The schools or further education settings will also be anonymised and will have no identifiable references.

### **What will happen after the interview?**

All volunteers will be offered the opportunity to view their transcribed interview if they wish prior to analysis to ensure it is accurate. You will still have the right to withdraw even after interview. Once all of the interviews have been analysed and findings noted, I will contact all volunteers to offer an opportunity for them to hear the overall findings of the research.

### **Does this research have ethical approval?**

Yes. The Graduate School of Education Ethics Committee at the University of Exeter have approved this study.

### **Are there any risks in taking part?**

The topic of transition can be personal however all of the volunteers will be given information prior to starting and asked if they wish to be part of the research. I hope that effective communication will reduce this risk and the volunteers can feel free to not answer questions they are not comfortable with.

**I am interested in taking part in the study**

I am very grateful, thank you. Please fill in the attached form to request additional information or volunteer and return to me or the school/college.

If you would like to discuss this further then please contact me on 01752 224962.

Thank you for your time to read this information sheet.



## Interest Form

**Researcher name:** Melissa Parry

**Researcher role:** Trainee Educational Psychologist

**Project title:** *An exploratory study of the incorporation of "future-self" as part of transition preparation in to and out of further education for young people with learning disabilities*

---

I have received the information sheet regarding the above research and would like:

- To volunteer to be part of the research, and I am happy to be contacted to be given more information
  
- To know more information about the research. This does not mean you are committed and you can choose not to proceed once contact has been made



To not take part in this research

**My details are:**

Name/s of parent/carers: .....

I prefer to be contacted by:     Telephone             Letter             Email

The most suitable time/s to contact me are: .....

Address: .....

.....

.....

Telephone number/s: .....

.....

Email address: .....

**Please complete the interest form and return to my postal address in the envelope attached or return to the school/college marked for the attention of 'Melissa Parry – Trainee Educational Psychologist'**

*Thank you for your interest.*

## Appendix 7: Consent form Professionals Phase 2



**Researcher name:** Melissa Parry

**Researcher role:** Trainee Educational Psychologist

**Project title:** *An exploratory study of the incorporation of "future self" as part of transition preparation in to and out of further education for young people with learning disabilities*

---

### CONSENT FORM - Professionals

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

**I understand that:**

- there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation and may also request that my data be destroyed
- I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me
- any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications or academic conference or seminar presentations
- if applicable, the information, which I give, may be shared between any of the other researcher(s) or research supervisors participating in this project or for transcription in an anonymised form
- all information I give will be treated as confidential and I can choose not to answer any questions asked
- I agree to have the interviews recorded and transcribed for analysis

the researcher will make every effort to preserve my anonymity

**Signature of Professional:** ..... **Date:** .....

**Printed name of Professional:** .....

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher

**Contact phone number of researcher:** Plymouth Community Psychology Service 01752 224962

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

**Melissa Parry – Trainee Educational Psychologist**

Plymouth Community Psychology Service, Windsor House, Tavistock Road, Plymouth. PL6 5UF

University of Exeter, St Luke’s Campus, Heavitree Road, Exeter. EX1 2LU

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**Supervisor Name:** Tim Maxwell, University of Exeter

**Supervisor details:** 01392 722719

## Appendix 8: Ethical approval from the University of Exeter



GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

St Luke's Campus  
Heavitree Road  
Exeter UK EX1 2LU

<http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/education/>

### CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

Title of Project: An exploratory study of the incorporation of "future self" as part of transition preparation in to and out of further education for young people with learning disabilities

Researcher(s) name: Melissa Parry

Supervisor(s): Tim Maxwell  
Shirley Larkin

This project has been approved for the period

From: 10/07/2015  
To: 01/09/2016

Ethics Committee approval reference:

D/15/16/05

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Durrant", with a small star-like mark at the end.

Signature: Date...18/09/2015.....  
(Dr Philip Durrant, Chair, Graduate School of Education Ethics Committee)

## **Appendix 9: Pilot interview schedule and details for amendments**

### **Pilot Interview Feedback**

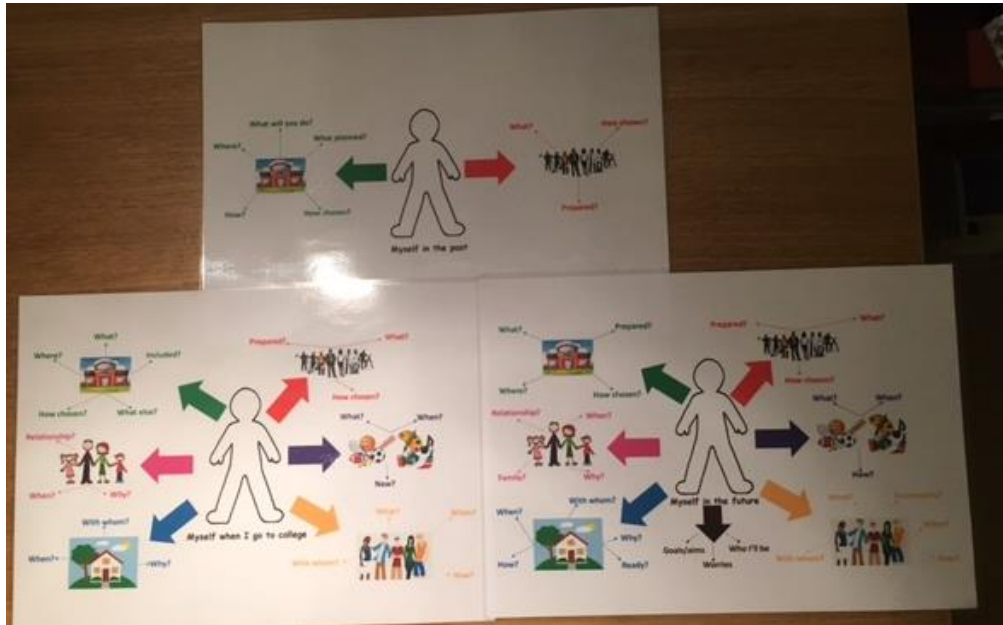
The pilot interviews were conducted to pose possible interview questions to the YP, to assess the effectiveness of some of the materials designed to aid understanding and meaning, and to check the language used to identify if it was appropriately gauged for the young person's understanding.

Generally, the order of the topic areas were well received and there did not seem to be any confusion with covering them in the planned order. The supporting activity which required the YP to sort cards of the different factors involved in the decision-making using associated images appeared to be accessible and allowed many of the YP to contribute with limited support from the researcher, suggesting it was beneficial for the young person.

The transcriptions of the pilot interviews identified that some of the terms used required additional information to ensure understanding, such as the use of 'what do you do in your spare time for fun' rather than the terms social or recreational, and the question 'How do you think that the teachers and your parents could listen better to get your ideas?' required some rephrasing to 'Are there any ways that you think would help you to tell other people what you want to do more of?' In addition, it was important to add some more detail to some of the questions to aid understanding, such as providing a definite time in which they see themselves in the future by using 'when you are 30' or in '10 years' time'.

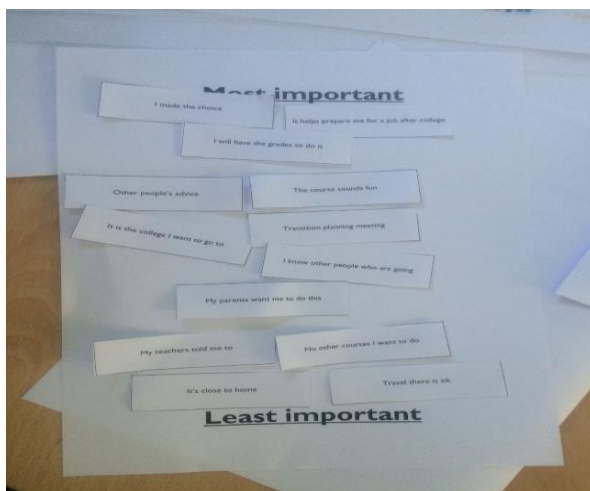
There were some additional sheets which had visual images of the areas being covered in the interviews provided for YP to see what areas we were covering

however these were too complex and confusing for the YP to benefit from them, so these were not used for the main interviews.



*Example of additional visual materials trialled*

The YP found text used in the Q-sort based task on decision-making hard to work through without visual support, so visuals have been added to the YP interview materials. This can be seen in the image below, the version used in the actual interview can be seen in appendix 12.



*Image showing the Q-sort based task used in the pilot*

## **Appendix 10: Exploratory Interview Feedback**

An exploratory interview was held with a parent of a young person with MLD and Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC), who was now in his early 30's, to gain information about the areas of difficulty which she and her son faces with regards to everyday life. The main aspects which Nicki focused on were:

- his needs impacting on his ability to interact with others and have the skills to maintain a job
- the lack of formal qualifications gained from being at a specialist provision until age 16
- lack of opportunity for Simon to go onto training or employment
- the impact of depression due to social isolation
- lack of support to help Simon to gain information about what is available
- challenges accessing adult services
- parent taking on additional responsibility over a sustained period of time to help to support him

Based upon these main aspects which impact on Simon's life, the interview schedule content was devised to cover these aspects raised.

## YP Interview Schedule

My name is Melissa Parry and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist. You have kindly volunteered for me to come and speak with you about some research that I am going to do. Thank you for agreeing to talk to me about this. My research is finding out about the transitions of young people from secondary school to college. I will ask you some questions about the plans you have for going to college when you leave school.

I will be asking you questions about the course that you are doing, how you have planned for this move, and what goals you have for the future.

I hope to use this information to help prepare other young people as they move from school to college.

I will be recording this interview to help me to find out about your experiences and all the answers you give will be not be shared with anyone else, even the teachers!

The interview should take about 20 minutes and I look forward to hearing your answers.

If you have any questions during the session then please ask me.

---

### Introduction

**ACTIVITY: Getting to know you questions – using star shapes**

**ACTIVITY: Using body outline, fill the image with descriptions**

- If would be helpful for me if you could describe yourself in a couple of sentences.

Now I am going to ask you some questions about your current college course.

1. What course are you studying at college?
2. Tell me about how you chose which course you wanted to study?

**ACTIVITY: Sorting activity to rank things that were important when choosing**



3. Now you have started the course, would you choose to study a different course from the one you have chosen?
4. When you were choosing this course, tell me how you have been involved in choosing your course.

***ACTIVITY: ((1 on Rating scales sheet) Can you rate out of 5 how involved you think you have been in choosing the course with 1 being the least and 5 being the most?)***

***5. ACTIVITY: ((Cards for getting views) How could I be listened to better?)***

6. Do you currently have a job?
  7. What do you do in your spare time for fun now that you are in college for example sports or activities with others?
  8. Tell me about any hobbies or interests you have?
  9. Tell me about what you and your friends do together in your spare time outside of college
  10. Can you tell me about your experiences of meeting new people since starting the course?
  11. Who do you currently live with?
  12. Now that you are in College, are you in a relationship?
- 

Now I am going to move on to a short section about what you thought you wanted to do when you were younger.

13. Can you tell me about who you lived with when you were in School?

14. When you were younger, describe to me what you wanted to do for a job when you became an adult

15. Tell me about how you planned your move to further education?

---

Finally this section is going to look at how you see yourself in the future after college.

16. After your college course, do you plan to study anything else?

17. Describe how your college course is going to help prepare you for what you want to do for a job in the future.

***ACTIVITY: ((2 on Rating scales sheet) Can you rate out of 5 how you think the course will prepare you for what you want to do for a job with 1 being the least and 5 being the most?)***

18. Tell me about what you see yourself doing for a job in the future after college.

19. Tell me what things/hobbies would you like to do for fun when you finish college?

20. What do you imagine your social life will be like after you finish college, for example how will you spend your spare time and with whom?

21. How will you be involved in your local community when you finish college?

22. Who do you hope to live with when you finish college?

23. Who do you imagine yourself living with when you are much older?

24. Do you imagine yourself being in a relationship when you're older?

25. Do you hope to have a family when you are older?

26. Can you tell me about what you would you like to achieve in the future?

***ACTIVITY X2: ((3 on Rating scales sheet) Can you rate out of 5 how important you think it is to have goals with 1 being not important and 5 being the definitely important?)***

***((4 on Rating scales sheet) Can you rate out of 5 how important you think it is to reach those goals with 1 being not important and 5 being the definitely important?)***

27. When you think of the future, what things are you worried about?

28. When you think of the future, what do you think you will be like?

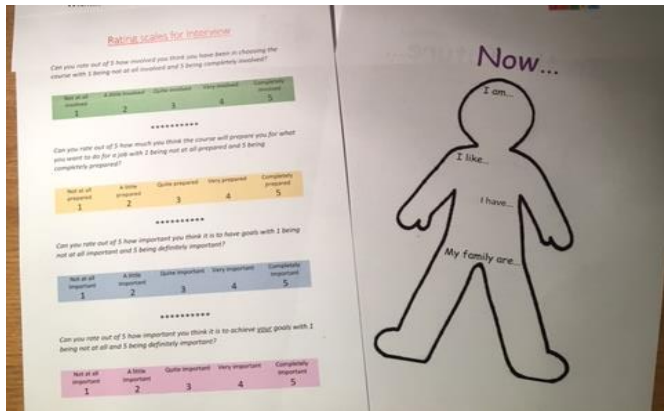
It's been a pleasure finding out about you, it sounds as though you are looking forward to \_\_\_\_\_ and that you plan to pursue a career in \_\_\_\_\_ and that you are interested in \_\_\_\_\_.

I appreciate the time you have taken for this interview. Is there anything else that you think would be helpful for me to know?

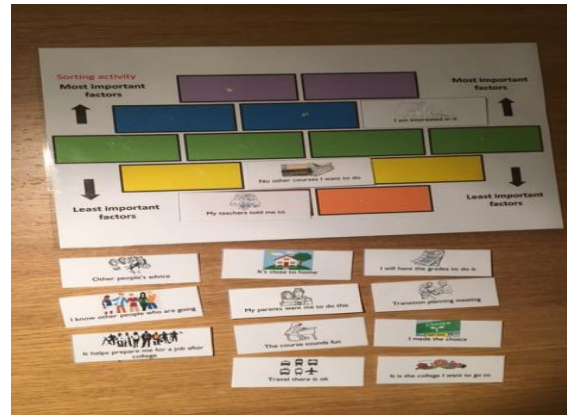
I should have all the information I need, thanks again and good luck for future.

**Appendix 12: Interview materials for YP interview Phase 1**





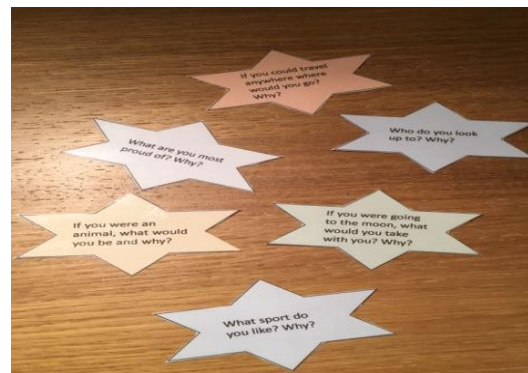
Rating sheet and Activity sheet for YP interview



Sorting Activity for YP interview



Activity task for YP interview



Ice-breaker Activity for YP interview

## Parent's Interview Schedule

**My name is Melissa Parry and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist. You have kindly volunteered for me to come and speak with you about some research that I am going to do. Thank you for agreeing to talk to me about this. My research is finding out about the transitions of young people from secondary school to college. I will ask you some questions about your child's transition including the planning, your family's involvement and the inclusion of your child's long term goals.**

**I will be asking you questions about the course that your child is doing, how you all have planned for this move, and how you think your child's future goals were listened to.**

**I hope to use this information to help prepare other young people as they move from school to college.**

**I will be recording this interview to allow me to find out your and your child's experiences but all answers you give will be not be shared with anyone else and your identity will be kept secret.**

**The interview should take about 30 minutes and I look forward to hearing your answers.**

**If you have any questions during the session then please ask me.**

---

### **Introduction**

- If would be helpful for me if you could describe your child in a couple of sentences.

Now I am going to ask you some questions about your child's current college course.

1. What course is you child studying at college or further education?
2. Tell me about how you and your child chose which course they wanted to study?
3. Now your child has started the course, would you or they choose for them to study a different course from the one that was chosen?

4. When your child was choosing this course, tell me how they have been involved in choosing their course.

***ACTIVITY: ((1 on Rating scales sheet) Can you rate out of 5 how involved you think your child was in choosing the course with 1 being the least and 5 being the most?)***

***ACTIVITY: ((2 on Rating scales sheet) Can you rate out of 5 how involved you were when you child was choosing their course?)***

5. Can you give me examples of how you and your child's views were gathered and used during transition planning?
  6. Does your child currently have a job?
  7. What does your child do in their spare time for fun now that they are in college for example sports or activities with others?
  8. Tell me about any hobbies or interests your child has?
  9. Tell me about what your child and their friends do together in their spare time outside of college
  10. Can you tell me about how your child has experienced meeting new people since starting the course?
  11. Who does your child currently live with?
  12. Now that they are in College, are they in a relationship?
- 

Now I am going to move on to a short section about what your child thought they wanted to do when they were younger.

13. When your child was younger, describe to me what they wanted to do for a job when they became an adult

14. Tell me about how your child's move to further education was planned?

15. Can you tell me about who your child lived with when they were in School?

---

Finally this section is going to look at how you see your child in the future after college.

16. After your child finishes their college course, do you think they will plan to study anything else?

17. Describe how you think your child's college course is going to help prepare them for what they want to do for a job in the future.

***ACTIVITY: ((3 on Rating scales sheet) Can you rate out of 5 how you think the course will prepare your child for what they want to do for a job with 1 being the least and 5 being the most?)***

18. Tell me about what you see your child doing for a job in the future after college.

19. Tell me what things/hobbies would you think your child will like to do for fun when they finish college?

20. What do you imagine your child's social life will be like after they finish college, for example how will they spend their spare time and with whom?

21. Can you tell me about how you will see your child interact with their local community when they finish college?

22. Who do you see them living with when they finish college?

23. Do you imagine your child being in a relationship when they're older?



24. Do you think your child will have a family when they are older?

25. Can you tell me about what you think your child would like to achieve in the future?

***ACTIVITY X2: ((4 on Rating scales sheet) Can you rate out of 5 how important you think it is for your child to have goals with 1 being not important and 5 being the definitely important?)***

***((5 on Rating scales sheet) Can you rate out of 5 how important you think it is for your child to reach those goals with 1 being not important and 5 being the definitely important?)***

26. When you think of the future, what things are you worried about for your child?

27. In their future, what things do you think your child is worried about?

28. When you think of you child in the future, what do you think they will be like?

It's been a pleasure finding out about you and your child, it sounds as though you are looking forward to \_\_\_\_\_ and that they plan to pursue a career in \_\_\_\_\_ and that they are interested in \_\_\_\_\_.

I appreciate the time you have taken for this interview. Is there anything else that you think would be helpful for me to know?

I should have all the information I need, thanks again and good luck for the future.

## Appendix 14: Focus Group schedule Phase 2

### Focus Group Schedule

Hello and welcome to our session. Thanks for taking the time to join me to talk about planning for transitioning. My name is Melissa Parry and I am an Educational Psychologist.

I am trying to find out about your experiences of planning for adulthood and will be asking you some questions and doing some activities to help get your views. This should only take about half an hour.

There are no wrong answers but you may have different thoughts to other people here, but please feel you can share what you think. I would like to hear about things that have gone well, as well as things that have been harder because this gives a full picture of what it's like.

I am going to record this session so I can participate with you but I won't miss the important things you say. The things said will not be shared with other people and when I write up the results, I will make sure that nobody is referred to by their real name.

The results are written up for my University degree to help other young people as they move in to adulthood.

Well, let's begin. I've placed blank stickers on the table in front of you to help us remember each other's names, could you please write your name on it. Let's find out some more about each other by going around the table. Tell us your name and what you're studying.

Now I'm just going to quickly suggest some ground rules to make sure that everybody can take part and so I can hear your views.

#### **Ground rules**

- No right or wrong answers
  - We're recording so can only one person speak at a time
  - Listen to what others have to say, even if you don't agree
  - My role will be to guide the discussion, but you're answers are the important bit
  - Talk to each other!
- 

#### **Questions and activities:**

1. When you think of the future, tell me about how you have been helped to plan for all parts of your future life, not just employment?

2. What things have you done or what will you be doing to help get ready to move from this course?
3. i) Can you tell me what things you are looking forward to when you leave education?  
ii) Can you tell me what things you are worried about too?
4. How did you decide what course you wanted to do when you left school?
5. As part of the planning to college/training, can you tell me if they helped you imagine yourself in the future, and how they did this?
6. Thinking back, if you could choose any job to do, what would it be?  
Is there a course that you could have taken to study this?

Thank you for telling me about your experiences or your transition, this has all been very helpful and interesting. Does anyone have anything they would like to add?

Thanks again for your time, good luck for the future.

# Professional's Interview Schedule

**My name is Melissa Parry and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist. You have kindly volunteered to be part of my research, thank you for agreeing to talk to me about this. My research is finding out about the transitions of young people from secondary school to college and on into adulthood. I will ask you some questions about your role in young people's transition including the planning, your involvement and the inclusion of the young person and their family's long term goals. I will be asking you a range of questions about these topics.**

**I hope to use this information to help prepare young people at school or college as they prepare to move from school to college and beyond.**

**I will be recording this interview to allow me to find out your experiences but all answers will be confidential and your identity will be anonymised.**

**The interview should take between 30 and 40 minutes and I look forward to hearing your responses and views.**

**If you have any questions during the session then please ask me.**

---

## Introduction

- If would be helpful for me if you could describe your role in a couple of sentences.
- Can you tell me about one thing you enjoy about this role?
- Can you tell me about one challenge you find with this role?

---

Now I am going to ask you some questions about transition planning and gathering views from young people and their families.

1. Can you tell me about how your setting plans for the transition of young people with SEN either in to or out of college?
2. In your opinion, how effective do you think transition planning is for preparing young people with SEN and their families for their move?

3. Can you tell me about the materials and structure you and your setting/service use to support transition planning for young people with SEN?
  4. Do you feel that the young person is explicitly helped to imagine themselves in the future as part of the transition planning? For example, does anyone assist them to visualise themselves in the future and therefore have something to work towards?
  5. Is there a focus on exploring the young person's possible identity shift as they move through transitions towards adulthood?
  6. Is gathering the young person's aspirations important as part of transition planning?
  7. Do you believe that transition planning is holistic (all aspects of the young person's life is planned for)?
  8. How do you involve the young person and their family when planning for transitions?
  9. Who do you think should be included in transition planning?
- 

The next section explore recent changes in legislation and options for young people with SEN.

10. Can you tell me how the changes for the new code of practice have impacted on your work with transition planning for young people with SEN?
11. Do you find that different professionals have different agendas when planning for transitions?
12. Tell me about how decisions about further education choices are made when transition planning for young people with SEN?
13. Do you feel that the range of options for young people with SEN is extensive enough to meet their aspirations?

14. Do you feel that young people with SEN are fully included in the communities beyond school?

15. Do you feel the young people have the support they need during transitions beyond school?

---

It's been a pleasure finding out about your role and your views about the transition process.

I appreciate the time you have taken for this interview. Is there anything else that you think would be helpful for me to know?

I should have all the information I need, thanks again and good luck for the future.

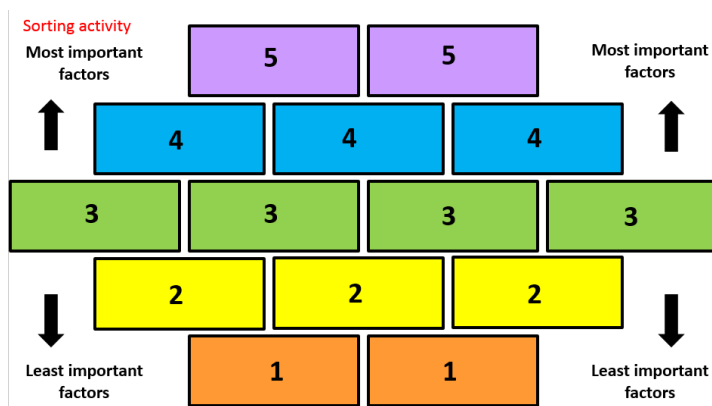
## Appendix 16: Q-sort Activity Analysis

As part of the young person's interview, there was a task which was based upon Q-sort methodology, which consisted of the YP placing the different factors which influenced their choice of course onto a hierarchy grid rated from the most important to the least important factors for them. The items were identified from the literature review and had been changed from the pilot, as it had the addition of pictures to support the statements. An example can be seen in the image below.



*Example of Q-sort based activity for YP interview*

The scoring grid for the statements is displayed on the layout below.



*Example of the scoring for the Q-sort based activity for YP interview*

Based on the responses from the YP, the scores for each statement can be seen in table below and the bar chart in section 4.2.4.c.

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Average Score</b>	<b>Score YP01</b>	<b>Score YP02</b>
Transition planning meeting	5	5	5
Other people's advice	3	3	3
I am interested in it	3.5	4	3
Travel there is ok	3.5	5	2
My parents want me to do this	2.5	3	2
The course sounds fun	2	2	2
It's close to home	3.5	3	4
I know other people who are going	2.5	2	3
My teachers told me to	1	1	1
No other courses I want to do	1	1	1
I will have the grades to do it	3	2	4
I made the choice	4.5	4	5
It helps prepare me for a job after college	3.5	4	3
It is the college I want to go to	3.5	3	4

*Scoring for the Q-sort based activity for YP interview*



## Appendix 17: Personal Construct Psychology Rating Analysis

The YP and parents were asked to rate a number of statements regarding the transition planning which they had experienced. The results for the YP can be seen below.

### How involved you think you have been in choosing the course?

	YP01 Ratings	YP02 Ratings
Not at all involved		
A little involved		
Quite involved		✓
Very involved	✓	
Completely involved		

### How much you think the course will prepare you for what you want to do for a job?

	YP01 Ratings	YP02 Ratings
Not at all prepared		
A little prepared		
Quite prepared	✓	
Very prepared		✓
Completely prepared		

**How important you think it is to have goals?**

	YP01 Ratings	YP02 Ratings
Not at all important		
A little important		
Quite important		
Very important		✓
Completely important	✓	

**How important you think it is to achieve your goals?**

	YP01 Ratings	YP02 Ratings
Not at all important		
A little important		
Quite important		
Very important	✓	✓
Completely important		

The results for the parents can be seen below.

**How involved you think your child has been in choosing their course?**

	Parent01	Parent02
	Ratings	Ratings
Not at all involved		
A little involved		
Quite involved		
Very involved		
Completely involved	✓	✓

**How involved you think you were in choosing your child's course?**

	Parent01	Parent02
	Ratings	Ratings
Not at all involved		
A little involved		
Quite involved		
Very involved		
Completely involved	✓	✓

**How much you think the course will prepare your child for what they want to do for a job?**

	Parent01 Ratings	Parent02 Ratings
Not at all prepared		
A little prepared		
Quite prepared		
Very prepared	✓	
Completely prepared		✓

**How important you think it is for your child to have goals?**

	Parent01 Ratings	Parent02 Ratings
Not at all important		
A little important		
Quite important		
Very important		
Completely important	✓	✓

**How important you think it is for your child to achieve their goals?**

	Parent01 Ratings	Parent02 Ratings
Not at all important		
A little important		
Quite important		
Very important	✓	✓
Completely important		

## **Appendix 18: Details of How the Assessment was Constructed**

The assessment was designed drawing upon resources created to assist the YP during the phase one interviews, the research findings and previous research. The research by Baker (2015) summarised the existing literature involving 'future-selves' and suggested the young person is assisted to 'elicit the mental imagery of the future-self' through techniques such as writing to their 'future-self', imagining themselves in the future and by using collages or drawing to elicit this.

Prince and Nurius (2014) were able to associate successful educational outcomes when YP were aided to imagine themselves in the future, to goal-set and plan towards the goals set. Through identifying possible barriers and supportive factors towards these goals, the YP were more prepared and more able to achieve successful academic outcomes. The use of 'mapping' was thought to help them to visualise and take steps towards the goal. Owens and Patterson (2013) suggested a variety of ways to deliver positive psychological interventions, such as writing or drawing if the YP require a less cognitively and literacy intensive approach as this can increase engagement and provide greater input from children with a learning need. They identified that very few studies have applied a drawing technique to elicit the young person's vision of their 'future-self'.

Stevenson and Clegg (2011) identified the benefit of having ideal or hoped for 'future-selves', as well as what they didn't want to become, as this helps to guide them towards making positive choices to achieve the desired self rather than the negative 'future-self'. The more developed the vision and more detailed it is, the more motivating it is for them, suggesting the YP who have explored their 'future-self' and consider

positives will have a greater motivation to achieve these aspirations. The learning environment which promotes the consideration of possible 'future-selves' will offer the YP opportunities to increase their self-efficacy towards these goals (Bandura, 1993), and having positive role models and supportive systems to aid their progression will lead to higher longer-term aspirations.

Oysterman and James (2011) reiterated the need to help the YP to make links between their current self and their desired 'future-self' and strategies to take steps towards this goal, so that they are motivated to make positive choices. Harding and Atkinson (2009) explored some of the techniques applied by EPs to ascertain YP's views, finding the use of discussion-based methods and therapeutic-based approaches like personal-construct psychology (Beaver, 2003; Butler & Green, 2007), which included rating scales and the 'miracle question'.

Based upon the research findings and the materials devised to support YP during the interviews, the following tool was created and delivered to three year ten pupils for **evaluation**.

# Future Selves Intervention

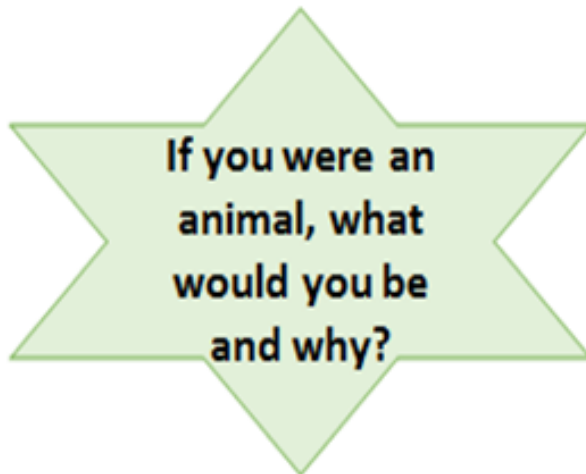


April 2016

Melissa Parry

Trainee Educational Psychologist

## Ice Breaker Activity



## Imagined Future Self

In the future, I would like to be...



In the future, I don't want to be...



## About Me

Things I am good at...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Things I find hard...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



## Life Mapping

I will study next...  
I want to do this because...

I live with...

Where I will be next...

I will like to do...  
With...

I hope to study...  
I want to be...

I will live with...

Where I will be in the future...

I will spend time...  
With...

I would like to achieve...



## Journey to the Future

NAME:

**BARRIERS**

**START**

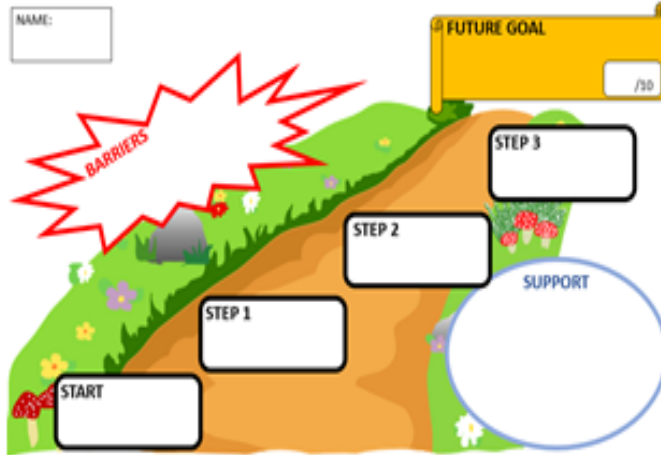
**STEP 1**

**STEP 2**

**STEP 3**

**SUPPORT**

**FUTURE GOAL** /50








There is a meeting planned for June 2016 to meet with the specialist school's Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, school EP, Transition Coordinator and relevant teaching and support staff for year 11 pupils to feedback the research findings and present the assessment materials to the staff to apply for the new year 11 pupils and for the school EP to apply and embed this into the transition preparation for pupils at the school.

## Appendix 19: Assessment Feedback from YP and Staff

The feedback from the YP and staff from the intervention delivered to the year 10 pupils in the specialist provision was mostly positive, with some helpful comments and ideas offered to make improvements. The YP feedback can be seen in the table below.

			
<b>Have you enjoyed today's session?</b>	✓ ✓	✓	
<b>Has the session been useful?</b>	✓ ✓	✓	
<b>Do you think this session will help you in the future?</b>	✓ ✓	✓	
<b>Comments:</b>	I didn't know some of the answers and didn't want to get it wrong Journey' page looked a bit 'baby-ish'		

*Table 2: Feedback from Assessment from YP*

The feedback from the staff member who was present can be seen below and is discussed in section 4.2.5.



## Appendix 20: Excerpt of parent transcript Phase 1

I: Do you think that the planning incorporated all aspects of Chandler's future or was it focus more specifically on education?

**R: I don't know, and again I suppose that's quite difficult because. I feel like Chandler has been put there for the next three years and then there's the what next. For other children it might be you've got a go to college for three years and then you can go on to uni or then you then go on to do this or that. I don't really know**

I: To think that it covered things such as independent living and is his social life and in the future and incorporated things such as his inclusion and his interests and the recreation kind aside covered as well or do you think that it's more about getting him to the next stage in education?

**R: umm.**

I: Considering it next?

**R: Ummm. I don't know, I think, I suppose that you know those independent living skills and things like that have been thought about hence why he's on the skills development course and certainly I know that they are going to work on his education support him with his English and maths. In terms of friendship groups that I don't know confusing a very small group of children, with of children, and then of children with varying abilities. And so in my head I was hoping that Chandler would go to college and make some new friends and finally discover a little bit social time and that hasn't happened. I don't know if that will happen, will he stay with that friendship group, the one, the group that he is with now or will he stay with them the next three years? And if he does is that good for him, I don't know. You know I have just recently been to a parents evening and Chandler is of higher ability than the other children that are in that skills development group so I don't know. Chandler is you know stuck between that bit of the mainstream and that specialist provision and that specialist provision it seems to hinder that social bit because obviously he's, and you know they're vulnerable children and they need escorting everywhere and everything needs to be planned. You know I couldn't just puts Chandler on the bus and just say you crack on into town and go off to Pizza Hut and meet your mates, it would never happen, it ain't ever going to happen. But in terms of, it's not happened so socially how good it is going to be I don't know. But at this moment in time, nothing has changed socially for Chandler. Because he was**

**at Kings Mount, he was so cut off from everybody children from across...**

I: it's such a wide cohort isn't it

**R: Yeah, and now he's at College, it's a very small group of young adults. There I don't know about their independent skills and things like that so certainly nothing has changed in our eyes. That might change socially I don't know but in terms of his education and his kind of independent living skills I think that yeah he's probably in the right place**

I: And as part of that you feel he has integrated within the community of the College, or do you feel that it's still quite related to the course that he's on?

**R: Actually spoke to the school and the College about this and they said that if they want to go and get a cup of tea or something then a member of staff will take them to get a cup of tea but they've learnt very quickly that actually Chandler doesn't need any of that and so if Chandler wants to go off and get himself a cup of tea or go off and get something, he can go off and do that on his own and so he has been able to go out into the College and be as independent as he can without having someone with him. For that and quite grateful that they have done that because the world isn't made up of just special children, the world is made up of all sorts of normally developing people who at times can create challenges that Chandler has perhaps been sheltered from and so he has to learn to deal with those things you know. And I think he has, people have said you know he has said people have come and barged my back today when I was in the queue at Costa and they didn't say sorry but I had to explain that people don't say sorry Chandler just because you do doesn't mean other people do. But these are things that he's got to learn so, and I am, I think they have made allowances for Chandler to get that bit of independence really which is really good I think. Yeah, I'm really grateful for that.**

## Appendix 21: Example coding using NVivo from YP and Parent Interview Phase One

PAP1F1M01

[Click to edit](#)

**Like, Does he do the apprenticeship or skills development? Someone's offered him an apprenticeship that's amazing**

That's great

**But equally should he go to skills development and continue to learn the skills that he is developing**

Yep

**That was hard because I'm taking away from Chandler something that he really wants to do. I'm taking away that choice, I'm trying to make it for him. And so then I did speak to Chandler and like say, that apprenticeship could still be there in three years time or in fact you may find something different you know an internship somewhere or something like that so you still have to learn. He still needs to learn, I think, yeah I think it is important he does skills development**

So it was kind of there was a discussion around it but you did feel that actually he needed those skills first?

Information seeking

Progression

Contribution of Parent

Labels

Needs of YP

Contribution of YP

Parents choosing for YP

developing skills

beliefs and values

Work Based Training

YP Expectation

opportunities

Happiness or Employment

Accessibility

Employment

Protectiveness

Relationships

Social Awareness

Parental Vision of Future Self for Y

Limiting Options

Provision Options

Preparation

Difference perception

Social Opportunities

Independence

Decision Making

Parental Concerns

Parental Expectation

Coding Density

## Appendix 22: Educational Psychologist Inter-Rater Feedback

Educational Psychologist	Feedback Comments
Number One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most of the items were coded as the researcher had completed however they did not code one section as 'protectiveness', however after discussion about the reasons the researcher has interpreted this as protectiveness, the EP felt this was appropriate</li> <li>• They commented about the distinction between some of the codes as several appeared to be similar to each other (parental contribution, parental expectations), and again were satisfied that in further sections of the transcript, there is a necessity to differentiate these as they demonstrate different aspects of the young person's and parental perspective</li> <li>• They commented about the number of codes produced as being a lot however recognised that they had only seen a small section and that the overall data collected was large and would require many</li> </ul>
Number Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The majority of codes were replicated, however they questioned the definition of some of the other codes not seen in this section. The name and description of these were expanded to provide more information</li> <li>• This EP felt that this portion of the text had a range of codes and had multiple coding for some quotes, as the researcher had done, and felt that this challenged him when not having constructed or previously discussed the codes names and descriptions</li> </ul>
Number Three	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This EP did not precisely match up the codes but after discussion, identified that she did not have the awareness the researcher did with the data and their construction of codes and agreed with the chosen codes.</li> <li>• The variety of codes found within a section of transcript, demonstrated the complexity of the data for this EP</li> </ul>



### Appendix 23: Summary of Themes for YP and Parent Phase One

Description and example/s from the transcript	Code Names	Description of the Theme	Theme Name
'do my dance career' 'have a misses' 'want a job' 'I picked myself' 'I wanted to go there so I put my 'foot down' 'dance, I wanted to do dance really badly' 'realistic' 'disability is not an excuse in this house' 'at the annual review' 'still swim'	Vision of future YP Involvement of YP Expectations Beliefs and Values Sharing of Information Well-being of YP	The inclusion of the YP's vision of their 'future-self' when planning for next steps within transition planning	<b>Inclusion of the 'future-self'</b>
'take him and sit in an interview and talk for him' 'he seems vulnerable in terms of his understanding, socially, his interactions' 'for us to make a decision based on what we think 'is best for Chandler' 'he can't handle a relationship' 'I think he's like to help with younger disabled children ... he's good with them'	Involvement of Parent Parental Concerns Parental Choosing for YP Protectiveness Parental Vision of Future YP	The roles that others have or take on as part of the transition planning for YP with SEN	<b>Roles of others</b>
'his understanding of things that are happening' 'autistic' 'dyslexic'	Understanding of Life Skills Labels of Need	The identified and discussed barriers or challenges which	<b>Challenges and Barriers to Achieving Aspirations</b>

'easily led' 'quick to anger' 'he's bad with money' 'other children had different needs to Chandler' 'it is local'	Needs of the YP	impacted on achieving the YP's aspirations	
	Financial Implications		
	Difference Perception		
	Accessibility		
'we will be looking at a work-based program' 'I teach kids' 'we're trying to encourage independence at home' 'doesn't like bad behaviour' 'more freedom'	Moving On	The factors involved in the steps towards adulthood	<b>Progression</b>
	Employment		
	Developing Skills		
	Social Awareness		
	Independence		
'knew I was going to be safe there' 'specific place you wanted to go' 'I don't know what options are available' 'go to skills development along with every other child'	Process of Decision-Making	The way decisions were made regarding choices for FE for the YP	<b>Decision-Making Regarding Options for FE</b>
	Provision Options		
	Lack of Choice		
'literally relied on school' 'they basically explained what was going to happen' 'wanted to be a train driver before' 'we had lots of meetings' 'didn't use technology to get your views' 'he did his work experience over the school' 'met our TAs' 'go and look at colleges' 'attended taster days'	Information Seeking	The preparation made for supporting the transition for YP, including planning, processes, materials and support for this	<b>Preparation for Transition</b>
	Advice Giving		
	Previous Aspirations		
	Systems and Processes		
	Technology		
	Work-Based Training		
	Support for YP		
	Preparation Materials, Planning and Visits		

## Appendix 24: Excerpt from Focus Group Phase 2

I: last one is if you could choose to study anything in the world, like literally a magic wand time, what would you choose to study?

L: like a second choice?

I: yeah

C: it could become true Liam

I: what would you choose to do?

L: probably be well, I might study what's the meaning of life

I: Ohhh philosophy

L: because I've just wondered what is life and what we built for and why are we here and why we created to do all that stuff. Because you live in the new die and then what is that all about

I: after all these difficult questions I've given you you challenged me to spell philosophy right!

C: some people don't get that way because like Liam said, you just get that and people don't get it and then you're like well life's just a bitch really

L: Yeah because there's lots of things in life, like in life there's lots of things like race gender, sexual like home oh and heterosexual and transgender and like religion and non-religion

I: I like the differences between people mind people make choices and stuff

C: yeah choices your choices and stuff

L: and why people make choices

I: that's a really good one, wow he's really good isn't he!

(41.11 sec)

L: well I am the courageous one in the group

C: it's like, it's like...

I: are you the one in the group that always gets asked your opinion first?

L: yes

I: (laughs) sounds like it. Excellent it's good that you are interested in why people make choices and why people do things and how they act

C: it's really good

I: in terms if you could do any course in the world is there any course that you would choose to do rather than this one?

W: I would probably do something to do with art or something

I: so you an artist then have you looked at my artwork in shame in your head (laughs)

W: I do like art, I do like to do art

L: I like to do art as well. I post some drawings on Facebook yesterday and she seen them (points)

I: do you do a particular thing for arts, is there a particular thing that you are good at doing or enjoy doing?

W: now just generally

I: what you see yourself doing with the arts would you be a natural artist or would she be a teacher or...

W: I probably do sculpture or something

I: dodgy spelling again I'm getting challenged by you guys. If you could use a course then you might have chosen art which you would pick up. Cara?

C: I'd like to do two. I think that us rugby what I really want to do which would be music, working with music

I: what type of music? Performing?

C: yes involving singing and rapping you know

I: to get a chance to do any of that kind of stuff

C: you can't really get a job involving that they only unless you want to go on like Britain's got talent or something or the X factor something like that

W: oh yeah

C: but sometimes it's just a con really

## Appendix 25: Example coding using NVivo from YP Focus Group Phase 2

The screenshot displays the NVivo interface for a focus group transcript. The transcript text is as follows:

A: yes I have. Umm I would obviously meet someone and I would obviously I'm not going to repeat how but I'd have a kid. I would travel around the world obviously with my job as well. ummm penny can do the babysitting! Sorry penny! I think it would be a good life because I may not have the goods upbringing myself but then you can't go back in time so you have to make the most your life now that you have so I'm like thinking it would be quite a good life and the one thing that my mum said to me and Gran are don't make the same mistakes that I did

P: yeah

I: okay penny had you see yourself in the future?

P: what was like a family? Yeah, well like and with this new guy now and after my 19th he said that he is going to send me some money and then we could like I could live with him in America. While I thought to myself that's a pretty big decision and then I thought what he can like send me the money and I can save up and then when I am ready to go I can just go over. Plus people think I'm like really really aggressive, but I am actually really gentle with kids when I like them. So I like definitely no would make a good mother plus like I'd like to go and see the world so I'd probably want to live in America anyway, so on top of that I could bring my cat with me

The coding density chart on the right side of the interface shows the following categories and their corresponding colors:

- discrimination (grey)
- job aspirations (black)
- relationships (red)
- technology (red)
- education or training (black)
- YP listened to on their views (black)
- role model (black)
- work experience (black)
- emotional response (black)
- preferences (yellow)
- taken advantage of (black)
- family (orange)
- life skills (orange)
- job requirements (black)
- needs of YP (black)
- environment (black)
- independence (purple)
- social opportunities (purple)
- vision of future self (purple)
- mistrust of others intentions (purple)
- boundaries of social interactions (black)
- support from others (black)
- friendships (black)
- concerns (black)
- personal development (black)
- personal background (purple)
- living accommodation (blue)
- decision making and opt (pink)
- supp (orange)
- expectations of (purple)
- enjoy (blue)

The interface also includes a 'Focus group 1' tab, a 'Click to edit' link, and a 'Code At' dropdown menu at the bottom.

## Appendix 26: Excerpt from Professional interview Phase 2

I: Excellent. Do you feel that the young person is explicitly helped to imagine themselves in the future as part of their transition planning? Um for example does anyone assist them to sort of visualise what they see themselves doing in the future?

R: We do-- we do, do a lot of discussion around that area but it is quite difficult with um students who can't look that far into the future. So for our more able students it may be just that they want to get a job and we can talk about their skills and um you know achievements they-they've got to uh achieve before um before they can move into employment you know they have to build up their skills and confidence. Um they will have to um learn to get there on time and that sort of thing. That's quite easy to portray that picture of what they've got to do um to get to their main goal. For our less able students we might talk about the future as in you might want to live on your own one day or with a friend. Or you might want to have a job. Um and in-- we talk in general then. I think they have some understanding but not always a full understanding at all.

I: That's great thank you. Um and do you think that could be an effective method to help young people to plan for their future?

R: Um I think-- I think it is um you know really we're doing that all the time. I'm not sure how much our-- say our pre-entry learners uh will understand by that. So I think it's--it's phrases like you know 'Do you always want to live with mum and dad? Or would you like to live with your friends one day?' Um sometimes you don't get a true picture of what they really want um because perhaps they've not been used to being asked those questions before. Um?

I: So do you feel that that's something that schools may be or uh the kind of transition planning with careers south west or the schools might be looking or might be suggested to look a little bit closely, more closely at to sort of...

R: I think it's too early to be honest.

I: Okay. Yeah.

R: I think it's-- I think they need to get to college and start their post 16 um curriculum and--and then start looking at preparing for adulthood because that is what we're all about here.

I: Yeah.

R: I think at school for a lot of them it is too early to be, yes they can talk about the future but I don't think they could do anymore because I'm not sure that--that a lot of the students could cope with that.

I: Yeah.

R: I think it's little steps.

I: Supporting the needs of the next step.

R: And they need little bits of information. Yes. Um so it is about creating a pathway for them but that pathway could change just the same as it is for any other 16 year old who-who decides they want to be a-a doctor or a lawyer and once they've you know come to college they may well change their mind and do something completely different so.

## Appendix 27: Example coding using NVivo from Professional interview Phase 2

The screenshot displays the NVivo software interface. The main window shows a transcript of an interview with three segments:

- I:** Excellent. Um do you feel that the young person is explicitly helped to imagine themselves in the future as part of their transition planning? Um for example does anyone assist them to sort of visualise what they see themselves doing in the future?
- R:** We do-- we do, do a lot of discussion around that area but it is quite difficult with um students who can't look that far into the future. So for our more able students it may be just that they want to get a job and we can talk about their skills and um you know achievements they-they've got to uh achieve before um before they can move into employment you know they have to build up their skills and confidence. Um they will have to um learn to get there on time and that sort of thing. That's quite easy to portray that picture of what they've got to do um to get to their main goal. For our less able students we might talk about the future as in you might want to live on your own one day or with a friend. Or you might want to have a job. Um and in-- we talk in general then. I think they have some understanding but not always a full understanding at all.
- I:** That's great thank you. Um and do you think that could be an effective method to help young people to plan for their future?

On the right side of the interface, a coding tree is visible, showing a hierarchical structure of codes. The root node is "Environment", which branches into several sub-nodes:

- Social Awareness
- Beliefs and Values
- Social Opportunities
- Limited Options
- Employment
- Inclusion of Future Self
- Opportunities
- Reframing aims
- Aspirations
- Protectiveness
- Independence
- Parental expectations
- Advice Giving
- Developing skills
- Needs of YP
- References to legal documents or processes
- Effectiveness of Transition Planning
- YP view listened to
- Funding
- Decision Making
- Challenges in Systems or Processes
- Parental involvement
- Communication
- Progression
- Support for YP
- Transition preparation for YP
- Professional Involvement
- Systems
- Coding Density

The bottom of the interface shows a toolbar with various icons and a status bar indicating "In Nodes" and "Code At".



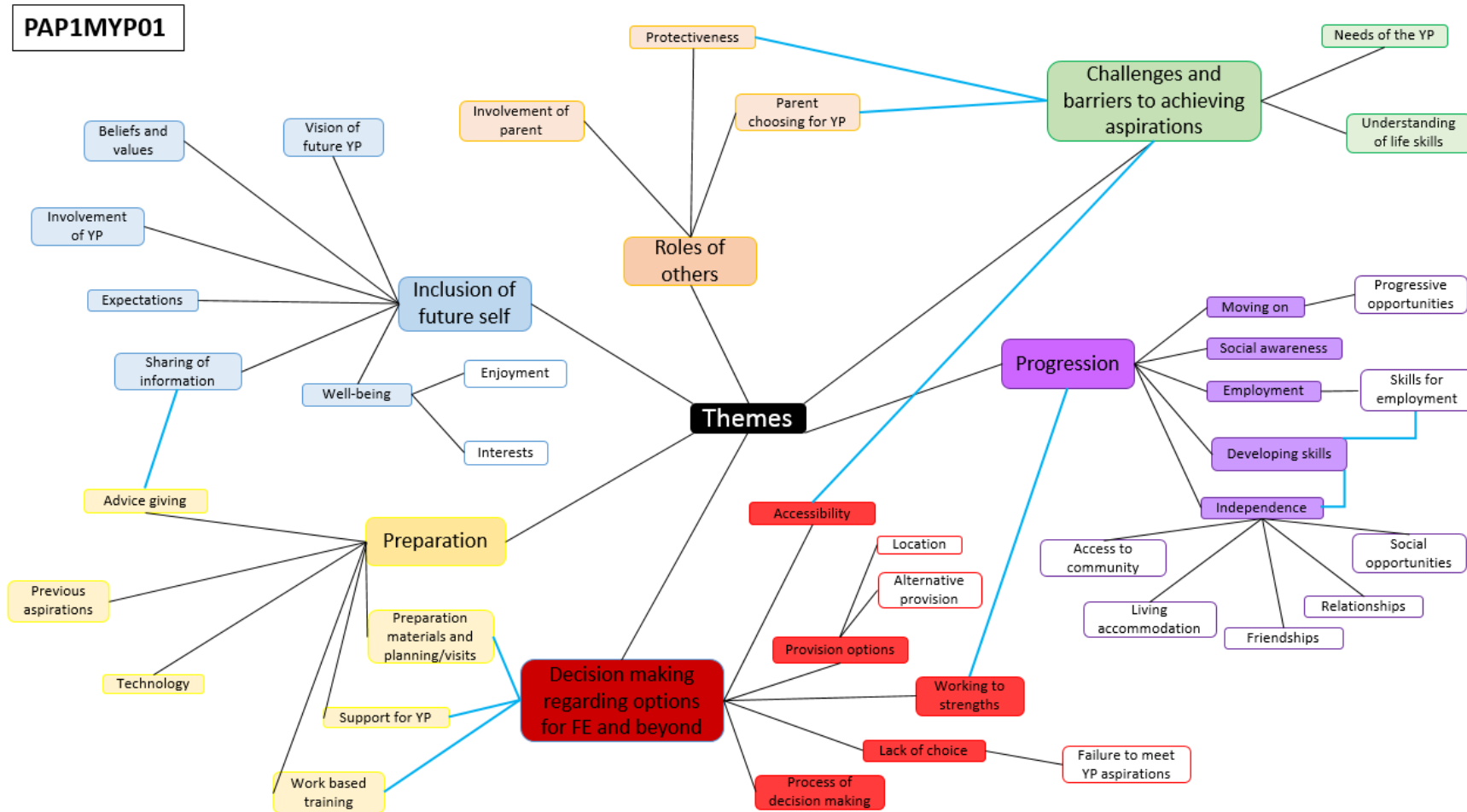
## Appendix 28: Example coding table for Professional interview Phase 2

Description and example/s from the transcript	Code Names	Description and example/s from the transcript	Theme Name
'person-centred approach' 'annual reviews' 'lots of meetings' 'working in conjunction with other organisations to make sure we know what is happening for the YP' 'strengths and weaknesses' 'he's kind'	Involvement of the YP	The sharing of information and communication between stakeholders involved in transition	<b>Information Sharing</b>
	Sharing of Information		
	Communication		
	Attributes of the YP		
'listen to me booklet' 'assessment days' 'taster sessions' 'careers advisor' 'adult services' 'work-based internships' 'work experience' 'successful' 'helpful' 'in the past, statements...' 'letting technology be part of that' 'phones'	Preparation materials	The preparation made for supporting the transition for YP, including planning, processes, materials and support for this	<b>Transition Preparation</b>
	Planning and visits		
	Support for YP		
	Work-based training		
	Effectiveness of transition planning		
	Historical references		
Technology			
'visualise themselves in the future' 'train track' 'strong sense of ambition' 'they are interested in to get the right course' 'being person-centred' 'its starts with the YP'	Inclusion of the YPs future-self	The inclusion of the YP's vision of their 'future-self' when planning for next steps within transition planning	<b>Inclusion of the YP's Future-Self</b>
	Self-perception of YP		
	Aspirations		
	Inclusion of the YP voice		
'find the best solution' 'taster days' 'attending meetings' it's a lengthy process' 'annual review' 'EHC'	Beliefs and values of professionals	The systems and processes created and applied to assist with transition planning, including decision-making	<b>Systems to Support Transition</b>
	Process of decision-making		
	Reference to legal documents and statutory processes		

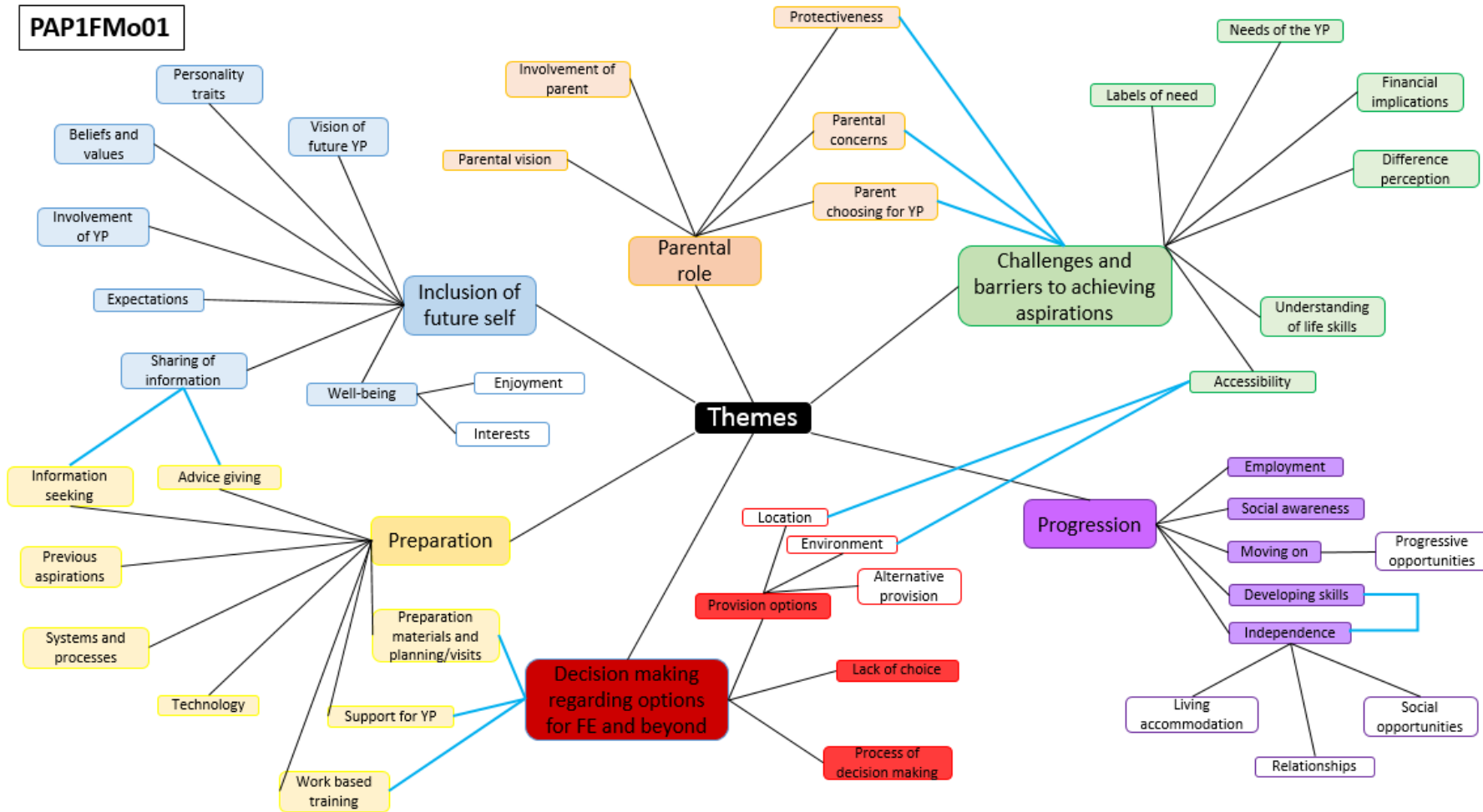
<p>'not treated like kids anymore'</p> <p>'cooking' 'riding a motorbike'</p> <p>'work placements'</p> <p>'they struggle socially'</p> <p>'employment is planned'</p>	<p>Independence</p> <p>Developing skills</p> <p>Moving on</p> <p>Social awareness</p> <p>Employment</p>	<p>The factors and areas involved in the development of independence and progression</p>	<p><b>Progression and Opportunities</b></p>
<p>'the provision just isn't enough'</p> <p>'not going to happen, they need level 3'</p> <p>'there's not a lot of choice'</p> <p>'local' 'accessible to YP'</p> <p>'small' 'safe'</p>	<p>Limited options</p> <p>Restricted learning options</p> <p>Limited options</p> <p>Location</p> <p>Environment</p>	<p>The range of provision options available and the decisions made</p>	<p><b>Provision Options</b></p>
<p>'we can't magic up transport' 'the local authorities are being squeezed'</p>	<p>Funding</p>	<p>Issues and systems linked to the funding of</p>	<p><b>Funding Routes and Options</b></p>
<p>'realistic' 'not limiting them no, but keeping it realistic'</p> <p>'stigma'</p> <p>'can't cope'</p> <p>'not much separation between the SEND and the local authority'</p> <p>'just not out there'</p> <p>'it's harder to get involved in things'</p> <p>'they disappear'</p> <p>'I'm very frustrated' 'it breaks my heart'</p> <p>'parents are terrified' 'they babied the students'</p>	<p>Reframing aims</p> <p>Labels of Need</p> <p>Needs of the YP</p> <p>Conflict of interest</p> <p>Limiting options</p> <p>Lack of inclusion</p> <p>Challenges to system processes</p> <p>Emotional Response</p> <p>Protectiveness</p>	<p>The identified and discussed barriers or challenges which impacted on achieving the YP's aspirations</p>	<p><b>Challenges and Barriers to Achieving Aspirations</b></p>

'we meet with families, discuss with them' 'that aint ever going to happen' 'disability is not an excuse' 'find the best fit' 'they play a huge part in transition planning' 'going on training in March to secure my knowledge'	Involvement of Parent	The roles that others have or take on as part of the transition planning for YP with SEN	<b>Roles and Responsibilities of Others</b>
	Parental expectations		
	Advice giving		
	Professional involvement		
	Staff training		

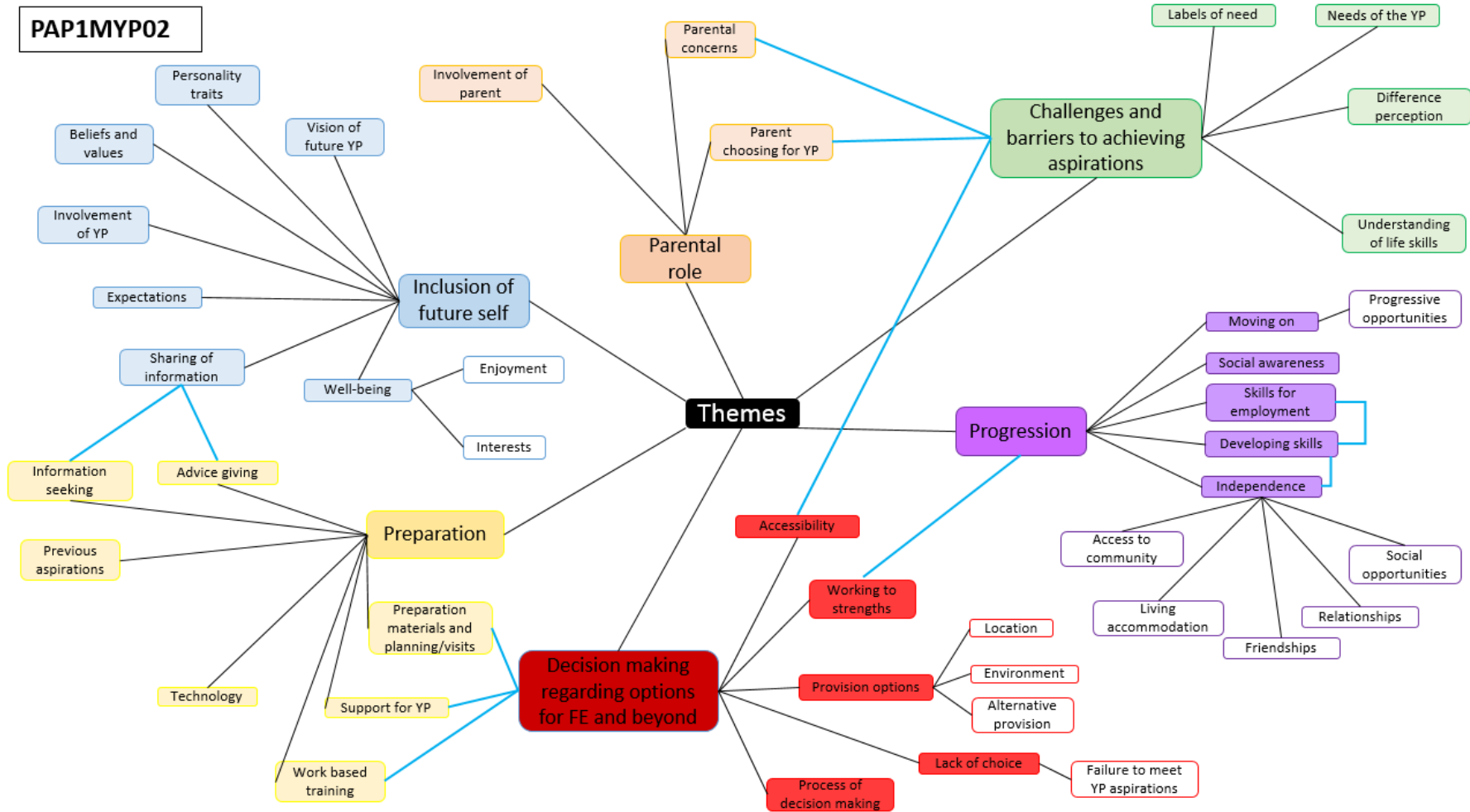
## Appendix 29: Case study 1 Chandler Thematic Map



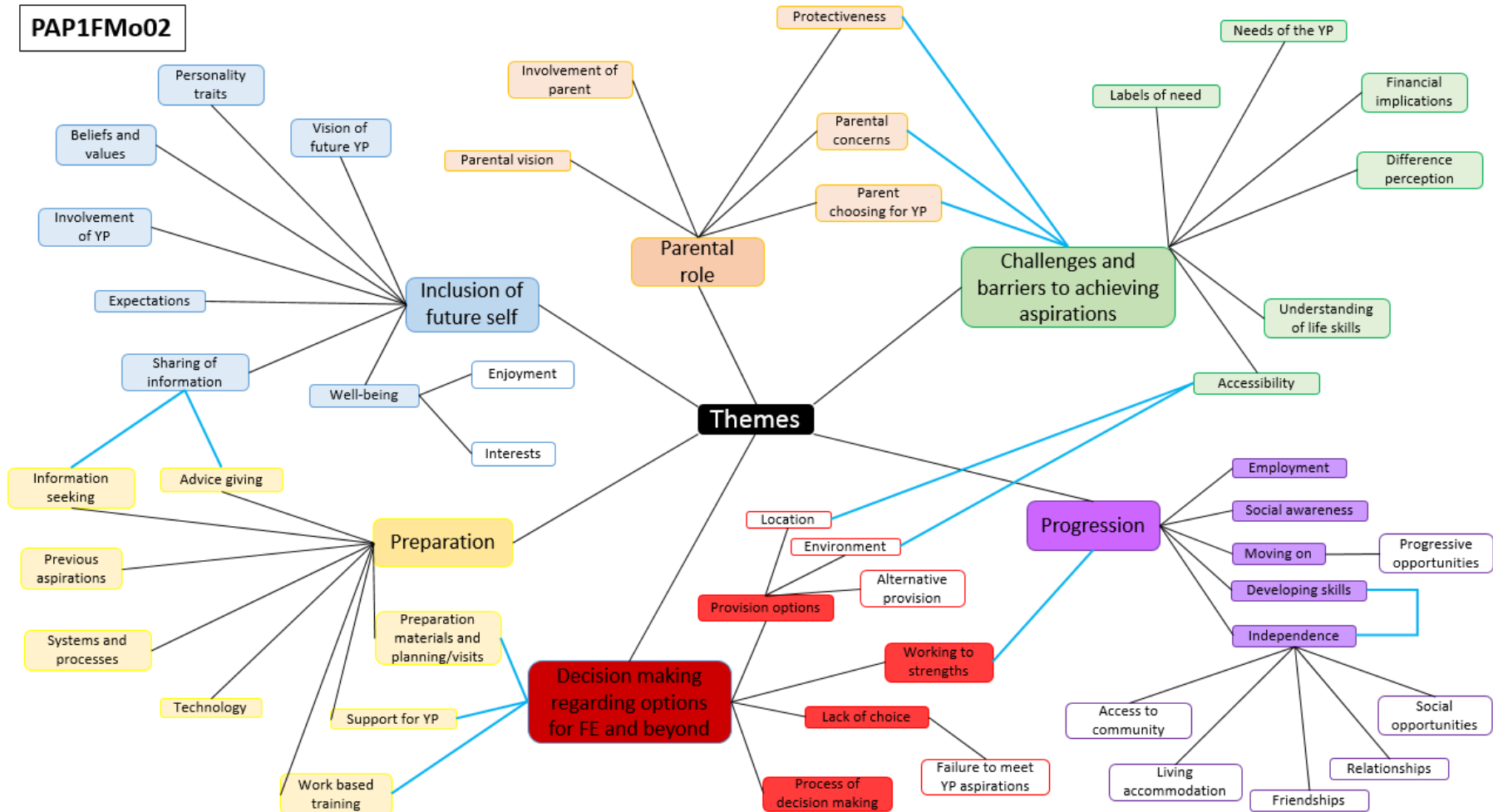
## Appendix 30: Case study 1 Cate Thematic Map



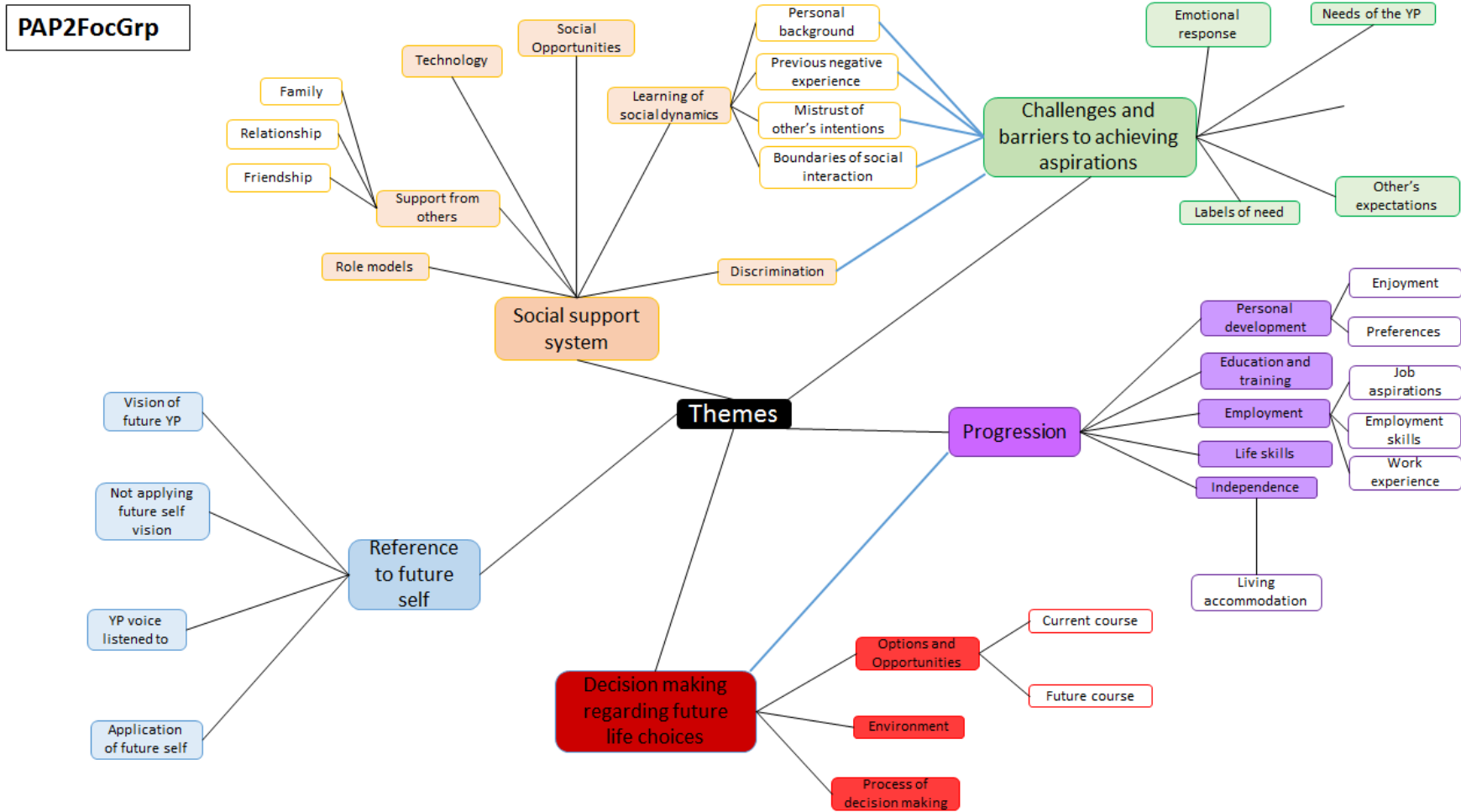
## Appendix 31: Case study 2 Ian Thematic Map



## Appendix 32: Case study 2 Amy Thematic Map

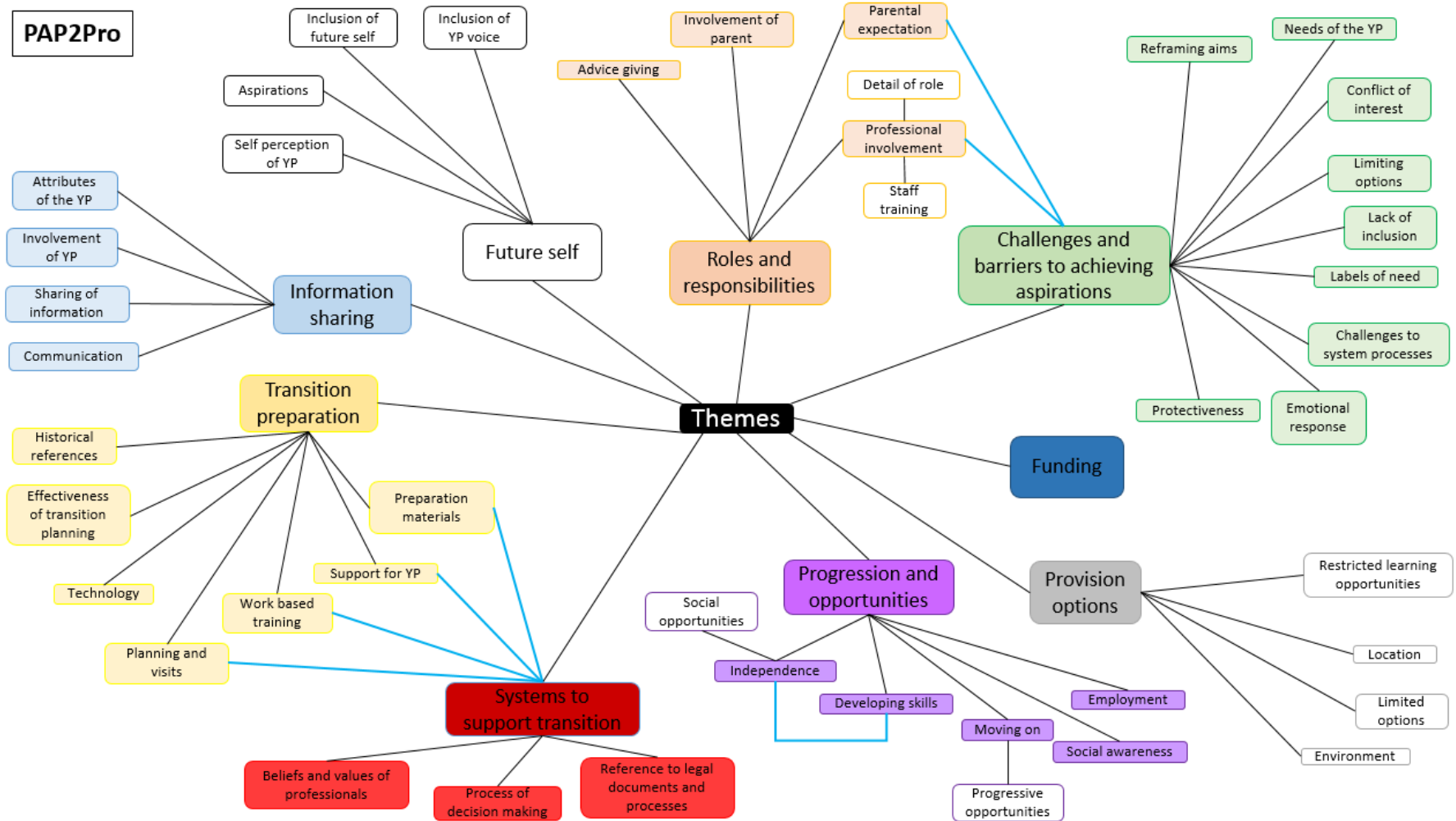


### Appendix 33: YP Focus Group Thematic Map





## Appendix 34: Professional Thematic Map



# **Literature Review**

## **Introduction**

The transition from one educational setting to another can be challenging for the most resilient young person (YP) due to the complexity of the changes which occur during this time, and for the most vulnerable YP, this process can be harder (Bostock and Wood, 2015). For particular populations of YP, such as pupils with special educational needs (SEN), careful planning is required to ensure that the young person's needs are met while making significant educational moves (Corrigan, 2014), with Government policy continuing to make transition planning statutory (DfE, 1994; DfEE, 1997; DfES, 2001; DfE, 2014b).

The transition from secondary school to further education (FE) has been a key topic of interest across this decade, although it is only over the past two years that there is an expectation for all YP to continue with education or training after age sixteen (DfE & DoH, 2014), potentially leading FE establishments to have to carefully consider how they meet the needs of the most vulnerable students. YP who received statements of SEN are identified as having an additional learning need which requires differentiation of curriculum or adaptations made to enable access to learning like their age-equivalent peers (DfES, 2001), and will be entitled to the new Education, Health and Care Plan (DfE & DoH, 2014). Any child with an EHC Plan or statement is entitled to receive a transition plan during their annual reviews from year 9, where parents/carers, the YP and professionals explore their strengths and needs and identify appropriate preparations required for FE, prior to the move.

Despite increased inclusion of YP with learning needs within mainstream education, specialist educational provision still exists across the UK. The family and YP has greater choice regarding the placement of children with SEN, with some parents requesting a special school for their child which

provides individualised support for young people with additional and complex needs (Abbott & Heslop, 2009). The level of need within some settings has become more complex, with many supporting a learning need and additional social, emotional and behavioural needs (Nind et al., 2012). Many specialist provisions are designed to meet the needs up to the previous statutory school leaving age of 16, leading to YP with SEN moving to mainstream FE (Elson, 2011). There is little research about YP with either moderate learning difficulties or YP with social, emotional, behavioural needs, about the changes which they experience during the transition process and how the approach and planning supports their needs.

Existing literature into the effectiveness of transition planning has found a difference in the level of involvement of the YP and their parents/carers in the process (Carnaby, Lewis, Martin, Naylor, & Stewart, 2003; Dee, 2002; Grove & Giraud-Saunders, 2003; Smart, 2004; Ward, Mallett, Heslop, & Simons, 2003). The EHC Plan and reviews are designed to be based around the views of the YP and their families to ensure the YP's aspirations and own interests are realised (DfE, 2014a). Studies have found particular factors which have been thought to lead to successful transition into FE, such as visiting the setting prior to starting (Abbott & Heslop, 2009; Elson, 2011; Smart, 2004), having a clear and well-constructed plan (Wright, 2006), and having good information and advice offered to YP and parents/carers about their options and choices (Abbott & Heslop, 2009; Smart, 2004; Ward et al., 2003). The Literature Review is evaluating research about the transition for YP with SEN in to FE and the link between the planning and the YP's view of their 'future-self'.

As greater numbers of YP with SEN are likely to continue in education after the age of 16, it is important for there to be research into the most effective ways to support them across the challenges of transition, using the YP and their families voices (Hayes, 2004). The longer-term outcomes for YP with SEN have been reported as poor, with findings such as little progression on courses post-16 (Dyson, Meagher & Robinson, 2004) and low employment levels (Curtis et al., 2009; Gebhardt et al., 2011). This demonstrates a need

to identify the most beneficial aspects of preparation during transitional planning.

Vulnerable groups who are due to move from a familiar provision with other YP with similar needs to a larger mainstream FE are likely to encounter a number of significant changes during the transition process (Mitchell, 2010). Previous studies have identified the range of support offered for YP as part of the transition (Hornby & Kidd, 2000; Smart, 2004; Ward et al., 2003), however there is no research considering the understanding of the YP's perception of expected changes.

### **Identification of literature**

There is a wide range of literature about transitional aspects for the YP with different populations of YP and altering research questions as focus. The research has been generated through reading past and current legislation (DfE, 1994; DfEE, 1997; DfES, 2001; DfE, 2008; DfE, 2014b; DfE & DoH, 2014), reports of evaluation (OFSTED, 2010), and through database searches for relevant journals.

I began with an initially broad topic and combinations of terms to help to build an effective and thorough background of the existing literature and identified aspects of research which still required exploration.

Databases used	Terms used
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- PsychInfo</li><li>- ScienceDirect</li><li>- EBSCO</li><li>- Web of Science</li><li>- Sage Open</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Transition</li><li>- Moderate Learning Difficulties</li><li>- Social, Emotional and Behaviour needs</li><li>- Further Education</li><li>- Special school</li><li>- Annual Reviews</li><li>- Perspectives</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Experiences</li> <li>- Young people</li> <li>- Parents</li> <li>- Professionals</li> <li>- Future-self</li> <li>- Self-esteem</li> <li>- Self- concept</li> </ul>
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As the area is vast, there have been areas of interest which have been studied and reported by different disciplines, such as SEN support, education, disability and educational psychology journals. This indicates the breadth and relevance of the topic for many stakeholders within the process, and the implications for practice.

The studies have largely centred around the views of the effectiveness of the interventions used within the transition planning (Abbott & Heslop, 2009; Eaves, Rabren, & Hall, 2012; O'Riordan, 2011), reflecting on the effectiveness of support towards longer-term outcomes (Elson, 2011; Hornby & Kidd, 2000; Smart, 2004; Wood & Cronin, 1999), the role of the transition coordinator (Cullen et al., 2009; Grove & Giraud-Saunders, 2003), and the views of the transition process itself (Abbott & Heslop, 2009; Carnaby et al., 2003; Li et al., 2009; Mitchell & Beresford, 2014; Ward et al., 2003).

The mode of data collection varied across the different studies based on the aims of the studies. For exploration of transition factors, researchers used interviews and focus groups to provide greater understanding of the personal perspectives of the process, to generate new information and insight (Naughton, Rolfe and Siraj-Blatchford, 2001; Robson, 2011). The advantages of this method is that it generates 'real' views of the participants and provides more information about the topic. However the negative considerations are the limited ability to generalise the findings from single or small case studies (Dee, 2002) and the Researcher has to assume that the information obtained is the truth and not what the participant thinks they want to hear, or that the participant with learning needs has been able to suitably make their views understood (Corrigan,

2014; O'Sullivan, 2011). Other studies gathering information about the specific intervention effectiveness have used questionnaires and surveys to gather quantitative data to be able to include greater numbers within studies (Crotty, 1998). While the advantage of statistical data can provide wider knowledge about the views of many, it can lack personal experience and opinion when it is analysed (Mertens, 2010).

By seeking rich and detailed data of a particular population case study, the basis for using semi-structured interviews is to provide relatively open areas for discussion to generate information on focussed aspects of what changes they perceive will occur (Hayes, 2000, Mertens, 2010; Robson, 2011), guided by previous research literature. Case studies can allow the researcher to manage the complexity of life situations for YP with SEN and their families (Dovey-Pearce, Price, Wood, Scott, Cookson & Corbett, 2012).

### **Terms of Definition**

The transition plan is a process that brings together a student and those individuals directly involved in helping the student prepare to enter a post-school environment, with 'well co-ordinated planning and advice' to make 'positive differences to YP's futures' (DfE, 2011). In the UK, annual reviews take place for all children with a statement for educational needs (DfE, 1994; DfEE, 1997; DfES, 2001) or Education, Health and Care plan (DfE, 2014b, 2014c), and state that transition plans are required for YP with SEN, beginning at their year 9 annual review (Abbott & Heslop, 2009; Carnaby et al., 2003; Cullen et al., 2009; Grove & Giraud-Saunders, 2003; Ward et al., 2003; Williamson et al., 2010). The meetings provide the opportunity for all stakeholders to offer their own views regarding strengths and needs, possible provision options, actions to support preparation for the future, and creation of a plan to record decisions and monitor progression (Cullen et al., 2009).

There has been a lot of confusion regarding the terms of SEN, particularly 'moderate learning difficulties' (MLD) as the population's needs within this category is so diverse (Kelly & Norwich, 2004; Norwich et al., 2014), providing a less than homogenous group for researching. This is particularly the case for YP who are within special schools as they may have other additional needs, leading to challenges in generalising findings for this group of YP. The previous research regarding transitions for pupils with social, emotional and behaviour needs (SEBD) is limited (O'Sullivan, 2011), and has identified that poor transition planning and inadequate experience of staff in FE for this population can lead to failure to complete education courses (O'Riordan, 2011; Nind et al., 2012). Researchers have suggested that there is a restricted amount of research conducted with populations such as MLD and SEBD, due to the difficulties of eliciting their voices (Hajdukova, Hornby, & Cushman, 2014; Kelly & Norwich, 2004; McConkey & Smith, 2004; O'Riordan, 2011; O'Sullivan, 2011). The newest Code of Practice (DfE & DoH, 2014) would identify the school's population as a special school for children with additional cognitive and learning needs and associated personal, social, emotional mental health needs.

The transition experience can be viewed as being 'complex and multi-faceted and invariably involve changes to self-identity', and not just a 'move from one physical location to another' or 'forward trajectory in age' (Cafter & Maunder, 2012). There is a need for YP to become acquainted with the new environment which they will be a member of, and to gain a sense of their changing identity. Markus and Nurius (1986) identified that people generate a possible 'future-self' or who they might become, would like to become, or who they did not wish to become in the future. The generation of this 'future-self' can direct motivation, support self-esteem and build a sense of belonging, and these are based upon previous experiences and beliefs within their own experiences and culture (Vignoles, Manzi, Regalia, Jemmolo, & Scabini, 2008).

### **Key issues and findings in the research field**

There are many significant factors which combine to create the complex experience of transition for YP and their families. Research has provided an overview of some of the key aspects which impact on the process of transition.

### **Inclusion Debate**

Over the past few decades, there has been a shift towards inclusion for many children with SEN into mainstream schools and classrooms, which has generated the 'dilemma of difference' between separate provision and full inclusion for all children with SEN (Norwich, 2013; Pitt & Curtin, 2004). The 'dilemma of difference' refers to the tension regarding the use of labels and segregation of pupils into alternative provisions against the inclusion of all children within a mainstream school (Norwich 2013). The pupils who attend the special school will have been identified as having a level of need and their parents will have requested that their child attend the special school rather than a mainstream school. Little research has investigated the perceptions of the YP about their school experience and if they experience the tension or negative view of being in a segregated provision (Norwich, 2006). The YP who are currently placed within specialist schooling, will have experienced a peer group of similar needs and abilities, and will have experienced an environment which supports their needs.

Ash, Bellew, Davies, Newman, & Richardson (2010) interviewed students at FE with and without disabilities to enquire about the level of inclusion which they experienced within college. The majority of YP interviewed indicated that they agreed with inclusion and thought that all could benefit from an increase of interaction between disabled and non-disabled peers. Many YP however suggested that often there was a segregation through college course options available for disabled. Another study explored the views of YP who attended mainstream schooling and chose to join specialist FE due to feelings of isolation within the mainstream learning environment and felt that they were more self-confident when attending a specialist provision (Pitt & Curtin, 2004). These findings indicate that there is concern about mainstream FE being able to cater for all aspects of learning and social needs, and if these experiences would be positive



(Hornby & Kidd, 2000). Hornby & Kidd (2000) followed the outcomes for YP who returned to mainstream education from special school and they indicated that while many were happy about moving to mainstream but their longer-term outcomes were low. However a limitation of this study was that it relied on retrospective accounts for experiences for up to 10 years since the event occurred.

Wright (2006) asked three practitioners to give their view about inclusion of YP with learning disabilities in in depth interviews, where they identified that specialist courses are created within FE for particular groups of YP. Interviews were chosen to gather subjective personal experience and is based in Phenomenology. They suggested that there needs to be greater emphasis on strategic planning for YP with learning difficulties and to offer greater inclusion within colleges.

### **Choice of Provision**

Research has suggested that the FE colleges are creating segregated courses which are specifically designed to meet the needs of YP with additional needs (Wright, 2006). Ofsted (2010) indicated the need for further examination of the provision provided in FE and for enabling YP to access the courses which they wished to study through changes in the support offered by FE Colleges.

Research performed by Elson found that some participants are concerned that the courses are providing a location to progress to from school but are failing to plan other life transitions, such as employment and independent living (Elson, 2011). Elson (2011) reports the legislative background which has led learners to be entitled to access mainstream FE, as recommended by the Warnock report (DES, 1978) and Valuing People White Paper (DoH, 2001). A case study approach with a cohort of Year 11 students moving to FE was used to identify the attitudes of YP, parents and staff of the provision available for YP with learning disabilities, identifying that for the YP with more complex needs, there were some options. Data was gathered from questionnaires answered by 13 school staff, with additional semi-

structured interviews from 6 of these staff. 23 students were interviewed with visual aids and parents were asked to fill in questionnaires. However the case study identified that the YP were marginalised to the specifically targeted SEN courses due to the literacy and numeracy levels of YP with MLD. There was a reported increase in YP accessing the mainstream courses with assistance from 8% in 2010 to 26% in 2011. The study brought awareness that some of the FE placements can apply a 'one size fits all' approach with SEN, assuming the group has homogenous needs (Elson, 2011). Macnab, Visser and Daniels (2008) created a study to identify and examine practice and provision in FE for YP aged 14-16 with SEBD, and identified that there were some concerns regarding the training of staff in FE to manage pupils with SEN and for strategic planning to ensure that courses are suitable and needs are met. The research had a telephone survey of randomly selected Colleges in England and Wales, with 10 visited, to interview Program Managers using semi-structured interviews and their findings written up as case studies. The options for YP moving from special schools with additional needs can be limited, meaning that a suitable choice is required to ensure positive future career options and lifestyle choices are provided (Beven, 2003; Elson, 2011; Watt & Paterson, 1997). McConkey and Smyth (2004) investigated the views of 51 Special School leavers aged between 18 and 21 and their families about their special school experience and of their transition to post-school options. The study was conducted in Belfast and the sample size was split evenly between male and female participants. The participant's views were gathered using semi-structured interviews. They suggested that the experience within the special school contributed to the YP's social and recreational needs as well as their learning needs being met versus 5 of the parents identifying a benefit of mainstream school as offering them the chance to interact with non-disabled peers. This was a subjective opinion of the parent's and there was no exploration of what they defined as "non-disabled peer". The parents highlighted the importance to them of gaining good information about options for the school, which had previous and extensive knowledge of the choices within the local area.

Mitchell (2010) provides a good account of the transition pathways for YP with disabilities and additional needs from special school to FE and beyond,

and demonstrates the complexity of the transition for these YP. This involves changes in status and identity as they move towards adulthood, the need for good preparation, and awareness of the shift to increased independence. Previous models of transition from education to work proposed by Fish (1986, cited in Mitchell, 2010) describe the change as both a process of psychological and social development, and a phase of provision, bridging childhood to adulthood. The YP moving from special school to FE or other training will have a 'lengthy' and 'graduated' series of steps towards independence and social identity associated with adulthood (Smart, 2004). Hudson (2006) indicates the importance of adolescence being a time of identity formation which is gained through their social experiences of their disabilities, with a blurring of boundaries and roles for all YP as they are developing independence towards adulthood status.

Stokes and Wyn (2007) have broken transition to adulthood in to four areas which are: completing education, entry into employment, leaving home, and forming a couple, and these help to create experiences which contribute to their identity. MacIntyre (2014) suggests that the transition to adulthood is seen to be complicated for YP with SEN moving towards adulthood. Her case study followed 20 YP with moderate learning disabilities using interviews after school had been completed, and found that many completed a 2-year course at college due to other adults suggesting that they were 'not ready' to become an active citizen. The YP identified that they had hopes and aspirations to gain paid employment and had increased independence but these may not have matched with the provision choice. Dovey-Pearce et al (2012) identified that the YP with disabilities were more reliant on their parents to act as a proxy and to make decisions on the YP's behalf. Lawy (2003) conducted a case study to explore the transformation of YP as they moved in to post-16. The longitudinal and interpretative method provided great detail about their self-identity shift through social interactions. Carroll (2015) identified that the transition for YP with SEN has changed over time with an increased range of options after schooling, and decreased paid employment for YP with learning disabilities. The domains of transition into adulthood had been suggested to include: work, education and training, leisure and social life, and family, home and domesticity. Carroll evaluated the research methods

of investigating transition, finding that more longitudinal data was required, interviews were most common, and some areas of disability being infrequently explored, such as SEBD and MLD. Some aspects of future lives were left out, such as social life and recreational activities. They suggest the need for greater research to provide a more 'holistic and nuanced account' of YP's lives and experiences (Carroll, 2015).

Research shows that there is disparity in the level of involvement of the YP and their families in the decision-making process (Niemi & Kurki, 2014). Several research studies have been critical about the limited extent of contribution from the YP themselves to the plan (Carnaby et al., 2003; Dee, 2002; OFSTED, 2010; Smart, 2004). Dee (2002) used case studies to obtain greater detail about how the decision was made on which actions and aspirations were included in the plan. It was found that it required full engagement of all stakeholders to generate a successful plan, and that YP and their families were faced with 'dilemmas' of sticking to proposed options or considering alternatives which matched the YP's preferred interests. Dee's study explored the complexity of the decision-making and discovered 7 types of process: consensus decision-making, negotiated problems, change of circumstance, incremental decisions, lone decisions, decisions made but not enacted, and decisions by default. There are a number of different factors for the decisions of course and placement and a range of ways that choices are made, and therefore differing levels of involvement of the YP within these decisions. The complexity and intentionality varied across the cases Dee used (2002). Some had more external control than others, such as the decisions made by circumstantial change, incremental and default, while the rest indicated an element of choice. However Dee suggested that the power and status of the relationships within the meetings often led to some opinions having greater effect than others. The YP and their family's fears or worries are not always fully expressed or acknowledged in meetings (Dee, 2002).

The transition experience for YP has had focus on the effectiveness of the transition process and not on the inclusion of the YP's 'future-self' within the provision choice. The experience of transition is one of identity change and

shift in culture, which humans will anticipate and produce images of possible 'future-selves', suggesting that this could be a useful method to explore provision choice for YP with SEN. The production of the possible 'future-self' can assist with problem-solving and action planning, and contributes to a person's sense of self and identity (D'Argembeau, Lardi & Van der Linden, 2012). The 'future-self' can act as a motivator to future goals and aims (Markus & Nurius, 1986), and it can be a positive or negative image, with female's producing more feared selves than males (Anthis, Dunkel & Anderson, 2004). Stevenson & Clegg (2011) found that the more elaborate the 'future-self' is, the more motivated the person was to achieve those goals. Academic achievement is linked to the perceived goals as created by imagined 'future-selves' (Johnson, 2009, Prince & Nurius, 2014), and cognitive processes such as memories are used along with cultural references to define the 'possible-selves'. This is a manifestation "of an individuals enduring hopes, fears, aspirations and expectations for their future", and can be used as a motivator and a self-regulatory function (Prince 2014). Vignoles et al. (2008) explored 'future-selves' through questionnaires with members of the public in Brighton to identify 10 possible 'future-selves' and they found links to self-esteem and belonging in their visions of life transitions. The use of 'possible-selves' as a framework for examining 'future-orientated, identity-relevant, goal-directed thinking in the present' and possible 'future-self was used to explore identity formation of new teachers (Hannan, Gosselin, Romano & Bunuan, 2010).

### **The YP and Family Voice**

The 'voice of the child' has continued to sit at the heart of SEN legislation (DfE, 1994; DfEE, 1997; DfES, 2001), where the importance of obtaining the voice of the young person when making decisions regarding their education and provision has been clarified. The Children's and Families Act (DfE, 2014b) aims to empower YP and their families to have ownership of their Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan, replacing statements. Over the last 30 years, there has been a clear progression towards recognising the rights of the child and removing the barriers to inclusion (Black-Hawkins, Florian and Rouse, 2007; Norwich 2013), and reducing discrimination in society (UNESCO, 1994). Since the Warnock report in 1978 (DES, 1978), society has altered the way SEN's are negatively

viewed and moved away from the medical model of disability towards a social model (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011). This considers the young person within a series of systems which create their experiences of SEN, and led to legislation utilising contributions from a range of sources to generate the statement of SEN (DfE, 1994; DfEE, 1997; DfES, 2001). In this process the young person and their parents were asked to contribute to the statement, however this did not always fully include the young person's views (Dee, 2002; OFSTED, 2010) for a variety of reasons, such as communication difficulties (McConkey and Smyth, 2004) or staff inexperience of ways to gain views (Abbott and Heslop, 2009). Carnaby et al. (2003) observed the transition meetings of 15 YP from an inner city Special School for pupils with mild to severe learning needs and their families and assessed the level of inclusion of the YP in the meeting. Of the sample, there was a range of mild to severe and profound learning difficulties. They found that the meetings varied in content and in involvement of stakeholders, with common themes being the YP's final year preparations, the options after school, health needs, and careers advice. The data were obtained through recording of the frequency of interactions. This found that depending on the category of need, the YP was included in the discussion for varied amounts of time, ranging from 4% to 66% of the time with those with more complex needs having less involvement. It was also found that little emphasis was given to the longer-term goals and aspirations of the YP or their social inclusion although there had been improvements, and greater time was offered to practical challenges such as transport (Carnaby et al., 2003). A study conducted by Kelly & Norwich in 2004, suggests the ethos, the school, and the way the YP's voice is sought can impact on the extent of their involvement within school processes and services.

Smart (2004) conducted a case study of 44 students from one residential Special School for children with severe and complex learning needs and challenging behaviour who lived in 11 Local Authorities across England and Wales. The research investigated the parental involvement in transition planning for YP with severe learning needs and challenging behaviours using 47 postal questionnaires and follow-up interviews to gather information regarding the parental perspective. Parents indicated that the process was a difficult one which required earlier planning and they felt

they required more information to enable them to make an equal contribution to professionals during meetings (Smart, 2004). The findings reported parents feel that they see their children experiencing challenges in the move and they can regress in their behaviours, suggesting some preparation for moving is incomplete. In contrast, Ward et al.'s paper (2003) suggested that 2/3 of parents felt they were fully involved in the transition planning. Initially 272 questionnaires for parents of children with learning disabilities from a range of settings throughout England were conducted which was followed by 27 in depth interviews of YP and their parents were held. A pictorial workbook was used as a visual aid for the YP. The parents reported that they directly influenced the provision choice however they suggested there were some improvements required. These included a need for more information prior to the meetings, the coordinator to take on more responsibility for finding other options, and to have a copy of the actions planned. This study did not obtain the views of the professionals within the systems supporting the YP and their family, suggesting that this represents only one perspective of the system of support around YP.

The new Code of Practice for all YP aged 0-25 years old with SEN (DfE & DoH, 2014) reiterates the need for child-centred perspectives. The process encourages greater acknowledgment of the aspirations of the young person and of parental preference for provision and support packages (DfE, 2011, 2014). It has endorsed the use of person-centred planning to ensure the outcomes are child-centred as recommended in the White Paper (Valuing people – DoH, 2001), and has received positive feedback from a small scale study (Corrigan, 2014), although further evaluation is required. Hayes (2004) suggested the most valuable contribution to the plan for longer term outcomes was to gather the young person's contribution in a meaningful way by using pictorial handbooks and Makaton signing, to ensure the accessibility of the plan to all stakeholders. In addition, the previous research regarding transitions for pupils with social, emotional and behaviour needs is limited due to them being a challenging population to obtain views from (O'Sullivan, 2011), and has identified poor transition planning and inadequate experience of staff in FE for this population can lead to failure to complete education courses (O'Riordan, 2011; Nind et al., 2012). Taylor-Brown (2012) has researched the effectiveness using

person-centred planning for 3 year 9 boys in a Specialist School for SEBD. Semi-structured interviews were used in the research to gain the participant's personal experiences and applied interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. The researcher used a visual review format in the interview, and found positive responses to this approach for boys with social emotional and behavioural needs. The use of techniques such as these can benefit all of the stakeholders by offering opportunities to find the best ways of supporting the YP and their families during the changes in transition from them.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

As part of the Learning Skills Act (DfES, 2000), it was recommended to employ staff who were impartial to the school, to assist with the transition plans and offering all children, including those with SEN, careers advice and guidance. The UK used Connexions Personal Advisors (PA) for this role, aiming to increase positive and supportive transitions towards a fulfilling future (Cullen et al., 2009). The evaluations of the service identified a lack of clarity of the role, difficulties with having staff inexperienced with SEN, and insufficient time to support all pupils effectively (Abbott and Heslop, 2009; Cullen et al., 2009; Dee, 2002). Grove & Giraud-Saunders (2003) interviewed Connexions staff, Headteachers and a Head of Learning Support in a FE college to explore the role of staff during transition. In the study, PA's felt that accountability in the transition planning actions were difficult to manage and the external role of PA can help to coordinate support impartially. The findings of this study need to be considered carefully as the research was funded by the Government who may need to justify the cost of PA's to the national budget.

In the new EHC plan (DfE, 2014b), the designated careers service has been commissioned to run the conversion meeting and transition plan for all children in special schools. Since the introduction of the transition plan, there have been very few research projects to consider the impact of careers staff's view of the plan process, and none have been evaluated since the conversions to EHC plans. This is also the meeting used to create the year 11 transition plan. Dyson et al. (2004) indicated that the staff



supporting the transitions have contracts to extend their support to YP after they have moved to guide YP through the turbulence of starting a new placement. This can offer support and increase resilience by offering counselling, although this service is not widespread.

The work of Kaehne & Beyer (2009) found that there can be a focus in transition planning on the process of transition more than the actual outcomes for the YP. This was due to the merging of a variety of different processes and systems combining to attempt to meet their own agendas, which may have lost sight of the YP. Most staff involved in the transition process have limited resource and different agencies operating in varying ways. The aim for the EHC process is to align services with the YP's needs and aspirations but there could be competing rather than complimenting agendas. The study by Kaehne and Beyer conducted 30 semi-structured interviews with a range of professionals from special schools, colleges, a manager, front-line staff from employment services and careers service managers. The interviews were over a period of 6 months in 2006/7 and asked a range of questions about transition effectiveness. Hudson (2006) agrees there is a lack of accountability for staff working together, and there is a need to 'unpick' the process and systems around the transition for understanding by using a 'helicopter view'.

### **Methods applied to prepare YP**

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI, 2014) conducted a large sample questionnaire to evaluate the effectiveness of the transition from parents of pupils with SEN. All Special Schools with post primary provision and a small sample of mainstream schools with learning support centres were sent a questionnaire asking their views on the transition process. Parents of children in these schools also received a questionnaire with some schools having a visit from ETI. They found that overall parents were happy with the move. However the study identified aspects which could be improved, such as improving independence skills, having a clear plan, support and advice, and mentoring for pupils. There have been a variety of suggested preparation methods to prepare the YP for the move, such as work experience, visiting the placement prior to moving, mentoring, careers

advice, and introduction to new staff. A study into transition planning for young people and their carers was conducted by Smart (2004) who identified the range of different preparation actions which YP experienced.

Work experience for YP with SEN has been identified as one of the supporting factors for maintaining the YP in FE and for longer term employment prospects (Curtis et al., 2009; Gebhardt et al., 2011; Hornby & Kidd, 2000). The YP who are offered the opportunity to engage in work experience can build skills and resilience. The opportunity for YP to visit the new location can help them to get accustomed to new locations, have new experiences, begin to get a sense of the next step and to help inform choices (Mitchell & Beresford, 2014; Ward et al., 2003). Schools can provide opportunities for YP to have counselling or mentoring sessions both pre and post move to FE to enable them to discuss their worries about their transition (Grove & Giraud-Saunders, 2003; Maras & Aveling, 2006; Mitchell & Beresford, 2014; O'Riordan, 2011). As the previous section indicated, careers advice is an important method of preparing YP for their transition to FE (Cullen et al., 2009). Ward et al. (2003) indicate the need for YP to know who is supporting their move and for staff to be able to meet them prior to starting (Maras & Aveling, 2006). The staff working with this population of YP require expertise (Macnab et al., 2008), and awareness of how to adapt the course to be accessed by all (Macnab et al., 2008; Pitt & Curtin, 2004). If there is mutual respect and understanding between the staff member and YP, there is a better chance of the YP achieving academically (Kelly & Norwich, 2004). Another preparation task can be to assist the YP in negotiating transport to the new location and is a common theme which emerges with the YP expected independence (Carnaby et al., 2003). The transition preparation offered is mostly focused on developing independence skills, skills for employment, and wider social development, but these skills can be particularly difficult for YP moving from special schools due to their learning needs (Abbott & Heslop, 2009; Gebhardt et al., 2011; Hornby & Kidd, 2000; Williamson et al., 2010). The YP will also be making the move into adult services (Dowrick, 2004), which can require support from staff at transition meetings to assist in negotiating services and funding. The need for identifying the aspects of the transition plan which are supportive for YP with moderate learning difficulties with

additional needs and aspects which are barriers is essential. This population is one of the largest and most diverse, and to ensure the services are offering the preparation required for their move to adulthood. Psychology can offer knowledge about how to support YP, such as building resilience skills and managing change (Cefai, 2008).

### **Rationale for future research**

Due to their large range of needs, the levels of research for YP that have been identified with 'moderate' learning needs as well as those with additional SEBD has been little explored (Norwich et al., 2014). The needs of these YP are reflected in the school's admission criteria but the needs of these YP have not been as extensively explored as some other populations of YP with SEN. This is due to challenges to define the population and to gain the views of this group when some have communication and cognitive difficulties (Norwich & Kelly, 2005). The levels of need may require additional ways to engage the students, such as using visual approaches and media (Hayes, 2004; Taylor-Brown, 2012), and person centred approaches (Corrigan, 2014).

Through gathering qualitative data, it can provide rich detail about YP's views of what they understand about the process of transition for them moving from a specialist school to mainstream FE. Using this knowledge, professionals will be able to better support the YP to identify what preparation is needed for before and after they move. The parents are identified as being very important in the process (Dowrick, 2004). The content of transition planning is important to make sure it meets the aspirations of the YP and that they are involved in the process (Carnaby et al., 2003). Historically, the Educational Psychology Service has had limited work with YP past the compulsory school age. The role of the EP can help define practice and understand the implications of working with YP up to 25 years of age (DfE, 2014b).

Transitions are difficult for many YP, particularly as this population are likely to be making a significant change into a mainstream FE (Hornby and Kidd, 2001). Elson (2011) identified the need for more strategic planning for children with MLD to overcome the assumption that the label covers a homogenous group who can all participate on the same FE course while meeting all their needs and aspirations. Carroll (2015) has stated the importance to explore the YP's hopes and aspiration holistically to generate successful provision choice and future. 'Future-self' research could provide a good framework to explore these and ensure a match of provision choice and life goals.

I propose to research the contribution of YP's vision of 'future-self' for YP moving from a special school, in the transition preparation into FE and after two years of study. The research questions proposed are:

1. To what extent do YP feel that the transition planning supported their views of their 'future-selves' having made the transition to FE from a special school for MLD and SEBD?
2. To what extent do parents/carers feel that the transition planning supported their views of their child's 'future-selves' having made the transition to FE from a special school for MLD and SEBD?
3. To what extent do YP feel that the transition support for progression at aged 19 has prepared them for adulthood and longer term life goals as imagined by their 'future-selves'?
4. To what extent do parents/carers feel that the transition support for progression at aged 19 has prepared YP for adulthood and longer term life goals as imagined by their child's 'future-selves'?
5. What are the professionals' perceptions of how well the transition planning prepares the YP for adulthood and longer term life goals?

(Word Count 6594)

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