Exploring the perspectives of young people with SEND during the transition out of further education: a study using Q-Methodology

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Summary

This thesis is presented in three parts. It consists of a review of the published literature relating to the area of interest, an empirical paper and a reflective chapter. The literature review explores literature relating to the SEND Code of Practice and associated frameworks and outcomes for young people in Further Education. Key words explored in the searches were 'further education', 'post-compulsory education'. 'transition', 'college', 'post-18', 'post-16' and 'preparing for adulthood'.

The empirical paper centres around a study conducted using Q-methodology with students in a post-16 college in a Local Authority (LA) in England. The study used the method of Q-sort-arranging statements based on personal importance - to explore the subjective viewpoints of young people on the experience of transitioning from education to adulthood.
Finally, the reflective chapter concludes the thesis with a reflexive consideration of the research process including: the initial development of ideas and a direction for the research project; reflection on the ethics process; a subjective reflection of the ways in which the study has contributed to an extension of personal knowledge and a discussion around how the findings in this study could be used to contribute to understanding, practice and policy in educational spheres and beyond.

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List of Abbreviations

ADHD	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
APA	American Psychological Association
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
BPS	British Psychological Society
CFA	Centroid Factor Analysis
CYP	Children and Young People
DfE	Department for Education
DSM-V	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual- Fifth Edition
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan
EP	Educational Psychologist
FE	Further Education
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
LA	Local Authority
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NICE	National Institute for Clinical Excellence
P-Set	Participant Set
PfA	Preparing for Adulthood
Q-Set	Set of statements in Q-Sort
SDT	Self-Determination Theory
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

1. Literature Review

1.1. Structure of Literature Review

1.1.1 Introduction

In this chapter, published literature and research will be explored in the context of understanding the social, legal and political systems which have changed the way further education is delivered for young people with SEND. In addition, the role of the Educational Psychologist (EP) working with young people aged 16 and above will be explored within these contexts. The current findings and research in this area will be examined in order to understand the impact of the SEND Code of Practice (2015) on the outcomes for young people. Particular emphasis will be placed on the frameworks and guidance available to EPs and other allied professionals, with the aim of understanding the unique decision-making processes which occur at this time and how the EP can provide effective support to young people with SEN who do not have a disability as they move towards adulthood and independent living. The review will begin by examining the legislative changes that have occurred throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, outlining the current context and the rights of young people. Using the theoretical lens of Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1976; Fig. 1), the function and structure of further education (FE) will be critically analysed. Published research and reports will be reviewed in order to provide an overview of the most common outcomes for young people and the particular issues which are raised within the systems surrounding FE. An additional theoretical perspective - self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002) - will also be utilized as a lens through which to understand the process of 'preparing for adulthood'.

The world of post-16 education is particularly unique due to the shift in focus from learning to employability and working towards a specific career. Although the Education and Skills Act (2008) has increased participation in FE, it remains an under-researched area. Many of the published pieces are limited due to their focus on a local context or single case study. Additionally, much of the literature does not involve research studies, instead encompassing opinions and accounts of local authority initiatives. This means that the voice of the young person is not as present in the literature and, therefore, their perspective is not heard. The

style of published literature in this area has an impact on criticality as there are very few larger-scale research studies and therefore limited findings to compare and contrast. However, it is possible to identify key themes across published literature which can be further understood within the context of current legislation and associated frameworks.

1.1.2 Search Process

The literature included in this review was obtained through a search of key data bases, including APA PsychInfo, APA PsychArticles, ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), British Education Index, Web of Science and Academic Search Complete. Journal articles were initially identified from their titles and abstracts. The key terms for this literature search included 'further education', 'post-compulsory education'. 'transition', 'college', 'post-18', 'post-16'and 'preparing for adulthood'. These terms were selected to capture the multitude of phrases used to describe education which occurs beyond the age of 16 (or beyond the typical age for achieving qualifications such as GCSEs or other leaving certificates). Unpublished doctoral theses were also included within this search in order to limit the impact of publication bias, which were sourced by searching with the same terms on thesis publication websites such as White Rose and the repositories of universities around the UK which have an Educational Psychology doctoral training programme.

Due to the structural differences within both Local Authority systems and schooling in other parts of the UK, articles were selected and considered for wider discussion if they had a focus on the context of education specifically in England and Wales. However, other articles which demonstrated the international context of post-compulsory education and the role of the EP was selected for the purpose of providing a comparison. Literature was specifically selected if it had a focus on young people over the age of 16 within a FE context. Critical consideration was given to any research findings which focused on FE settings published prior to the 2014 Children and Families Act and the subsequent 2015 SEND Code of Practice due to the legal and structural changes in post-compulsory education and the role of the local authority at this time.

Studies were excluded if they were systematic reviews which provided no contextual information relevant to the topic, if they were not written in English or if the full article was

not available. In addition, duplicated studies were also discarded from the search. Many studies were discounted after reading the title or abstract as their irrelevance was clear; however, some studies were discarded following a review of the full text. Studies at this stage were excluded if the paper revealed that the research focused on a different population (i.e., younger pupils in school or adults who have left education) or if the context focused on measuring the effectiveness of an intervention or approach which was not relevant to the current study. Following the process of searching the data and removing articles which did not meet the criteria for inclusion, 84 articles were selected and explored to provide further context on the subject of post-compulsory education in the UK and the lived experiences of those who have been impacted by the legislation which surrounds it.

1.1.3   Definition of Key Terms

Many of the key terms within the literature have come into common parlance via their application in legislation or elsewhere within the wider social context. As such, it is imperative that the underlying subjective implications are understood as being representative of a social discourse (Arnold & Barker, 2012).

NEET Status is a term used by the Office for National Statistics to represent young people aged 16-24 who are 'Not in Education, Employment or Training'. The statistic captures a social picture of young people who are not actively participating in an element of wider society, such as school or education, however it does not capture whether said young people are unemployed or economically inactive (e.g., not looking to find work, unable to work or not available to work) (Mirza-Davies, 2014).

SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) is a term defined by the 2014 Children and Families Act and the subsequent SEND Code of Practice (2015). The umbrella term encompasses all young people who have an additional difficulty accessing the curriculum, defined under broad categories: Cognition and Learning; Communication and Interaction; Physical and Sensory and Social, Emotional and Mental Health. Young people identified as 'SEND' may have a recognised disability, a special educational need or both.

A disability is defined, under the 2010 Equality Act, as a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative impact on a person's ability to do normal day-to-day activities. These can include sensory impairments such as sight or hearing loss, fluctuating conditions such as epilepsy or rheumatoid arthritis, progressive conditions such as dementia, auto-immune conditions such as lupus or HIV, developmental conditions such as Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and dyslexia, some mental illnesses such as schizophrenia or depression and some mental health conditions such as phobias, eating disorders and personality disorders. The UK Government also outlines 'learning disability' as a type of disability under the criteria laid out in the 2010 Equality Act.

A learning disability or intellectual disability is formally defined within the DSM-V (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 2013) as limited function across social skills, conceptual skills and practical ability. The British Psychological Society (Whitaker, 2015) guidance on the diagnosis of intellectual disabilities highlights that a 'significant impairment of intellectual functioning' can be categorized by an IQ score of 70 or below. In both documents, an intellectual disability is only recognised if the onset of the impairment across the domains of intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour are present before adulthood (BPS, 2015).

1.2   The Legislative Context

Historically, young people with additional needs experienced exclusion from opportunities due to a lack of appropriate support; with some being classed as ineducable and prevented from accessing any formal education (Tomlinson, 1996). In 1978, The Warnock Report posited that a more inclusive system of FE would allow young people with SEND to improve their future prospects and outcomes through access to 'ordinary courses' (Warnock, 1978) adapted to meet their needs. It was highlighted within the report that removing barriers to accessing FE would reduce the unemployment rate in the UK (Warnock, 1978). Some of the suggestions made by Warnock were included within the 1981 Education Act (DES, 1981). Stowell (1987) explains that the first post-16 courses developed for students with SEND focused on supporting young people with moderate learning difficulties who had previously attended special schools.

Throughout the latter part of the 20th century, the FE provision was developed to include the teaching of 'life skills' (Guishard, 2000), a course designed specifically to support young people with additional needs to develop their independence. However, critics highlight that the type of opportunities offered to young people with SEND at this time represented an additional barrier as the 'discrete, separate and modified' (Dee, 1993) syllabus did not represent steps towards inclusion. FE colleges operated outside of local authority control, which contradicted Warnock's original proposals (Wright, 2006). The function of FE also changed over time, reflecting a wider societal shift away from industrial work and towards a more corporate, office-based jobs market (Johnstone, 1995). There has been a lack of clarity in the FE sector, with the changes increasing access but not necessarily improving the quality of provision for young people with additional needs.

Currently, young people in FE are protected by a number of legal frameworks which support their rights to equal opportunities and reasonable adjustments whilst admonishing discriminatory practice. A young person's access to FE was supported through the development of the Mental Capacity Act (2005), which was developed to ensure that a person with capacity had the right to make decisions about their own life. Prior to this, people who did not understand the information provided by professionals or who were unable to make a decision were subject to decisions being made for them. These decisions were not necessarily in line with the person's own views or wishes and were often made without an advocate. The Mental Capacity Act was developed as an emancipatory act, designed to empower people to have a say in the decisions they face in life (Marshall & Sprung, 2018).

The Equality Act (2010) outlines a number of 'protected characteristics'; characteristics which evidence has demonstrated there remains a high level of discrimination in access to services and employment. The nine characteristics which are covered by the act and for which 'reasonable adjustments' must be made are: gender reassignment, sexual orientation, religion or belief, race, marriage and civil partnership, biological sex, pregnancy and maternity, age and disability. For young people with a disability, their access to support is therefore protected as a 'reasonable adjustment' throughout their educational journey.

The 2010 Equality Act was developed to encompass all previous Acts surrounding discrimination, including the Disability Discrimination Act. Under the Equality Act (2010),

any young person with a recognised disability is afforded the right to 'reasonable adjustments', promoting equality of access and opportunity across all contexts, including education. However, it must be noted that the Equality Act has specific definitions of 'disability', which is separate to 'additional needs' or 'special educational needs'. Under the Equality Act (2010), a person's learning needs can only be classed as a disability if they have an IQ of less than 70 (known as an intellectual disability according to the DSM-V) or if they have specific learning needs for which reasonable adjustments need to be made, such as dyslexia or dyspraxia (House of Commons, 2019).

The criteria used to identify a 'disability' in this legislation are limited and can be seen as an additional barrier to accessing support for some people who need it. The use of IQ as a measure of intelligence continues to receive criticism from the scientific community; there remain several questions about the origins and parameters of intelligence itself (Richardson, 2002) and therefore there are many questions around how and why IQ should be accepted as a measure of someone's ability or – indeed - disability. The specificity around the score of 70 is an additional barrier as the hard cut-off severely limits support for people. It fails to account for variability in scores across the domains of the test and therefore excludes people who have a high level of need in certain areas from receiving support in the same way as their peers who have a more general intellectual disability.

However, there remain criticisms surrounding the equity of access to courses across the diverse spectrum of young people with SEND (Attfield, 2021) and the impact this has on long term outcomes and social mobility (Attfield, 2021). There remains a view that FE is separated into two tracks: vocational and academic, and that students are pigeon-holed into one or the other (Young, 2014). In a society which sees education as the key to social mobility, the opportunities for young people with additional needs are therefore limited by the system around them (Attfield & Attfield, 2019).

The 2015 SEND Code of Practice extended the legal requirement for settings to provide appropriate support for individuals with SEND. With the enactment of the 2014 Children and Families Act, young people with SEND in Further Education (FE) became legally entitled to additional support as the age range outlined in the Children and Families Act (2014) was extended from 16 to 25 years. Since the implementation of this new code, educational

professionals, including EPs, have been required to extend their work to include young people in FE settings such as sixth form centres, colleges and vocational apprenticeship schemes. The code itself outlines that the reason for this extension was, in part, to improve the transition process into adult life:

> "Under no circumstances should young people find themselves suddenly without support and care as they make the transition to adult services." (SEND Code of Practice, 2015, p.127)

The SEND Code of Practice (2015) involved the implementation of a new document, the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The EHCP document replaced statements of SEN and was designed to ensure that health, social care and education worked together as a multi-agency team to support young people. The Code of Practice itself outlines that the EHCP was developed to 'ensure continuity' and 'protect provision' for young people as they move through the education system (SEND Code of Practice, 2015, p.136). The legislative changes over time have led to increased participation in FE for young people with SEND, with more focus being placed on equal opportunities (Attfield & Attfield, 2019). The increasing statutory requirement means that – now - disabled young people's rights to an accessible and person-centred education are more protected than ever. However, there continues to be a lack of clarity around what happens to young people who do not meet the harsh threshold to be seen as disabled in the eyes of the current UK legislation (Howell, 2020) both in FE and beyond.

Beresford et al (2004) posit that there are three phases which comprise the transition to adulthood: planning and preparation, transition and post-transition. While protected by the SEND Code of Practice (2015), young people in FE who have SEN are supported to plan their next steps and may have some support when leaving FE through careers advice. However, the post-transition phase, once a young person has left the FE setting, is where the 'SEND' acronym splits into two (Howell, 2020); those who have a recognised disability and those whose needs do not meet the criteria. It is this particular group of people, those who have required help throughout school and who are now no longer entitled to that same support, who are therefore likely to have poor outcomes. MacKay (2009) argues that 'education' is not an age-specific experience, which is the fundamental basis for the Scottish

system of post-school psychological service. These educational psychology services have been developed to support learning in the wider context and to extend guidance and advice to employers, health settings and social care as a way to ensure positive outcomes for all young people as they begin their journey into adulthood (MacKay, 2009).

1.3 NEET Status and the Timpson Review

The Timpson Review (2019) explored the demographics of young people most at risk of permanent exclusion from school in the UK. It found that young people with SEND are at a higher level of risk of being excluded from school, a statistic which is heavily linked with a higher risk of becoming 'NEET' (Timpson, 2019). The most recent House of Commons Briefing Paper on Disabled People in Employment (2021) supports this correlation, highlighting that 8.4% of disabled people of working age are unemployed in the UK, compared to 4.6% of non-disabled people of working age. This statistic is known as the disability employment gap. Of the 400,000 disabled people who are unemployed, 18% cited that their main disability was a 'severe or specific learning disability' (House of Commons, 2021). Disabled people aged 16-24 were also found to be the least likely to be in employment (House of Commons, 2021), however it is not highlighted whether some of this group are instead participating in education or training opportunities.

The Timpson Review (2019) made recommendations to reduce the impact of exclusion and social isolation, calling for the legislation to be watertight and consistent, ensuring that young people who are additionally vulnerable are not put at increased risk (Timpson, 2019). Factors which put young people at higher risk can be identified up to three years before they leave school (Arnold & Barker, 2012), highlighting the need for preventative strategies. Timpson's (2019) review suggested measures such as increased mental health support for young people, mentoring programmes, and pastoral and therapeutic support. The most recently published statistics - from research conducted prior to the Covid-19 pandemic - suggest that young people with a disability are twice as likely to be NEET at 16, and four times more likely at 18 years old (House of Commons, 2019). It is for this reason that the Timpson Review (2019) called for additional guidance for young people beyond the statutory school leaving age to ensure equitable access to opportunities for education, training and meaningful employment.

The recommendations within the document have been agreed in principle in the House of
Commons, with further discussions specifically around the implications for students with
SEND to be held as part of a wider review (Kulakiewicz, Roberts & Long, 2021).

1.4 Ecological Systems Theory and Education

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1976; 2005) provides a model to demonstrate
how humans develop knowledge within a systemic context. In the context of 'preparing for
adulthood' and the experiences of young people with SEN and Disabilities, the systems
around young people have a significant impact on the experiences they have, their rights and
level of support and – ultimately - their outcomes in adult life. Through the separation of
culture and society into five interacting systems, it is possible to understand how a child's
development is shaped by their environment and how their individual experience is shaped by
society at large. The five proposed systems are:

The Microsystem: the young person's immediate environment, including their friends,
family, home and school.

The Mesosystem: the implicit connections between the units of the microsystem, such as
communication between home and school or between family and friends.

The Exosystem: the indirect environment around a young person, including the wider social
settings they may interact with. This includes community groups, parent/carer employer
settings, social services and family acquaintances.

The Macrosystem: the broader social and cultural context which indirectly influences a
young person. This includes culture, politics, religion and media. The macrosystem is bound
by cultural and geographical borders.

The Chronosystem: the impact of time and experiences over time. This includes both social
and historical events as well as events within a person's own life.

The purpose of the Ecological Systems Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1976; 2005) is to
demonstrate that development occurs within a specific context. From an educational
perspective, it shares some similarities with Vygotsky's Cognitive Mediation Theory (1978),
in that the model captures the idea of learning as a form of development and suggests that

education is a social process (Christensen, 2016). However, unlike the Vygostkian theory, Bronfenbrenner's model is able to capture the notion that not all factors within the system have equal significance (Christensen, 2016).

More recently, Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) developed the model further to include proximal processes which contribute to outcomes for individuals. They argue that interactions between an individual and the environment over time are the key factor in development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). These proximal processes: process, person, context and time, are suggested as a way to explain how systems can create dysfunction which impact long-term outcomes (Marcon-Vargas et al., 2020). However, critics argue that the model - although it provides a clear theoretical perspective on poor outcomes from adverse experiences - is limited in its capacity to explain the success borne from difficult circumstances (Engler, 2007). Engler (2007), poses that 'resilience' should be considered as a factor within the individual which affects their interactions within and between ecological systems.

For young people with SEND in the UK, Bronfenbrenner's theory (1976; 2005) demonstrates how the variable quality of experience can be explained through systemic factors. The legislation around young people, such as the 2010 Equality Act and its definitions of 'disability' has a direct impact on the access of young people to services in the UK. In addition, where the 2014 Children and Families Act has outlined the statutory rights of young people, there is little clarity on the structures and pathways available, leading to a variability in the quality of support. This theoretical lens also demonstrates how a person's own views, experiences and wishes can affect how they interact with the world around them, which is an additional factor affecting their journey towards adulthood and independence.

1.4   Self Determination Theory

There are thought to be a number of factors which affect how human beings develop throughout the lifespan and why certain people are driven to make certain choices. For young people with SEND, whose journeys into adulthood can be impacted by a number of external systems, it is important to consider the ways in which intrinsic factors shape the choices they may or may not make. Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002) is a psychological

theory of motivation which has been successfully applied across a wide number of contexts, including education. The authors pose that there are three universal and innate factors which contribute to motivation and goal-directed behaviour (Deci & Ryan, 2002). These three psychological needs are: competence, relatedness and autonomy. In this instance, 'competence' refers to a sense of personal effectiveness and the ability to meet one's own needs. 'Relatedness' relates to feeling connected to others and feeling cared for within the particular context being explored. 'Autonomy' is a term which refers to a sense of authentic participation and the notion of having volition and independence (Duda & Appleton, 2016). Deci and Ryan (2002) further highlight that the environment affects the extent to which a person's psychological needs are met, thus impacting their ability to steer outcomes and achieve their goals.

Both the barriers and the enabling factors surrounding successful transition to FE and beyond reflect the importance placed upon choice and self-motivated decision-making (Heslop et al., 2002; Carroll & Dockrell, 2012). Many researchers cite Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2002) as a useful concept to explain the underlying needs which, when satisfied, contribute to a sense of fulfilment. In the case of transition, there is evidence to demonstrate that competence (Beresford et al., 2004), relatedness (Lawson & Parker, 2020) and autonomy (White & Rae, 2016) can all lead to a sense of fulfilment.

The social environment is, in SDT, seen as an influencing factor on satisfaction (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Where the decisions made regarding a young person's future do not accurately reflect their personal goals, or where there are environmental or social factors which hinder growth, evidence demonstrates that young people with SEND are at high risk of marginalization (Atkins, 2016) and of becoming NEET (Yates et al., 2011). Evidence demonstrates that SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2002) is a useful tool in supporting young people to move out of NEET status (Gabriel, 2015) through mentoring and supporting the development of autonomy (Lawson & Parker, 2020). In the context of young people with SEND, where there is little direct research, the application of SDT as a theoretical lens therefore offers an insight into the underlying reasons why the statistics demonstrate poor outcomes for some groups. In addition, SDT as a theory is a means to develop strategies for early intervention and mentoring, as highlighted in the Timpson Review (2019).

1.5   Preparing for Adulthood

The Preparing for Adulthood Framework (2013) was developed alongside the reforms to
SEND and Social Care which informed the Children and Families Act (2014). The
framework provides a structure to inform person-centred planning and is suggested to be
implemented from year 9 onwards. In tandem with this framework, the Mental Capacity Act
(2005) protects and empowers young people to make their own decisions. As such, the EHCP
document - when informed by such person-centred practices - is seen as a protective factor
when supporting the transition to FE settings (Cockerill & Arnold, 2018).

The Preparing for Adulthood framework (2013) was heavily informed by O'Brien's Five
Accomplishments (1992), a set of evaluation criteria designed for use in social care settings
for adults with learning disabilities. The criteria of community presence, choice, respect,
relationships and competence (O'Brien, 1992) shaped the main tenets of the Preparing for
Adulthood Framework (2013): personalizing approaches, shared vision, improving options
and support, raising aspiration and planning services together (Preparing for Adulthood,
2013). In addition, the Preparing for Adulthood framework (2013) focuses on four key
outcome areas for young people: paid employment, independent living, good health and
community inclusion (Preparing for Adulthood, 2013). There are some similarities between
these outcome areas and Settersten's (2007) Big 5 indicators of adulthood: leaving school,
getting a full-time job, moving out, getting married and having children. In the context of
SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2002), the Preparing for Adulthood framework (2013) represents the
social environment and the decision-making processes which affect outcomes for young
people (Atkins, 2016).

The Preparing for Adulthood framework (2013) is not a statutory document and, therefore, is
not used in every local authority or FE setting in England and Wales, however it was funded
by the Department for Education (DfE) until March 2022. The framework has been praised
for providing a personalized approach to planning, particularly as it is suggested to be used
each year from year 9 to support decision making and outcomes (Morris & Atkinson, 2018).
In addition, its use alongside the Mental Capacity Act (2005) provides a sense of
empowerment to young people. However, the effectiveness of the framework has been posed
to depend on the skills of the person delivering it. In particular, Robinson et al (2018) found

that careers advisors were found to have limited knowledge and skills around SEND. While
the framework has been found to support planning and outcomes for some, there remain
questions over whether more needs to be done to account for the significant needs of young
people with SEND in the 16-25 age bracket (Morris & Atkinson, 2018).

1.6   The Experiences of Young People.

1.6.1 The Experience of Transition and Preparing for Adulthood

The experience of transition throughout a young person's life is seen as a significant event in
which there are shifts in identity and personal values (Hayton, 2009). Many young people
with SEND face additional barriers at times of transition (Carter et al., 2009). The onus at this
time is often placed on young people to voice their thoughts and feelings in about what they
would like to do after secondary school (Heinz, 2009). This group of young people - those
with SEND - have key needs at this time and often experience stress and anxiety as a direct
result of the oncoming changes (Carroll, 2015).

Before the implementation of the 2015 SEND Code of Practice, the process of person-centred
review meetings and the additional paperwork required to facilitate the move to an FE setting
was reported to be more formal and intrusive than the experience other young people have at
the end of secondary education (Dee, 2002). For young people with SEND, in particular
those who find it difficult to make decisions, this reportedly led to a sense of 'losing out'
(Yates et al., 2011). This increased formality posed an additional obstacle for young people
with lower cognitive functions who found it difficult to plan or conceptualise an abstract
concept such as 'the future' (Beresford et al., 2004).

Effective transition was also impacted by other factors which left young people without
support. Parents and carers raised the issue of not having enough information to support the
decision-making process for their children (Aziz, 2014). Others felt that the professionals
were better placed to make the decisions and therefore took a more passive role (Maddison &
Beresford, 2012). The literature demonstrates that, in many cases, the choices presented to a
young person and their family were curated by professionals and that the decisions did not

always reflect the aspirations of the young people (Kaehne & Beyer, 2008). Employment, for example, was reported by parents and carers to be rarely discussed in transition planning (Kaehne & Beyer, 2008), reflecting a narrow agenda with regards to inclusive opportunities for FE and training (Abbott & Carpenter, 2014).

Good outcomes for young people are underpinned by an 'individualised approach to planning' (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OSECSS), 2010). It remains the duty of the local authority to find a suitable FE placement for young people with SEND, with their rights protected by the Children and Families Act (2014), the Equality Act (2010) and the provision outlined in their EHCP. The 'Delivering Better Outcomes Together' consortium was developed to support authorities to implement the SEND reforms when they were implemented. The initiative included setting up the SEND Pathfinder Programme (Craston et al., 2013), a structured approach offered to local authorities to support transition planning for young people with additional needs (Thom & Agur, 2014). The key question posed through this approach within the annual review process was 'do they need/ would they benefit from more education?', with a focus on the young person's desired outcomes for the future (Thom & Agur, 2014).

The Preparing for Adulthood framework (2013) and other associated approaches are underpinned by common themes such as improving access to appropriate support for young people, delivering suitable outcomes and increasing aspiration. As such, paid employment and opportunities to be independent are a key focus within these structures. It has been identified that finding appropriately supportive employment opportunities is a significant barrier for young people (Thom & Agur, 2014), further exacerbated by the limited skills of career advisors when working with SEND (Robinson, Moore & Hooley, 2018) and the limited scope of areas of work offering supported employment opportunities (Thom & Agur, 2014). Hensel, Stenfert Kroese & Rose (2007) found that motivation is crucial to maintaining employment, however a misalignment of a young person's aspirations and their education level can be an additional barrier to success in finding job satisfaction (Yates et al., 2011).

The experiences of young people are heavily influenced by the systems around them, with the decisions they make limited by legislation, by the availability of suitable programmes, the quality of careers advice and advocacy and – finally - their own motivation and

determination. The research exploring the experiences of young people at this stage of their educational journey highlights that there have been some shifts since the implementation of the Children and Families Act (2014). However, it is clear from the findings that there continues to be a variability in services dependent on a number of key factors, which is likely to impact the outcomes for particular groups of young people who are negatively affected by the systems around them.

At present, the majority of the research has focused on the experiences of transition for young people with SEND as they move between secondary school and an FE setting (Arnold & Baker, 2012). Although it has been recognised that this time is key in determining outcomes for young people (Yates et al., 2011), there is little research which focuses on young people's experiences as they transition out of education altogether. MacKay (2009) provides some evidence from the Scottish context, however the contextual differences in available support for young people without a disability would suggest that the outcomes and experiences for young people in England and Wales are likely to be qualitatively different.

1.6.2   Outcomes

A young person's adult identity is influenced by their experiences at periods of transition (Bason, 2012). Poor transition experiences can lead to poor employment outcomes (Knapp et al., 2009) and findings demonstrate that limited communication and support led to young people dropping out of FE settings (Mallinson, 2009). The Social Exclusion Unit (1999) reported that young people with SEND had varied experiences around the country. As there was no statutory protection for FE settings to meet their needs at this time, access to employment, education and training depended on the local authority and working relationships between services (The Social Exclusion Unit, 1999). Findings from research throughout this time found that young people with SEND were more likely to be socially isolated (Hirst & Baldwin, 1994), in particular if they attended special school before Key Stage 4 (Hirst & Baldwin, 1994). Young people with disabilities were additionally found to be less likely to be in full-time education after the age of 16 (Carroll, 2015).

Poor integrated working between education, health and social care has also previously been cited as a reason for poor outcomes for young people with SEND (Kaehne, 2011), in particular during the sensitive transition period at the age of 18. Findings have also demonstrated that, in some cases, decisions were made on behalf of a young person by the professionals around them (Kaehne & Beyer, 2008).

The concept of what makes a 'successful transition' is rarely defined by young people, but rather by the professionals around them and the frameworks they use (Lawson & Parker, 2020). Families of young people with SEND aged 16-25 are reported to be less positive about the outcomes for their children and findings demonstrate that the outcomes young people experience are less in-line with parental expectations (Adams et al., 2017). This may be additionally impacted by the ways in which the FE system - a system based on the mainstream school model (Atkins, 2016) - is limited in its inclusivity for young people with SEND.

Research exploring the lived experiences of young people with SEND at this time in their lives has demonstrated that there remains a feeling of passive participation (Lawson & Parker, 2020). As the local authority holds responsibility for finding a suitable FE placement, there is a notion that college is an expected - rather than a desired - choice (Abbott & Carpenter, 2014). Indeed, findings from analysis of person-centred review documents has found that many professionals voice that college is easier to organise than other kinds of FE placement (Kaehne & Beyer, 2014). It has been found that limited choices, or options which result in reduced qualifications, impact on employment opportunities (Young, Otam, Squires & Sutherland, 2015).

It is difficult to establish a causal relationship between transition planning and outcomes for young people when questions are raised about whether the outcomes are person-centred (Lawson & Parker, 2020). There is very little evidence surrounding what 'good practice' looks like in terms of supporting young people through transition (Wittemeyer et al., 2011) and the frameworks and structures which facilitate planning are not compulsory. However, there are statistics which demonstrate the incidence of generally poor outcomes for people with additional needs in adult life. In 2019, the disability employment gap was calculated to be around 28.9% (House of Commons, 2019), with 5.6% of people with a learning disability

in some form of paid employment (ASCOF, 2020). By the age of 26, young people with a disability are four times more likely to be classed as NEET (Timpson, 2019) and are highly likely to remain unemployed for long periods of time (Burch, 2018).

Research has demonstrated that a mismatch between a young person's attainment in school and their aspirations places them at higher risk of becoming NEET (Yates et al., 2011). Exclusion from school is also a risk factor; statistics demonstrate that this is a particular issue for young people with SEN, who are more likely to be permanently excluded (The Timpson Review, 2019).

A young person's social mobility is also impacted by the options available to them and the pathways they are able to access throughout their educational journey (Attfield & Attfield, 2019). A number of barriers have been identified which contribute to the poor outcomes for young people with SEND in FE. It has been argued that FE settings 'pigeonhole' young people into either a vocational or an academic-focussed course (Young, 2014). Prior to the 2015 SEND Code of Practice, findings demonstrated that young people with SEND accessed largely segregated courses (Wright, 2006) and that the options available became more limited, the more complex the young person's needs (Elson, 2011). A more recent study confirmed that, for many young people, there is still a lack of choice, with the options pre-selected for the young person by education professionals (Parry, 2020).

The models of planning which are supposed to support young people at this stage have also been criticised for their limitations. Mitchell (2010) highlights that young people with learning difficulties tend to take a series of gradual steps towards adulthood. The planning structures used to support this journey, however, only represent the next step, and do not appear to capture the long-term outcomes and aspirations of young people (Elson, 2010). It is possible that this is a reason why young people with SEND often remain in education longer than their peers (Mitchell, 2010). Research surrounding young people with SEND has also found a positive correlation between cognitive ability and a willingness to take risks (Beauchamp et al., 2017), and lower levels of hope within the SEND community when measured at the time of the transition from adolescence to adulthood (Ben-Naim et al., 2017).

Markus and Nurius (1986), through their research on possible selves, demonstrated the importance of systems around young people to support their motivation. In particular, the theoretical proposal - which aims to represent the cognitive components of hope, fear, threat, and goal setting - highlights the need for high aspirations for young people (Markus & Nurius, 1986). The literature available at present does not capture the employment prospects for young people with SEND, however research focusing on the outcomes for young people with SEND in FE highlight that the employment options available do not meet the aspirations of young people (Parry, 2020).

The research into young people's experiences is person-centred and takes an emancipatory perspective. The aim of many of the studies looking at this stage in a young person's life is focused on capturing the lived experience and views of the students themselves. The outlining of barriers to success is useful and allows for further research to focus on what can be done to address these imbalances. However, the focus is most commonly placed on when things go wrong, with little emphasis on good practice or success stories. Additionally, there is little focus on the underlying reasons for the poor outcomes for young people. Identifying the gaps in support and provision and understanding both the extrinsic and intrinsic factors which impact on a young person's success are pertinent areas of research which could lead to the implementation of real change. Following the studies discussed above, the next logical step would be to think more closely about the systems around young people and the people within those systems - such as parents, educational professionals, and the government - with a view to developing more effective pathways with more positive outcomes.

1.7   The Role of the Educational Psychologist

1.7.1   Extending the EP Role

FE settings are unique in the way that they provide opportunities to learn new skills (Guishard, 2000) with the environment specifically set up to cater for the needs of young people from the age of 16 upwards (Morris & Atkinson, 2018). The extension of the EP role to include statutory direct work with young people between the ages of 16 and 25 has led to

the need for professionals to develop their understanding of post-16 needs (Morris &
Atkinson, 2018).

For the EP, the role therefore developed from providing consultation and guidance (Guishard,
2000). Professionals are now needing to increase their knowledge and skills to accommodate
the needs of individuals with SEND in FE settings (Atkinson et al., 2015). Atkinson et al
(2015) identified three key themes for post-16 work, outlining that additional training and
professional development should focus on: increasing knowledge for the 16-25 age group;
developing process skills in order to deliver psychological services and extending existing
knowledge of developmental psychology in order to successfully apply it to this age group.
These themes closely link to the recommendations from the Timpson Review (2019) and
from the Dearing Report (1997), both of which recognised the link between continuing
professional development and positive outcomes for young people. Furthermore, the
recommendations made by Atkinson et al (2015) represent one of the ways in which a
systemic change - in this case, in the exosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1976; 2005) - can directly
impact on the experiences of young people. Further investigation as to whether the
recommendations made by Atkinson et al (2015) are successful in practice would be a useful
next step.

1.7.2 Mental Health and Multi-Agency Working

It is at the age of 18 that young people in receipt of health or social care are transferred to
adult services. Where a young person's needs are met by the criteria listed in the 2010
Equality Act, their right to access reasonable adjustments is protected meaning that their
experience will be designed to meet their needs. However, for some young people whose
special educational needs do not meet the threshold for classification as a recognised
disability (Howell, 2020), the multi-agency team around them can involve professionals with
little training in working with people with additional needs (Sloper et al, 2010) meaning
which can lead to a delay in providing appropriate support.

The processes in adult services can be very different to those in their children's counterparts
and the transition between the two has historically been difficult to navigate (Kaehne, 2011).

Indeed, many young people became 'lost' in the system when moving to adult services, with their details either missed, deleted or never transferred (Caton & Kagan, 2006). Sloper et al (2010) highlight that this lack of appropriate services for young people, when considered alongside the minimal information offered to parents and carers around transition, has problematic consequences. Indeed, mental health professionals have similarly cited the gap in provision for young people with mild intellectual disabilities as a 'potential risk' (Kaehne, 2011). It was identified that the lack of collaboration led to miscommunication, fragmented service delivery and young people being abruptly discharged without a clear transition plan in place (Kaehne, 2011).

During the transition period in which young people move from child to adult health and social care services, the EP and the education provider remain involved. As such, there is a responsibility at this stage for the EP and the FE setting to 'bridge the gap' and, in some cases, to provide hands-on support which would otherwise be provided elsewhere. In particular, at this vulnerable time in which young people frequently experience heightened levels of stress and anxiety (Carroll, 2015), the EP can be argued to be the most appropriate and most highly skilled professional to provide mental health support whilst awaiting the transfer to adult health services (Morris & Atkinson, 2018).

Within the FE sector, the EP must understand the social and emotional needs of young people (Morris & Atkinson, 2018) and the myriad changes they experience during the transition into adulthood (Carroll, 2015). Within the frameworks which support conversations about transition, there is a focus on the future and on aspiration. As such, the EP is well-placed to promote positive self-identity and support the development of resilience (Morris & Atkinson, 2018). Where mental health service thresholds are not met, or in cases in which there is a period of transition in which a young person is left without support, the EP can play a strategic role in ensuring continuity of provision (Morris & Atkinson, 2018) and in advocating for young people (Ungar, 2005) by capturing their wishes and expressing these in multi-agency settings.

The publication of Green Papers such as *Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision* (Department for Education (DfE) and Department of Health (DoH), 2017) has highlighted the increasing prevalence of mental health problems in young people. This

paper also stated that mental health provision within settings could help to reduce the stigma around accessing therapeutic support and would provide opportunities to deliver a more graduated response (Atkinson & Martin, 2018). One of the key areas of the Preparing for Adulthood framework (2013) surrounds 'good health', including mental health. Indeed, mental health can also be argued to underpin the other tenets of the framework, including independent living, paid employment, and community inclusion. As such, educational psychologists working with this age group have an additional responsibility to advocate for young people's access to appropriate healthcare and could possibly undertake a more therapeutic role when working directly with young people (Atkinson & Martin, 2018).

1.7.3 Preparing for Adulthood: Voice and Choice

Questions continue to be raised regarding whether young people are provided ample opportunities to develop and practise the skills required to participate fully in person-centred planning opportunities (Norwich & Eaton, 2015) and whether this is an additional factor affecting autonomy (Pierson, Carter, Lane & Glaeser, 2008). It can be argued that the EP is well-placed to elicit the 'voice and choice' (White & Rae, 2016) of young people, in particular during times of transition (Madriaga & Goodley, 2010; Atkinson et al., 2015). The experiences of young people, shaped by the sociopolitical context, legislation and policy and their own wants and needs, will individually impact on the role the EP takes in person-centred planning (Hayton, 2009).

"…by helping to develop a positive sense of identity, to promote a positive career orientation and to raise aspirations, educational psychologists can assist in addressing the particular issues faced by young people." (Hayton, 2009).

Additionally, the collective experiences of this group of young people and the outcomes they wish to achieve will influence EP work at a systemic level, both in strategic work with FE settings (Morris & Atkinson, 2018) and in supporting transition policy (Haughey, 2009).

Research into successful transitions between school and FE has found there to be a number of influencing factors. Carroll and Dockrell (2012) found that, for young people with speech, language and communication needs, their own determination, the support of their family and having appropriate qualifications were all enabling factors to a successful transition to FE and, later, to paid employment. Lawson and Parker (2020) found that mentoring young people during the 'preparing for adulthood' phase of transition allowed the development of a strong, trusting relationship and enabled conversation about the future. Although most studies in this area are small and use a case-study style of methodology, the importance of relationships appears to be a common theme across analyses of successful transitions to FE and beyond (Craig, 2009; Lawson & Parker, 2020). The Educational Psychologist is well-placed to support building relationships and facilitate mentoring; a role which would also satisfy the recommendations of Atkinson et al (2015) around the extension of the EP role in the FE sector and beyond.

The transition period is a time in which young people explore their aspirations, which can lead to shifts in their identity (Hayton, 2009; Crafter & Maunder, 2012). A positive sense of identity and opportunities for person-centred thinking are seen to bolster self-determination (Wilding, 2015), a skill which has been shown to increase the probability of experiencing a positive educational transition (Allwell & Cobb, 2009). Although there is evidence to demonstrate that a mismatch between attainment and aspiration can have negative consequences for young people (Yates et al., 2011), findings demonstrate that young people often have a good understanding of their own SEND needs and requirements (Palikara, Lindsay & Dockrell, 2009). Indeed, Heslop, Mallett, Simons & Ward (2002) found that successful outcomes are underpinned by communication alongside continuity of support, coordination of services and the facilitation of choice.

There remain legislative differences which impact outcomes for young people with special educational needs which are not automatically classed as a disability (Howell, 2020). The Equality Act (2010) serves as protection for those who are recognised as being disabled, which includes those who have a diagnosis of an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia or those who have an intellectual disability. The NICE guidelines define a learning disability under three criteria: significant impairment of social or adaptive functioning, onset in childhood, and a lower intellectual ability (usually

defined as having a Full-Scale IQ of less than 70) (NICE, 2018). For some, this legislation is a protective factor which facilitates continued access to support. For others, it presents an additional barrier to reaching their aspirations in adult life.

Special Educational Needs (SEN) is, by its very nature, a context-specific term (Arnold, 2015) which does not necessarily guarantee access to additional support outside of the realm of education. For young people with additional needs, this can leave them unsure of their path after school or college. With the responsibility for decision-making in their hands (Heinz, 2009) and with the additional impact of their intellectual needs (Beresford, 2004), there is a need for advocacy from a profession well-versed in eliciting and supporting 'voice and choice' (White & Rae, 2016; Arnold, 2015). This need appears to be supported by the SEND Code of Practice (2014) which recognizes the importance of continued support into adulthood.

1.7.4 Post-Compulsory Educational Psychology - The International Context

Elsewhere in the UK, the value placed on continuing support for vulnerable young people into adulthood has led to the growth and development of educational psychology services, including support for people after they have left formal schooling. The Scottish system of 'post-school psychological services' (MacKay, 2009) includes 'pathfinder psychologists' who work with adults who continue to face issues related to education (MacKay, 2009). This is not a new development, with the Wall Report (Wall, 1956) highlighting the role for the EP in supporting adults recovering in hospitals and recognizing the sense of discontinuity between the psychological services available to people during and after their school days (MacKay, 2009). In fact, Wall's suggestions were put forward to UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) in 1958. This proposal for a more comprehensive applied psychology service highlighted the need to move beyond adolescence and suggested the strategy of providing guidance to community employers taking on apprentices and other young employees (MacKay, 2020). At this stage, the UNESCO committee recognised that the EP role should extend beyond school, however Wall's vision was never fulfilled (MacKay, 2020).

Around the world, there is a shared acknowledgement between some countries that the role of the school or educational psychologist is one which should extend beyond the school context and should support transition to the adult world. Daniels et al (2007) highlighted that, despite there not being the structure in place, South African EPs recognise their role across the lifespan. In Romania, as highlighted by Dinca et al (2007), EPs provide vocational guidance to young people as they leave FE to go into the workplace. Zepke and Leach (2010), in a large-scale, international study, additionally identified that there are five key factors affecting engagement in post-compulsory education which professionals need to be aware of. They are: motivation and agency; transactions; institutional support; active citizenship and external influences. In this case 'external influences' includes finances, social integration and family circumstances.

The Psychological Society of Ireland (2011) recognises that an EP's work can support the 'psychological and educational development of students of any age' (Slattery et al., 2022). In China, Ma (2022) extends this by explaining how the role of the school psychologist can be seen as a way to promote the growth of the social economy by supporting successful employment. The focus on employment is echoed in the Australian context (Lawson, 2014), where there is a recognition of the young people who are unemployed but who want to work and where there is a call for professionals to stop young people from 'falling through the cracks'.

Although there is published research available which highlights the potential effectiveness of an EP supporting young people in early adulthood and beyond, many authors discuss how the actual contribution of EPs in this area is limited by the number of professionals who engage in this type of work. Talapatra et al (2019) put forward the consideration that EPs may require additional training to improve their knowledge of post-compulsory education and the specific needs of young people at this stage, which may include the developments of guidelines around good practice and effective strategies for support.

1.7.5 Good Practice - Promoting Inclusive Education

There remains little evidence to support the notion of 'good practice' for the EP in post-16
settings (Wittemeyer et al., 2011; Damali & Damali, 2018). For some EPs, working in FE
requires an individualized approach (Hayton, 2009) whereas, for others, the role is more
strategic (Morris & Atkinson, 2018). Damali and Damali (2018) found that there is not yet a
cohesive shared understanding of how best to approach post-16 working, with many services
still developing models of service delivery. They identified that, at this stage, it is important
that EP support reflects the transition process the young people are going through,
highlighting their strengths and needs across the four areas of need from the 2015 Code of
Practice: employment, health, community, and independence.

Damali and Damali's (2018) research was carried out using a 15-piece questionnaire and was
aimed at gathering the views of EPs working in a single borough in London. The authors
recognise the limits to generalizability associated with this type of case-study design. The
participants were asked about their work with the 16-25 year old age group and the responses
were analysed for themes. It is important to note that this particular local authority operates
on a traded model which places the educational setting as the consumer, and that the authors
highlight that only one FE setting in the area had purchased EP time (Damali & Damali,
2018). The research was intended to capture the thoughts of EPs as the authority progresses
to developing a cohesive model of service delivery for the 16-25 year old age group and is
presented in the local context. However, some elements of the study's findings reflect wider
research in the area.

This model, much like the Preparing for Adulthood framework (2013), reflects the original
purpose of the EHCP; the need to promote inter-agency communication and joint working to
support young people (SEND Code of Practice, 2015). However, the extension of the EP role
to include direct work with young adults involves understanding the unique social and
emotional challenges faced in early adulthood (Morris & Atkinson, 2018) and may require
professional collaboration with adult health and social care services. As such, the EP role
shifts once young people turn 18, presenting an unfamiliar and complex landscape through
which the EP must learn to navigate.

Theoretical literature has been published around the topic of social mobility, special schools and inclusive education, which highlights the ways in which systems around young people can help or hinder their perception, motivation and achievement (Tomlinson, 2017). Inclusive education is seen as a dynamic process (Anderson et al., 2014), which can only truly be achieved through the challenging of exclusion (Slee, 2011). The systems at play, which are posited to maintain the social inequality and contribute to the manufacturing of inability (Tomlinson, 2017), are perpetuated through the semantics of the language around SEND which affect how provisions are conceptualized and delivered (Anderson et al., 2014). The notion of 'special' or 'additional' as a label is noted as an example of society's individualism, which shifts focus away from the structural inequalities at play and instead qualifies the young person as 'other' or somehow not included (Tomlinson, 2017). It is this perspective, representative of an individualistic outlook, which has led to young people with SEND being limited to accessing basic vocational qualifications, and low-skilled or casual employment whilst being considerably more vulnerable to social exclusion and exploitation within the criminal justice system (Tomlinson, 2017).

1.8   Summary

The literature surrounding the experience of transition in the 16-25 age range is focused on moving from secondary school to FE settings, with many studies using a small sample size and a qualitative, case study design in order to capture the 'lived' experience of young people. The findings demonstrate that, despite the development of person-centred planning tools and frameworks, there is variability in how young people experience the transition process. Additionally, as there is no standardised notion of 'good practice' in this area (Wittemeyer et al., 2011), evaluations are subjective and have limited external validity.

Statistics continue to demonstrate that, for young people with SEND, their experiences of transitioning into and learning within the FE structure can be difficult (Cockerill & Arnold, 2018), however the role of professionals in supporting young people as they take their final steps towards adulthood and independence appears to be inconsistent with no clear guidance to support it. Where other areas of the UK recognise that learning is not context-specific (Arnold, 2015) and that it impacts people throughout their lives (MacKay, 2009), there are

questions surrounding the EP role and how the psychological understanding of processes
such as motivation and self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 2002) can be used to support young
people as they move into adulthood in England and Wales.

Statistical evidence supporting the arguments presented offers a clearer picture of the
consequences of poor outcomes for young people (e.g. Tomlinson, 2017; Parry, 2020). There
is evidence to suggest that, in comparison to peers who are not identified as having SEND,
there is a higher risk of becoming NEET (Timpson, 2019) and that associated milestones
used to define what it means to be an 'adult' (Settersten, 2007) are therefore more difficult to
achieve. The impact of such environmental factors on autonomy, relatedness, and
competence - the tenets of self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 2002) - supports the notion that
this group are particularly vulnerable and that there is a need for preventative work from
professionals (Arnold & Baker, 2012).

However, the statistics do not account for the differences in protection offered by the
legislation surrounding young people with disabilities versus those whose additional needs
are context-specific (Arnold & Baker, 2012; Howell, 2020). The research on transition has
largely focused on young people moving into FE, rather than leaving it, and so there is little
evidence to demonstrate the long-term outcomes for young people who continue to access
support or, indeed, those whose needs are not protected under the Equality Act (2010). There
remain questions around the experience of transition into adult services once the SEND
acronym splits into its component parts of SEN and Disability (Howell, 2020), and around
the potential role of the EP in providing additional support and guidance.

The EHCP document is often cited as a protective factor (Cockerill & Arnold, 2018) for
young people as it ensures a level of individualized and person-centred support, with
contributions from a variety of services. However, there are several factors which impact on
the quality of the plans provided (Bason, 2018), including the ways in which professionals
from different agencies approach the development or review of an EHCP.

FE settings are widely recognised as educational 'stepping stones' (Lawson & Parker, 2020).
Colleges have been praised for the opportunities they provide for young people to develop
new, transferable skills (Guishard, 2000), in particular around independent living (Lawson &

Parker, 2020). The implementation of the SEND Code of Practice (2015) which extends statutory support across the FE sector was designed to ensure continuity and protect the outlined provision required to meet a young person's needs, however young people with SEND continue to experience unique difficulties and barrier to success at this stage and beyond.

The role of the EP in FE continues to develop as working relationships grow and change and as professionals increase their knowledge in the area (Atkinson et al., 2015). Where young people are at risk of becoming NEET, the EP is argued to be well-placed to provide early intervention and preventative work (Arnold & Baker, 2012). Additionally, the EP is suggested to be an influential figure in the development of transition guidance for young people with SEND (Haughey, 2009). However, due to the unique and complex needs of young people at this stage of their lives, further evidence is required in order to inform what is 'best practice' (Wittemeyer et al., 2011), in particular given that the role of the EP may change depending upon whether a young person has SEN or a recognised disability (Howell, 2020).

The current research base highlights the barriers and difficulties faced by some young people, particularly those with SEND, as they prepare for adulthood. However, a significant portion of the published literature is theoretical and focuses on the wider systems around young people with an additional portion focusing solely on the experiences of young people as they move from secondary education to FE settings. Further exploration is required to establish the lived experience of young people and their views on the systems around them as they transition from FE to adulthood. In addition, further investigation is required to establish effective practical approaches to research which demonstrate the impact of recommendations for inclusive practice and continuing professional development. Although studies have been carried out with young people transitioning into post-16 education and FE settings, there no published empirical research which explores the lived experiences of young people as they leave FE or as they begin to explore life outside of education. It is only through direct research and exploration that recommendations for professionals and good practice guidelines can be generated and implemented: the young person's voice must be heard and understood first.

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2. Empirical Paper

Exploring the perspectives of young people with SEND during the transition out of further education: a study using Q-Methodology

Abstract

This study explores the perspectives of young people with SEN and/or disabilities in their final year of further education. The purpose of the study is to explore the lived experience of young people and to develop an understanding of their priorities in relation to the future, using the Preparing for Adulthood framework (2013) as a guide. It also considers the difference in experience between young people who have recognised special educational needs (SEN), those who have a registered disability and those who have both SEN and a disability (SEND).

The study uses Q-methodology to seek the subjective outlooks of 10 young people aged 17-23 from a local group of colleges within one local authority in England. The set of statements is based on the priorities of the Preparing for Adulthood framework (2013). The analysis of the Q-sort data revealed three factors which, together, account for 65% of the variance within the study. The three factors all had eigenvalues of more than 1.00, which is an indicator of the explanatory power of the factor. The three factors were explored based on the placement of the statements, which demonstrated a particular outlook.

The 3 extracted factors highlight different perspectives on the question of 'what is important to you as you begin to prepare to leave college?'. The participants who loaded significantly onto each factor were found to share some characteristics. Post-sort interviews were conducted, and the young people's stories were used to make sense of their responses through a process of deductive content analysis. Through analysis of their post-sort interview transcripts, it was possible to develop labels for three factors which explain the perspectives of the participants who loaded onto them most significantly. The results indicate that there is some parity between young people with and without disabilities, leading to recommendations around how EPs and other allied professionals can further support young people with SEN or SEND at this stage in their lives.

2.1 Introduction

Young people with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) have historically faced additional barriers to appropriate support, in particular once they leave school (Warnock, 1978). Statistics demonstrate that young people with SEND are at higher risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training), which is in itself a predictor for poor outcomes in adult life, including social vulnerability (Arnold & Baker, 2012) and social exclusion (Timpson, 2019).

For young people with recognised disabilities, their access to additional support is protected under the Equality Act (2010). As disability is a 'protected characteristic', young people are entitled to 'reasonable adjustments' which ensure that additional barriers to their success in the workplace or their access to health services and appropriate education are removed. However, there is a legislative gap between young people who have a disability and those who have special educational needs (SEN) which are not recognised as a disability (Howell, 2020). For this group of people, the label used to describe their needs is context-specific (Arnold, 2015), as the term 'special educational needs' implies that a person's needs therefore only apply in the context of education. As such, there remain questions over the equity of access to support and the implications this may have for a young person's future (Howell, 2020).

The transition from adolescence to adulthood is recognised as a key time in a young person's life (Lawson & Parker, 2020). A difference or a misalignment in expectation or in the level of support provided for a young person's needs could have significant and detrimental consequences (Yates et al., 2011). Indeed, as young people experience changes in their self-identity at this time (Crafter & Maunder, 2012), there is an increased vulnerability amongst the population (Newman & Blackburn, 2002). Despite the implementation of frameworks to support planning and preparing for the future (Preparing for Adulthood, 2013), outcomes for young people with SEND continue to demonstrate an increased risk of poor outcomes in adulthood (The Timpson Review, 2019; Cockerill & Arnold, 2018).

Tomlinson (2017) highlights that there is limited literature surrounding the employment prospects of young people with SEND at this pivotal stage of their life. The 2015 SEND

Code of Practice was developed with the guiding principle of person-centred, holistic support, with the Preparing for Adulthood Framework (2013) underpinned by the notion of 'delivering better outcomes together'. The framework itself was developed by a team of professionals working alongside the DfE who hold the perspective that most young people can achieve the goals set out in the framework with the correct support in place (PfA, 2015). However, there is little evidence around the effectiveness of the framework to demonstrate how young people themselves feel about the frameworks and structures designed to support the transition into adulthood, with research focusing on the views of allied professional groups and the experiences of EPs (e.g. Damali & Damali, 2018).

The EP has had a statutory role in supporting post-16 education since 2014 and many suggestions have been made as to how the unique FE environment requires professional development of understanding and skills (Morris & Atkinson, 2018). Within a multi-agency approach, the EP is posited to be in a good position to provide psychological support and promote positive self-identity (Morris & Atkinson, 2018), however research continues to demonstrate that there is no clear evidence to show what 'good' practice means (Damali & Damali, 2018). The current literature highlights that there is not yet a clear understanding of how best to support young people with SEND during their time in FE and beyond. While statistics demonstrate that outcomes for young people can be poor (Timpson, 2019; Parry, 2020), a key voice is missing from the puzzle surrounding how best to support young people when they leave FE: their own.

2.2 Key Concepts and Theories

2.2.1 SEND in Post-16 Education

Several legislative changes have contributed to the shifting landscape of FE in the UK. Historically, reports such as the Warnock Report (1978) advocated for inclusive practice, highlighting that removing some of the barriers to FE faced by young people with SEND could reduce the employment rate in the country (Warnock, 1978). The 1997 Labour government extended the provision for young people with SEND by developing 'life skills' courses focused on developing the independence of people with additional needs (Guishard,

2000). However, critics highlight that these courses remained separate and did not, therefore, promote the inclusion of young people with SEND within the wider FE community (Guishard, 2000).

Three key pieces of legislation, imposed in the early 21st century, have shaped the rights of young people and the responsibilities of FE settings to develop appropriate provision. The Mental Capacity Act (2005) is an emancipatory act, which ensures that a person with capacity has the right to make their own decisions and voice their own wishes (Marshall & Sprung, 2018). Secondly, the Equality Act (2010) afforded the right to 'reasonable adjustments' for anyone with a recognised disability to promote equity of access across employment, education and social domains. The SEND Code of Practice (2015), a document associated with the 2014 Children and Families Act, legally entitled young people aged 16-25 with SEND to support for the first time.

The focus on equal opportunities has been key to increased participation of young people with SEND in FE (Attfield & Attfield, 2019), however there continue to be questions regarding the quality of services and the legal rights of young people whose needs do not meet the criteria to be classed as a disability (Howell, 2020). For young people whose needs are identified in an educational context (Arnold, 2015), there is no guarantee that the support they have received in school would be continued or replicated into adulthood, whereas for those young people whose needs are classed as a disability under the Equality Act (2010), the right to 'reasonable adjustments' is a protective factor which ensures a continuation of support into adulthood regardless of context.

2.2.2 Preparing for Adulthood

The Preparing for Adulthood Framework (2013) is a non-statutory document which links closely with the recommendations of the Children and Families Act (2014), particularly the notion within the SEND Code of Practice (2015) that young people with SEND should be assumed to be capable of achieving life ambitions such as accessing paid employment and living independently. It is a person-centred planning document which is recommended for use with young people from year 9 onwards.

The framework was originally delivered by the National Development Team for Inclusion and is designed to operate alongside the SEND Code of Practice (2015), supporting planning for the future through suggesting set outcomes to focus on during annual reviews and progress meetings. There are five key aims which the document is designed to promote: personalizing approaches, shared vision, improving options and support, raising aspiration and planning services together (Preparing for Adulthood, 2013). Professionals are invited to use the framework alongside a young person to support them to think about four key outcome areas: paid employment, independent living, good health and community inclusion (PfA., 2013)

2.2.3 Ecological Systems Theory

Within Educational Psychology, systems theory is a widely accepted approach which represents the complex interactions between a person and the world in which they live. Through a systemic lens, it is possible to explore the impact of legislation, culture and individual differences on the lived experiences and outcomes for young people. In the context of this study, an ecological systems perspective offers a way to explore and explain the connections between the frameworks available to support young people, the legislative context and the outlook of the young people themselves on their next steps. In particular, the systemic lens is a helpful tool to examine why there has been found to be a dissonance between a young person's expectations and the reality of their post-education outcomes (Parry, 2020).

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1976; 2005) is a theoretical model which aims to demonstrate how a person's environment, culture and community can impact on their understanding of the world. The theory identifies five systemic levels, which interact with one another and are often mapped as concentric circles around a central individual.
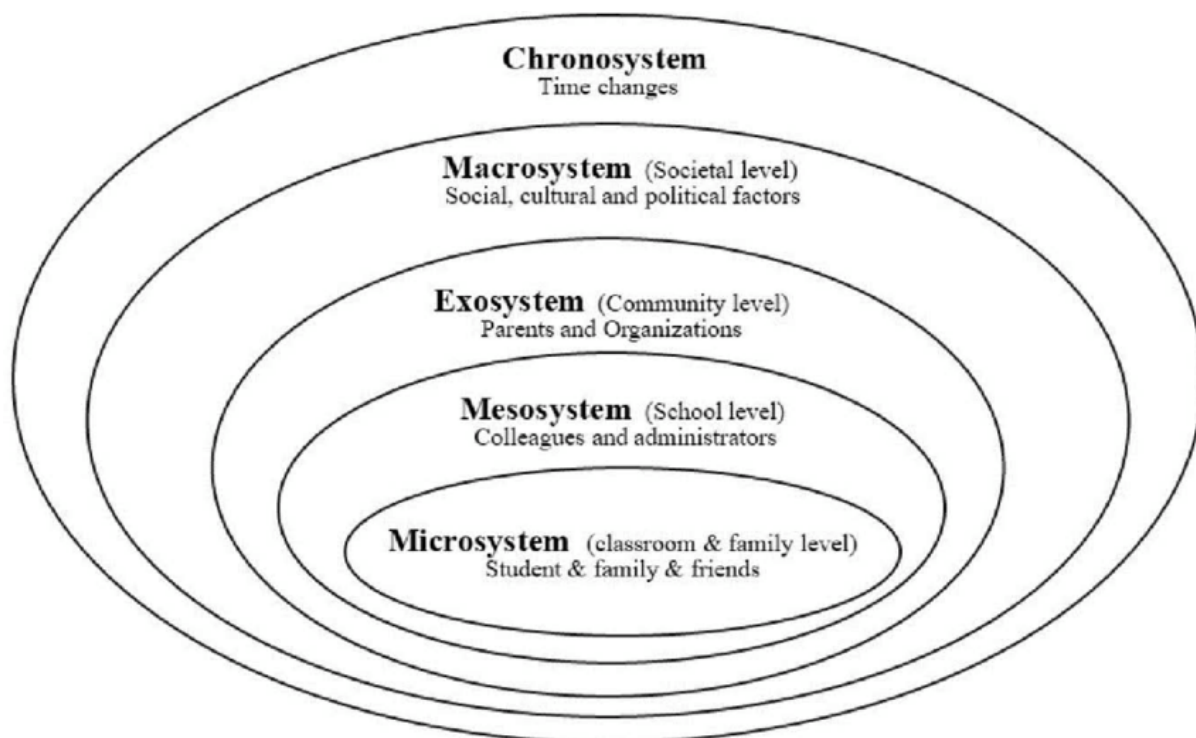
Fig. 1. A diagram representing Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory of Development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005)

2.2.4 Self-Determination Theory

The literature surrounding the outcomes for young people with SEND often focuses on the systemic influences (Arnold & Baker, 2012; Yates et al., 2011), however it is important to highlight that personal motivation is a significant factor in the experiences of many people and the choices they make. Therefore, a second psychological theory which helps to explain the lived experience of young people is Self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2002).

SDT is a psychological theory of motivation which proposes that there are three universal factors which contribute to motivation and goal-directed behaviour: competence, relatedness and autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2002). SDT is seen in research as a concept which is able to explain the psychological factors involved in developing a sense of fulfilment and satisfaction. Research has previously highlighted that SDT can be a useful framework to support young people to move out of NEET status (Gabriel, 2015). In the case of young

people with SEND, particularly where reported outcomes continue to be poor (Timpson, 2019; House of Commons, 2019), SDT is a useful framework to support the development of effective intervention strategies (Lawson & Parker, 2020).

When attempting to understand the lived experiences of young people, it is important to consider both the intrinsic and extrinsic factors which impact on their journey. This is particularly the case with young people as they leave FE, as there is little direct research. SDT as a theoretical lends therefore allows for the development of an understanding around why some young people experience poor outcomes at this stage. In addition, if SDT can be applied to understand the issue, it can also be suggested as a way to support the development of strategies which guide young people to avoid poor outcomes, such as NEET status (Gabriel, 2015). In addition, as highlighted in the Timpson Review (2019), this theory can be used to develop early intervention strategies for vulnerable young people before they leave the security and support provided by educational settings.

2.3 Research Aims

Young people are recognised to go through a period of personal growth and development throughout their time in FE, related to an increase in independent skills (Lawson & Palmer, 2020). Relationships, especially with supportive adults have been found to be key to a successful transition (Craig, 2009). It has been posited, due to the themes of relatedness, competence and autonomy that occur in much of the literature, that SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2002) may be a useful lens through which to understand the experiences of young people at this significant stage of their lives (Lawson & Parker, 2020). This theoretical application may also allow for the development of more person-centred and meaningful approaches to planning for the transition into adulthood.

There is very little published research which focuses on the experiences of young people as they move from FE towards adulthood. The available literature is largely theoretical, as opposed to empirical, in nature. The dearth of available insight into the lived experiences of young people with SEND as they leave education means that a number of questions remain unanswered. Since the SEND Code of Practice (2015) extended the roles and responsibilities

of education professionals to support young people up to the age of 25, clarification is needed as to how professionals - namely EPs - can adapt and extend their skills to promote positive outcomes into adulthood (Morris & Atkinson, 2018).

Further research is required in order to evaluate whether the Preparing for Adulthood framework (2013) meets the heterogenous needs of young people both as they begin to plan for their future and as they transition out of education and into the adult world. In addition, it has been highlighted that the current legislation - the Equality Act (2010) and the Children and Families Act (2014) - is not watertight (Timpson, 2019) and leaves a 'gap' in which there exist a group of young people who have special educational needs, but no disability and are therefore not protected under either Act when they leave school (Howell, 2020). Wright (2006), through an exploration of provision for students with learning disabilities in FE, highlights that research should focus on listening to the young people who have 'lost their voice'. The author posits, therefore, that the highlighted group - young people with SEN but no disability - should have an opportunity to demonstrate their perspective alongside their peers who are afforded legal protection through the Equality Act and the right to 'reasonable adjustments'.

It is important to highlight at this stage in the research process that the majority of students who engaged with the study had a recognised disability alongside their educational needs. Given that there is very little published research which demonstrates a difference in the lived experience of young people with SEND, and that the literature and media consulted in the literature search focused on young people with SEND rather than just SEN, it was felt that the research project would be more valuable and its findings more valid if the focus was on exploring students with 'SEND', meaning that the experiences and views of young people who have disabilities would also be included. Therefore, at this point, the aims and questions of the study were developed to reflect the focus on young people special educational needs and/or disabilities.

AIMS:
- To understand the perspective of young people with SEND regarding the transition out of education.

- To identify a role for the EP in supporting transition out of education and into employment or training.

QUESTIONS:

- What is the perspective of young people with SEND on the existing Preparing for Adulthood framework for planning for the future? (Phase 1)
- What is the experience of young people with SEND leaving further education? (Phase 2)

The current study follow ed the recommended structure of Q-methodology. Firstly, participants were invited to complete a Q-Sort, the task central to Q-Methodology, using remote software. The Q-Sort statements were developed from the categories within the Preparing for Adulthood Framework (Preparing for Adulthood, 2013) and link to key findings derived from pertinent research. Transcripts from short interviews with the participants were utilized to demonstrate the young people's experiences in their own words using deductive content analysis. A discussion chapter summarises the study's findings in the context of published literature.

2.4 Outcomes and Impact

2.4.1 Implications for Theory

The dearth of information available currently regarding the experiences of young people as they move out of FE settings and towards adulthood suggests that any research will provide additional knowledge and a platform from which further research could be designed and carried out. The intended research, and its anticipated findings, could additionally have implications regarding theoretical frameworks through which disability is understood, including SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2002) and the social model of disability (Oliver, 1983).

2.4.2 Implications in Practice

It is hoped that the findings of this study will provide opportunities for a greater understanding as to how young people with SEN who do not have a disability wish to be supported as they transition out of FE. It is widely recognised within the literature that there is a role for the EP within this; further consideration will be given to the benefits of implementing a system like the model commonly seen in Scotland (MacKay, 2009) elsewhere in the UK.

Analysis of the items scored negatively in the Q-Sort and further exploration of this may also provide an opportunity to consider the areas in which an EP may be best placed to provide additional support and the areas in which, at a more systemic level, strategic or policy-based changes may be required in order to sufficiently support young people and prevent the current trends around the risk of becoming NEET from increasing.

2.4.3. Implications for Young People

It is hoped that the experience of participating in the research, and the experience of having their voices heard, was a positive one for the young people involved. It is also hoped that the research findings can contribute in a meaningful way to the development of a more formal process through which young people with SEN access support and guidance at the end of their time in education. Additional awareness of the views of the young people and the challenges they face is also likely to ensure that, within the wider system, more consideration is given to the individual needs and aspirations of all young people with SEN.

Finally, it is hoped that this research study will provide a solution, in some way, to the increasing numbers of disenfranchised young people with SEN who are classified as NEET. Any reduction in the number of young people in this category, especially with the additional social and emotional risks it poses, would be of great benefit on an individual, local and national level.

2.5 Methodology

2.5.1 Paradigm

The current study is framed through a lens of a critical realist paradigm, underpinned by an epistemological stance of social constructionism. Critical realism is a philosophical position in which the nature of reality is understood to be a dynamic interaction between ideas which are usually dichotomous: nature and nurture; mind and matter; subject and object (Sayer, 2000). This notion allows the researcher to reflect critically upon society and its systems, supporting an emancipatory approach to research (Harré, 2009). Bhaskar (2011), highlights that critical realism rejects the artificial division of 'reality' and 'representation', instead understanding natural and social phenomena as factors representative of the complex relationship between nature and society within the world in which we live. Critical realism is a perspective which offers an alternative viewpoint to both empirical and relativist approaches, instead acknowledging the 'central paradox' of science (Bhaskar, 1975). This approach separates objects of knowledge into those which are *intransitive* and those which are *transitive:* objects which are known and not produced by the 'knower' and those which come to be known through theory and social processes. Philosophically, critical realism acknowledges the existence of an ontological reality whilst understanding epistemologically that knowledge is borne from a social process and can be influenced by the subjectivity of human beings (Yucel, 2018).

Social Constructionism is an epistemology based upon the notion that a person's knowledge and understanding of the world is developed through their interactions and experiences. It is derived from the sociological concept of symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934), the idea that human identities are constructed through the everyday encounters they share with one another (Sarbin & Kituse,1994). Burr (2015) highlights that social constructionism is similarly underpinned by the belief that knowledge developed is biased towards certain categories upon which humans place more emphasis. Secondly, it is understood that society is influenced by history and culture and that this has an impact on the contextual lens through which things are known. Social constructionism operates on the understanding that knowledge is sustained though social processes, most notably language and discourse (Sims-

Shouten et al., 2007). Perception, as a consequence, is shaped by the social constructions that surround an event, object or person.

Social Constructionism is often criticised, while positing that reality is created rather that discovered, for placing a heavy emphasis on the role of discourse and language. It has been argued that elements of society which do not utilize language can only truly be understood or analysed when transformed into discourse (Cromby & Nightingale, 2000), thus minimizing the influence of non-discursive social experiences such as movement, art, and music (Burr, 1999). However, theorists now recognise that social constructionism exists in two strands (Danzinger, 1997), a 'light' version which focuses on discourse and speech and a 'dark' version which acknowledges power as a non-discursive element which contributes to the social construction of reality, manifesting in the structures of society around an individual.

Both the critical realist ontology and the 'dark' social constructionist epistemology (Danzinger, 1997) recognise some parts of reality are derived from relationships and interactions between people and the structures within which they live, but that the systems around human beings and the context in which they live is empirically real. Therefore, there is an underlying belief across these philosophies that a person's reality is subjective to a degree, understood through their actions within the context of the systems around them. This theoretical philosophical stance therefore offers a critical perspective through which a researcher is able to reflect upon the roots of social behaviour and offer challenges to the norm in a manner which can be considered emancipatory (Harré, 2009) when applied to marginalized populations (Banks et al., 2001).

The current research project uses critical realism and the social constructionist perspective on epistemology as a position from which to understand the accounts of young people on their personal, subjective experiences. As such, the author acknowledges the existence of both what is known and what is represented as factors of the same, interactive reality which is shaped both by nature and by social processes and subjective perceptions. In addition, the author's position within the paradigm must be noted, as the experience of subjectively making sense of the world is likely to influence both the interpretation of information and the way it is contextualised. The knowledge generated through this project was understood as representing the reality of a particular group of people which was shaped by their individual,

social experiences but which was bound by the empirical reality of the systems and context in which they lived. The knowledge generated from this project was therefore anticipated to represent a subjective perspective which is examined critically as a product of the interaction between an empirically real systemic context and the social processes applied within it.

2.5.2   Research Design

2.5.2.1 Q Methodology

In order to answer the research questions outlined in section 2.3 in line with the ontology and epistemology detailed above, the author recognised the need for a holistic approach which was sensitive to the views of the individual whilst also capturing elements of a shared lived experience within a population. Q methodology is a method which supports the generation of a first-person perspective on psychological significance through the application of by-person factor analysis (Watts & Stenner, 2014). The exploration of by-person (rather than by-variable) correlations and clusters around subjects then leads to the analysis of single latent factors which underpin and influence the subjective results of a population. In sum, it is a methodology which supports a researcher to understand how people make sense of issues and to look closer at the underlying commonalities between the groups who share a particular viewpoint or preference.

Q methodology is based upon the statistical and psychological work of William Stephenson, who first published his thoughts on the idea of a holistic, inverted statistical approach to data analysis in 1935 (Watts & Stenner, 2014). A contemporary and colleague of Charles Burt, known to be the first 'educational psychologist' employed in the UK, Stephenson developed techniques to invert data and explore latent variables and represent the human experience (Brown, 1996). From his initial approach - known as *R-methodology* - Stephenson assessed the limitations and began the development of what would come to be known as Q methodology; a system which is holistic in nature and is able to capture both the 'operant behaviour' and 'state of feeling' of a particular person, whilst exploring the subjectivity and shared perspective of a population (Stephenson, 2005).

Unlike quantitative measures of the human experience, which tend to link to a positivist epistemology and therefore focus measuring the impact of one variable on another, Q methodology does not use any pre-determined assessment or guide. Instead, the participants in a Q sort (known as a P set) are presented with a set of statements on a particular topic (known as the Q set) which they then actively rank into a pre-established order based on a scale of preference, likeness, or another similar measure (Watts & Stenner, 2014). This data can be used to demonstrate the subjective views of one individual, however multiple responses from people across a population can be assessed in order to establish whether there is a commonality of perspective relative to personal characteristics (Stephenson, 1935). Through using by-person factor analysis, Q methodology is therefore a way to identify groups of people who make sense of particular issues in similar ways (Watts & Stenner, 2005).

In contrast to more traditional or positivist scientific techniques applied to social science, Q methodology is based upon the idea that the participants involved in the study become the variables (Watts & Stenner, 2014). As this method requires the participants themselves to decide what is important or meaningful, there are less *a priori* assumptions in place (Watts & Stenner, 2005). As the researcher does not identify the variables to be tested - which involves a degree of subjectivity- the researcher is able to be more objective during the analysis phase and is therefore less likely to be influenced by their own constructs (Lundberg, de Leeuew & Aliani, 2020).

The Q Sort method is recognised as a scientific framework which allows an individual's subjective viewpoint to be examined and compared (Coogan & Herrington, 2011). The method involves a selected sample of stimuli (the Q set), derived from a 'concourse' of items which could represent perspectives on the topic, being rank ordered by each participant into a set grid, which represents the normal distribution curve (Burt & Stephenson, 1939). The 'concourse' of stimuli is selected to represent a broad range of views on a particular topic, derived from a range of sources including television, news articles, magazines, government documents and social media (Hylton et al.,2018). A distilling process, through which it is ensured that the selected statements continue to represent a broad range of perspectives, is used to reduce the concourse into a smaller, more manageable set of statements which can be presented to the participant group.

The rank ordering is based upon a pre-established dimension such as agreement or likeness (Stainton Rogers, 1995). Participants are asked to sort the statements they have been presented with on a scale from an extreme positive response to an extreme negative response e.g. 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. The participants are given a grid in which to place each statement, with a drawn outline to represent how many statements can fit in each section. The idea is that the statements are sorted into a pyramid or triangle shape, which represents the normal distribution curve, where there are more spaces in the neutral centre and less spaces at either extreme end (Hylton, Kisby & Goddard, 2018). This rank order is then analysed through a process of inverse, by-person factor analysis, in order to establish the extent of agreement or disagreement on particular topics across a population (Watts & Stenner, 2014). A diagram explaining the stages of the approach can be seen in Fig. 2.
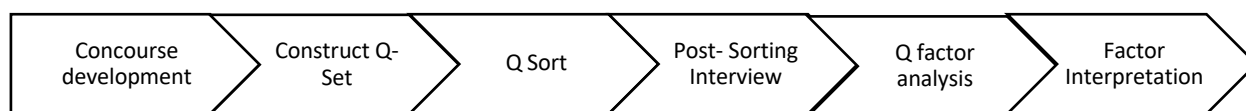
Fig. 2: A visual representation demonstrating the Q methodology process based on the findings of Lundberg et al., 2020.

There is a developing understanding within educational psychology research that, because Q methodology is not reliant on formal measures and is flexible enough that most stimuli can be utilized within a Q set (Watts & Stenner, 2014), it is an appropriate method for application in the 'dynamic, complex and ever-changing' world of education (Lundberg et al., 2020, p.1). In addition, seeking an understanding of subjectivity and psychological significance from groups across a population promotes equitable access to research participation (Lundberg et al., 2020) 'without a limitation in age and verbal understanding' (Lundberg et al., 2020, p.12). The participatory approach of Q methodology additionally offers the possibility for stakeholders to demonstrate their views, contributing to inclusive policy development across systemic levels (Howe, 2004; Heasly, 2017). As such, the rationale for selecting this method is that it is a technique which is able to capture and compare perspectives in a way which offers both a person-centred interpretation and a meaningful statistical data set through which the population's views as a whole can be better understood. In this study, Q methodology represented an opportunity to understand the perspective of young people within the

education system and to discover how views and perspectives may differ within or between groups.

2.5.2.2 Factor Analysis

Q methodology aims to understand the way in which people place particular importance on certain elements or ideas within a given topic. Therefore, the analytical process needs to highlight how particular statements were ranked and demonstrate the correlations found within the groups who feel similarly. The recommended statistical analysis model for Q methodology is a by-person correlation and factor analysis (Watts & Stenner, 2005).

A 'factor' is an arrangement of the given statements which most closely reflects responses across the P-set; it represents a grouping of variables which is statistically significant and is able to explain a portion of the variance within the study. Factors emerge from patterns within the data when each participant's responses are compared. The more commonality between participant responses and the factor's unique arrangement of the statements, the more likely it is that there is a shared viewpoint within the P-set. This shared viewpoint is then known as a 'factor'.

The correlation matrix is analysed to capture the 'loading' on each factor; identifying the number of participants who had similar viewpoints and allowing for further analysis of their characteristics as a group. For example, this analysis can demonstrate how important or unimportant particular factors are, identifying strong viewpoints which are shared between multiple participants.

Once a factor has been identified, the responses which most closely correlate with one another are used to develop an overall configuration of statements, using the same grid that the individual participants used to complete their Q-sort. This configuration is representative, therefore, of the shared viewpoint which the factor represents. The most significant statements within this factor's arrangement are then used to help identify the shared underlying perspective of the group and are used to label it

2.5.2.3 Factor Interpretation

Each factor is a statistically significant pattern of the statements which represents a shared
perspective between more than one participant. The defining statements are characterised as
those which are statistically significantly different from the responses which load onto other
factors, and the statements upon which the participants aligning with each factor place
particular importance. As recommended by Watts and Stenner (2005), the shared viewpoint
represented by these statements can be defined and summarised into a short, descriptive
phrase. The interpretation of factors within Q methodology (as recommended by Watts &
Stenner, 2005) is then additionally supplemented by quotes taken from interviews with
participants which highlight the underlying reasons for their choices.

Q-methodology is a method which invites the use of post-sorting activities, often interviews
(Shemmings & Ellingsen, 2012), to develop context for participant responses (Watts &
Stenner, 2005). However, it is imperative in this method that the participants' comments are
not reduced or over-analysed; Watts and Stenner (2005) highlight that this would go against
the first-person nature of Q methodology, which eschews any in-depth analysis of the data.
Instead, the commentary is simply utilized to further demonstrate the factor's defining
characteristics and the interpretation of its defining elements (Watts & Stenner, 2005).

2.5.2.4 Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews are seen within the research community as a way to understand what is 'in and on
someone else's mind' (Patton, 2002, p.341). It is argued that this additional information can
be used to enrich the understanding of factors and of the subjective viewpoints of individuals
within the P-set (Lundberg et al., 2020), through a process of analysis such as deductive
content analysis (Krippendorff, 2013). Deductive content analysis, in this instance, refers to
the analysis of the interview data for content, which is coded using pre-determined categories
based on the Q-sort data analysis and the factors it uncovers (Polit & Beck 2012).

The interview structure within this study is derived from the responses given by the
participant during the Q sort activity, with questions developed which offer an opportunity to
generate a deeper understanding of the reasons behind a person's ranking choice. Interview

style is often connected with the philosophical stance of the researcher (Roulston, 2007). In this instance, the interview – in line with the epistemological and ontological perspectives outlined above – aimed to establish an understanding of the context, culture, systems and history which has influenced a young person's subjective experience of reality.

The interview phase of this study was conducted to align with the principles of interpretivism and social constructionism (Clandinin et al., 2007). This paradigm, in line with the exploratory nature of Q-methodology, offers an opportunity to make sense of the young people's experiences and a chance for their voices to be heard.

Salmon and Reissman (in Andrews, 2013) highlight the importance of tolerance and a willingness to wait for a meaning to emerge when working with people with learning difficulties, as they do not always have the ability to tell a coherent story. The dialogue of the interview transcript is then utilised to represent the story of the young people and the shared experiences exemplified in each factor through a process of deductive content analysis (Krippendorff, 2013), in which the data is used to demonstrate evidence which links to the factor's defining characteristics. This gives further contextual understanding to the factors discovered through Q methodology, presented through exemplifying quotes which align with the particular shared perspectives the analysis uncovers

2.5.2.5 Deductive Content Analysis

Deductive content analysis is a qualitative method which is designed to support the exploration of trends within any kind of communicated medium, including media, film, spoken word, advertising and narrative (McKibben, Cade, Purgason & Wahesh, 2020). The deductive approach allows the researcher to follow an *a priori* design, using the information presented in order to make inferences or illustrations on a particular topic (McKibben et al, 2020). Hsieh and Shannon (2005) describe a deductive approach to content analysis as a process through which pre-established key concepts (for example, from theory or from previous research) are used as initial categories in order to code data from a new form of content. In this study, the content analysis is designed to add depth to the findings from the Q-study (Krippendorff, 2013) by exploring the participants' attitudes and beliefs, as represented in their interview transcripts. By using content analysis as a secondary, deductive

technique, it allows for the development of context without hindering the structure or reducing the data the Q sort analysis provides (Watts & Stenner, 2005).

Content analysis is a term which was first described in Webster's Dictionary of the English Language (1961, in Krippendorff, 2013, p.20) as 'analysis of the manifest and latent content of a body of communicated material… through classification, tabulation and evaluation of its key symbols and themes in order to ascertain its meaning and probably effect'. Historically, Krippendorff (2013) explains that content analysis has been applied to media in order to analyse public opinion. In psychology, the method has been applied to various forms of data in order to develop meaning, which has prompted it to be linked to approaches such as literary theory and symbolic interactionism (Krippendorff, 2013).

Content analysis, as a process, supports the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the meaning of a form of media without reducing its meaning to the participant, author or speaker to whom it belongs (Krippendorff, 2013). Fig. 3, a diagram designed by Krippendorff (2013), offers a visual demonstration of the process and role of content analysis in making sense of data. The image is designed to highlight the way in which content analysis attempts to understand how people make meaning of their experiences through making inferences from text through a process of unitizing, sampling, coding and reducing. In other words, the aim of the analysis is to explore the underlying attitudes of the participants, using their language and discourse as a way to make 'real' the beliefs they held which were not necessarily observable (Krippendorff, 2013) by developing an understanding of context to help answer the research questions.
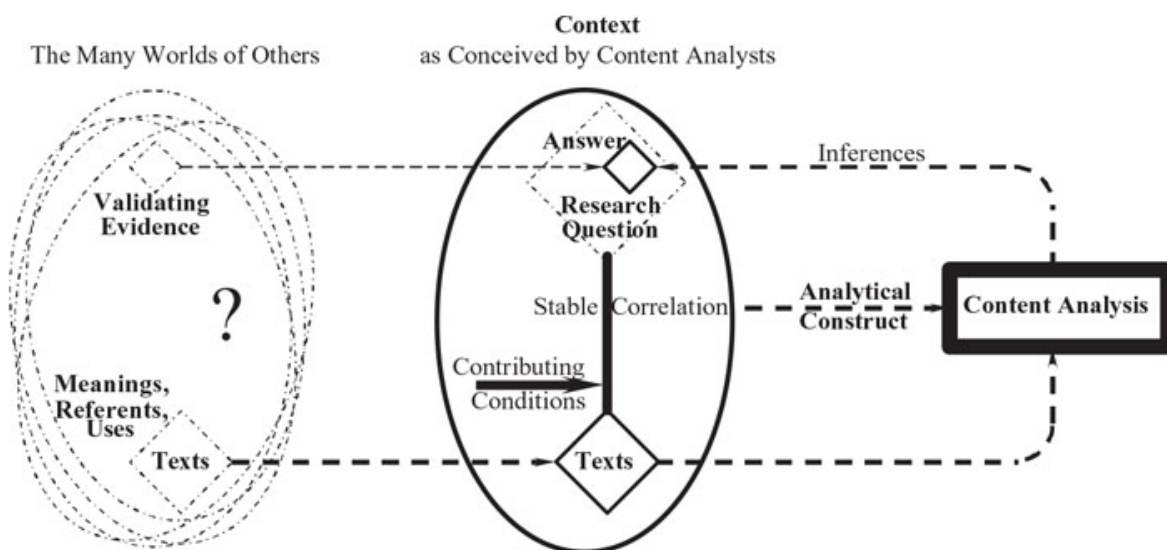
Fig. 3. A visual demonstration of the function of content analysis as an analytical construct, designed by Krippendorff (2013).

Krippendorff's (2013) four-stage model of content analysis is illustrated below. In this section, the method of deductive content analysis is described in the context of this study; namely how it relates to the previous section of research (Q Methodology) and how the findings from the Q-sort were used to sample and code the interview transcripts from participants:

1. Unitising- the unit for analysis is selected based on the research question and the media available. In this case, the unit for analysis will be the transcripts of the interviews, and the participant responses to questions about their experiences in school and further education.

2. Sampling- examples of the content are selected using a sampling method. In this study, purposive sampling will be used in order to explore the transcripts which are linked to each factor, i.e., the interview transcripts of the participants linked to each factor will be analysed separately to allow for comparison.

3. Recording- codes which arise from the content are highlighted and recorded. For this study, the interview transcripts will be coded through a process of reading, re-reading and reflection. Quotes will be selected which align with a conceptual framework which is based on the most significant statements for each factor, as defined by the Q analysis process, in order to establish trends and commonalities which can support a deeper understanding of the research hypothesis.

4. Reducing- themes or categories are inferred through a process of exploring and analysing the recorded codes with the aim of developing patterns and discovering relationships by comparing the findings with data from other sources. The process of deductive content analysis in the specific context of this study is discussed later in the methodology chapter.

The interview transcription and coding process is guided by the Qualitative Quality Criteria (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability to ensure methodological rigour. Credibility was ensured through triangulation with the themes of the factors, the interview transcripts and the emerging codes. Negative case analysis- exploring themes from other factors- were also used to ensure credibility and confirmability. Transferability was ensured through the clear explanation of arising themes and their wider contextual applications. Dependability was ensured through multiple coding processes and researcher reflexivity will be applied to safeguard confirmability.

2.5.3 Participants

Participants (the P Set) were sourced from a group of local FE colleges based in the East of England. The recruitment process was facilitated by a key individual employed by this group, whose role is to co-ordinate the support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This facilitator acted as a gatekeeper, reaching out to groups of young people on behalf of the author in order to generate a suitable sample through purposive sampling methods. The criteria for participation are as follows:

- Aged 17-25
- In their final year of FE (i.e., due to leave in Summer 2022)
- Attending one of the colleges in the group
- Recognised special educational need and/or disability

Participants were recruited via the facilitator and were given an opportunity to read the participant information sheet with support if they required it. The form was presented in an easy-read format with pictures to illustrate the meaning of each section to support

understanding and independent decision-making. Participants were requested to give written consent prior to completing the Q-Sort activity. At this point, they were verbally asked again to give their consent. An additional parental information sheet was distributed via the facilitator. This sheet acted as information for parents of young people over 18 and also acted as a consent form for parents of young people aged 17, or of those young people who did not have capacity to independently make a choice about their participation. The different purposes of this form were clearly communicated to the colleges and the parents. A copy of these forms can be found in the appendices.

Due to the specific needs of the young people involved in the study, it was suggested that they would have difficulty accessing a remote version of the Q-sort task without support. As a result, it was agreed by the ethics board that this study could take place face to face to allow the researchers to guide the young people through the tasks. Recruitment was facilitated by staff within the FE settings, rather than through the parents of the young people, reflecting their independence and the fact that their parents are unlikely to be acting as gatekeepers for decisions such as research participation at this age (see appendix 2 and 3 for participant and parent/carer information sheets).

Anonymised, demographic information was collected by the facilitators, along with key information which the researchers would require to make 'reasonable adjustments' to support access to the sorting task (Equality Act, 2010). This key information included whether the young people could read independently and if they had any particular sensory processing differences which would need to be accounted for within the environment, such as light or sound sensitivity. The table below highlights the demographic information for the P-set, separated by characteristics such as gender, age, special educational need and disability. The participants' primary area of need or diagnosis is reported as it was recorded by the facilitators within the FE college group.

Table 1

Information Regarding the Demographics and Primary Needs of Participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Type of Need	Primary Diagnosis/ area of need
1	M	20	SEND	ASD / Communication and Interaction
2	F	18	SEN	Cognition and Learning
3	F	19	Disability	Cerebral Palsy
4	M	18	Disability	ASD – Asperger's Type
5	F	18	Disability	Tourette's Syndrome
6	F	21	SEND	ASD /Communication and Interaction
7	F	23	SEND	Down Syndrome / Cognition and Learning/ Communication and Interaction
8	M	20	SEND	ASD / Cognition and Learning
9	M	21	SEN	Cognition and Learning
10	F	19	SEND	Communication and Interaction / Seizures

The size of the P-set for a Q methodology study is not as important as the way in which the participants represent a broad range of the pertinent demographic groups; in this case, young people in their final year of FE with SEN and/or a disability. Research has demonstrated that the quality of a Q sort and its analysis can be negatively impacted by a sample size which is too large (Watts & Stenner, 2005), particularly if it no longer represents a group who have diverse views on an issue. Additionally, it is suggested that there should not be more participants than there are statements within the Q sort (Watts & Stenner, 2005). For this study, given the needs of the young people, a smaller set of statements had been selected. Therefore, it was felt that between 8 and 12 participants from the specific groups identified would be enough to provide an array of viewpoints, whilst allowing for clear patterns to emerge.

The primary need of the young people - the reason why they need additional support, which for some young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan would be identified in their documentation – was highlighted within the demographic information provided by the local FE college. Using the areas of SEND from the 2014 Code of Practice; cognition and learning, social, emotional and mental health, physical and sensory and communication and interaction, alongside the diagnostic labels for the young people with a registered disability it was possible to develop a clear understanding of the array of needs the participants had.

2.5.4 Ethical considerations

2.5.4.1 Consent, Participant information and Debrief

The learning needs of this population shaped the design of the project; additional measures such as easy read paperwork and clear instructions for task completion were included in order to ensure young people could give independent consent and could participate as independently as possible. Copies of these forms can be found in the appendix. It was established within the contracting phase with the local FE college group's SEND Co-ordinator that the researcher would be present not only to gather data but to support the young people to access the tasks if this was required.

An easy-read format was used to develop accessible participant information including consent and debrief documents. The accessibility measures were taken in line with the British Psychological Society's Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2021) which highlights that all participants should be provided with enough information to make an informed decision about consent. This included the use of short sentences, a clear font, a larger font size and images to support understanding in order for the participants to make as independent a choice as possible. In addition, for young people aged 17 or for whom it was felt that parental consent was additionally required due to their capacity (BPS, 2021), a parent information sheet was also developed which contained the same information. All of the young people in the P-Set were supported to make an informed choice about participation with the support of the college SEND Coordinator. In addition, participants were verbally reminded of their right to withdraw and to the fact that their responses would be anonymous at the beginning of each phase of the research.

It was recognised that talking about transition and leaving school can be an emotive subject for young people. Due to the legislation around transition, the young people had been discussing the topic for some time (since the age of 14) in annual reviews, however the reality of it being soon could have been upsetting or anxiety-provoking. The discussion was handled with care and signposting was be offered to services appropriate to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of young people.

2.5.4.2 Working with the SEND community

It was recognised that young people with SEND may require additional support to access the activity and the need to focus on the activity may make them tired or stressed. As such, breaks were offered when it appeared that a young person was losing focus or if they asked for one. At the beginning of the activity, any pertinent information was requested from the young person about their specific needs in order to ensure the activity was appropriately differentiated. Young people were also informed that they could have an adult with them throughout the activity/interview to support them if they so wished.

2.5.4.3 Other ethical considerations

The young people and the people who care for them were made aware of the right to withdraw from the study. Participants were additionally asked verbally if they wished to complete the Q sort before the activity began. All participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any point up until the data was analysed as, at this point, the information would be anonymous, and it would not be possible to retrieve their own data.

Anonymity and confidentiality measures were put in place to ensure the safety of the participants' data. The personal information of the young people was kept by the college SEN coordinator who acted as gatekeeper; the researcher was only provided with the young person's chosen forename. Data was kept confidential, and participants were assured that it would be deleted once the research was complete. Interview data was held securely in a password-protected file on a password-protected computer with each transcript stored under a pseudonym. Participants were not asked to provide any personal, identifying details during either the Q sort or interview process.

The final consideration was around researcher reflexivity and the role of the author in both the construction of the study and the interpretation of its findings. A key factor in Yardley's (2000) dimensions for robust qualitative research is transparency; in this case, this comes from the acknowledgement that the subject matter, the research questions and the structure of the study are impacted by the subjectivity of the researcher and the author's own biases.

2.5.5   Procedure

2.5.5.1 Development of Q Sort Process

The initial concourse for this study - the array of representative quotes and findings from which the Q-set statements are derived - was developed through a literature search. Articles, books and policy documents relating to young people with SEND and their experiences of preparing to leave education were all consulted and significant areas of interest were highlighted. Additional documents from the Local Authority and the Department for

Education (DfE) were also added to the concourse in order to further understand the viewpoints across systems.

Watts and Stenner (2005) discuss that statements in a Q set should be heterogenous and should reflect a number of perspectives on a given subject. As the method is exploratory and does not call for the development of a hypothesis (Watts & Stenner, 2005), the research question is what shapes the direction of the study. As such, the initial statements were all selected from sources which shape the experiences of young people with SEND such as the Equality Act (2010), the SEND Code of Practice (2015) and findings from research such as the Timpson Review (2019) and Lawson and Parker's (2020) paper exploring the perspectives and experiences of young people at the post-16 stage of education. The statements developed from this array of sources included the following.

A full list can be found in Appendix 4.

- I should be entitled to extra help in the workplace
- I don't think that I am able to get a job
- I have made my own decisions about the future
- I know what I want to do after college
- I don't think I am ready to leave college

These statements were then shared with a parent of a young person within the participant demographic, a teacher of the participant demographic and a young person who is within the demographic. From discussion with this group, the statements were further refined based on how appropriate they were and how easily they could be applied to the experiences of young people. The process of deciding what was most relevant at this stage included decisions around whether the statements were relevant to the context of further education in the UK and if they applied to the experiences of young people with SEND. In addition, decision points at this stage included whether the sentiment of the statement was duplicated in another, whether the language used could be easily translated to an 'easy read' format and whether the statements reflected a universal experience (e.g. statements that did not mention a specific process or programme, such as transition meetings) and whether it would be possible for participants to agree or disagree with the statement during the Q sort. The statements which were highlighted as most relevant were all reflected in one key document used by Local

Authorities and other professionals to support young people with transition: the Preparing for

Adulthood Framework (2013).

Table 2

A Demonstration of The Original Statements, Their Links to the Preparing for Adulthood
Framework and the Refined, Easy-Read Version.

Statement	Source	Preparing for Adulthood section	Easy-Read written version
I would like to work towards the job I want, rather than just getting any job	Kaehne & Beyer, 2008; Yates et al (2011)	Paid employment	Working towards the job I want to have
It is important that I am treated by medical professionals who understand me	Kaehne & Beyer, 2008	Good health	Going to a doctor/nurse who has worked with young people like me before
I would like to live independently in the future	Elson (2010)	Independent living	Living on my own
It is important that I earn my own money	Equality Act (2010)	Paid employment	Earning my own money
It would be good to have someone to talk to about my worries	Morris & Atkinson (2018)	Good health	Being able to talk about my worries
It is important that my family are supported to care for me	Equality Act (2010); Timpson Review (2019)	Community inclusion	My family having support to help me
Having a partner (a boyfriend or girlfriend) is something I want in the future	Human Rights Act	Community inclusion	Having a partner (a boyfriend/girlfriend)
Having a group of friends is important to me	Atkins (2016)	Community inclusion	Being part of a group outside of college
I think I will be a part of the community as I get older	Timpson Review (2019); Atkins (2016)	Community Inclusion	Being part of a group outside of college
It is not important to me that I can keep myself safe	Mental Capacity Act (2005); Timpson Review (2019)	Good health	Being able to independently keep myself safe
I can ask for help when I need it	Morris & Atkinson (2018)	Independent living	Being able to ask for help

I should be entitled to extra help in the workplace	Equality Act (2010)	Paid employment	Finding an employer who can help me
I don't think I am able to get a job	Attfield & Attfield (2019); ASCOF (2020)	Paid employment	Getting a job
I might need help to understand what 'the future' really means	Beresford (2004)	Independent living	Understanding what 'the future' means
I want to do things independently	Equality Act (2010)	Independent living	Do things independently
The professionals who support me understand my needs	Timpson Review (2019)	Good health	Feeling understood by the people who help me
I have made my own decisions about the future	Mental Capacity Act (2005)	Independent living	Making my own decisions

The preparing for adulthood framework is based on the principles of person-centred planning and aims to offer a structure through which young people and those who care for them can express their views and wishes about the future. The framework contains space for discussion on four key areas: Employment; Independent Living; Community Inclusion and Health.

The statements derived from these categories were further examined by the pilot group described above. The young person within this group offered to act as a volunteer in a pilot study in order to further establish whether the breadth of the statements was representative of the subject area. This included thinking about whether the statements covered all areas of the preparing for adulthood framework (2013) by sorting them into a grid which had the areas sectioned out and space to put each statement where it was thought to belong. Additionally, a discussion was had as to whether there was anything missing that the young person felt important to be captured about the transition from further education to adulthood in their experience. Following the pilot study, some statements were re-worded in order to make them easier to understand. In addition, it was agreed that pictures which supported the sentence on each statement would help some young people to access the task as independently as possible. This measure ensured that the research remained as naturalistic as possible and would ensure credibility if the study were to be repeated; a key element of qualitative rigour (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The quality of the statements was assessed through a list of criteria, set to ensure methodological rigour and to ensure the final Q-set was representative and comprehensive. This list was derived from guidance written by Watts & Stenner (2005), which suggested consideration be given to:

- Ensuring there was no duplication of perspectives or ideas in the statements

- Ensuring that each statement only had one clear key message within it

- Ensuring neutral wording

- Developing a sample of statements which was representative of a broad range of needs and abilities

- Ensuring that the pictures used to support understanding were representative and inclusive of the population within the sample.

As the Q set was developed, the needs of the young people within the sample were taken into account. As such, the limit for statements was set at 16, with a grid designed to reflect this whilst also maintaining the normal distribution curve as set out in Stephenson's (1935) original work. The Q set was identical for each participant. It consistent of 16 statements typed and printed in an easy-read format alongside a demonstrative, line-drawn picture (see appendix 6).

Participants were instructed to sort the items based on how important each statement was to them as they prepare for adulthood. It was hoped that the participants would all therefore produce an array of statements which exemplified their vision of what adulthood will look like for them.

The 16 statements are listed below:
1. Living on my own
2. Making my own decisions
3. Doing things independently
4. Being able to keep myself safe.
5. Being able to talk about my worries
6. Going to a doctor/nurse who has worked with young people like me before
7. My family having support to help me

8. Support to understand what is meant by 'the future'

9. Feeling understood by the people who help me

10. Being able to ask for help

11. Being part of a group outside of college

12. Having a partner (a boyfriend/girlfriend)

13. Earning my own money

14. Getting a job

15. Finding an employer who can help me

16. Working towards the job I want to have.

2.5.5.2   Q-Sort Procedure

The P-set was developed following a series of emails and a meeting with the SEND coordinator of the local group of colleges, who acted as a gatekeeper during the recruitment process. The information about the study, including a participant information sheet developed in an easy-ready format, was disseminated by this individual to young people whom it was felt may be interested in participating. The criteria for the P-set were known to this person and were used as selection criteria when seeking participants.

Participants all had an identified special educational need and/or disability. For those whose primary need was under the category of cognition and learning, which may involve having a specific learning difficulty or a learning disability, it was recognised that some reasonable adjustments should be made to the process. These participants were likely to have difficulties with processing, language, and memory, although specific impairments varied between participants. It is expected that, if a young person is registered as having SEN of this type at their setting, their needs will be reflected in a cognitive ability at least two years below their chronological age. However, participants were selected based upon their ability to access and respond to the Q-Sort and interview questions; this was one of the roles the SEND coordinator undertook as gatekeeper.

The SEND coordinator then liaised with young people and organised specific dates and times which the researcher could visit the college and carry out the Q-sorts in person. Both the Q-

sort and the interview were carried out in the same visit. The participants were asked to rank and order the statements onto a large, printed grid which represented the normal distribution curve. Emoticon faces were also used to ensure the young people understood the focus of the sorting activity. For all participants, the instruction was to sort the statements based on how important each item was to them as they look towards adulthood. The researcher was present throughout in order to support the young people with reading and interpreting the statements when required. An example of the grid used is below in Fig. 4.
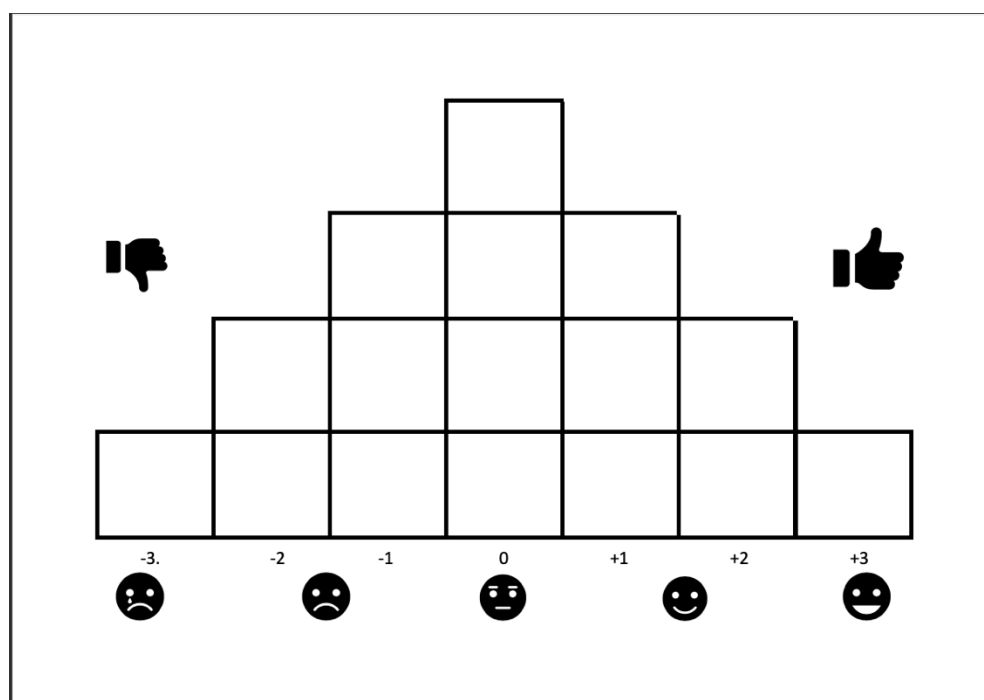
Fig. 4. An example of the grid used to rank order statements from the Q set.

2.5.5.3 Q Factor Analysis

Q methodology aims to understand the way in which people place particular importance on certain elements or ideas within a given topic. Therefore, the analytical process needs to highlight how particular statements were ranked and demonstrate the correlations found within the groups who feel similarly. The recommended statistical analysis model for Q methodology is a by-person correlation and factor analysis (Watts & Stenner, 2005).

The statements developed in the pilot study were arranged into a grid (see fig. 4) by each participant, which follows the shape of a normal distribution curve. The participants were individually asked to sort the statements on a scale of importance - from 'not important to me' to 'very important to me'. By comparing each person's responses (i.e. where they put the statements on the grid) to everyone else's response in a by-person factor analysis, it was possible to see shared viewpoints (or 'factors') within the participant group. An example of this could be if people were asked to sort items of confectionary on the basis of preference; a pattern may emerge through by-person factor analysis which groups together all of the people who have similar preferences (for example, those who prefer chocolate). This grouping - the shared perspective of these participants - would then be known as a 'factor'.

This correlation matrix is then analysed to capture the 'loading' on each factor; identifying the number of participants who had similar viewpoints and allowing for further analysis of their characteristics as a group. For example, this analysis can demonstrate how important or unimportant particular factors are, identifying strong viewpoints which are shared between multiple participants. Following the example above, the Q sorts which 'load' onto a particular factor may be those which demonstrate a preference for chocolate over candy. A second factor may be made up of the Q sorts where fruity flavours were always sorted into a more preferable position than caramel flavours. In this study, the correlation matrix instead demonstrated which Q sorts placed a similar level of importance on certain elements of preparing for adulthood over others.

In this factor extraction method using PQ Method, the statements were inputted into the software in the same order as outlined earlier in this chapter. Following this, each participant's responses were added to the software, under a number to ensure anonymity. These responses demonstrated where on the grid (a value between -3 and +3) the participant had placed each of the 16 statements. A table outlining each participant's response can be found in the appendix.

Once all the data was inputted, an exploratory factor analysis was carried out, as recommended by Brown (1980). Factor analysis in general is an analytical process in which the underlying, unobserved correlations between variables (factors) are found and extracted by comparing each Q-sort configuration to every other participant's responses.

Factor analysis uses a process of exploring correlations between responses – in this case, to each statement – in order to identify underlying relationships between responses across the Q-set. For example, if two or more participants have had similar responses, the factor analysis will highlight this and identify a 'factor' which is characterised by the correlated answers given by the participants. This exploratory factor analysis aims to extract the largest sum of loadings for each factor within the Q study. The initial analysis found eight unrotated factors, altogether accounting for 99% of the variance. This means that, from an initial exploration of the intercorrelations between participant responses, almost all of the differences between responses can be explained by eight underlying factors.

However, of the eight factors found in this initial analysis, some explained considerably more of the variance than others. Following the initial centroid factor analysis, further statistical checks were also applied to reduce the number of factors and ensure they were representative of a large amount of the variance and that, therefore, they had some explanatory value which could be used to understand the shared perspectives of participants. Four factors were found to have an Eigenvalue of <1, which is a standard requirement (Watts & Stenner, 2005) to safeguard the reliability of factors. An Eigenvalue of 1 would indicate that the factor explains the same amount of variance as a single variable. Therefore, a factor with an Eigenvalue of more than 1 is more statistically useful as it explains more of the variance and therefore has more clarifying value. The number of Q sorts (10) was also considered, as was the number of significant loadings on each factor, when deciding whether a factor was statistically representative of a shared viewpoint or perspective. In line with Watts & Stenner's (2005) guidance, factors were deemed to be of interest if two or more sorts loaded significantly upon it, meaning that there was a significant intercorrelation between the responses.

The PQ Method system has options which allow an individual to select how many factors the software should extract. In this case, although initially the first factor analysis found eight factors, the guidance outlined above indicated that only four factors had an Eigenvalue of <1. Therefore, another factor analysis was carried out with four factors. However, one of the factors (factor 2) had no significant loadings at all. In line with Watts and Stenner's (2005) guidance, this factor was discounted as it did not provide any additional explanation as to the variance in responses. Therefore, a final factor analysis was conducted using three factors. This highlighted 9 (out of a possible 10) significant defining sorts across the three factors and

was able to explain 65% of the variance. The defining sorts within each factor could then be explored and used to develop a clear understanding of the unique perspective the factor represents, particularly when the response is rated at +3 (i.e. as 'most important') in one factor and is -2 or -3 in the others (e.g. 'not important').

2.5.5.4 Factor Rotation

As recommended in the literature (Watts & Stenner, 2005; Hylton et al., 2018), the factor rotation was completed through the use of a dedicated Q methodology package: PQ Method (Schmolck, 2014). This is a process through which the responses of a particular group are mapped onto an axis and rotated until such a point that there is a clear alignment of responses which can be interpreted. At this point, the representative views of the group of people who load onto each factor can be mapped back onto a Q-sort grid and used to demonstrate the particular, shared perspective of the people whose views align with each factor. The participants' comments and interview responses could then additionally be considered in order to make sense of how and why certain people appeared to share perspectives on particular aspects of the 'preparing for adulthood' framework.

For instance, the exemplifying Q sort for Factor 1 would be generated by combining the responses of participants 1, 4, 5, 6 and 8 (those whose views were most closely aligned and were therefore grouped together and categorised as 'factor 1'). The exemplifying Q sort is simply a way of representing the most common rating of each statement by the participants whose views link most closely to Factor 1. The visual representations of these factor exemplifying Q sorts are shown in figs. 5, 6 and 7.

A varimax rotation was carried out using the PQ Method software to highlight the rotated solution which accounts for the most amount of variance (Watts & Stenner, 2005). This is a statistical technique which is used during factor analysis to clarify the number of underlying factors which can explain the variance between responses. This is done through a process of rotating findings around an axis until a clear pattern emerges which groups items together, usually due to some underlying commonality (which is identified as a 'factor').

Varimax rotation in PQ Method is a computerised (as opposed to by-hand) process of analysis which aims to rotate the Q-sort results in a way which maximises the number of sorts which load onto a particular factor and which explains the largest amount of variance within the results (Watts & Stenner, 2005). This was used firstly to begin the process of rotation, but the solution reduced the data to a point where it did not accurately reflect the aims of the study as factors 2 and 3 were minimised and their significance was therefore reduced. Due to the small number of participants, statements and factors, it was therefore felt that a more sensitive rotation would be more successful.

It is for this reason that a second, manual factor rotation was carried out, particularly around factors 2 and 3, in order to ensure that a solution was found in which the majority of responses mapped onto a factor. This was important in this particular study as the focus is on capturing the perspectives of the young people. Using PQ Method, the pairs of data between factors 2 and 3 were manually rotated around an axis until such a point that clear clusters of Q-sort responses were clear and were able to be further analysed. The aim of the rotation was to establish both the similarities and differences between the responses, in order to uncover the statements which characterise each factor and distinguish it from the others.

Below is a table which highlights the final factor matrix, with an X indicating a defining sort (i.e. one of the sets of responses which characterises underpinning that particular factor).

Table 3

A Demonstration of the Final Rotated Factor Matrix

Participant/Sort	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
1	0.8400 X	0.1947	0.0050
2	0.4857	0.3781	-0.4831
3	0.2705	0.8841 X	-0.1009
4	0.8392 X	-0.3309	-0.0881
5	0.8901 X	-0.0211	-0.3944
6	0.4902 X	0.1285	0.0242
7	-0.0542	0.0060	-0.6780 X
8	0.6150 X	0.4786	0.1132
9	0.1215	0.1071	-0.8247 X
10	-0.1090	0.7393 X	-0.2165

Table 4

The Final Rotated Correlations Between Factors

Factor	1	2	3
1	1.000	0.2220	-0.2018
2	0.2220	1.000	-0.2456
3	-0.2018	-0.2456	1.000

2.5.5.5 Factor Analysis

Table 5

P-Set Demographics and Factor Loadings.

Participant	Gender	Age	SEN	Disability	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
1	M	20	Y	Y	X		
2	F	18	Y	N			
3	F	19	N	Y		X	
4	M	18	N	Y	X		
5	F	18	N	Y	X		
6	F	21	Y	Y	X		
7	F	23	Y	Y			X
8	M	20	Y	Y	X		
9	M	21	Y	N			X
10	F	19	Y	Y		X	

The analysis of the factors within this rotation highlighted that there are three distinct factors, each of which has at least two sorts which load onto it. Figs 4, 5 and 6 are an example of each factor-defining sort; the array of statements which most closely represents the shared perspective underlying the factor.

Factor 1

			Living on my own				
		My family having the support they need to care for me	Being able to talk about my worries	Making my own decisions			
	Having a doctor or nurse who has worked with people like me before	Feeling understood by the people who help me	Being able to ask for help	Keeping myself safe	Being independent		
Having a partner	Support to understand what is meant by 'the future'	Being part of a group outside of college	Finding an employer who will help me.	Working towards the job I want to have	Getting a job	Earning my own money
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
Least Important to me. important to me			→			Most

Fig. 5. The defining sort/ array of responses representative of Factor 1

Factor 2

Support to understand what is meant by 'the future'	Finding an employer who can help me	Earning my own money	Feeling understood by the people who help me	Being able to talk about my worries	Being part of a group outside of college	Being independent
	Getting a job	Having a partner	Working towards the job I want to have	Keeping myself safe	Living on my own	
		Being able to ask for help	Having a doctor or nurse who has worked with people like me before	Making my own decisions		
			My family having the support they need to care for me			
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
Least Important to me. important to me			→			Most

Fig. 6. The defining sort/ array of responses representative of Factor 2

Factor 3

Being able to talk about my worries	Being independent	Keeping myself safe	Earning my own money			
			Having a doctor or nurse who has worked with people like me before	Working towards a job I want to have		
	Being independent	Having a partner	Being part of a group outside of college	Finding an employer who can help me	My family having the support they need to care for me	
Being able to talk about my worries	Getting a job	Living on my own	Feeling understood by the people who help me	Being able to ask for help	Support to understand what is meant by 'the future'	Making my own decisions
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
Least Important to me.			→			Most important to me

Fig. 7. The defining sort/ array of responses representative of Factor 3

2.5.5.6 Interview Content Analysis Procedure

Following the Q-Sort, a short interview was conducted to gather contextual information such as the type of needs the young person had, the support in place and their future plans. These questions were asked to provide additional background to the responses which would aid with factor analysis, in addition to allowing the researcher to gain a better insight into the lived experiences of young people with SEND at this stage in their lives. At this point, participants were reminded verbally of their right to withdraw from the study and were reassured that their responses would be kept anonymous.

The interview schedule was semi-structured to ensure that young people with communication needs would be able to impart some information without being overwhelmed by an open

question. The questions were included in the original ethics application and were approved for use. They are listed below:

- Tell me about what it was like for you in school.

- What kind of things did you find easy/difficult?

- What kind of help did you get?

- How do you feel about leaving school/college?

- What will change for you when you leave school/college?

- Do you think you will have any help moving on from college?

- Can you tell me about the help you might have?

- What kind of things do you have to decide before you leave college?

- What would you like to do when you leave college?

- Do you think you will have any help with that?

- Do you know who you would talk to if you needed any help?

- What sort of things would you like to do in the future?

- Do you think there is anything you will need help with in the future?

The questions and interview structure were designed to support the author's understanding of the young people's journeys and give some context to their particular perspectives. As with the Q-sort section of the study, the interview procedure was designed to reflect the principles of rigour in qualitative research. Yardley (2000) developed a framework consisting of four dimensions. These are:

1. Sensitivity to context
2. Commitment and rigour
3. Transparency and coherence
4. Impact and importance

Within this section of the study, the above criteria are met through the way in which the approach was designed to be sensitive to the needs of young people with SEND, the commitment to understanding their views and experiences in context, the clear aims of the questions posed and the importance of capturing this particular perspective on this topic.

The young people's interviews were recorded by Dictaphone and transcribed verbatim later the same day, focusing on the questions in section 2.6.2. Transcripts are included in Appendix 7. The transcripts were reviewed against the recordings to ensure there were no errors. The initial stage of listening to and transcribing the interview data was the first part of the analysis process as it provided an opportunity to develop familiarity and immerse oneself in the data. The phases of analysis (Krippendorff, 2013) and the procedure in the context of this study are outlined below.

Unitising the Data

The unit for the deductive content analysis was the interview transcripts completed by the P Set following their Q sort. The questions focused on their experiences in school, the changes they anticipated after college, the level of support they might need and their wishes for the future. The *a priori* parameters at this stage were based on the research question and the findings of the Q sort, with the intention of exploring the personal views of the study's participants through content analysis of their interviews.

Sampling the Data

As deductive content analysis was used in this case as a supplementary method to support a study based in Q methodology, it was necessary to utilise the entire population of the P set as a sample. However, in order to further explore each factor in turn, the participants' interview transcripts were separated into three purposive groups: participants 1, 4, 5, 6 and 8 as Factor 1, participants 3 and 10 as Factor 2 and participants 7 and 9 as Factor 3. The transcripts were grouped in this way- according to the factors with which they most aligned- in order to allow for coding to occur in a deductive manner, with the factor loadings and defining statements in mind. It was at this stage that the interview transcript of participant 2 was discounted as it did not represent any of the identified factors and therefore would not provide generalisable information (McKibben et al, 2020).

Recording the Data

Krippendorff (2013) describes the process of recording as the development of categories which can be interpreted by the researcher. The deductive nature of this approach meant that

the interview transcripts were analysed with a specific focus in mind, which was to explore the perspectives and lived experiences of the young people in relation to the defining statements found within the factor analysis of the Q sort. Transcripts were analysed according to the factor which the participant had aligned with according to the analysis of the Q sort data, with the aim of developing a deeper understanding of the unique perspectives which can contributed to the statistical distinction between factors.

Coding the Data

Following the stage of recording, McKibben et al (2020) describe a process of coding through which the themes outlined in the recording stage are compared and contrasted with pre-established conceptual categories. In line with the Q sort statements, these categories are; earning money, getting a job, being part of a group, living alone, being independent, understanding the future, having family support, accessing appropriate healthcare, talking about worries and having support from an employer.

The interview transcripts of each participant were analysed through a process of recording and coding, in line with the recommendations of Krippendorff (2013) around deductive content analysis. Transcripts were separated into 'units' which allowed the content to be categorised by its belonging to a particular category. As deductive content analysis in this case was utilised to provide context and illustrate the factors uncovered in the Q-sort portion of the study, the factors were used as units their own right, with transcripts aligning with each factor being analysed and coded together.

Initially, the interview transcripts were explored though a process of immersion; reading and re-reading in order to become familiar with the language and its underlying meaning. Emerging thoughts and reflections were recorded at this time, which provided an initial starting point for the coding process. As the content analysis in this study was designed to be deductive, in order to provide context for pre-established themes rather than developing new ideas from the interview transcript data itself, each group of transcripts was explored line-by-line, following and making notes on a list of the most significant, defining statements from the analysis of each factor.

2.6. Results and Interpretation

2.6.1.1 Factor 1

Factor 1 has an eigenvalue of 3.54. It explains 35% of the variance within the study. Five participants' responses were found to load significantly onto this factor (participants 1, 4, 5, 6 and 8). Of the participants, two were female and three were male. The mean age of these participants was 18.6 years (range 18-20 years). All five participants had a registered, recognised disability according to the 2010 Equality Act, and two also had special educational needs relating to cognition and learning and communication and interaction. Four of the five (three male and one female) participants associated with Factor 1 had a diagnosis of ASD. The other female participant had a diagnosis of Tourette's Syndrome.

The defining statements (those which were different from the responses which loaded onto factors 2 and 3) were characterised by the strong emphasis on earning money (13, +3), being independent (3, +2) and getting a job (14, +2). The interview transcripts highlighted that the young people whose Q-sorts loaded most significantly onto this factor have a clear idea of their chosen career path and are making decisions which will support them to get there. As four of the five young people who aligned most with this factor have ASD, it is possible that the clear message about not needing help in order to be understood (9, -1) and the lack of importance placed on their families getting support (7, -1) is more representative of autistic traits.

Extracts from interview data highlight that Factor 1's focus is largely on independence: *I'm mostly used to working independently. I will ask for help when I need which is quite rare these days.* (Participant 1). In Factor 1, participants also placed importance on certain aspects of independent living, *I want to live independently, and I've got daily living skills. I'm just*

messy yeah that's the only thing. I'm really messy and really unorganised but I can do it
(Participant 4).

Additional statements which were ranked as important included keeping themselves safe
independently and making their own decisions. As an illustrative example, Participant 1
stated that he would be *"… hopefully making plans to move out – preferably to a place that
other autistic people live in, so kind of like renting an apartment room for myself. I just kind
of want to take that step forward so that someone keeping an eye out for me but I can live
most independently"*.

Factor 1 was exemplified by the high importance placed on paid employment. Of particular
importance were earning money and getting a job, alongside working towards a specific job
or career path. The participants whose views aligned most closely with Factor 1 all had clear
ideas about their desired careers and the paths they would need to take to achieve this. *The
plan at the moment is to go into management and Accounting somewhere with international
locations.* (Participant 1).

In Factor 1, participants ranked three statements as significantly important to them – earning
their own money, doing things independently and getting a job. The codes highlighted in the
analysis of Factor 1's interview transcripts demonstrate that the distinguishing statements are
underpinned by an attitude of motivation and of overcoming challenges. All of the
participants whose views aligned most strongly with Factor 1 demonstrated a significant
awareness of their needs and the type of support that worked best for them, both in school
and in further education. Another distinguishing element within these transcripts is the notion
of working towards a career, which was demonstrated through multiple discourses around
studying at university or undertaking apprenticeships in order to achieve career aspirations.
Independence was a significant feature of all transcripts within this unit, particularly
characterised by participants as a developing journey which involves multiple elements;
living independently, developing a support network of friends- as opposed to parents or paid
assistants in college- and building on their ability to manage their needs.

The deductive content analysis from interview transcripts shows that students whose views
align most significantly with Factor 1 additionally highlights that their motivation to pursue a

career and to develop their independence is primarily extrinsic, centred on the notion of participating in additional training in order to achieve a desired career in the future. Evident within this unit is the level of understanding shared by all aligning participants of the requirements of their desired career, the expectations for applying for and keeping a job and the challenges they as individuals may be likely to face in the workplace and beyond given their specific needs.

2.6.1.2   Factor 2

In Factor 2, the most distinctive statements were: doing things independently, being part of a group outside college and living independently. Participants 3 and 10 loaded significantly onto Factor 2. The transcripts from the participants' post-sort interviews further highlighted that they are working towards independence and that this means stepping away from professional support and learning to cope with daily life on their own. Both participants 3 and 10 were 19-year-old females. One had a disability but not SEN, whereas the other had SEN and a recognised disability. Factor 2 has an eigenvalue of 1.694. It explains 17% of the variance.

The coding process for this unit of data demonstrates the underlying inferences which highlight the views and motivations of the young people who aligned with this factor. The most frequently mentioned theme for these participants was the letting go of support they receive and the way they feel about it, which fit most with the defining statement 'doing things independently'. Passages from the transcripts provide evidence that these young people recognise their reliance on the support and that they understand the process that is needed in order to become more independent. Both participants within this unit demonstrated that they have career aspirations and plans for the future, with both also discussing how this is likely to be a process for them to achieve.

Factor 2 focuses on being independent and becoming less reliant on structured support: *Now I'm in college, I've grown up. I can be independent, and I can get around the place. I can ask for help on my own if I need it*. (Participant 10) and places a heavy emphasis on the importance of doing things independently (3, +3). Time was an important theme and this was highlighted through participants 10 and 3 discussing their journeys and the progress they are making towards being independent, particularly underpinned by the idea that they are not

in a rush to stop being supported in a more formal way: *I would like to get more confident with people so that I could work up to working in a shop to earn money* (Participant 3); *I think next year I'd like to work on leaning off the support a little bit, to get me ready for doing the degree* (Participant 10).

Factor 2 was also characterised by the lack of importance placed on getting a job (14, -2), finding an employer who could help them (15, -2) or earning their own money (13, -1). Both participants who loaded significantly onto Factor 2 have recognised disabilities. Participant 3 highlighted that there is no financial concern if she is unable to find work or is not ready for work at this stage: *I know I might still need support and that's why we have living disability allowance* (Participant 3).

Being part of a group was another significant defining statement from the Q sort for Factor 2. Within the transcripts, there is evidence from the discourse that this is underpinned by a desire to become more sociable, and a view that this is key to becoming more independent and less reliant on formal forms of support: *I would like to get more confident with people so that I could work up to working in a shop to earn money* (Participant 3).

The third most significant defining statement from the factor analysis involves independent living. Both participants discussed practical elements of living independently, including developing skills to support them in the home. Additionally, the topic of money was felt to be a second element of this theme, particularly as Participant 10 discussed it as a way of facilitating independent living. Both participants were clear in their views on the time it would take to become independent, and both discussed that they were comfortable to wait and were in no rush to take these steps in early adulthood. Instead, both participants within this unit raised that they are not ready to completely move away from the support they receive and that they are more comfortable taking smaller steps towards independence over time: *I think next year I'd like to work on leaning off the support a little bit, to get me ready for doing the degree* (Participant 10).

2.6.1.3   Factor 3

In Factor 3, the Q sorts were defined by the significant importance placed on being able to make decisions independently, having support to understand 'the future' and the young person's family having support to help them. The interview transcripts and subsequent deductive content analysis demonstrated that – for these participants in particular– the future is still uncertain, and their path is not yet set. They have skills which they still need to develop (such as understanding money or managing domestic tasks) before they seek employment.

Factor 3 was most significant to participants 7 and 9, both of whom have significant SEN. Participant 7 also has a recognised disability as she has a diagnosis of Down's Syndrome. Both participants 7 and 9 recognise that they will continue to need support after they leave college. This factor has an eigenvalue of 1.271 and accounts for 13% of the variance within the study.

The Q sorts which most closely aligned with Factor 3 placed high importance on making their own decisions (2, +3), but recognised that they would need support to understand 'the future' and what it means (8, +2). In addition, the participants whose responses loaded onto Factor 3 highlighted the importance of their families having support to care for them (7, +2). Both participant 7 and participant 9 recognised their continuing need for support: *The main thing I need help with is money. My dad keeps asking me about the prices and I don't know because I don't really understand it. I've got my own bank card now but I'm not good at money* (Participant 7. It was also highlighted that, although both participants highlighted that they do not place heavy importance on living independently in the future (1, -1) or doing things independently (3, -2), part of the path towards understanding 'the future' involves accessing support from outside of the family, such as from friends or romantic partners. *I want somebody to be there for me like a boyfriend or friends or something when I need help. I don't know about living by myself, though* (Participant 7).

The two young people whose sorts loaded most heavily onto Factor 3 both have significant SEN. One has an additional recognised disability (Down's Syndrome) which contributes to her difficulties with cognition and learning. Their perspectives on employment were shaped

by their interests, but with little understanding of the process: *I don't know yet where I might work. When I'm 30, I might be a banker with a big house and a season ticket for Chelsea. I want to get a job and be… like my dad* (Participant 9).

The interview transcripts in this unit were analysed in order to discover the attitudes and beliefs which underpinned the most distinguishing statements from the Q sort factor analysis. The young people who aligned most with Factor 3 demonstrated that making their own decisions was of high importance to them. Within the transcript, the participant's responses were coded according to the most evident themes. It appears from the interviews that these participants understand making their own decisions to be underpinned by a sense of becoming more independent, developing independent living skills and working towards career aspirations. *I know how to do things by myself. I don't need much help anymore. I like being independent.* (Participant 7)

The transcripts in this unit were also read through the lens of developing a further understanding of what having support to understand 'the future' means to these young people. The coding process appeared to demonstrate that this was an important element for the participants due to a shared hesitancy about the future and a desire to develop friendships to build a support network. The young people's interview transcripts highlighted that they are working towards independence but that they require support to develop the necessary skills to achieve this: *I might still need help with food and the washing up because I don't like to do the washing up. It's hard and also boring.* (Participant 9).

The third significant and distinguishing statement from the factor analysis was around the participants' families having the support they need to care for them. Within the transcripts, two relevant codes were uncovered; having ongoing support with life skills (*I don't think I'm ready to get a job because I don't really understand money.* - Participant 7) and being able to ask their families for help (*If I need help, I'll ask my family or something.* -Participant 7). It is possible that the young people whose views aligned most with Factor 3 recognise that they are still reliant on their families to help them and that, therefore, their families are still likely to benefit from additional guidance and support. This finding was corroborated by the fact that 'my family having support to help me' was one of the statements rated as particularly

important by the young people within this factor during the Q sort. With regards to the preparing for adulthood framework, this perspective links closely to the idea of community inclusion and the continued need for support for young people and those who care for them after they leave education.

2.6.1.4   Further Analyses

The PQ Method analysis also found four statements which can be described as consensus statements. These are statements which were found to be similarly ranked across all factors. They are statistically non-significant when p>.01. These statements can be interpreted as a representation of the common viewpoints between factors and within the entire P-set. Whereas the factors are a representation of how the young people's views differ, these statements and the way they are similarly ranked across the factors is a demonstration of what these young people have in common.

'Making my own decisions' (item 2) was placed at +1 in the grid across most of the Q sorts, meaning that most participants – regardless of their differences in experience or perspective– felt that this was slightly important to them. The only exception to this was in Factor 3, where the two participants demonstrated that this was highly important to them. 'Being able to ask for help' (item 10) was ranked at 0 –neutral – as an average across all responses. 'Working towards the job I want to have' (item 16) was ranked at 1 (slightly important) as an average, with little difference in where it was placed between factor groups. Finally, 'feeling understood by the people who help me' (item 9) was identified as statistically non-significant when $p>.01$ and when $p>.05$. This was placed at -1 on the grid across the representative sorts for each factor with very little variability. Therefore, it can be assumed that the majority of the young people who participated in the Q-sort feel that feeling understood is slightly unimportant to them, regardless of their individual experiences or perspectives.

2.7 Discussion

2.7.1 Research Aims and Questions

This study was designed with the aim of understanding the perspective of young people with SEND on their transition out of education. In addition, it was also hoped that the study would help to identify a role for the EP in supporting the transition out of education and into employment or training for young people with SEN, in particular those who do not have a disability. The research questions were designed to encompass the lived experience of young people who have SEN and/or disabilities due to the need for representative research which could capture the lived experience of all young people with additional needs and the difficulties in recruiting young people with SEN who do not have a disability within the local area.

The research questions are:

- What is the perspective of young people with SEND on the existing Preparing for Adulthood framework for planning for the future?
- What is the experience of young people with SEND leaving FE?

2.7.2 Summary of Process

The Q-sort analysis phase involved extracting factors and interpreting them in order to derive some meaning. The three factors found represent three perspectives on the process of transitioning out of education and preparing for adulthood. They represent what is important to the young people and what their priorities are. Factor 1 centred largely on the importance of work and earning money to achieve independence and was characterised by a participant group who live with neurodiverse conditions such as Autism Spectrum Disorder and Tourette's Syndrome. Factor 2 focused on autonomy through independent living skills and

working towards a career; this factor most significantly represented the views of young
people with physical disabilities. Factor 3 focused on decision-making and the need for
continued support into adulthood; the participants whose views most closely aligned with this
factor both had significant cognition and learning needs.

Following on from the analysis of each individual factor, this chapter will further explore the
characteristics of these factors in a wider legislative and educational context, exploring what
it is that underpins the qualitative differences in perspective which have been uncovered
through the process of factor analysis. Links to theoretical models and literature which
further illustrate the distinctive outlooks of each factor will then be discussed. Following this,
a summary of the SEND characteristics will be explored with reference to the literature. This
chapter will end with a discussion around the implications of this research for schools and
colleges, EPs and legislation, followed by a reflective conclusion regarding the limitations of
the study and recommendations for further research which could be undertaken as a
consequence of this project.

2.7.3 Preparing for Adulthood: Findings in Context

The participants who loaded onto each factor demonstrate particular views about areas of the
Preparing for Adulthood Framework (2013). This is demonstrated visually in table 6.

Table 6

Importance of Preparing for Adulthood Areas by Factor

	Paid Employment	Independent Living	Good Health	Community Inclusion
Factor 1	High importance Clear career path and focus on getting a job.	Importance placed on keeping self safe and making own decisions, rather than living alone.	Low importance for needing medical staff familiar with their needs.	Low importance for social groups and family support. Low importance on being understood.

Factor 2	Low importance on getting a job, earning own money, and finding an employer who can help.	High importance on doing things independently, living alone and making decisions.	High importance on talking about worries,	High level of importance for social groups. Low level of importance for asking for help.
Factor 3	Low importance placed on getting a job, however working towards a job is more important than just getting any job.	High level of importance for making own decisions. Low importance for living alone and doing things independently.	Neutral around working with a doctor or nurse familiar with needs. Slightly higher importance on asking for help.	Family support is important. Having a social group is neutral. Low importance on romantic relationships.

A description of each factor's characteristics relative to the four areas of the Preparing for Adulthood framework

2.7.3.1 Factor 1

With regards to the preparing for adulthood framework, the highlighted and significant statements from the Q-sort analysis process demonstrate that participants who aligned with Factor 1 placed a high importance on paid employment. Their post-sort interviews show that they have clear ideas and aspirations about their future careers, many of which included accessing higher education and additional training. For participants who loaded onto Factor 1, finding an employer who could help them was not as important.

The area of good health was not noted as important in this factor. Participants did not feel that having a doctor or nurse who had worked with people with their type of need before was something they particularly required. It is possible that this is due to the demographics of the participants aligning with this factor, particularly as none of the participants have a physical disability or health condition. Research has found that young people who have physical health needs are significantly more aware of their own conditions and place a higher value on being able to access professional medical support (Betz et al., 2003). In addition, research has found that masking (the process of camouflaging autistic traits in an effort to try and 'fit in')

is common among young people with ASD (Doherty et al., 2021), such as the majority of participants within Factor 1. This avoidance of social stigma could be another reason why the young people within Factor 1 did not feel it was important for them to have access to 'different' or specialist medical support.

Community living – social groups, accessing support for the family and being understood – were additionally less important for this group. This perspective in particular links with SDT and the underlying principles of autonomy and competence as contributors to goal-directed behaviour (Deci & Ryan, 2002). *I'm mostly used to working independently. I will ask for help when I need which is quite rare these days*. (Participant 1). This group did not appear to demonstrate a need for any kind of 'special treatment' on their journey towards adulthood. It is possible that this perspective links to the experiences these young people have had over time. This group consists of young people who access mainstream courses in college, it is possible that their experiences and expectations have been shaped by the systems around them (Bronfenbrenner; 1976, 2005) and by their peers without SEND who share their ambition and drive for independence.

This group of participants placed importance on certain elements of independent living, keeping themselves safe and making decisions independently. The prioritisation of some independent living skills over others may be an indicator that this particular group of young people are on a slightly different journey, which consists of several steps towards independence (Elson, 2010), and which reflects a supportive environment which promotes autonomy in the context of goal-directed behaviour, as in SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2002).

2.7.3.2 Factor 2

Participants who loaded significantly onto Factor 2 placed a high importance on all aspects of independent living: staying safe, doing things independently, making their own decisions and living on their own. For this group, independent living was more important than employment and there did not appear to be a clear connection between independence and employment. It is possible that – as both participants who loaded most significantly onto this factor have a registered disability – there is a mutual exclusivity that exists between employment (earning

money) and independent living which does not exist for the other participants. Participant 3 highlighted the role of disability living allowance (DLA) in their journey; it is possible that the financial support received by young people who are registered as disabled is a contributing factor to their outlook. In line with ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), there is likely to be an influence of legislation and financial freedom on the lived experience of these young people. For example, the Equality Act 2010 and the right to reasonable adjustments, alongside DLA payments, may allow for these young people to take their time preparing for adulthood, moving through the transition at their own pace, rather than the pace of their peers.

I want to do a music and media degree, but I don't think I'll do that until for another two years because, as soon as I do, I won't get that support. I don't have a job I want to do right now so can take my time. I've kind of made a decision I'm just going to do what I enjoy and see where it takes me. (Participant 3)

Participants who loaded onto Factor 2 highlighted the importance of being able to talk about their worries. As previous research has found, young people at this time are particularly vulnerable to stress and anxiety (Carroll, 2015), which may be a reason why they place emphasis on seeking mental health support over physical health support, as evidenced by the lower importance placed on the statement 'going to a doctor/nurse who has worked with people like me before'.

Both participants talked about anxiety: *It's the same person every single time and they don't change which is better for my anxiety. I have a 1:1 with me all the time. I don't necessarily need support with like academically, it's more emotionally,* (Participant 3), This perspective aligns particularly with the research and recommendations of Morris and Atkinson (2018) who highlighted the significant social and emotional changes young people go through at this stage of their lives. There has been limited research on strategies to support mental health for this group of young people (Atkinson & Martin, 2018). For the Preparing for Adulthood Framework, the lack of specificity in what 'good health' means, with little empirical evidence to support good practice (Kaehne, 2011), may be contributing to some young people feeling that achieving independence means being able to manage their mental health without any support.

When I leave college, I'm going to have to do things independently which I want, it's just that right now I have a lot of support and, yeah, I don't know how to gradually let go of that. I need to know how to manage my anxieties and be organised… just things like that.
(Participant 3)

This factor was particularly noted to focus on autonomy and stepping away from support (*Now I'm in college, I've grown up. I can be independent, and I can get around the place. I can ask for help on my own if I need it* – Participant 10). Research demonstrates that a shift in identity (Hayton, 2009) during this time of transition can support opportunities for person-centred thinking (Wilding, 2015) and boost self-determination, leading to goal-oriented behaviour (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Within the preparing for adulthood framework, a large proportion of the guidance centres around housing and the transition to living away from parents. The perspective of young people in Factor 2 particularly aligns with this interpretation of 'independent living' which goes beyond developing the necessary skills and focuses more on the overall goal of moving out.

2.7.3.3 Factor 3

In terms of independent living, participants who loaded onto Factor 3 prioritised making decisions but placed less importance on living on their own or doing things independently. As suggested by Mitchell (2010), the journey towards adulthood for young people with learning difficulties often includes several steps, which may go some way to explaining why this group in particular did not appear to aspire as heavily towards independent living. In addition, Beauchamp et al (2017) highlight that cognitive ability is positively correlated with a willingness to take risks. It is possible, therefore, that the young people who loaded onto Factor 3 are less willing to take risks and are more comfortable and confident developing their skills and abilities while remaining in a familiar and supportive environment: *I want somebody to be there for me like a boyfriend or friends or something when I need help. I don't know about living by myself, though. If I need help, I'll ask my family or something.* (Participant 7).

The focus of these young people appears to be more on the present than the future. From a theoretical perspective, this aligns with findings from Norwich and Eaton (2015) who found that a young person's intellectual ability directly affects their ability to participate in person-centred planning. If, as in Factor 3, a young person finds it difficult to focus on the future or to identify outcomes, this has an impact not only on their ability to have their voice heard through their transition but could additionally limit their understanding of and ability to achieve 'autonomy' (Pierston et al, 2008). Within the Preparing for Adulthood framework, young people with complex needs may therefore require additional support from key adults which, in the context of ecological systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1976; 2005), may in turn lead to other people having more of an influence over the decisions made than the young person at the centre of it all.

With regards to the area of paid employment, the young people who aligned with Factor 3 placed higher importance on finding an employer who could help them. They did not identify getting a job or earning their own money as important. A key difference, particularly notable through the interview transcripts from participants loading onto Factor 3, is the clarity and logic of a pathway from education to a career. For the young people aligning with Factor 3, the experience may have been more passive (Lawson & Parker, 2020). In addition, it is possible that – due to the complex needs of the participants in this group– the options available are limited (Elson, 2011), pre-selected by professionals (Parry, 2020) or do not reflect their interests and aspirations (Kaehne & Beyer, 2008). It is also possible that– in Factor 3 – there is a mismatch between aspirations and attainment which may place the young people at higher risk of becoming NEET (Yates et al., 2011): *I might need help to get a job. I don't know yet where I might work. When I'm 30, I might be a banker with a big house and a season ticket for Chelsea. I want to get a job and be … like my dad. I also will go to Chelsea Football Club and get tickets to a match.* (Participant 9).

2.7.3.4 Summary

The findings from all 3 factors demonstrate that young people with SEND are a heterogenous group with varied hopes, ambitions and expectations. Systemic factors appear to have an influence on how some young people perceive their journey towards independence and,

indeed, their definition of 'independence' itself. Through a lens of ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1976; 2005) it is possible to identify how legislation, finance and peer experience can all impact on a young person's outlook. In addition, when exploring the young people's lived experience, their voice and choice, the findings suggest that a young person's intellectual ability can impact the ability to participate meaningfully and the way in which decisions are made. As the data demonstrates, young people with SEND are not all on the same journey; for the preparing for adulthood framework and the notion of person-centred planning, this has implications for what the support might look like and how it might be implemented.

2.7.4   SEND Needs and Self-Determination Theory

The three factors uncovered through the factor analysis process can be characterised as representing different perspectives on the experiences of SEND. The findings emphasise that – for this particular sample – there is some difference in perspective which appears to be linked to lived experience. The analysis of factor loadings and the emphasis of particular areas of the Preparing for Adulthood (2013) framework demonstrates some demographic differences between groups. Participants who loaded onto Factor 1 all had a registered disability (for most of them, this was ASD). Both participants who loaded onto Factor 2 had a registered disability, with one having a special educational need in addition. In Factor 3, both participants had a special educational need. One of the participants had an additional, recognised disability which linked to their cognitive needs: Down's Syndrome. However, it is possible to explore the findings through an alternative lens.

Table 7

Participants' SEND Needs and Factor Loadings.

	SEN	Disability	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
1	Y	Y	X		
2	Y	N			
3	N	Y			X

4	N	Y	X		
5	N	Y	X		
6	Y	Y	X		
7	Y	Y			X
8	Y	Y	X		
9	Y	N			X
10	Y	Y		X	

In this section, the findings from each factor will be used to further explore systemic influence of SEND legislation on the lived experience of young people, discussing the type of support and guidance available to particular groups of young people which contributes to their overall lived experience and their point of view. Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner 1979; 2005) is a theoretical perspective which provides a model to explain the qualitative differences between the three factors in this study. The systems around young people in FE influence many aspects of a young person's life educationally, socially, and environmentally. In addition, this section explores evidence for the role of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002) and the impact of autonomy, competence and relatedness as features of each factor and as a way to inform potential strategies to support progress towards set goals for young people.

2.7.4.1.Factor 1

The 2010 Equality Act outlines protected characteristics and the need for 'reasonable adjustments' to be made for people with disabilities. For the young people who loaded onto Factor 1, it is possible that their sense of autonomy is linked to an understanding of independence being synonymous with working alone to achieve a goal, without a need for additional support. As all of the young people loading onto Factor 1 were accessing mainstream (as opposed to specialist SEN-only) courses in college, the experiences they have had in teaching and learning are likely to additionally promote elements of competence which will support their success after graduation.

As young people with ambitions for the future, the participants in Factor 1 all demonstrated a clear pathway to succeeding in their areas of interest. The lived experience of these young

people is therefore guided by opportunities to develop independence, with a view to seeking paid employment. In terms of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002), this demonstrates a level of competence which can support these young people to achieve their ambitions. Deci and Ryan (2002) discuss the notion of autonomous motivation, the idea that a person does something because they are enjoying it and because they want to. The findings from Factor 1 appear to demonstrate that the participants are working towards self-identified goals, with their journey underpinned by a sense of competence and autonomy.

Findings from the deductive content analysis additionally demonstrate that participants who loaded onto Factor 1 place less importance on elements of relatedness such as being understood or being supported. The findings suggest that they are more likely to want to access employment independently, however the interviews highlight that participants aligning with this factor recognise that they can access support if needed. With regard to self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002), it is possible that the sense of relatedness for this group comes not from social connections with peers, but from interactions within the system around them (Bronfenbrenner, 1976; 2005), for example through constructive and supportive relationships with employers and a sense of security in the workplace.

2.7.4.2 Factor 2

Interview transcripts from the participants loading onto Factor 2 demonstrate a level of competence around their understanding of their own needs. The participants aligned with Factor 2 both had physical disabilities which impact their range of motion and for which they require support in order to remain safe in college. These young people evidently have a good understanding of their own needs (Palikara et al., 2009), which is possibly why their responses demonstrated that they value independence at home and in life skills, rather than in the workplace. These participants' physical needs will additionally be met through reasonable adjustments (Equality Act, 2010) and disability living allowance. For these young people, autonomy was more closely linked to living independently than to employment.

In addition, these participants demonstrated that they understand how their physical disabilities impact on their ability to be independent and how their autonomy can be affected

by their needs. However, the importance placed on community - particularly through peer relationships - highlights the way in which the participants loading onto Factor 2 value elements of relatedness in terms of achieving their goals, including independent living.

When the lens of self-determination theory is applied (Deci & Ryan, 2002) in order to explore how these young people are likely to achieve their goals and the kind of support they are likely to require as they 'prepare for adulthood', the impact of physical disability on both competence and autonomy cannot be overlooked. While reasonable adjustments are likely to support these young people to independently access opportunities in society, it is possible that achieving their goals links more closely to relatedness than autonomy. For example, when considering the systemic influences on both motivation and goal achievement, the participants aligning with this factor highlighted that they feel they will need to let go of their support 'gradually' whilst increasing their confidence with people.

The 'preparing for adulthood' journey for young people whose views align with Factor 2 is therefore likely to involve developing a network of support which can advocate for reasonable adjustments, provide opportunities to develop independence and autonomy and compassionately support the development of competence both in the workplace and at home.

2.7.4.3 Factor 3

In college, the participants who loaded onto Factor 3 were accessing segregated, SEN-specific courses. The argument that FE colleges– based on the mainstream schooling system –limits the experiences of inclusion for young people with SEND (Atkins, 2016) is one way to conceptualise this difference in lived experience. Whereas young people who have some additional needs but who are academically at the same level as their peers can access mainstream courses with support, young people with more significant needs are excluded from the wider college community and therefore do not receive the same messages about transition and adulthood. The significant limits of the segregated SEND environment (Wright, 2006) impact on young people's identity development, motivation and values (Hayton, 2009) as well as their sense of competence when it comes to their ability to meet their own needs in the wider world.

From a systemic perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1976; 2005), the perspective of the young people aligning with Factor 3 can be seen as a direct result of their experience. For example, their experience of accessing segregated, SEND-specific courses in college limits the ability to develop a social understanding of adulthood from peers. In addition, since these young people have a higher level of need than the other participants, there is more influence from the wider systems- particularly parents- on their outlook and, consequentially, their ambitions.

Participants loading onto Factor 3 highlighted in interviews that the key to them living independently would come from increasing competence to meet their own needs (such as managing money). However, an emphasis on family support demonstrates that relatedness remains an important consideration for these young people when it comes to being successful in achieving their goals. In addition, these participants' experiences of motivation and goal-directed behaviour appear to be linked to more achievable, small steps (such as being able to do the washing up) which are closer in time to the present day. When determining how the preparing for adulthood framework might look for these young people and what their perspective is on the sections within it, it is possible that - particularly due to their need for support to participate actively in planning- there is a need for more detail and for there to be several more achievable goals identified within a pathway rather than a single end result.

2.7.5   Implications of Research Findings

The focus of this particular study was to elicit the views of a select group of young people with SEND on their experiences of further education and their perspective on the Preparing for Adulthood Framework (2013). The use of Q-methodology – a process which is exploratory, and which is sensitive enough to utilise with a small sample size (Watts & Stenner, 2005)– does not aim to prove or disprove a priori assumptions and instead generates a first-person perspective which is largely impervious to the influence of subjective interpretation. The outcomes of the research and the findings it generates are therefore introduced across several contexts without any suggestion or implication that they are representative of a larger group. However it is hoped that the findings, when presented across

contexts, may have some transferable aspects which can contribute to further psychological enquiries around the lived experiences and perspectives of young people with SEN and /or disabilities at this point in their journeys.

The findings largely suggest qualitative differences in the outlooks of young people across three distinct viewpoints, with potential additional perspectives of young people with SEN and no disability which may require further investigation. The participant whose responses did not align with any factor (participant 2) was one of the participants who had a special educational need which was not recognised as a disability. It could be possible that the Preparing for Adulthood framework (2013) more accurately represents the aspirations and shared perspectives of young people with SEND – whose responses indicate some shared experiences – compared to young people who have SEN but no recognised disability. This finding brings into question whether the lived experiences and priorities of some young people with SEN who do not have a disability are qualitatively different from those of their disabled peers.

These findings demonstrate that young people with SEND are a heterogenous group who place importance and value of different aspects of preparing for adulthood and the future. The narratives around their particular experiences similarly highlight the differences in lived experience and the complex nature of the transition from education to employment for young people with SEND. The research findings from this study additionally highlight the ways in which perspectives and values of each group can be understood in terms of varying levels of autonomy and competence, elements of Self-Determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Further research is required in order to explore the notion that the differences in both lived experience and perspective can be linked to demographics or type of need. With additional exploration of the underlying elements which impact on young people's experiences and views, it may be possible to determine whether alterations to the Preparing for Adulthood framework or the systems surrounding post-FE transition are required to support the specific needs of young people with SEN who do not have a disability.

2.7.5.1   Schools and Colleges

In the context of education, the findings from this study highlight that there is no one set route towards adulthood for young people, further emphasising the diverse spectrum of young people with SEND in the UK (Attfield, 2021). Although key elements of the Preparing for Adulthood framework (2013) were prioritised across factors – such as making independent decisions and accessing a form of training or employment– there are distinct differences which highlight the need for a person-centred approach to transition (Lawson & Parker, 2020).

Particularly around Factor 3, the results also highlight that there is some dissonance between the educational experiences of young people and their aspirations. The lack of choice available at a post-16 level is evidence of 'pigeon-holing' (Young, 2014) and may suggest that current young people are passive participants in their transition (Lawson & Parker, 2020) with decisions largely being made for them (Parry, 2020). Given the emphasis the participants across factors placed on independence and making their own decisions, a holistic approach to planning is likely to be a supportive factor in promoting a sense of hope (Ben-Naim et al., 2017) and determination (Deci & Ryan, 2002).

Employment was emphasised as particularly important in Factor 1. For participants who loaded significantly onto the other factors, more importance was placed on elements of independent living, mental health and wellbeing. Although there is a significant amount of focus on employability and on outcomes for young people in terms of their employment status (e.g. Timpson, 2019), Damali and Damali's (2018) finding that there is not yet a shared understanding of best practice in this area is support for the idea that models of service delivery may be more successful if they focus on aspects of Preparing for Adulthood other than employability.

Instead, it could be suggested that–as part of the transition planning process– a structure which focuses on the elements of SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2002); autonomy, competence and relatedness may be a more useful way to support transitions and assess 'readiness' for adulthood and independent living. In addition, the findings demonstrate that the systems around young people (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 2005) additionally impact their outlook and sense of preparedness.

A key finding from across all factors was that the priorities of young people can be separated by need, but that there was no qualitative difference between young people with SEN and those with an intellectual disability (such as in Factor 3). This highlights the importance of providing an equitable service at a school or college-level and, in terms of the wider systemic context, emphasises that schools have a role and responsibility in preparing young people whose needs are not classed as a disability for the reality of life after education. Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002) is a key theory which could be used to underpin an approach to supporting young people through transition by highlighting intervention strategies (Lawson & Parker) and ensuring their needs are understood (Timpson, 2019).

Additional research and evidence-based adaptations at a wider systemic level could also be used to support equity of access to services and a more bespoke approach to preparing for adulthood given the distinct perspectives of young people with particular needs. Sorting activities such as the Q-methodology approach applied in this study may be useful to develop an understanding of the priorities of individual students as they approach this transition point.

2.7.5.2 Educational Psychologists

Although the role and impact of professionals was not explored as part of this study, there are some key findings which reflect the needs and wishes of young people as they reach the end of their FE journey which can be applied to allied professionals and, in particular, to educational psychologists. Factor 1 demonstrated that some young people, particularly those who have a clear career path in mind, value their independence and their ability to autonomously make decisions about the future. Where previous research has found difficulties with maintaining employment and increased risk of becoming NEET (Timpson, 2019), an EP's support in providing reasonable adjustments and guidance to employers could be one way to increase equity of access to support and, therefore, social mobility in the lives of young people (Attfield & Attfield, 2019).

At a systemic level, EPs are in a position to facilitate more holistic and person-centred approaches to planning and to the use of the Preparing for Adulthood framework (2013) through Annual Reviews and interactions with young people, education providers, parents

and SEND caseworkers within local authorities. Through opportunities to support FE settings and provide holistic support to young people as they move into employment, EPs would also be offered the opportunity to develop their profile and interactions with colleges and other FE settings beyond the statutory role outlined in the 2015 SEND Code of Practice.

An emphasis on good health and being able to talk about worries was particularly highlighted in Factor 2. This is in line with previous suggestions from Morris and Atkinson (2018) and Carroll (2015), who highlighted the high levels of stress and anxiety at this stage of life and the associated need for allied professionals to understand the complexities of identity development which can contribute to social and emotional difficulties. As previously argued, EPs are particularly well-placed to contribute to mental health support for young people aged 16-25 as they remain a consistent presence despite the shift from child to adult health services at the age of 18 (Atkinson & Martin, 2018). Where the gap in services for young people with intellectual disabilities has been noted as a risk (Kaehne, 2011), the educational psychologist has the skills and abilities to supplement provision with direct therapeutic work (Atkinson & Martin, 2018) or to support the education provider to appropriately differentiate mental health and wellbeing support to meet the individual needs of the young person.

A final consideration is the statutory role of the EP, as defined within the SEND Code of Practice (2015), which extends to the age of 25 years. As many other services available to young people cease at the age of 18, the continuing presence of the EP means that the profession is particularly well-positioned to provide ongoing, holistic support for young people well into their journey towards adulthood. As in the Scottish system, where post-school psychological services support adults who continue to experience difficulties linked to their learning needs (MacKay, 2009), there is an argument for EPs in England and Wales to extend their role to provide a similar model. For participants who loaded onto Factor 3, in which steps towards independence are underpinned by a high importance on decision-making, a continuation of the EP role beyond further education, working alongside adult services and providers of vocational skills development courses, could lead to a psychologically-informed approach towards achieving set goals. In this case, Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002) and its underlying areas of autonomy, competence and relatedness could support a holistic and person-centred journey towards a successful future.

At a more strategic level, within the wider system, the findings of this study– which highlight that the lived experiences up until leaving education for young people with SEN are no different to the experiences of their peers with disabilities– can be used to argue for additional rights for young people whose needs do not meet the threshold to be classed as a disability under the 2010 Equality Act. EPs could have a pertinent role in advocating for young people's right to appropriate support and reasonable adjustments regardless of their disability statement, influencing policies and developing pathways to ensure that the experience of Preparing for Adulthood is equitable regardless of how a young person's need is classified.

2.7.6   Limitations of the Current Study

The current study aimed to understand the perspective of young people with SEND as they transition out of education, alongside questioning whether there is an additional role for the EP in supporting this process. The design of the study, particularly the Q-methodology applied to elicit an understanding of subjectivity, limited the number of participants involved and, therefore, the results must be interpreted as a representation of the young people's (who took part in the study) specific lived experience. In addition, the use of the Preparing for Adulthood framework (2013) as a model from which to develop and categorise the Q-sort statements is likely to have limited the perspectives participants were able to demonstrate and discuss. Further exploration is certainly required in order to understand whether the findings within this study represent a shared viewpoint within a wider community of young people at the same age and stage.

In terms of the participants, an additional limitation is that the P-set all came from one group of colleges, in one local authority. As FE is varied, it is likely that the environment had a significant impact on the views and experiences of the young people in this study. In other local authorities, it is possible that the different services available to support careers, the various options provided in terms of courses and the presence of any charities in the local area would impact on the lived experience of young people. A wider-reaching study, encompassing questions which provide information about the provision available in the area

outside of the college, would be useful in order to build a national picture of the services in place for people with SEND aged 16-25 and beyond. From an epistemological perspective of social constructionism, a widening of the context would allow for a deeper understanding of the experiences of young people through additional interactions and social processes.

The original aim of the research study was to provide a real, lived account of the experiences of young people with SEND, but particularly those who have SEN but no disability (Howell, 2020). There was a limited number of participants who fit this criteria, which was further reduced during the factor analysis stage of the study. As a result, further inquiry is required in order to establish the true extent of the differences and similarities in lived experience, outlook and outcomes for young people whose needs are or are not met by the 2010 Equality Act's definition of a disability.

The three factors appear to be characterised, broadly, by need: ASD, physical disabilities and intellectual disabilities or special educational needs which are based around cognition and learning. It would be particularly helpful to explore whether there continues to be a qualitative difference in lived experience or perspective between these groups on a larger scale as this may help to inform strategies and frameworks for person-centred planning.

It is additionally impossible to ignore the limitations on the research process and its findings which are connected to the Covid-19 pandemic. Although ethical guidance was sought to work face-to-face with young people, the protracted nature of this process is thought to have contributed to the small number of participants in the P-set as the time to recruit was limited. On the other side of the study, it is also important to reflect on the impact of social distancing and lockdown rules on the social experiences the participants have had, including opportunities for work experience, and planned social groups. This may have influenced their responses –particularly the emphasis placed on independent living. Although some societal shifts have taken place and some social distancing measures had been removed at the time of research, a study in the future, when young people are able to access more experiences in the community, may reflect a shift in values or priorities compared to the P-set at this particular time.

2.7.7 Future Research and Recommendations

As discussed above, there are several potential ways in which the findings from this study could be developed or extended. Using a wider sample which covers more than one local authority, and which accounts for local initiatives which may impact on perspectives, may provide a more representative account of the wider lived experience of young people. In addition, exploring the differences and similarities based on the three factors in this study could be a particularly interesting development. Another additional element not explored in this study is around the role and perspective of parents or carers. It would be interesting, and may provide some additional context, to complete a similar activity with parents of young people with SEN and those with a disability to explore whether there is a difference in outlook from a parent's point of view.

This study focuses on the experiences of young people before or during their transition out of FE. A study which focusses on the reflections of young people who have already left college– those who are in work and those who are NEET – would provide a different outlook and would potentially allow the researcher to support or discard some of the theoretical suggestions of what could happen to these young people if they do not receive appropriate support. Understanding the real outcomes for these young people and reflecting on a potential role for allied professionals in planning based on real evidence of the full journey from education to employment would add validity to what is a valuable and interesting area of study.

A final recommendation, based on the arguments discussed and the findings presented in this study, is for EPs, other educationalists, parents, carers and young people to question and advocate for a more holistic and inclusive definition of an intellectual disability which ensures that no young person is left without support, or put at additional risk of isolation or social vulnerability, when they end their educational journey and become an adult. As has been echoed throughout this study, the most important factor is that the young person's voice is heard above all others.

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3. Final Reflective Chapter

3.1 Introduction

Reflective and reflexive practice is a key tenet of the role of the Educational Psychologist (British Psychological Society, 2019). As a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP), this particular account documents my reflections on the process of designing and carrying out research, the problems faced during the journey and reflections on key points of both celebration and difficulty. It is important to note in this introductory chapter that the process of completing this research study was impacted from its conception by the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent guidance on social distancing and access to schools and colleges. Although there were guidelines in place at the time of designing the project, the pandemic's progress and trajectory within society has been unprecedented and placed additional limitations on the choices one could make as a researcher. In this chapter, I aim to reflect upon the entire journey from the initial ideas to the completion of this written account of the research project.

3.2 Reflection on Topic

The original inspiration for this topic came from my experiences working in education and in mental health services which catered to adults with intellectual disabilities. As I developed my practical knowledge and understanding of the legislation around SEN and disabilities, I became acutely aware that there would likely be a group of young people who were left unprotected by the 2010 Equality Act despite their needs, as they would not meet the threshold to be classed as disabled under the category of 'intellectual disability'. As I worked more closely with young people approaching the end of their educational journey, I was conscious of the difficulties some of them might face in the wider world and became curious about the consequences for society if these young people were not supported appropriately. In 2020, I published a short article regarding this particular issue in BPS Debate (Howell,

2020), highlighting the 'legislative gap' and the issues some young people may face. However, I was aware that my article and the research I had done up until that point was missing a key factor: the voices and views of the young people themselves.

When I began to review the literature related to this topic, I found that there was a dearth of research specifically linking to two notions: the experience of young people leaving education for good (as opposed to transitioning between settings) and their views on the systems which support them at this time. The research which has focused on outcomes at this stage reflects a bleak picture. Poor transition experiences have been found to predict poor outcomes in employment (Knapp et al., 2009), social isolation of young people with SEND is a well-documented issue (Hirst & Baldwin, 1994) and parental expectations are often not met (Adams et al., 2017).

Despite the changes to the SEND Code of Practice in 2015 which extended the remit to include young people from the age of 16-25, the disability employment gap continues to be over 25% (House of Commons 2019), with many people unlikely to receive employment for extended periods of time (Burch, 2018). I found these statistics particularly disconcerting, particularly when paired with the Timpson Review (2019)'s findings around the risk of exclusion and of becoming NEET for young people with additional needs.

Some research has been carried out to explore the barriers which exist for young people with SEND and which impact on their outcomes as they move towards adulthood. The limited choices available in college (Attfield & Attfield, 2019), with options often pre-selected (Parry, 2020), lead to a sense of passive participation and a lack of person-centredness within the approach to planning (Lawson & Parker, 2020). However, although the research demonstrates that there are issues with the current system, the young people's own voices and views were not captured or demonstrated in a meaningful way.

It was at this point that I reflected on my position as a TEP and on what I could contribute to this field of interest. I thought it would be most helpful to explore the actual, lived experiences of young people at this stage in their lives and the views they hold about the future. In particular, I was interested in how their views and desires compared to the pre-

established categories within one of the frameworks designed to support the planning of
transitions: the Preparing for Adulthood framework (2013).

A key reflection I hold looking back on this point in my research journey is around the
emancipatory nature of the research and the reasons for this. I had become aware, via the
works of Professor Tommy MacKay, of the Scottish system in which educational psychology
is accessible throughout a person's lifetime (MacKay, 2009). I had also developed questions
in my own mind about how educational psychology could be extended in England and Wales
to –potentially– safeguard the progress and wellbeing of young people who would otherwise
fall down the 'gap' within the legislation (Howell, 2020). There were many ways in which
this could be explored, however I was determined that I would ensure my focus was on the
lived experiences of the young people, providing them a platform to offer their views.

3.3 Developing research questions

Following on from the research I had completed around SEND legislation and the Equality
Act (Howell, 2020), I shifted my focus towards the Preparing for Adulthood model (2013)
and the ways in which– from my personal experience –parts of it do not fit with the provision
of the NHS learning disability services and adult social care. It led to me questioning whether
reflections had ever been gathered from young people at this stage in their lives around what
was most important to them, or whether their experiences after leaving college had been
tracked and compared to the outcomes they had hoped for. A particular area of interest for me
was on whether there was a possibility of developing research which could help bridge the
gap between educational psychologists (who work with educational settings) and clinical
psychologists employed by the NHS mental health services to work with young people with
intellectual disabilities. A particular focus at this point became the question of whether there
is a role for the EP in supporting the transition out of education and what this might look like.
Given the gap in legislation I had previously identified (Howell, 2020) I decided I could
additionally, then, question whether there is a role for the EP specifically in supporting young
people with SEN but no disability who would not receive formal support from other services.

I decided, before moving forwards, to discuss my research ideas with a parent representative from the local Parent Carer Forum who is also mother to a 17-year-old son with SEND. I was particularly interested to understand more about the parental perspective on the project and whether this would be useful. Throughout the discussion, I was holding in mind the notion that parents would most likely act as facilitators to gathering data as they would have to consent for their children to participate. This discussion centred around the Preparing for Adulthood framework (2013) and the parent's questions about whether it is fit for purpose or seen as a 'tick box' exercise. It was at this stage that my second research question was formulated as I asked the parent: have young people's views ever been explored on this subject? Do we know what the young people want? Do their views and experiences match what is written in the document? At this stage, I decided I would focus on exploring the lived experiences of young people who were in the process of leaving college, looking at both their expectations before they left and their experiences afterwards.

3.4 Reflection on Research Design

3.4.1   Why Q Methodology?

As the literature on young people's experiences focussed on pigeon-holing (Young, 2014) or limiting the options available to young people with SEND (Parry, 2020), I felt compelled to explore how the young people felt about this particular experience, ideally without imposing any *a priori* assumptions on them. Initially I had wanted to explore the views of young people who had already left college in order to get a reflective account of their own experiences, however as I looked into methods which would allow me to explore people's perspectives and use these views as the data set itself, I was drawn to Q-methodology and its emphasis on understanding subjectivity.

In the early stages of developing the research proposal, my justification for selecting Q methodology as an approach centred around the possibility of it being facilitated virtually. In addition, Q methodology offered a way to gain a subjective, person-centred account from a young person without the influence of others as the young people would be able to access this independently. This view was supported by a systematic view carried out by Lundberg et al

(2020) on the use of Q methodology in educational research, the findings of which demonstrated that Q is a useful way to support young people to put forth their views. Although other methods, particularly qualitative methods, could have been used to approach this subject, I personally felt that the structured nature of the Q sort was a helpful guide for the participants.

My initial plan was to use interviews to gain a greater depth of personal insight after the young people had left college. However, as this approach is inherently reliant on cognitive ability and verbal communication, I did consider that a set of participants who would be able to complete an unstructured interview would not be a representative sample of young people with SEND and therefore the findings would not demonstrate the lived experience of young people with more significant additional needs. At this stage, I began to explore the types of interview techniques which would suit the young people most. I was aware that the Q methodology model includes an interview after the sorting process and so I considered ways that this could be utilised. I settled on using a series of structured questions which focused on the journey of leaving college and developed a short list of possible questions to ask. These questions would help me to further understand what the priorities are for young people with SEND as they leave education and whether there is a difference in the lived experience of young people with SEN and those with a registered, recognised disability.

3.4.2   Development of the Q-Set

Usually, the set of statements or items used in Q methodology is derived from the literature surrounding the topic. Through a process of organisation and selection, a range of statements are developed which represent a wide range of viewpoints on the topic. The idea is that each statement is distinct from the others, but still forms part of a coherent 'set' of perspectives which fit with the overarching topic (Watts & Stenner, 2005).

A particular issue I faced at this point in the development of the study came from the lack of published research which focused on the perspectives of people involved in post-16 or post-18 education, particular after the enactment of the 2014 Children and Families Act and the subsequent SEND Code of Practice (2015). Although there were research findings which

appeared to demonstrate some of the difficulties young people faced, none were reflective of
the process of preparing to leave. As a result, following discussions with a small pilot group
who have lived experience made the decision to utilise the Preparing for Adulthood
framework (2013) and the sections within it as my Q-set, developing statements which align
with the key outcomes in order to develop an understanding of the young people's views on
this.

I developed a set of statements and discussed these with an SEN teacher, the Parent Carer
forum member and her son as a way of ensuring they were a) understandable and b)
representative of the question at hand. For the young person, this was delivered through
matching the statements to the key areas of the Preparing for Adulthood Framework (2013).
Through discussions, it was decided that I could make this more accessible by providing
illustrations to support the young people to understand each statement. From my experience
working in adult learning disability services, I recalled utilising Easy Read script and decided
that I could use this to make the whole Q sort process more accessible and easier for the
young people to complete independently.

3.4.3   Initial Ethics Submissions

An initial ethics proposal was submitted in February 2021 which detailed my intention to
complete a Q-sort activity and a subsequent interview with young people in their final year of
education. The plan at this stage was to complete the Q-sort activity before they left in the
July and then re-connect in the October or November to complete an interview about their
experiences having left college. In line with the previously discussed discrepancy between
the legislation supporting young people with and without disabilities, the participant group
was intended to represent both young people with SEN and those whose needs came under
the criteria to be classed as a disability under the 2010 Equality Act.

The ethics board had developed criteria in response to the Covid-19 pandemic which aimed
to minimise in-person research. As such, the direction from the board was to develop a study
which could be completed virtually in the first instance, with additional permissions needed if
these measures were not possible to accommodate. In line with this guidance, I sourced an

online platform that would be able to host a Q-sort and distribute it via email. My criteria were that it had to be user-friendly enough for the young people to complete the study, be able to display pictures alongside easy read statements and it had to be usable on both a tablet or phone and a computer. Through exploration of the Q methodology forum and websites, I found recommendations for a website called 'Q Method Software' which is specifically designed to host and deploy studies using Q. I named this software in the ethics application and developed an exemplar of what the statements would look like on the system to accompany my written application.

My initial ethics application was rejected on the grounds that the Q Method software is not approved by the university and therefore I would be unable to use it. I was asked to find another method which would allow me to complete a Q sort with the young people by virtual means before re-submitting. After discussions with my supervisors and again looking at the approved software list, I concluded that there was no available software which could host and deploy a Q-sort study which was included in the university catalogue. As a result, my only option was to develop my own framework via Microsoft Teams and PowerPoint which could– through screen sharing– be used to facilitate a Q-sort online. With this added to the ethics proposal, my second submission was accepted in April 2021.

3.4.4 Recruitment of the P-Set and Ethics Re-Submission

From May to September 2021, study recruitment information was disseminated to local colleges, schools, online forums, parent carer forums and charities. In this time, I received no response from any interested party. A reflective discussion in research supervision allowed me to analyse the reasons why this may have been happening, leading me to conclude that a particular issue was that utilising online groups as a means to reach young people was not– in fact – reaching the young people. Instead, by targeting charities and parent groups, I was putting in place additional gatekeepers and decision-makers which were not the young people. As I was determined that this project focus on and facilitate independent participation, I made the decision to reach out to some local colleges in person to discuss the possibility of carrying out a similar project face-to-face.

At this stage, the young people I was originally hoping to work with had already left college. As a result, and given the difficulties I had encountered with recruitment, I decided to work with students in their final year at college, exploring their hopes for the future and their perspective on the Preparing for Adulthood framework's outcomes (2013). I developed a new set of interview questions which focussed on the future, rather than the past, and re-designed the Q-sort statements so that they could be printed and used by hand.

An initial discussion with the ethics chair highlighted that it would be possible to conduct research face-to-face as long as I completed a risk assessment and could justify the choice. The ethics proposal put forward at this stage detailed that the group of young people were 'hard to reach' and that it appeared that previous recruitment attempts had failed largely because I had put in place unnecessary gatekeepers. I put forward the notion that I would work directly with the local college in order to avoid repeating these mistakes. Additionally, I highlighted that face-to-face facilitation of the Q-sort would likely be more successful as I would be present to support the young people to understand what to do and to support them to give their responses without needing another adult present.

The risk assessment completed to accompany the application centred around the face-to-face nature of the study and the risks posed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Measures included regular testing, ventilation and sanitising of all materials. In addition, the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (2021) was used to ensure that the measures put in place protected the young people as much as possible. Consideration was given to a number of factors, including the vulnerability of the group and the risks of exploitation due to power dyamics. The code states that 'awareness of responsibility ensures that the trust of others is not abused, the power of influence is properly managed and that duty towards others is always paramount' (BPS, Principle 3.3). In line with the principles of Q methodology, I wanted to ensure that participants were kept safe and that their trust in me was not exploited in any way. As such, I wanted to ensure that participants were made aware (through revised consent forms) of the risks of working face-to-face, giving them the option to opt out if they were concerned or if they were clinically vulnerable.

At the same time, I had opened discussions with the local college group about my study and regarding the recruitment difficulties I had previously faced. I outlined the aims of the study and the participant group I was seeking. A member of staff who leads the disability and SEN support team within the group agreed to source participants on my behalf – acting to ensure their details were kept confidential and ensuring parental consent was sought for those students who would require it.

I received ethical approval for this new, face-to-face version of the study in November 2021 and, in December 2021, I began to complete my research. Although the delay in starting the data collection portion of the study was significant and stressful, I feel now that the process was useful in highlighting some of the difficulties researchers are likely to face when recruiting participants from this particular age group, particularly if they have SEN or a disability. It also highlighted, to me, that Q-methodology continues to be an under-used method. Since there is no alternative method which measures the same thing, it is a great shame that no software has been approved by the university which could facilitate virtual studies. With the original timescale and approval of an online study, I do believe I could have found ways to reach more participants, meaning that my findings would be representative of the wider experience of young people, rather than just those within one local authority.

3.5 Reflection on the Research Journey

Collecting the data was the most enjoyable part of the research study. I appreciated the opportunity I had to speak with the young people and explain what my study was about. I also enjoyed getting to hear their perspectives on the elements of the Preparing for Adulthood framework (2013) and their hopes for the future. I was initially nervous for the first session of data collection, particularly as I was unsure whether the students would be anxious about the idea of leaving college or if they might feel stressed in any way by my questions. However, as I developed my technique and scripts to introduce the study, I found the process of working directly with the young people to be very enjoyable. They were open and honest about their expectations and gave me a great insight into their perspective on leaving college and the next steps in their journeys.

After the first portion of data collection, I reflected on the information and findings from the young people who had participated. I was pleased to have a clear initial data set; however, I was conscious that the young people I had been working with were a fairly homogenous group and that they did not represent the broad spectrum of SEND needs in the college. From discussion with my contact at the college, it was agreed that my second visit for data collection would involve me working with young people who are based in another section of the college and who are accessing foundation level or SEND-specific courses such as life skills. I felt reassured at this stage that working with these young people would allow me to have a wider range of perspectives and, in turn, that this would give me a greater insight into the effectiveness of the Preparing for Adulthood framework (2013) for young people at many different points within the SEND spectrum.

The analysis of the data was the part of the study I found the most challenging, particularly as Q-methodology is not a method I have a significant amount of practical experience with and therefore I was relying a lot on written guidance during the analysis phase. The PQ Method software (Schmolck, 2014) was extremely useful in facilitating the data analysis, however it required a competent level of understanding in order to interpret the results. I felt the least comfortable with this phase of the research, particularly when I realised my data required manual rotations. This particular experience was not one I was familiar with, and the sensation of conscious incompetence (Howell, 1982) was unpleasant. However, I was grateful for the published guidance (e.g. Watts & Stenner, 2005; 2014) which served to remind me of the theoretical underpinnings of the approach and why I needed to treat the data in this way. As I worked with the data and began to see the 'bigger picture' of what the results meant for my study, I was able to shift towards a feeling of being more 'consciously competent' in my role as researcher.

3.5.1   Development of Knowledge and Skills

As I reach the end of my research journey, I am able to recognise the discrete stages as a reflection of a model of adult learning. Kolb's (1984) model of experiential learning feels the most representative of my experience. My journey began with a concrete experience; a

moment in which I was able to reconsider my experiences in adult mental health alongside the legislation around SEND. The reflections which followed then led me, I believe, to raise the questions that would become the focus of my research. This gave rise to a concept which I could actively explore through experimentation and scientific inquiry. The findings then lead me to once again reflect, indicating that this a learning experience which extends far beyond the EdPsyD course, and which will shape my experiences as a fully-qualified EP.

Along the way, I have developed key skills and knowledge which I feel will support me throughout my career. Alongside developing competence in using Q methodology to explore subjectivity, I feel my most significant growth has been in the knowledge I hold around post-18 education and legislation. As I move towards qualification, I hope that these skills will allow me to continue to support and advocate for young people in the latter stages of formal education and to highlight – through my research findings – how professionals can use their own knowledge to provide guidance beyond education and into adulthood.

3.5.2   Reflection on Contributions to Knowledge

Prior to starting training, I held some confusion and concern over the seemingly harsh criteria to receive a diagnosis of an intellectual disability (DSM-V, 2013). When accompanied by more contemporary research which highlights the limited options available to young people (Atkins, 2016; Abbott & Carpenter, 2014), it is unsurprising that young people can end up feeling socially isolated or excluded (Timpson, 2019; House of Commons, 2019). A particular reflection I had whilst initially reading research into young people aged 18-25 from an educational perspective was that this population is assumed to be homogenous, with shared views, expectations and experiences. I hope that my study and the factors uncovered through Q methodology serve to demonstrate that not all young people with SEND have the same perspective and that, underlying this, their particular needs and rights to additional support may be shaping their future plans. This is particularly important as I move towards qualification as the HCPC's standards of proficiency demonstrate the need to adapt practice to meet the needs of diverse groups (HCPC, 5.2). This is something I would like to embed into my practice, sharing this knowledge with other professionals along the way.

From a personal standpoint, I would like to take forward the hope that young people hold
when they talk about their future. My experience of talking directly to young people about
their expectations highlighted for me the need for the system to be person-centred and
adaptable, something which I hope to be able to advocate for. I also hope that further
exploration and links made with FE settings in the local area will strengthen the working
relationships between the local authority and the college group. It would be wonderful to
have the opportunity to put some of the findings into practice and truly work alongside
colleges and other allied professionals to support young people through this period of
transition.

3.5.3   Future Research

The findings of my study will contribute to EP practice. As the pool of research in this area is
small, the data is likely to contribute to knowledge of practitioners in FE settings and in allied
professional services such as educational psychology. If further research were to be
completed, I believe there is also the possibility of influencing legislation which serves to
close the identified 'gap' in support (Howell, 2020). It would be useful to explore the
perspectives of parents and professionals on this transition phase in a young person's life in
order to find out more about their experiences. In addition, further emancipatory research
taking an action research stance where young people are actively supported after they leave
college by educational psychologists could help to add some evidence as to whether the
'Scottish' model (MacKay, 2007) of support could translate to an English or Welsh system.
The three factors uncovered in this study help, in my opinion, to demonstrate the different
perspectives and expectations of young people, particularly those who have a recognised
disability and those who have more significant learning needs. This is certainly an area which
requires more investigation, and I would welcome further insight into the lived experiences
of young people who have SEN but no disability when they leave FE and enter the complex
world of adulthood and, possibly, employment. As a first step, I am hoping to disseminate
this research to relevant journals, alongside presenting the findings at local and national
conferences and other continuing professional development events.

3.6 Summary

To summarise, the process of conducting this research study has been challenging and rewarding in equal measure. The journey from conceptualisation to ethical approval included navigating issues I had not predicted, then the process of recruitment using the initial model was a source of immense frustration. However, through tenacity, optimism and knowing when to go back a stage to re-evaluate, I was able to develop a working relationship and source a group of participants who were open and honest about their views and experiences. This research journey has left me wishing to develop closer links with FE settings across the local authority and beyond to ensure positive outcomes for as many young people as possible.

The literature around this topic highlights a lack of choice (Parry, 2020) for young people and a sense of passive participation (Lawson & Parker, 2020). In addition, the role of the EP is not yet established when it comes to Further Education (Morris & Atkinson, 2018). When I consider the results of my study in this context, I am able to reflect particularly on the ways in which EPs can act as advocates, supporting young people through early intervention, preventative work (Arnold & Baker, 2012) and promoting motivation (Tomlinson, 2017).

This study contributes a small amount of knowledge to the sphere of educational psychology in FE settings, however I am proud that the knowledge I am putting forth is centred around the young people's own voices and views. I hope that these findings are the first step towards developing cohesive, multi-disciplinary and person-centred frameworks which lead to personal growth and systemic change.

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Appendices

Appendix 1- Ethical Approval

EDU ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER 2020-21	

APPLICANT DETAILS	
Name:	Sophie Howell
School:	EDU
Current Status:	EdPsyD Student
EDU REC IDENTIFIER:	2021_03_SH_LW

Approval details	
Approval start date:	15.04.2021
Approval end date:	31.07.2022
Specific requirements of approval:	Supervisor to check and approve minor edits related to PCFs (detailed in email) prior to data collection beginning.
Please note that your project is only given ethical approval for the length of time identified above. Any extension to a project must obtain ethical approval by the EDU REC before continuing. Any amendments to your project in terms of design, sample, data collection, focus etc. should be notified to the EDU REC Chair as soon as possible to ensure ethical compliance. If the amendments are substantial a new application may be required.	

Victoria Warburton EDU Chair, Research Ethics Committee

Appendix 2- Participant Information Sheet

Sophie Howell
Trainee Educational Psychologist
18.10.2021

Faculty of Social Sciences

School of Education and Lifelong
Learning

University of East Anglia
Norwich Research Park
Norwich NR4 7TJ
United Kingdom

Study Information Sheet

Exploring the perspectives of young people with SEN during the transition out
of further education: a study using Q-Methodology
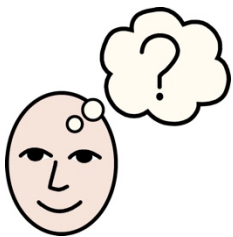
Hello. My name is Sophie Howell.

I am doing a research study to find out more about what is important
to young people with special educational needs when they leave school or college.

I am asking you to be in my study because you are in your last year of school or college
and because, in school, you have had people to help you with your learning.

You can decide if you want to take part in the study or not. You don't have to - it's up
to you.

This sheet tells you what we will ask you to do if you decide to take part in the study.
Please read it carefully so that you can make up your mind about whether you want
to take part.

If you decide you want to be in the study and then you change your mind later, that's ok. All you need to do is tell me that you don't want to be in the study anymore.

If you have any questions, you can ask me or your family or someone else who looks after you. There is a sheet for parents and carers which tells them all about the study. If you have questions, the best way to get in touch is to email me at S.Howell1@uea.ac.uk.

What will happen if I say that I want to be in the study?

If you decide that you want to be in our study, we will ask you to do these things:

- The first part of the study will take place in your school or college.

- We will be in a quiet room with a table and chairs. You can have an adult with you if you would like.

- I will show you lots of different sentences about school and growing up.

- You will be asked to sort these statements to show which ones you agree with and which ones you don't agree with.

- Don't worry if this sounds complicated. I will be there to explain to you what to do.

- It should take about 20 minutes.

- After this part of the study, you will be asked if you would like to take part in an interview. An interview would mean talking to me about what it is like to leave school or college.

- The interview will be on the computer.

- If you say it's ok, I will record what you say. This will be either a video or an audio (just your voice) recording.

- When I write down what you said to me, I will give you a different name so that your information is kept private.

- In the interview, you can choose which questions you want to answer. If you don't want to talk about something, that's ok. You can stop talking at any time if you don't want to talk to me anymore.

- If you would like someone to be with you when we talk, that's fine too. It's your choice.

Will anyone else know what I say in the study?

I won't tell anyone else what you say to me, except if you talk about someone hurting you or about you hurting yourself or someone else. Then I might need to tell someone to keep you and other people safe.

All of the information that we have about you from the study will be stored in a safe place and I will look after it very carefully. I will write a report about the study and show it to other people but I won't say your name in the report and no one will know that you were in the study.

How long will the study take?

The sorting activity will take up to 20 minutes.

You might be asked if you would like to do an interview after this. The interview might be up to 40 minutes if you have lots to say.

Are there any good things about being in the study?
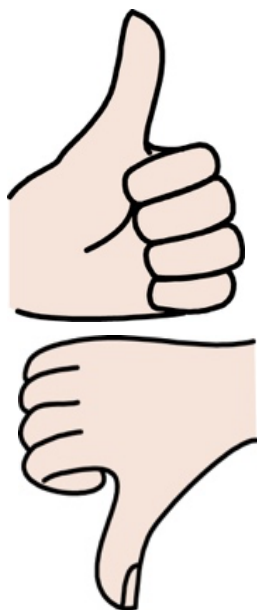
You won't get anything for being in the study, but you will be helping us do our research. Our research might help people like you in the future because it will help us understand what you might need when you leave school to make sure you are happy and successful.

Are there any bad things about being in the study?

This study will take up some of your time, but we don't think it will be bad for you or cost you anything. Talking about moving on and talking about leaving school or college can be tricky and can make people feel worried or anxious. I will listen carefully and will give you breaks if you need them. I will give you some information about people who can support you. If you get upset or want to stop the conversation at any time, you can do this. It is your choice.

Will you tell me what you learnt in the study at the end?

Yes, I will if you want me to. There is a question on the next page that asks you if you

want me to tell you what I learnt in the study. If you circle Yes, when I finish the study

I will tell you what I learnt.

What if I am not happy with the study or the people doing the study?
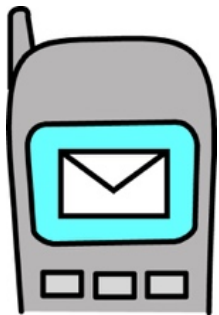
If you are not happy with how I am doing the study or how I treat you,

then you or the person who looks after you can:

- Write an **email** to A.Honess@uea.ac.uk

This sheet is for you to keep.

Consent Form

You should only say 'yes' to being in the study if you know what it is about and you want to be in it.
If you don't want to be in the study, don't tick the box.

In saying yes to being in the study, I am saying that:

PERSPECTIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SEND DURING THE TRANSITION OUT OF EDUCATION

- ✓ I know what the study is about.

- ✓ I know what I will be asked to do.

- ✓ Someone has talked to me about the study.

- ✓ My questions have been answered.

- ✓ I know that I don't have to be in the study if I don't want to.

- ✓ I know that I can pull out of the study at any time if I don't want to do it anymore.

- ✓ I know that I don't have to answer any questions that I don't want to answer.

- ✓ I know that I can ask to see the transcript of my interview.

- ✓ I know that the researcher won't tell anyone what I say when we talk to each other, unless I talk about being hurt by someone or hurting myself or someone else.

Are you happy for us to **audio record** your voice?   **Yes**   **No**

Are you happy for us to **video record** you?   **Yes**   **No**

Would you like to know what we learnt in the study?   **Yes**   **No**

……………………………………………….   ………………………………………………….

Signature   **Date**

Appendix 3- Parent/Guardian information sheet

Sophie Howell

Trainee Educational Psychologist

18.10.2021

Faculty of Social Sciences

School of Education and Lifelong

Learning

University of East Anglia

Norwich Research Park

Norwich NR4 7TJ

United Kingdom

Exploring the perspectives of young people with SEN during the transition out

of further education: a study using Q-Methodology

PARENTAL/GUARDIAN INFORMATION STATEMENT

(1) What is this study about?

The young person you care for is invited to take part in a research study about the experience
of leaving further education as a young person with SEN. They have been invited to participate
in this study because they are due to leave their further education setting at the end of this
academic year and because the setting has identified them as having SEN relating to cognition
and learning.

This Participant Information Statement tells you about the research study. Knowing what is
involved is intended to help you to support the young person to make an informed decision
about participation. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that

you don't understand or want to know more about. You will also be asked to give your consent for the young person to participate.

Participation in this research study is voluntary. By giving your consent you are telling us that you:

✓   Understand what you have read.

✓   Support the young person's decision to participate in this research study.

✓   Agree to the use of the young person's personal information as described.

✓   You have received a copy of this Parental Information Statement to keep.

(2) Who is running the study?

The study is being carried out by the following researchers: Sophie Howell, Trainee Educational Psychologist. (Supervised by Dr LeMarra Williamson and Dr Andrea Honess, Qualified Educational Psychologists and tutors from the University of East Anglia.)

(3)   What will the study involve for the young person I care for?

The study will involve sorting a series of statements relating to the experience of 'preparing for adulthood' and leaving education. The activity will be carried out face-to-face in the young person's college or school in a space which is ventilated in line with Covid-19 risk assessments and protocols. The young person will be asked to sort the statements into a grid which shows

how much they agree/disagree. I will be there to support the young person to complete the activity. They are also welcome to have someone else with them in the room.

The statements within the sorting activity will be based upon the 'preparing for adulthood' framework and the four key areas within this: employment, independent living, health and friends, relationships and community. Statements may, for example, say things like "when I leave college, I will be ready to go to work" or "I have the skills I need to live on my own". The young person will be asked to rank the statements based upon how much they agree or disagree with them based on their own experiences.

Following the sorting activity, there will be an opportunity for the young person to participate in an interview about their experiences of preparing to leave further education. This is likely to be carried out in December 2021. The interview will include questions about the young person's aspirations for the future and their plans for what happens next. We will also discuss who they think might be around to help them when they leave their current setting. The interview will be semi-structured, so there will be space for the young person to tell their story in their own words. The interview will be audio recorded for transcription purposes and the recording will be destroyed once it has been transcribed. All information will be kept anonymous.

(4)   How much time will the study take for the young person I care for?

It is anticipated that the sorting activity will take 15-20 minutes to complete. The interview may take up to 40 minutes. The young person will also have an opportunity to review their interview transcripts should they wish to do so. Depending on their literacy level and comprehension ability, they may require additional support to access this. This may take around 1 hour or more depending on the young person's needs.

(5) Does the young person I care for have to be in the study? Can they withdraw from the study once they've started?

Being in this study is completely voluntary- the young person you care for does not have to take part. Their decision on whether to participate will not affect your/their relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia or Bedford Borough Council now or in the future. If you decide to let the young person you care for take part in the study and then change your mind later (or they no longer wish to take part), they are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Requests to withdraw from the study can be made via email at any time up until the research is complete.

The young person is free to stop the interview at any time. Unless they say that they want us to keep them, any recordings will be erased and the information the young person has provided will not be included in the study results. The young person may also refuse to answer any questions that they do not wish to answer during the interview. If the young person decides at a later time to withdraw from the study, their information will be removed from our records and will not be included in any results, up to the point we have analysed and published the results.

The young person's sorting responses can be withdrawn any time before they have submitted the completed activity. Once they have submitted it, their responses cannot be withdrawn because they are anonymous and therefore we will not be able to tell which one is theirs.

(6) What are the consequences if the young person I care for withdraws from the study?

The young person is free to stop the research activity at any time. Unless you say that you want us to keep them, any materials (e.g. images, recordings, text) will be erased and the information the young person has provided will not be included in the study results. The young person you care for may also refuse to take part in any of the activities that you wish.

If the young person you care for decides at a later time to withdraw from the study their information will be removed from our records and will not be included in any results, up to the point we have analysed and published the results

The young person you care for is free to stop the interview at any time. Unless they say that they want us to keep them, any recordings will be erased and the information the young person provided will not be included in the study results. The young person may also refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer during the interview. If the young person you care for decides at a later time to withdraw from the study your information will be removed from our records and will not be included in any results, up to the point we have analysed and published the results

(7) Are there any risks or costs associated with the young person being in the study?

It is possible that talking about transition and leaving school/FE will be an emotive subject for some young people. The discussion will be handled with care and signposting will be offered to services appropriate to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of young people (such as YoungMinds and local mental health services).

It is understood that young people with SEND may require additional support to access the activity and the need to focus on the activity may make them tired or stressed. As such, breaks will be offered when it appears that a young person is losing focus or if they ask for one. There will be time before the activity for the young person to tell me if there is anything they need me to know about their additional needs.

Any disclosures or safeguarding issues that arise will be dealt with in line with both UEA and local authority policies. In both instances, this will involve discussing the concern with my supervisor before informing appropriate people/services and following their protocol for lodging a concern.

(8) Are there any benefits associated with the young person being in the study?

It is hoped that this study will help to highlight any potential gaps in the support offered to young people with SEN who do not have a disability when they leave education. Your child's views will help to demonstrate what the experience is of young people with SEN and their voice will be heard throughout this study. It is hoped that the findings from this study will generate some practical suggestions for ways in which young people with SEN can access appropriate, additional support outside of education as they prepare for adulthood.

(9) What will happen to information provided by the young person I care for and data collected during the study?

The young person's personal data and information will only be used as outlined in this Participant Information Statement, unless you consent otherwise. Data management will follow the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), and the University of East Anglia's Research Data Management Policy.

The young person's information will be stored securely and their identity will be kept strictly confidential, except as required by law. Study findings may be published, but the young person you care for will not be identified in these publications if the young person decides to participate in this study.

Study data may also be deposited with a repository to allow it to be made available for scholarly and educational purposes. The data will be kept for at least 10 years beyond the last date the data were accessed. The deposited data will not include the young person's name or any identifiable information about the young person you care for.

(10) What if I or the young person I care for would like further information about the study?

When you have read this information, Sophie Howell will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage during the study, please feel free to contact Sophie via email at S.Howell1@uea.ac.uk

(11) Will the young person I care for be told the results of the study?

You and the young person you care for have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can tell us that you wish to receive feedback by emailing the researcher directly. The findings will also form part of a thesis which will be available to read online once the researcher has finished the course. You can access this feedback after the university's marking and moderation procedure is complete. This is likely to be after September 2022. You can tell us that you or the young person you care for would like to receive feedback by sending an email to S.Howell1@uea.ac.uk.

(12) What if I or the young person I care for have a complaint or any concerns about the study?

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved under the regulations of the University of East Anglia's School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Committee. If there is a problem please let me know. You can contact me by email (s.howell1@uea.ac.uk) or via the University at the following address:

Sophie Howell

School of Education and Lifelong Learning

University of East Anglia

NORWICH NR4 7TJ

If you would like to speak to someone else you can contact my supervisor: Dr LeMarra Williamson, Lemarra.williamson@uea.ac.uk.

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the Head of the School of Education and Lifelong Learning, Professor Yann Lebeau (Y.Lebeau@uea.ac.uk)

(13) How do we know that this study has been approved to take place?

To protect your safety, rights, wellbeing and dignity, all research in the University of East Anglia is reviewed by a Research Ethics Body. This research was approved by the ethics board from the School of Education and Lifelong Learning.

(14) What is the general data protection information the young person I care for needs to be informed about?

According to data protection legislation, we are required to inform you that the legal basis for processing your data as listed in Article 6(1) of the UK GDPR is because this allows us to process personal data when it is necessary to perform our public tasks as a University.

(15) OK, the young person I care for is happy to take part – what do I do next?

If the young person you care for has capacity and is over 18 years old, they only need to fill in their own consent form. If the young person you care for is under 18 years old, or if they do not have capacity to consent, you need to fill in one copy of the attached consent form and return it alongside the young person's consent form to the Further Education College they attend. Please keep the letter, information sheet and a copy of the consent form for your information.

(16) Further information

This information was last updated on 22nd October 2020. If there are changes to the information provided, you will be notified via the young person's Further Education College.

This information sheet is for you to keep

PARENT/CARER CONSENT FORM (1st Copy to Researcher)

I, ... [PRINT PARENT'S/CARER'S NAME], consent to the young person I care for   …………………………………………………………………………….[PRINT YOUNG PERSON'S NAME] participating in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

✓   I understand the purpose of the study, what the young person I care for will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.

✓   I have read the Information Statement and have been able to discuss the involvement of the young person I care for in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.

✓   The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.

PERSPECTIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SEND DURING THE TRANSITION
OUT OF EDUCATION

✓   I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and the young person I care for does not have to take part. My decision whether to let them take part in the study will not affect our relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia or the school now or in the future.

✓   I understand that personal information about the young person I care for that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about the young person I care for will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.

✓   I understand that the results of this study may be published, and that publications will not contain the name or any identifiable information about the young person I care for.
I consent to:

- **Audio-recording of the young person I care for**   YES   ☐   NO   ☐
- **Video-recording of the young person I care for**   YES   ☐   NO   ☐
- **Would you like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study?**

                                                         YES   ☐   NO   ☐

If you answered **YES**, please indicate your preferred form of feedback and address:

☐ Postal: _____

☐ Email: _____

....   ………………………………………………………….   ………………………….
Signature   **PRINT name**   **Date**

Appendix 4- Pilot Study Statements

Statement	Source
I should be entitled to extra help in the workplace	Equality Act (2010)
I don't think I am able to get a job	Attfield & Attfield (2019); ASCOF (2020)
I have made my own decisions about the future	Mental Capacity Act (2005)
I know what I want to do after college	Timpson Review (2019)
I don't think I am ready to leave college	Carroll (2015); Thom & Agur (2014)
I might need help to understand what 'the future' really means	Beresford (2004)
I would like to work towards the job I want, rather than just getting any job	Kaehne & Beyer, 2008; Yates et al (2011)
It is important that I am treated by medical professionals who understand me	Kaehne & Beyer, 2008
Other people made decisions about my next steps after college	Lawson & Parker (2020)
I have been able to do a qualification linked to the job I want to have	Lawson & Parker (2020)
I would like to live independently in the future	Elson (2010)
I want to do things independently	Equality Act (2010)
It is important that I earn my own money	Equality Act (2010)
The professionals who support me understand my needs	Timpson Review (2019)
I don't know who will support me when I leave college	Kaehne (2011); SEND Code of Practice (2014)
I worry about my future	Carroll (2015)
It would be good to have someone to talk to about my worries	Morris & Atkinson (2018)
I can ask for help when I need it	Morris & Atkinson (2018)
It is important that my family are supported to care for me	Equality Act (2010); Timpson Review (2019)
I do not think I need to be understood	Mental Capacity Act (2005)
Having a group of friends is important to me	Atkins (2016)
Having a partner (a boyfriend or girlfriend) is something I want in the future	Human Rights Act
It is not important to me that I can keep myself safe	Mental Capacity Act (2005); Timpson Review (2019)
My difficulties will be different after college	Arnold (2015)
I will be able to cope in the workplace without help	Lawson & Parker (2020)
I know where to go if I need help in the workplace	Timpson Review (2019)
My ideas have been listened to when planning for the future	Wright (2006)
The people who help make decisions understand my needs	Mirza-Davies (2014)
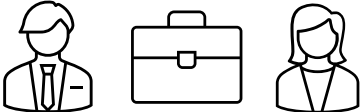
College has helped me understand my additional needs	Robinson (2018)
I have been able to develop the life skills I need to be independent	Guishard (2000)
I think I will be a part of the community as I get older	Timpson Review (2019); Atkins (2016)
I understood what was happening during transition meetings	Lawson & Parker (2020)

Appendix 5- Participant Responses

Participant	Gender	Age	SEN	D	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1	M	20	Y	Y	2	1	1	1	0	-2	-1	-2	-1	-1	0	-3	3	0	0	1
2	F	18	Y	N	3	-2	2	-1	0	-2	-1	-3	0	0	1	0	1	1	-1	2
3	F	19	N	Y	2	1	3	1	0	0	-1	-3	1	0	2	-1	-1	-2	-2	0
4	M	18	N	Y	-1	1	1	1	0	-3	0	-1	-1	0	-2	-2	2	3	0	2
5	F	18	N	Y	-1	0	3	1	1	-1	-3	-2	0	1	-1	-2	2	2	0	0
6	F	21	Y	Y	1	0	1	0	-1	3	-2	-2	0	-1	-1	-3	0	1	2	2
7	F	23	Y	Y	-2	0	2	0	3	1	-2	-1	1	-3	-1	2	0	0	-1	1
8	M	20	Y	Y	1	0	2	0	2	1	1	-1	-3	-2	3	-1	-2	0	-1	0
9	M	21	Y	N	2	-3	1	1	2	-1	-1	-2	0	0	0	1	0	3	-1	-2
10	F	19	Y	Y	-1	1	3	2	0	-2	0	-2	1	2	1	-3	-1	0	-1	0

Appendix 6- Q Sort statements

Getting a job	Working towards the job I want to have	Finding an employer who can help me	Earning my own money

Making my own decisions	Living on my own	Doing things independently	Support to understand what is meant by 'the future'
Feeling understood by the people who help me	My family having support to help me	Being part of a group outside of college	Having a partner (a boyfriend/girlfriend)

Being able to talk about my worries	Going to a doctor/nurse who has worked with young people like me before	Being able to ask for help	Being able to independently keep myself safe

Appendix 7- Transcript Examples

Participant 1 Transcript

Q: Tell me about what it was like for you in school

A: When I was in school, I think it was more that I needed help with the settling in process coz I've had a lot of temporary teachers which I don't think helps me at all. I would say I used to be unconscious about it yes but as the years progressed I started being more comfortable in school. I pretty much had like not 24/7 support but yeah it's pretty close to it yeah. A very structured… very structured schedule if you know what I mean. Yeah very visual which I kind of actually do right now. About year seven I really start to take off and be more independent which is about time for a 12 year old honestly. I did my GCSE and yes I did need more help because of the stresses. I got sick and tired of it in the end coz it I'm not academically smart, I just get out there and learn my lesson. In college I received minimal support coz I do things independently now. I have teaching assistants but I'll be honest I don't really need them, it's mostly my friend who wants one but doesn't have one that uses it which I'm fine with. I'm mostly used to working independently. I will ask for help when I need which is quite rare these days.

Q: What do you think might change when you leave college?

A: A lot of things will change when I leave. I won't I won't have anything to study towards unless I get an apprenticeship then in that case I'll probably have a day just to study up on it . But yeah it will be very different. I'll be earning a lot more money that's for sure. Hopefully making plans to move out- preferably to a place that other autistic people live in, so kind of like renting an apartment room for myself. I just kind of want to take that step forward so that someone keeping an eye out for me but I can live most independently. Then get a girlfriend and make a family and fulfil my dreams.

I may need help with certain things for example kind of balancing I don't know how to operate washing up machine. I know how to cook, yeah, I make a pretty good stir fry just FYI. But yeah there's some things I need help with like the clothing side of things like ironing, washing up ,drying up or doing dishes and like how to dry things. Just…just the other things I don't know how to do independently just yet but I would like to know how. it's more or less the living independently things I'm worried about.

I have older friends as well that could help me too. They are about 23-24. We hang out at my friend's place just for good old good whiskey and good conversations. One of my friends has, ah, autism like me and he lives independently. I mean, going to his place kind of started the idea of living on my own but with someone to keep an eye on me. I'm not sure the full details of it yet.

Q: What sort of things would you like to do in the future?

A: The plan at the moment is to go into management and Accounting somewhere with international locations. I would still like to live in town, yeah but I've never been international before. It will kind of be nice just to see what the world is like. I'm getting sick of the UK, well, England. I'd maybe like to go somewhere else in the UK like Wales.

I've likely already got an accounting qualification beforehand on Level 3 business extended diploma Level 3 whatever. Two-year course. I might need help with interview skills help and how to apply for a job. I see a lot of UCAS application people and I kinda feel left out because the workshops in college are all more focused on university people which are mainly the smart people. I've learned the hard way that schools only matter about things like sport, like either if you're very sporty or you're very smart. I feel kind of left out but luckily because I'm also autistic I do have support when I want it.

Participant 3 Transcript

Q: Tell me about what it was like for you in school

Socialising was hard in school. I… I just don't do it. I didn't get any help until I got diagnosed in 2018. Then I got an EHCP and that's kind of when they would allow me to leave class and I had a TA. The TAs are much better in college. It's the same person every single time and they don't change which is better for my anxiety. I have a 1:1 with me all the time. I don't necessarily need support with like academically, it's more emotionally.

Q: Do you think you will have any help moving on from college?

When I leave college I'm going to have to do things independently which I want, it's just that right now I have a lot of support and, yah, I don't know how to gradually let go of that. I need to know how to manage my anxieties and be organised… just things like that.

Q: What do you think might change when you leave college?

I want to do a music and media degree but I don't think I'll do that until for another two years because, as soon as I do, I won't get that support. I don't have a job I want to do right now so can take my time. I've kind of made a decision I'm just going to do what I enjoy and see where it takes me.

Q: What sort of things would you like to do in the future?

My main aim is to do music therapy. I've researched it and I know I need an undergraduate degree in education and then I can go off to get that degree in music therapy. I think I would still need help at university with being organised and with emotional support as well. Again I don't really need help with the academic stuff, it's the stuff around it like staying organising and managing my time. Plus coping with my anxiety and my mental health.

Q: Do you think you will have any help with that?

Everyone needs support in life but I don't want it to be intense support forever. At the moment, though, that intense support is what I need. My TA helps me stay organised and on time. Plus I have someone to talk to which is really important. I think I crave a connection with people coz I don't really connect with many people.

I think next year I'd like to work on leaning off the support a little bit, to get me ready for doing the degree. I think I could maybe do one lesson a day or half a lesson, whatever I'm comfortable with, then do more time without and see how that goes. I know I might still need support and that's why we have living disability allowance. I want to live independently and I've got daily living skills. I'm just messy yeah that's the only thing. I'm really messy and really unorganised but I can do it. I just don't know how I'd cope if something went wrong yeah so again it's managing the anxieties. That's what I need to prepare for.

Participant 4 Interview Transcript

Q: What sort of things would you like to do in the future?

I think I want to go into media production, that's kind of what I'm doing right now. There is no particular job role I want to go into at the moment. There are so many options. I'm planning on going to university for a few years to help me to find a career path.

Q: Can you tell me about the kind of help you might need with that?

I get some, you know, teaching assistants coming to class and they're normally very helpful and kind as well yeah which I think is you know very kind of useful to me.

Q: What about in the future? Do you think you will still need support?

I don't know how much help I might need in the future. I know that university isn't just about the course. It's about how are you going to get on living there as well so it… it depends how I like the city and how I like the accommodation. I might need a bit of guidance may be out first at the moment I'm confident of going to university. All the universities I've chosen have really appealed to me so obviously I've got to make the choice where do I think I'm gonna settle in best.

Q: What was it like for you in school? Did you have help then?
When I was in school they were quite supportive. They had, like, a centre building where they came together and they offered support there. You can just go in at any point it just kind of felt like a welcoming place where they didn't put any pressure on you or anything. I got teaching assistants coming into most of my classes and helping me because I'm not you know the most clever person in the world but thanks to the help I got I managed to make it through in the end.

Participant 6 Interview Transcript

Q: Can you tell me about what it was like for you in school?

I had a teaching assistant when I had the EHCP. She helped me to understand what the teachers were saying because I process information a lot slower. So the teacher was supposed to… she helped the rest of the class as well, but she was mostly next to me keeping me focused on the work. I had in the EHCP then I went to a special needs school for four years where is specifically aimed any child with an EHCP who got expelled from their previous school. I chose the special needs school, yeah, cos it was either that or boarding school. We put me in a special needs school instead coz I already missed a lot of education. I got expelled in year 5 and they didn't have a place until halfway through year six. I was there for half a year then I went to another special needs school. I was there for three years and I was the first ever female student to actually get myself back to mainstream school.

Q: How do you feel about going to university?

I wish universities would agree requirements for, like, an exception, for anybody that has a lifelong disability that can affect their intellectuality. I think they should automatically have a one grade drop. I always struggled just to get to like the band minimum yeah and it's like obviously I know I'm go to uni, it's just the case of making sure I am hitting those grades which I find difficult because a lot of the briefs and the work isn't worded in an easy-to-understand format. Some laws have an easy read version, but not the animal ones. If they don't have easy read versions, I can't understand anything, like how am I supposed to learn these legislations if I can't understand the language they use?

Participant 7 Interview

Q: You said here that being independent is very important to you. What sort of things do you like to do?

I like to do, well, everything. I like doing cooking and I do life skills where we learn to make dinners with other people. I like music and I like doing singing. I like dancing and I'm a gymnast. I like doing something new like ballet and exercise. I'm interested in that right now.

Q: Is that something you would like to do after college? What do you think you would like to do in the future?

I decided yeah I would like to do… I would like to be a beautician and do face masks. I did that at school and I massaged people's hands. I might also want to learn how to make cakes.

My brother works in a shop. I might do something like that but in a different kind of shop. I don't think I'm ready to get a job because I don't really understand money.

Q: Do you think there is anything you will need help with in the future?

I know how to do things by myself. I don't need much help anymore. I like being independent. The main thing I need help with is money. My dad keeps asking me about the

prices and I don't know because I don't really understand it. I've got my own bank card now but I'm not good at money. I don't really look at the prices and I usually get lots of things from the shop but then I don't have any money left over.

Q: And who do you think might help you when you leave college?

I want somebody to be there for me like a boyfriend or friends or something when I need help. I don't know about living by myself, though. If I need help, I'll ask my family or something. I don't like going anywhere out with my parents. I like to hang out with my friends.

Q: Yes, you said that being part of a group is very important to you. Can you tell me more about that?

Being in a group is very important, but you don't always stay together. If you're not with your friends you might get lost. After college when you don't have your friends you might get lost in town.

Q: What was school like for you?

I had lots of help in school. I needed help but I don't remember what for. I went to 3 schools before I went to special school.

Q: Do you think that you will have any help moving on from college?

I don't like moving on. I don't know what the plan is yet. Some people will know what they will do when college ends but I'm not sure about that.

Participant 9 Interview

Q: What is important for you in college?
I like talking to my friends. I have lots of friends at college.

Being independent is important. I can do shopping and make my own bed.

Q: And what about in the future? What would you like to do after college?

I want to get a job and be a [redacted] like my dad. I also will go to Chelsea Football Club and get tickets to a match.

Q: How do you feel about living independently?

I need to buy a house before I live on my own. I might still need help with food and the washing up because I don't like to do the washing up. It's hard and also boring. I might be able to get a dishwasher.

Q: What was school like for you?

When I was in school I had help in maths. I had an adult with me all the time to help me write things. My writing is better now and I can write by myself. I won't need help with that when I'm older.

Q: Is there anything you think will change when you leave college?

When I leave college, I will still see my friends. Mum will help me. I might get taller and I might grow a moustache. It would be good if I had a buddy to keep me safe.

I might need help to get a job. I don't know yet where I might work. When I'm 30, I might be a banker with a big house and a season ticket for Chelsea.

Participant 10 transcript

Q: What would you like to do when you leave college?

Getting a job is the most important. I want to either work with animals or work with little children in a primary school. It's quite tricky on how to make a decision on what I want to do, though, and I think I need some help with that. The main thing is getting a job, though, because then I can have my own money and then I can start to think about getting a house and a car.

Q: Can you tell me about what it was like for you in school?

When I was in school I had help with an EHCP meeting. I had a person who used to come in and do 1:1 with me. I had speech and language therapy, too. My helpers used to write things down for me so I could understand what was going on.

I still need a little bit of that help. Like, I can't go to places by myself because I get lost and I don't know how to read a map or tell the time. They get worried if they can't find me or if they don't know where I am in college.

Q: What sort of things would you like to do in the future?
I would like to live on my own one day. I'm not ready yet. I can do some independent things in the house but I need help to use the kettle and the oven and stuff. I forget and leave it on. I might burn myself.

I will always get distracted by crossing the road I get distracted and it's not safe. I need help to cross the road and in the future I will still need help with that because it's tricky and I could get hurt.

Appendix 8- PQ Method Analysis Output

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PQMethod2.35              re analysis of q sort data                                    PAGE    1
Path and Project Name: C:\PQMethod\projects/post18st2                            Aug 19 22

Correlation Matrix Between Sorts

SORTS        1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9   10

  1 P1     100   57   37   65   55   43   -5   37    8   12
  2 p2      57  100   50   30   40   22    8   25   55   22
  3 p3      37   50  100  -12   28   20   15   62   17   45
  4 p4      65   30  -12  100   65   20    3   40   12  -15
  5 p5      55   40   28   65  100   40   30   57   40   -5
  6 p6      43   22   20   20   40  100   10   10   -5   10
  7 p7      -5    8   15    3   30   10  100   -8   20   17
  8 p8      12   22   45  -15   -5   10   17  100   20   17
  9 p9       8   55   17   12   40   -5   20   10  100   20
 10 p10     73   25   62   40   57   10   -8   17   10  100

Unrotated Factor Matrix
            Factors
             1          2          3          4          5          6          7          8
SORTS
  1 P1      0.7885    -0.2727    -0.2178     0.0580    -0.2951     0.2031    -0.2381    -0.2498
  2 p2      0.7311     0.2217     0.1691    -0.2261    -0.4419    -0.1028    -0.2553     0.2334
  3 p3      0.6091     0.5960    -0.3724     0.0027     0.1459    -0.2237    -0.2098    -0.0702
  4 p4      0.6168    -0.6544     0.1135    -0.1000     0.0624     0.0133     0.1390
  5 p5      0.8198    -0.2877     0.2359     0.0703     0.2864    -0.1306     0.1534    -0.1233
  6 p6      0.4584    -0.1548    -0.1526     0.6855    -0.3125    -0.2806     0.2919     0.0823
  7 p7      0.1963     0.2691     0.5930     0.5383     0.3909     0.1059    -0.2801    -0.1037
  8 p8      0.2709     0.7139    -0.1487     0.1511    -0.0996     0.5296     0.2776     0.0112
  9 p9      0.4371     0.3113     0.6469    -0.3873    -0.1375    -0.1297     0.2834    -0.1037
 10 p10     0.6690     0.0271    -0.4146    -0.2535     0.5190    -0.0616     0.1350     0.1208


Eigenvalues   3.5404     1.6936     1.2707     1.0662     0.9383     0.6379     0.5288     0.1903
% expl.Var.       35         17         13         11          9          6          5          2

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Cumulative Communalities Matrix
            Factors 1 Thru ....
             1          2          3          4          5          6          7          8
SORTS
  1 P1      0.6217     0.6961     0.7436     0.7470     0.8340     0.8753     0.9320     0.9944
  2 p2      0.5345     0.5837     0.6123     0.6634     0.8587     0.8693     0.9344     0.9889
  3 p3      0.3710     0.7262     0.8649     0.8649     0.8862     0.9362     0.9803     0.9852
  4 p4      0.3804     0.8087     0.8215     0.8315     0.8354     0.9634     0.9635     0.9829
  5 p5      0.6721     0.7549     0.8106     0.8155     0.8975     0.9146     0.9381     0.9533
  6 p6      0.2101     0.2341     0.2574     0.7273     0.8249     0.9037     0.9888     0.9956
  7 p7      0.0385     0.1110     0.4626     0.7524     0.9052     0.9164     0.9949     0.9966
  8 p8      0.0734     0.5831     0.6052     0.6281     0.6380     0.9185     0.9955     0.9957
  9 p9      0.1910     0.2880     0.7064     0.8565     0.8754     0.8922     0.9725     0.9833
 10 p10     0.4475     0.4483     0.6201     0.6844     0.9538     0.9576     0.9758     0.9904

cum% expl.Var.     35         52         65         76         85         91         97         99

Factor Matrix with an X Indicating a Defining Sort
```

```
          Loadings

QSORT          1        2         3

  1 P1      0.8400X   0.1947    0.0050
  2 p2      0.4857    0.3781   -0.4831
  3 p3      0.2705    0.8841X  -0.1009
  4 p4      0.8392X  -0.3309   -0.0881
  5 p5      0.8091X  -0.0211   -0.3944
  6 p6      0.4902X   0.1285    0.0242
  7 p7     -0.0542    0.0060   -0.6780X
  8 p8      0.6150X   0.4786    0.1132
  9 p9      0.1215    0.1071   -0.8247X
 10 p10    -0.1090    0.7393X  -0.2165

% expl.Var.    30       19        16
```

```
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Free Distribution Data Results

QSORT        MEAN    ST.DEV.

  1 P1      0.000    1.633
  2 p2      0.000    1.633
  3 p3      0.000    1.633
  4 p4      0.000    1.633
  5 p5      0.000    1.633
  6 p6      0.000    1.633
  7 p7      0.000    1.633
  8 p8      0.000    1.633
  9 p9      0.000    1.633
 10 p10     0.000    1.633
```

```
Factor Scores with Corresponding Ranks
                                                              Factors
No.   Statement                          No.        1          2          3

  1   living on my own                     1     0.01  10    1.19   3   -0.53  12
  2   making decisions                     2     0.53   6    0.50   5    1.54   1
  3   being independent                    3     1.29   2    1.89   1   -1.01  14
  4   keeping myself safe                  4     0.79   5    0.50   5   -0.51  11
  5   talk about worries                   5     0.13   7    0.40   6   -1.77  16
  6   doctor or nurse                      6    -1.31  15    0.20   7    0.26   7
  7   family support                       7    -0.88  13   -0.30  10    1.01   3
  8   the future                           8    -1.30  14   -1.69  16    1.27   2
  9   feeling understood                   9    -0.37  11   -0.10   9   -0.25  10
 10   asking for help                     10     0.06   8   -0.40  11    0.75   6
 11   part of a group                     11    -0.61  12    1.59   2    0.25   8
 12   partner                             12    -1.88  16   -0.70  12   -1.01  14
 13   own money                           13     1.41   1   -0.90  13    0.00   9
 14   getting a job                       14     1.09   3   -0.99  14   -1.54  15
 15   employer help                       15     0.02   9   -1.19  15    0.76   5
 16   working towards job                 16     1.00   4    0.00   8    0.77   4
```

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```
Factor Scores with Corresponding Ranks
                                                        Factors
No.  Statement                        No.        1           2           3

 1   living on my own                   1     0.01  10    1.19   3   -0.53  12
 2   making decisions                   2     0.53   6    0.50   5    1.54   1
 3   being independent                  3     1.29   2    1.89   1   -1.01  14
 4   keeping myself safe                4     0.79   5    0.50   5   -0.51  11
 5   talk about worries                 5     0.13   7    0.40   6   -1.77  16
 6   doctor or nurse                    6    -1.31  15    0.20   7    0.26   7
 7   family support                     7    -0.88  13   -0.30  10    1.01   3
 8   the future                         8    -1.30  14   -1.69  16    1.27   2
 9   feeling understood                 9    -0.37  11   -0.10   9   -0.25  10
10   asking for help                   10     0.06   8   -0.40  11    0.75   6
11   part of a group                   11    -0.61  12    1.59   2    0.25   8
12   partner                           12    -1.88  16   -0.70  12   -1.01  14
13   own money                         13     1.41   1   -0.90  13    0.00   9
14   getting a job                     14     1.09   3   -0.99  14   -1.54  15
15   employer help                     15     0.02   9   -1.19  15    0.76   5
16   working towards job               16     1.00   4    0.00   8    0.77   4


        Correlations Between Factor Scores

               1        2        3

    1      1.0000   0.2220  -0.2018

    2      0.2220   1.0000  -0.2456

    3     -0.2018  -0.2456   1.0000

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Factor Scores -- For Factor    1

No.  Statement                        No.     Z-SCORES

13   own money                         13        1.415
 3   being independent                  3        1.288
14   getting a job                     14        1.092
16   working towards job               16        1.000
 4   keeping myself safe                4        0.790
 2   making decisions                   2        0.527
 5   talk about worries                 5        0.134
10   asking for help                   10        0.065
15   employer help                     15        0.024
 1   living on my own                   1        0.014
 9   feeling understood                 9       -0.371
11   part of a group                   11       -0.605
 7   family support                     7       -0.881
 8   the future                         8       -1.301
 6   doctor or nurse                    6       -1.310
12   partner                           12       -1.879
```

```
Factor Scores -- For Factor    2

 No.  Statement                              No.    Z-SCORES

   3  being independent                        3     1.887
  11  part of a group                         11     1.591
   1  living on my own                         1     1.192
   4  keeping myself safe                      4     0.496
   2  making decisions                         2     0.496
   5  talk about worries                       5     0.400
   6  doctor or nurse                          6     0.200
  16  working towards job                     16     0.000
   9  feeling understood                       9    -0.103
   7  family support                           7    -0.296
  10  asking for help                         10    -0.400
  12  partner                                 12    -0.696
  13  own money                               13    -0.895
  14  getting a job                           14    -0.992
  15  employer help                           15    -1.192
   8  the future                               8    -1.688
```

```
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```

```
Factor Scores -- For Factor    3

 No.  Statement                              No.    Z-SCORES

   2  making decisions                         2     1.536
   8  the future                               8     1.273
   7  family support                           7     1.010
  16  working towards job                     16     0.775
  15  employer help                           15     0.761
  10  asking for help                         10     0.747
   6  doctor or nurse                          6     0.263
  11  part of a group                         11     0.249
  13  own money                               13     0.000
   9  feeling understood                       9    -0.249
   4  keeping myself safe                      4    -0.512
   1  living on my own                         1    -0.526
   3  being independent                        3    -1.010
  12  partner                                 12    -1.010
  14  getting a job                           14    -1.536
   5  talk about worries                       5    -1.771
```

```
Descending Array of Differences Between Factors   1 and   2
```

No.	Statement	No.	Type 1	Type 2	Difference
13	own money	13	1.415	-0.895	2.310
14	getting a job	14	1.092	-0.992	2.084
15	employer help	15	0.024	-1.192	1.215
16	working towards job	16	1.000	0.000	1.000
10	asking for help	10	0.065	-0.400	0.464
8	the future	8	-1.301	-1.688	0.386
4	keeping myself safe	4	0.790	0.496	0.294
2	making decisions	2	0.527	0.496	0.031
5	talk about worries	5	0.134	0.400	-0.266
9	feeling understood	9	-0.371	-0.103	-0.268
7	family support	7	-0.881	-0.296	-0.585
3	being independent	3	1.288	1.887	-0.599
1	living on my own	1	0.014	1.192	-1.177
12	partner	12	-1.879	-0.696	-1.184
6	doctor or nurse	6	-1.310	0.200	-1.510
11	part of a group	11	-0.605	1.591	-2.196

```
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```

```
Descending Array of Differences Between Factors   1 and   3
```

No.	Statement	No.	Type 1	Type 3	Difference
14	getting a job	14	1.092	-1.536	2.628
3	being independent	3	1.288	-1.010	2.298
5	talk about worries	5	0.134	-1.771	1.905
13	own money	13	1.415	0.000	1.415
4	keeping myself safe	4	0.790	-0.512	1.302
1	living on my own	1	0.014	-0.526	0.540
16	working towards job	16	1.000	0.775	0.225
9	feeling understood	9	-0.371	-0.249	-0.122
10	asking for help	10	0.065	0.747	-0.682
15	employer help	15	0.024	0.761	-0.737
11	part of a group	11	-0.605	0.249	-0.854
12	partner	12	-1.879	-1.010	-0.869
2	making decisions	2	0.527	1.536	-1.009
6	doctor or nurse	6	-1.310	0.263	-1.573
7	family support	7	-0.881	1.010	-1.891
8	the future	8	-1.301	1.273	-2.574

```
Descending Array of Differences Between Factors   2 and   3
```

No.	Statement	No.	Type 2	Type 3	Difference
3	being independent	3	1.887	-1.010	2.897
5	talk about worries	5	0.400	-1.771	2.170
1	living on my own	1	1.192	-0.526	1.717
11	part of a group	11	1.591	0.249	1.342
4	keeping myself safe	4	0.496	-0.512	1.008
14	getting a job	14	-0.992	-1.536	0.544
12	partner	12	-0.696	-1.010	0.314
9	feeling understood	9	-0.103	-0.249	0.146
6	doctor or nurse	6	0.200	0.263	-0.063
16	working towards job	16	0.000	0.775	-0.775
13	own money	13	-0.895	0.000	-0.895
2	making decisions	2	0.496	1.536	-1.040
10	asking for help	10	-0.400	0.747	-1.147
7	family support	7	-0.296	1.010	-1.306
15	employer help	15	-1.192	0.761	-1.952
8	the future	8	-1.688	1.273	-2.960

```
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```

Exact Factor Scores (· la SPSS) in Z-Score and T-Score units

```
                                                              Factors
No.  Statement                            No.        1             2             3

  1  living on my own                       1      0.13  51     1.28  63    -0.28  47
  2  making decisions                       2      0.51  55     0.24  52     1.54  65
  3  being independent                      3      1.14  61     1.50  65    -0.99  40
  4  keeping myself safe                    4      0.70  57     0.26  53     0.07  51
  5  talk about worries                     5     -0.37  46     0.21  52    -1.81  32
  6  doctor or nurse                        6     -1.27  37     0.41  54     0.16  52
  7  family support                         7     -0.85  42     0.18  52     1.13  61
  8  the future                             8     -1.30  37    -1.31  37     1.02  60
  9  feeling understood                     9     -0.08  49    -0.22  48    -0.06  49
 10  asking for help                       10      0.46  55    -0.21  48     0.98  60
 11  part of a group                       11     -0.66  43     2.03  70     0.29  53
 12  partner                               12     -2.03  30    -0.75  42    -1.48  35
 13  own money                             13      1.35  63    -1.31  37    -0.22  48
 14  getting a job                         14      0.96  60    -1.27  37    -1.42  36
 15  employer help                         15      0.20  52    -0.95  40     0.71  57
 16  working towards job                   16      1.10  61    -0.09  49     0.35  54
```

Factor Q-Sort Values for Each Statement

```
                                                       Factor Arrays

No.  Statement                            No.        1       2       3

  1  living on my own                       1        0       2      -1
  2  making decisions                       2        1       1       3
  3  being independent                      3        2       3      -2
  4  keeping myself safe                    4        1       1      -1
  5  talk about worries                     5        0       1      -3
  6  doctor or nurse                        6       -2       0       0
  7  family support                         7       -1       0       2
  8  the future                             8       -2      -3       2
  9  feeling understood                     9       -1       0       0
 10  asking for help                       10        0      -1       1
 11  part of a group                       11       -1       2       0
 12  partner                               12       -3      -1      -2
 13  own money                             13        3      -1       0
 14  getting a job                         14        2      -2      -2
 15  employer help                         15        0      -2       1
 16  working towards job                   16        1       0       1
```

Variance = 2.500 St. Dev. = 1.581

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```
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Factor Q-Sort Values for Statements sorted by Consensus vs. Disagreement (Variance across Factor Z-Scores)

                                                              Factor Arrays

No.  Statement                                      No.     1      2      3

  9  feeling understood                               9    -1      0      0
 16  working towards job                             16     1      0      1
 10  asking for help                                 10     0     -1      1
  2  making decisions                                 2     1      1      3
 12  partner                                         12    -3     -1     -2
  4  keeping myself safe                              4     1      1     -1
  1  living on my own                                 1     0      2     -1
  6  doctor or nurse                                  6    -2      0      0
  7  family support                                   7    -1      0      2
 15  employer help                                   15     0     -2      1
 11  part of a group                                 11    -1      2      0
 13  own money                                       13     3     -1      0
  5  talk about worries                               5     0      1     -3
 14  getting a job                                   14     2     -2     -2
  3  being independent                                3     2      3     -2
  8  the future                                       8    -2     -3      2


Factor Characteristics
                                Factors

                            1       2       3

No. of Defining Variables   5       2       2

Average Rel. Coef.        0.800   0.800   0.800

Composite Reliability     0.952   0.889   0.889

S.E. of Factor Z-Scores   0.218   0.333   0.333
```

```
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Standard Errors for Differences in Factor Z-Scores

(Diagonal Entries Are S.E. Within Factors)

        Factors     1       2       3

           1      0.309   0.398   0.398

           2      0.398   0.471   0.471

           3      0.398   0.471   0.471


Distinguishing Statements for Factor  1

 (P < .05 ;  Asterisk (*) Indicates Significance at P < .01)

Both the Factor Q-Sort Value (Q-SV) and the Z-Score (Z-SCR) are Shown.
```

```
                                                Factors

                                            1          2          3
No. Statement                        No.  Q-SV Z-SCR  Q-SV Z-SCR  Q-SV Z-SCR

 13 own money                        13     3  1.41*   -1 -0.90    0  0.00
 14 getting a job                    14     2  1.09*   -2 -0.99   -2 -1.54
 11 part of a group                  11    -1 -0.61     2  1.59    0  0.25
  6 doctor or nurse                   6    -2 -1.31*    0  0.20    0  0.26
 12 partner                          12    -3 -1.88    -1 -0.70   -2 -1.01

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Distinguishing Statements for Factor  2

 (P < .05 ;  Asterisk (*) Indicates Significance at P < .01)

Both the Factor Q-Sort Value (Q-SV) and the Z-Score (Z-SCR) are Shown.


                                                Factors

                                            1          2          3
No. Statement                        No.  Q-SV Z-SCR  Q-SV Z-SCR  Q-SV Z-SCR

 11 part of a group                  11    -1 -0.61     2  1.59*   0  0.25
  1 living on my own                   1     0  0.01     2  1.19*  -1 -0.53
 15 employer help                    15     0  0.02    -2 -1.19*   1  0.76


Distinguishing Statements for Factor  3

 (P < .05 ;  Asterisk (*) Indicates Significance at P < .01)

Both the Factor Q-Sort Value (Q-SV) and the Z-Score (Z-SCR) are Shown.


                                                Factors

                                            1          2          3
No. Statement                        No.  Q-SV Z-SCR  Q-SV Z-SCR  Q-SV Z-SCR

  2 making decisions                  2     1  0.53     1  0.50    3  1.54
  8 the future                        8    -2 -1.30    -3 -1.69    2  1.27*
  7 family support                    7    -1 -0.88     0 -0.30    2  1.01*
 11 part of a group                  11    -1 -0.61     2  1.59    0  0.25
  4 keeping myself safe               4     1  0.79     1  0.50   -1 -0.51
  3 being independent                 3     2  1.29     3  1.89   -2 -1.01*
  5 talk about worries                5     0  0.13     1  0.40   -3 -1.77*

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Consensus Statements  --  Those That Do Not Distinguish Between ANY Pair of Factors.

All Listed Statements are Non-Significant at P>.01, and Those Flagged With an * are also Non-Significant at P>.05.




                                                              Factors

                                                          1          2          3
No.   Statement                              No.    Q-SV Z-SCR  Q-SV Z-SCR  Q-SV Z-SCR

  2   making decisions                        2      1  0.53     1  0.50     3  1.54
  9*  feeling understood                      9     -1 -0.37     0 -0.10     0 -0.25
 10   asking for help                        10      0  0.06    -1 -0.40     1  0.75
 16   working towards job                    16      1  1.00     0  0.00     1  0.77


)ANALYZE was completed at 15:26:19
```

Appendix 9 - Recording and initial coding of interview transcripts

Factor 1 Recording and coding.

Yellow- Recognising and reflecting on own needs – 25
Blue- Studying for a career- 3
Green- Living independently - 3
Red- support network- 5
Purple- self-motivation and aspiration- 4

Participant 1 Transcript

Q: Tell me about what it was like for you in school

A: When I was in school, I think it was more that I needed help with the settling in process coz I've had a lot of temporary teachers which I don't think helps me at all. I would say I used to be unconscious about it yes but as the years progressed I started being more comfortable in school. I pretty much had like not 24/7 support but yeah it's pretty close to it yeah. A very structured… very structured schedule if you know what I mean. Yeah very visual which I kind of actually do right now. About year seven I really start to take off and be more independent which is about time for a 12 year old honestly. I did my GCSE and yes I did need more help because of the stresses. I got sick and tired of it in the end coz it I'm not academically smart, I just get out there and learn my lesson. In college I received minimal support coz I do things independently now. I have teaching assistants but I'll be honest I don't really need them, it's mostly my friend who wants one but doesn't have one that uses it which I'm fine with. I'm mostly used to working independently. I will ask for help when I need which is quite rare these days.

Q: What do you think might change when you leave college?

A: A lot of things will change when I leave. I won't I won't have anything to study towards unless I get an apprenticeship then in that case I'll probably have a day just to study up on it . But yeah it will be very different. I'll be earning a lot more money that's for sure. Hopefully making plans to move out- preferably to a place that other autistic people live in, so kind of like renting an apartment room for myself. I just kind of want to take that step forward so that someone keeping an eye out for me but I can live most independently. Then get a girlfriend and make a family and fulfil my dreams.

I may need help with certain things for example kind of balancing I don't know how to operate washing up machine. I know how to cook, yeah, I make a pretty good stir fry just FYI. But yeah there's some things I need help with like the clothing side of things like ironing, washing up ,drying up or doing dishes and like how to dry things. Just…just the other things I don't know how to do independently just yet but I would like to know how. it's more or less the living independently things I'm worried about.

I have older friends as well that could help me too. They are about 23-24. We hang out at my friend's place just for good old good whiskey and good conversations. One of my friends has, ah, autism like me and he lives independently. I mean, going to his place kind of started the idea of living on my own but with someone to keep an eye on me. I'm not sure the full details of it yet.

Q: What sort of things would you like to do in the future?

A: The plan at the moment is to go into management and Accounting somewhere with international locations. I would still like to live in town, yeah but I've never been international before. It will kind of be nice just to see what the world is like. I'm getting sick of the UK, well, England. I'd maybe like to go somewhere else in the UK like Wales.

I've likely already got an accounting qualification beforehand on Level 3 business extended diploma Level 3 whatever. Two-year course. I might need help with interview skills help and how to apply for a job. I see a lot of UCAS application people and I kinda feel left out because the workshops in college are all more focused on university people which are mainly the smart people. I've learned the hard way that schools only matter about things like sport, like either if you're very sporty or you're very smart. I feel kind of left out but luckily because I'm also autistic I do have support when I want it.

Participant 4 Interview Transcript

Q: What sort of things would you like to do in the future?

I think I want to go into media production, that's kind of what I'm doing right now. There is no particular job role I want to go into at the moment. There are so many options. I'm planning on going to university for a few years to help me to find a career path.

Q: Can you tell me about the kind of help you might need with that?

I get some, you know, teaching assistants coming to class and they're normally very helpful and kind as well yeah which I think is you know very kind of useful to me.

Q: What about in the future? Do you think you will still need support?

I don't know how much help I might need in the future. I know that university isn't just about the course. It's about how are you going to get on living there as well so it… it depends how I like the city and how I like the accommodation. I might need a bit of guidance may be out first at the moment I'm confident of going to university. All the universities I've chosen have really appealed to me so obviously I've got to make the choice where do I think I'm gonna settle in best.

Q: What was it like for you in school? Did you have help then?
When I was in school they were quite supportive. They had, like, a centre building where they came together and they offered support there. You can just go in at any point it just kind

of felt like a welcoming place where they didn't put any pressure on you or anything. I got teaching assistants coming into most of my classes and helping me because I'm not you know the most clever person in the world but thanks to the help I got I managed to make it through in the end.

Participant 6 Interview Transcript

Q: Can you tell me about what it was like for you in school?

I had a teaching assistant when I had the EHCP. She helped me to understand what the teachers were saying because I process information a lot slower. So the teacher was supposed to… she helped the rest of the class as well, but she was mostly next to me keeping me focused on the work. I had in the EHCP then I went to a special needs school for four years where is specifically aimed any child with an EHCP who got expelled from their previous school. I chose the special needs school, yeah, cos it was either that or boarding school. We put me in a special needs school instead coz I already missed a lot of education. I got expelled in year 5 and they didn't have a place until halfway through year six. I was there for half a year then I went to another special needs school. I was there for three years and I was the first ever female student to actually get myself back to mainstream school.

Q: How do you feel about going to university?

I wish universities would agree requirements for, like, an exception, for anybody that has a lifelong disability that can affect their intellectuality. I think they should automatically have a one grade drop. I always struggled just to get to like the band minimum yeah and it's like obviously I know I'm go to uni, it's just the case of making sure I am hitting those grades which I find difficult because a lot of the briefs and the work isn't worded in an easy-to-understand format. Some laws have an easy read version, but not the animal ones. If they don't have easy read versions, I can't understand anything, like how am I supposed to learn these legislations if I can't understand the language they use?

Participant 8 interview

Q: What sort of things might you have to decide before you leave college?
Living on my own kind of depends on circumstances and the kind of path I choose to take. It might take time. It might not be realistic to do it straight away.

I am an adult but I still love my family. I still need help. I can be very independent but sometimes I need my parents to help me.

Q: What is the career that you would like to work towards?

I want to be an author and write stories. That's what I'm good at. I don't know if it's a proper job, though. I did work experience in a charity shop in the back room. I sorted out the clothes. I would like to get more confident with people so that I could work up to working in a shop to earn money, but my dream is to write stories and inspire people.

Q: Do you think you will have any help with that?

Sometimes people aren't very understanding but you have to learn to adapt your behaviour and find other ways to meet their expectations. Sometimes getting the job done is more important than doing it in a way that makes you happy.

It takes me longer than everyone else to learn certain things. When I was younger, back in primary school, the routine of getting dressed took me 2 years to do it independently. I couldn't put my socks on. I had 1:1 teaching assistant support all the way through primary and secondary school to help me when I needed help, especially in maths and science. They were also there to keep me safe in crowds when I might get lost. It was loud and scary for me and I didn't like it if people banged into me.

Now I'm in college, I've grown up. I can be independent and I can get around the place. I can ask for help on my own if I need it.

If I get a job interview I have to be honest about my needs. It helps if I get to know the people who are running the interview so that I can explain what I can do for myself and what I need help with.

Factor 2 recording and coding

Socialising- yellow - 2
Support- green- 13
Anxiety- pink - 5
Future plans- blue – 5
No rush- grey- 4
Independent living skills- red.- 2
Earning money- purple - 1

Participant 3 Transcript

Q: Tell me about what it was like for you in school

Socialising was hard in school. I… I just don't do it. I didn't get any help until I got diagnosed in 2018. Then I got an EHCP and that's kind of when they would allow me to leave class and I had a TA. The TAs are much better in college. It's the same person every single time and they don't change which is better for my anxiety. I have a 1:1 with me all the time. I don't necessarily need support with like academically, it's more emotionally.

Q: Do you think you will have any help moving on from college?

When I leave college I'm going to have to do things independently which I want, it's just that right now I have a lot of support and, yah, I don't know how to gradually let go of that. I need to know how to manage my anxieties and be organised… just things like that.

Q: What do you think might change when you leave college?

I want to do a music and media degree but I don't think I'll do that until for another two years because, as soon as I do, I won't get that support. I don't have a job I want to do right now so can take my time. I've kind of made a decision I'm just going to do what I enjoy and see where it takes me.

Q: What sort of things would you like to do in the future?

My main aim is to do music therapy. I've researched it and I know I need an undergraduate degree in education and then I can go off to get that degree in music therapy. I think I would still need help at university with being organised and with emotional support as well. Again I don't really need help with the academic stuff, it's the stuff around it like staying organising and managing my time. Plus coping with my anxiety and my mental health.

Q: Do you think you will have any help with that?

Everyone needs support in life but I don't want it to be intense support forever. At the moment, though, that intense support is what I need. My TA helps me stay organised and on

time. Plus I have someone to talk to which is really important. I think I crave a connection with people coz I don't really connect with many people.

I think next year I'd like to work on leaning off the support a little bit, to get me ready for doing the degree. I think I could maybe do one lesson a day or half a lesson, whatever I'm comfortable with, then do more time without and see how that goes. I know I might still need support and that's why we have living disability allowance. I want to live independently and I've got daily living skills. I'm just messy yeah that's the only thing. I'm really messy and really unorganised but I can do it. I just don't know how I'd cope if something went wrong yeah so again it's managing the anxieties. That's what I need to prepare for.

Participant 10 transcript

Q: What would you like to do when you leave college?

Getting a job is the most important. I want to either work with animals or work with little children in a primary school. It's quite tricky on how to make a decision on what I want to do, though, and I think I need some help with that. The main thing is getting a job, though, because then I can have my own money and then I can start to think about getting a house and a car.

Q: Can you tell me about what it was like for you in school?

When I was in school I had help with an EHCP meeting. I had a person who used to come in and do 1:1 with me. I had speech and language therapy, too. My helpers used to write things down for me so I could understand what was going on.

I still need a little bit of that help. Like, I can't go to places by myself because I get lost and I don't know how to read a map or tell the time. They get worried if they can't find me or if they don't know where I am in college.

Q: What sort of things would you like to do in the future?
I would like to live on my own one day. I'm not ready yet. I can do some independent things in the house but I need help to use the kettle and the oven and stuff. I forget and leave it on. I might burn myself.

I will always get distracted by crossing the road I get distracted and it's not safe. I need help to cross the road and in the future I will still need help with that because it's tricky and I could get hurt.

Factor 3 recording and coding

Independent living - blue - 5
Hobbies and interests- yellow - 2
Career aspirations- green - 4
Hesitance about the future -red - 3
Being independent – pink - 3
Support with life skills- brown - 4
Friendship- purple- 6
Asking family for help- grey - 2

Participant 7 Interview

Q: You said here that being independent is very important to you. What sort of things do you like to do?

I like to do, well, everything. I like doing cooking and I do life skills where we learn to make dinners with other people. I like music and I like doing singing. I like dancing and I'm a gymnast. I like doing something new like ballet and exercise. I'm interested in that right now.

Q: Is that something you would like to do after college? What do you think you would like to do in the future?

I decided yeah I would like to do… I would like to be a beautician and do face masks. I did that at school and I massaged people's hands. I might also want to learn how to make cakes.

My brother works in a shop. I might do something like that but in a different kind of shop. I don't think I'm ready to get a job because I don't really understand money.

Q: Do you think there is anything you will need help with in the future?

I know how to do things by myself. I don't need much help anymore. I like being independent. The main thing I need help with is money. My dad keeps asking me about the prices and I don't know because I don't really understand it. I've got my own bank card now but I'm not good at money. I don't really look at the prices and I usually get lots of things from the shop but then I don't have any money left over.

Q: And who do you think might help you when you leave college?

I want somebody to be there for me like a boyfriend or friends or something when I need help. I don't know about living by myself, though. If I need help, I'll ask my family or something. I don't like going anywhere out with my parents. I like to hang out with my friends.

Q: Yes, you said that being part of a group is very important to you. Can you tell me more about that?

Being in a group is very important, but you don't always stay together. If you're not with your friends you might get lost. After college when you don't have your friends you might get lost in town.

Q: What was school like for you?

I had lots of help in school. I needed help but I don't remember what for. I went to 3 schools before I went to special school.

Q: Do you think that you will have any help moving on from college?

I don't like moving on. I don't know what the plan is yet. Some people will know what they will do when college ends but I'm not sure about that.

Participant 9 Interview

Q: What is important for you in college?
I like talking to my friends. I have lots of friends at college.

Being independent is important. I can do shopping and make my own bed.

Q: And what about in the future? What would you like to do after college?

I want to get a job and be a [redacted] like my dad. I also will go to Chelsea Football Club and get tickets to a match.

Q: How do you feel about living independently?

I need to buy a house before I live on my own. I might still need help with food and the washing up because I don't like to do the washing up. It's hard and also boring. I might be able to get a dishwasher.

Q: What was school like for you?

When I was in school I had help in maths. I had an adult with me all the time to help me write things. My writing is better now and I can write by myself. I won't need help with that when I'm older.

Q: Is there anything you think will change when you leave college?

When I leave college, I will still see my friends. Mum will help me. I might get taller and I might grow a moustache. It would be good if I had a buddy to keep me safe.

I might need help to get a job. I don't know yet where I might work. When I'm 30, I might be a banker with a big house and a season ticket for Chelsea.

Appendix 10- Coding and Deductive Content Analysis for Factors 1, 2 and 3

Factor 1

Statement	Codes	Examples
Earning my own money	Earning more money	*I'll be earning a lot more money that's for sure-* Participant 1
Doing things independently	Recognising and reflecting on own needs	*It takes me longer than everyone else to learn certain things.* - Participant 8 *I'm mostly used to working independently. I will ask for help when I need which is quite rare these days.* (Participant 1)
	Moving away from family support	*I have older friends as well that could help me too-* Participant 1
	Living independently	*…hopefully making plans to move out – preferably to a place that other autistic people live in, so kind of like renting an apartment room for myself. I just kind of want to take that step forward so that someone keeping an eye out for me but I can live most independently -* Participant 1 *I want to live independently, and I've got daily living skills. I'm just messy yeah that's the only thing. I'm really messy and really*

		unorganised but I can do it - Participant 4.
Getting a job	Studying for a career	*I'm planning on going to university for a few years to help me to find a career path.-* Participant 4
		The plan at the moment is to go into management and Accounting somewhere with international locations.- Participant 1
	Self-motivation and aspiration	*My dream is to write stories and inspire people-* Participant 8

Factor 2

Statement	Codes	Examples
Doing things independently	Letting go of support	*Right now I have a lot of support and, yah, I don't know how to gradually let go of that-* Participant 3
		I think next year I'd like to work on leaning off the support a little bit, to get me ready for doing the degree (Participant 10).
		Now I'm in college, I've grown up. I can be independent, and I can get around the place. I can ask for help on my own if I need it. (Participant 10)
	Choosing own career	*Getting a job is the most important. I want to either work with animals or work with little children in a primary school.-* Participant 10
Being part of a group outside college (Negative)	Socialising	*I think I crave a connection with people coz I don't really connect with many people.-* Participant 8
	Confidence with people	*I would like to get more confident with people so that I could work up to working in a shop to earn money-* Participant 3
Living independently	Independent living skills	*I can do some independent things in the house but I need help to use the kettle and the oven and stuff-* Participant 10

Earning money	*I can have my own money and then I can start to think about getting a house and a car.* – Participant 10	
Not ready	*I would like to live on my own one day. I'm not ready yet*- Participant 10	
	I know I might still need support and that's why we have living disability allowance (Participant 3).	

Factor 3

Statement	Codes	Examples
Making my own decisions	Being independent	*I know how to do things by myself. I don't need much help anymore. I like being independent.*- Participant 7
	Independent living	*I like doing cooking and I do life skills where we learn to make dinners with other people.*- Participant 7
		I might still need help with food and the washing up because I don't like to do the washing up. It's hard and also boring. (Participant 9).
	Career aspirations	*I don't know yet where I might work. When I'm 30, I might be a banker with a big house and a season ticket for Chelsea. I want to get a job and be… like my dad -* Participant 9
Support to understand 'the future'	Hesitance about the future	*I don't think I'm ready to get a job because I don't really understand money.*- Participant 7
	Understanding money	*The main thing I need help with is money. My dad keeps asking me about the prices and I don't know*

		because I don't really understand it. I've got my own bank card now but I'm not good at money (Participant 7)
	Friendship and support	*It would be good if I had a buddy to keep me safe. I might need help to get a job…- Participant 9*
		I want somebody to be there for me like a boyfriend or friends or something when I need help. I don't know about living by myself, though- Participant 7.
My family having support to help me	Support with life skills	*I might still need help with food and the washing up because I don't like to do the washing up. It's hard and also boring. I might be able to get a dishwasher. –* Participant 9
	Asking family for help	*If I need help, I'll ask my family or something. Participant 7*