# Supporting the Transition of Young People with Additional Support Needs

Research Report 2022

# Executive Summary

**ENABLE Scotland received funding from the Scottish Government in December 2019 to undertake a comprehensive review of the influence that parents and education practitioners have on the transition of young people with additional support needs.**

ENABLE Scotland initially conducted a literature review followed by a review of the current policies and context, both of which helped in the development of the research methodology for this project.

A mixed methods approach was chosen, utilising both qualitative and quantitative research methods to explore the influence that parents and education practitioners have on transitions. Alongside this there is also an exploration of key factors relating to supporting and growing the aspirations of young people with additional support needs and disabilities, and the preparation for their transition from secondary education into employment. Key socio-economic factors were also examined relating to the families involved in the study.

During the study a total of 102 parents (of primary and secondary aged children) and 48 education practitioners of young people with additional support needs across 12 local authorities in Scotland were engaged utilising online research tools and communication methods. The use of technology in the project was due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Following the analysis of the data collected in this study, the findings have helped to establish six key recommendations to support parents and teachers to positively influence transitions. The recommendations formed the basis of a guidance of good practice for educational practitioners.

## Key Findings

Parents' relationships with their education providers are inconsistent. Parents want more support to understand future options and earlier access to information. One-fifth of parent participants (20.59%) who took part in the research live in the 15% most deprived areas of Scotland, according to Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) and 18.18% of participating parents identified as being disabled themselves. Parents have asked for support for themselves as well as for their child's education transition.

Education practitioners value the importance of parent participation in pupils' education transition and recognise the barriers preventing some parents from being involved.

Education practitioners feel some pupils can have high expectations around employment however 100% of practitioners working in secondary education talk to the pupils about employment. However, the proportion lowers to 50% of practitioners when those working in pre-school or primary education are included.

## Key Recommendations

1. information about future options is needed earlier
2. employer engagement is needed earlier
3. role models are needed to inspire young people and parents
4. education practitioners would benefit from relevant bespoke training and input
5. parents need tailored support
6. ongoing support is needed after leaving school

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# Introduction

The transitions that children and young people make into, between and from school can be exciting and full of new opportunities. However, transitions can also present challenges and concerns for children and young people. The transition from compulsory education to early adulthood is one of the most stressful events in a young person's life, with multiple options for their future to choose from. For those with additional support needs (ASN), there are additional challenges related to this transition, for example changes in support changes in the people they are used to teaching and supporting them.

During the 2020/21 academic year one-third of school leavers (37.91%; n=19,344) from secondary and additional support needs (ASN) schools have a recorded ASN. As can be seen from figure 1 (below), the proportion of leavers with an ASN has risen significantly since 2009/10, when 7.91% of school leavers had an ASN (Scottish Government, 2022).
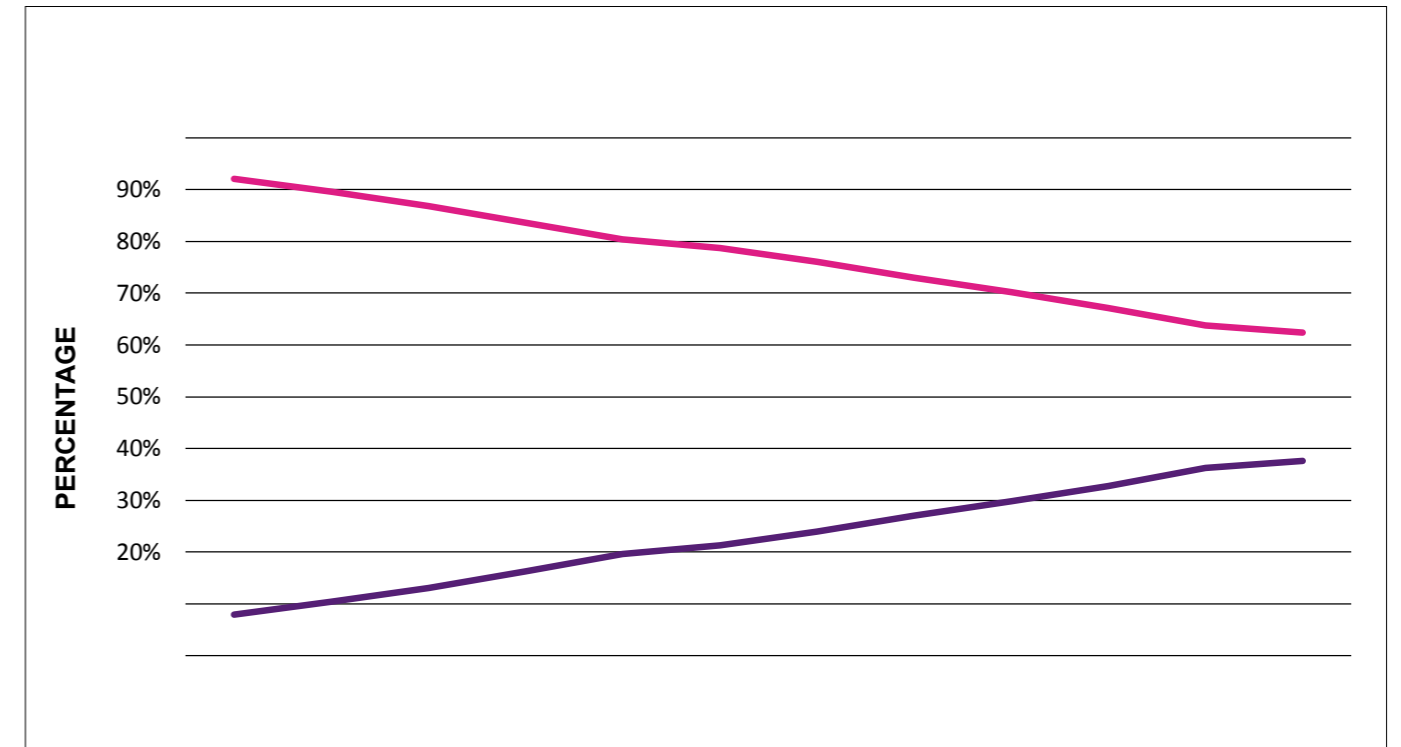


*Figure 1:Proportion of School Leavers With and Without an ASN, 2009/10-2020/21*

The proportion of leavers during the last school year is in line with figures from the annual census of pupils and teachers in publicly funded schools, published in December 2021, which reported that 232,753 pupils in Scotland are identified as having an ASN. This represents 33.0% of the pupil population. This figure has nearly doubled since 2012 (97.2% increase) when the figure was 118,011 (Scottish Government, 2021).

This increase in numbers means an increase in demand for ASN support. However, this is against a background of reduced funding, under-staffing and lack of staffing, with the average spend per pupil with an ASN falling from £4,276 in 2012/13 to £3,224 in 2019/20, a reduction of 24.6% (Scottish Children's Services Coalition, 2021).

Of the 2020/21 leavers, 92.42% of those with an ASN went on to an initial positive destination, compared to 97.03% of leavers with no ASN. When looking at the breakdown of positive destinations, the following was found:

- A significantly higher proportion of leavers without an ASN progressed into higher education – 54.38% compared to 28.06% of leavers with ASN

- In comparison, a higher proportion of leavers with ASN progressed onto further education – 34.10% compared to 17.43% of those with no ASN

- 6.74% of leavers with an ASN progressed onto training programme, compared to 1.99% of leavers with no ASN

- Of leavers progressing into employment, the 21.68% of those with ASN who progressed into employment is only slightly less than the 22.75% of leavers with no ASN who followed the same route (Scottish Government, 2022).

Whilst there is little difference in the employment statistics for those with and without an ASN, the leaver data does not indicate the levels and types of employment that leavers have progressed to.

## Aims and objectives

**The overall aims of the research are:**

- consider what influence parents and education practitioners have on the transitions of young people with additional support needs into the world of work

- explore key factors relating to supporting and growing the aspirations of young people with additional support needs and disabilities, and the preparation for their transition from secondary education into employment

- consider influences of specific socio-economic factors e.g. gender, age, disability

**The research is based on:**

- a review of relevant literature

- analysis of the related policy

- primary research with parents and education practitioners utilising both quantitative and qualitative research approaches

## ENABLE Works

ENABLE Scotland is Scotland's largest organisation supporting people with disabilities. ENABLE Works, the employability arm of ENABLE Scotland, focuses on supporting people with disabilities to move into sustainable employment.

Stepping Up is an innovative school transitions programme run by ENABLE Works, which supports young people from the age of 14 who have learning disabilities, autistic spectrum disorder or additional support needs. Comprising a three-stage model, Stepping Up provides support for young people to identify, address and remove barriers that often impede their transition into adulthood, whilst building and exploring their aspirations for the future. Participants receive support throughout the remainder of the schooling and one year aftercare after their transition from school. Since 2009, Stepping Up has supported 2,267 young people, with 98% of those engaged gaining a positive destination – higher than the national figure for all school leavers (ENABLE Works, 2021).

# Literature Review

In order to gain a better understanding of some of the issues that would inform and influence the research, a review of related literature was undertaken. In order to identify relevant literature, searches were conducted using the keywords 'Aspirations', 'Disability' 'Parental', 'Employment', 'Attainment' and 'Transition'. Whilst it is clear there is a significant amount of academic literature focussed on parental influence and aspirations for educational attainment in disabled young people, there are considerably less focussed on the impacts upon employment and very little specifically focussed on learning disabilities and autistic spectrum conditions (ASC).

Aspiration is defined by Quaglia and Cobb as an individual's "ability to identify and set goals for the future, while being inspired in the present to work toward those goals" (1996, p. 130), and it is clear from the literature that aspiration forms very early in children with aspiration for work suggested as beginning before schooling, as early as 3 years old (Gottfredson, 1981) in comparison to aspiration for educational attainment, forming in the first three years of school (Kifer, 1975).

Gutman and Akerman recognise that as a child grows older, aspirations change and are influenced by their own experiences and environment. In children facing multiple barriers, aspirations decline markedly in response to their understanding of society and their own circumstances (2008).

The literature shows evidence of a difference in aspiration between young people with and without a disability. Wagner et al. (2007) found young disabled people less positive about attaining or completing secondary education, and Parsons and Platt (2018) found children with 'special educational needs' (known as additional support needs in Scotland) were less likely to aspire to professional employment and more likely to expect lower paid jobs. Interestingly, Burchardt (2004) did not find a significant difference in the expectation of employment in young disabled people taking part in two large-scale Youth Cohort Studies, but did find evidence that they would expect to be paid less and felt less optimistic about their futures although this gap was perhaps reducing across the broad disabled population (Burchardt, 2005).

Perhaps the most relevant study to this work, focussed on learning disability as opposed to a broader disability or additional support needs category was conducted by Rojewski (1996). He found that teenagers with learning disabilities had lower aspiration for educational attainment and occupational outcomes than their peers without disabilities. Within this study, 2 years later, these individuals are less likely to be in employment or post-secondary education than their peers and Rojewski suggests that the complex factors which influence aspiration, such as parental influence, negative interactions with teachers, low societal expectation and limited academic attainment, also influence attainment. A young person's aspiration has been shown to be the most influential predictor of both educational and occupational attainment, itself influenced by a number of factors including socio-economic standing, gender, ethnicity, material conditions but, most significantly, parental aspiration for their son or daughter (Croll, 2008; Schoon & Parsons, 2002).

Individuals with parents who have higher aspirations for them are more likely to have higher aspiration for themselves, higher levels of educational and occupational attainment, with evidence that this can be directly linked to adult earnings in comparison to their less aspirational peers (Ashby & Schoon, 2010).

The impacts of adult expectations are, of course, not limited to parents. There is evidence from the literature that teacher expectations also have an impact on attainment (De Boer, et al., 2018; Rosenthal, 1974). As such, the combined effects of both parental and teacher engagements are considered to also play a significant factor in a young person's educational and occupational outcomes, particularly where the vocational programme within the school is limited (Morningstar, 1997). Gorard et al. (2012) for example, suggests that whilst there are links between parental aspiration and attainment, parental involvement with school has a greater impact.

Whilst parental and teacher aspiration is considered to be a significant influencer of aspiration, and thus occupational attainment, of the young person – there is evidence that there is reduced aspiration amongst key adult stakeholders for disabled young people.

Russell (2003) suggests that parental expectations for their disabled child are drawn from their own experiences across four levels of interaction, that of them and their child, the services they receive, local and national policy as well as their social environment and cultural values. This includes the suggestion that the parents of children with a disability have different experiences and sources of information compared to the parents of children who do not have a disability, due to the additional needs of the children, and the limited network of other parents sharing similar experiences. It is therefore not unusual that parents of disabled children, who may have had to pursue access to support, diagnoses, welfare, services and many other things – would have developed wholly different expectations for their child in comparison to a parent without a disabled child.

Supporting parents to develop expectations of positive outcomes for their children may enhance their confidence and improve relationships with the schools. Russell (2005) suggests that is it important to encourage parents to be active in the education of their children, and when the teacher discusses expectations with the parents it helps them to clarify their thoughts and ideas. Wong et al. went further by suggesting that it is crucial that parents scaffold their children's participation in schooling with *"appropriately high and realistic expectations based on cognitive ability and individual needs"* (2015, p. 92).

The transition of young adults with disability to post-school life demands planning and collaboration, with informed decisions made that best prepare and suit the young person. Information is required from all relevant sources, including educational practitioners, families, key partners potentially including social work and healthcare, and the young person themselves (Flexer, et al., 2013). Family involvement is considered to be important in the transition process of all young people. Continued family involvement is important in all transitions, but for children with additional support needs the involvement of family in the transition process is essential. Whilst the transition process is a formal process, parents have the experience and knowledge of their own children, which puts them in an informed position to comment on the transition of their child and their post-school options and outcomes (Kohler & Field, 2003; Ludlow, et al., 1988).

Davies and Beamish (2009) found that whilst parents are portrayed as being valued providers of information in relation to their children and are key advocates on behalf of their children during the transition to post-school life, they are infrequent participants in research on transitions. Through their review of research studies, Davies and Beamish found that only a small number invited parents to share their views on either the transition process or the education relating to transitions that their child received. Further, they found that even fewer studies invited parents to share their perspectives of how the transition of the young adult from school to adult life impacted on the family experiences.

In terms of parental involvement with teachers, there is also evidence that this is limited in parents of disabled children (Jones, 2005), perhaps influenced by mistrust in the school (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010) or a difference in the parental expectations for the child and the school (Spera, 2006). Chen et al. (2019) suggests that this lack of involvement in transitional preparation and shared familial engagement in 'real life experience' for their children with autistic spectrum conditions (ASC) limited their aspirations for their child's future.

A number of studies identify that it is not just factors relating to the type and level of disability that influence the expectation of parents in educating their children, but that the socioeconomic status of the family is also a key factor (Banks, et al., 2016; Blacher, et al., 2010; City Trends, 2015; Doren, et al., 2012; Newman, 2005; Poon, et al., 2013; Russell, 2005). Hiebert et al. (1982) found both parent and teacher expectations for educational attainment are reduced for disabled young people in comparison to their non-disabled peers, whilst Banks et al. (2016) and Newman (2005) confirmed that parents of children with general learning or intellectual difficulties, autism or multiple disabilities had lower expectations for both academic and occupational skills as compared to parents of children with specific learning difficulties. Poon et al. (2013) found that, whilst parents of children with autistic spectrum conditions (ASC) and intellectual disabilities had reduced confidence in their children's ability to find employment, valuing future outcomes relating to their children's personal satisfaction, safety and security over and above those relating to social participation. It was also suggested in studies by Blackorby et al. (2010) and Newman (2005) that parents of low economic background held significantly lower expectations than parents of high economic background for their children's educational and occupational attainment. Hattie (2009) suggests that the effects of socioeconomic status has a greater influence during pre-school and early years of primary, but the correlation between socioeconomic status and available resources in the home could impact later in a child's schooling.

So, there is evidence of the significant influence of adult aspiration on young people's occupational attainment, and that this aspiration is limited for young disabled people. Whilst aspiration, in and of itself, is not the direct cause of reduced employment in disabled young people – the literature suggests some of the factors that aspiration influences. The study by Doren et al. (2012) on young disabled people suggested that parental expectations significantly predicted levels of autonomy in young people, which had a direct impact on a number of post-school outcomes including employment. Holmes et al. (2018) suggested that parental aspiration was a factor in their involvement in supporting preparatory transitional activities, which in turn influenced outcomes.

In counterpoint, studies suggest that parents of children with disabilities have similar aspirations and expectations for their children's employment opportunities and future independence as parents of children (Lehmann & Baker, 1995; Wahl, 2012). Martinez et al. (2012) found in their US-based study that parents of children with developmental disabilities recognised that whilst their children may not achieve academic qualification, they had hopes and expectations for them to develop skills to prepare them for future employment through vocational-based training and college courses. Similarly, Wahl (2012) found that parents expected vocational training and skill development to be important steps in the transition from school to work for their child. However, it is argued by Hendricks (2010), Hurlbutt and Chalmers (2004), and Wahl (2012) that even with vocational skills and/or qualification, many children with disabilities will encounter challenges in adulthood in gaining an employment and living independently owing to social difficulties, sensory issues and poor communication with employers.

Treanor (2017) offers counterpoint as to whether socioeconomic factors influence the expectations of a parent in the education of their child, recognising that often if a child's progress in education is less successful, it is blamed on the poor aspirations of the child or their parents. This 'poverty of aspiration' is used to shift the responsibility for both aspirations and achievement from policy makers and schools to parents and children.

Treanor argues that the aspirations of parents experiencing poverty for their children are no less than those who are not experiencing poverty – that they want the best for their children. It is recognised that their aspirations are constructed from what they know, and so parents experiencing poverty and earning low wages are not aware of what could be achieved through education, or the support that is available to assist their children to succeed in school.

In summary, our research will set out to further explore in greater detail the factors influencing aspiration for employment in parents, carers and teachers of young people with learning disabilities and autistic spectrum conditions (ASC).

We will examine how these influence young people's aspiration and whether this has an impact on transition into employment from school.

# Policy Context

This section provides an overview of key national legislation and plans, along with international policy, relating to the education and care of children and young people with additional support needs. The legislation and plans provide the overarching framework within which local authorities, schools and practitioners should work within to support and assist children and young people through their educational journey.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) sets out children's rights with governments responsible for ensuring that they are available to all children. The UNCRC was ratified by the UK in December 1991 and has informed and underpinned much legislation relating to children and young people since. However, the convention itself has not yet been fully incorporated in either UK or Scottish legislation.

Within the 54 articles of the Convention, 42 articles describe specific rights. Of these, four are described as the general principles: non-discrimination (article 2), commitment to the best interests of the child (article 3), the right to life, survival and development (article 6), and respect for the views of the child (article 12). In relation to this research, and some of the issues discussed in the Literature Review, two of the articles relate directly to education: that every child and young person has the right to an education (article 28), and that that education must develop the child's personality, talents and abilities to the full (article 29). Article 5 of the Convention relates to parents doing the best for their child, as set out in article 3, and helping a child to know and understand their rights, along with the evolving capacity of the child.

The provisions of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 are intended to provide support for children with long or short term barriers to learning, including children with severe and complex needs. It provides the legal framework for local authorities and other agencies to support all children with their learning, placing a duty on education authorities to establish procedures for identifying and meeting the additional support needs of children and young people. The identified needs must be kept under review and it will be the responsibility of all agencies to help education authorities meet their duties.

The Act established the term Additional Support Needs (ASN) in Scotland, replacing the previously used term Special Educational Needs (SEN), with the Act stating that at some point in their education, all children may require some form of additional support.

The new structure is intended to make accessing support easier for parents and carers, with parents able to request an assessment if they believe their child has an additional support need. Education authorities also have the ability to request an assessment (Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004). The Act has been amended by the Education (Additional Support for Learning (Scotland) Act 2009, the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and the Education (Scotland) Act 2016.

The Equalities Act 2010 is UK-wide legislation that protects people from discrimination in school, in the workplace and in wider society. It replaced seven previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act, simplifying the law and making it easier for all to understand and apply. The Act makes it illegal to discriminate against someone on the grounds of any of the nine 'protected characteristics', one of which is disability. Under the Act, disability refers to physical and mental impairments that have a substantial and long-term effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Within the Act, Part 6 Chapter 1 sets out specific provisions on how the Act must be enacted in schools. This chapter covers all aspects of school life, and how a school must treat pupils and prospective pupils, parents and carers, employees, and members of the community. Everything a school does must be fair, non-discriminatory, and not put individuals or groups of people at a disadvantage. In particular, a school must not discriminate, harass or victimise a pupil or potential pupil in relation to the way it provides education for pupils, how it provides pupils access to any benefit, facility or service, or through the exclusion of a pupil or subjecting them to any other detriment (Equalities Act 2010).

A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People highlights the need for person centered support and positive activity to support disabled people into sustainable employment with the aim of reducing the Disability Employment Gap. Transitional support is also needed due to the changing labour market impacts and risk of young people with additional support needs being placed at a further disadvantage than they are already due to COVID 19. The current employment rate of disabled people in Scotland is 45.4% compared to that of the non-disabled population 81.2%. (Scottish Government, 2018a). After measuring the impact on employment post COVID 19, to ensure a decrease in the Disability Employment gap, investment must be made for young people with disabilities in education and transitioning from education in employment or further education.

Furthermore, No One Left Behind, provides the national action plan for creating a joined-up approach and improve employability prospects for disadvantaged groups. It states that "a strong and fair labour market is vital if Scotland is to achieve sustainable and inclusive growth" (Scottish Government, 2018b, p. 2). The policy sets out actions focusing on improving support for a range of groups highlighting the need to "deliver better outcomes for those people who face significant barriers to accessing work" (Scottish Government, 2018b, p. 2).

There is also substantial policy focus on the importance of supporting parents to be involved and engaged in their children's education, but what does this mean? Harris and Goodall (2007) recognised that the term parental involvement is multifaceted and represents many different parental behaviours and practices. These include parental aspirations for their child's academic achievement; parental communication with their children about school; parental participation in school activities; parental communications with teachers about their child; and parental rules at home which are considered to be education-related. Goodall and Montgomery (2014) recognised that 'parental involvement' and 'parental engagement' are often used interchangeably, but they considered parental engagement as active involvement in learning, and that it represents a greater commitment than parental involvement. They recognised that such learning can take place in a variety of settings including early-learning and childcare settings, schools, the community, through family learning and learning at home.

The Scottish Government have also provided definitions of parental involvement and parental engagement in Learning together: Scotland's national action plan on parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home 2018 - 2021:

**"Parental involvement describes the ways in which parents can get involved in the life and work of the early learning and childcare setting or school or the ways that parents can get involved in "schooling". Parental involvement includes activities such as parental representation in the development of policies, improvement plans and key decisions. It can include involvement in the life and work of the establishment, for instance through volunteering opportunities.**

**"Parental engagement is about parents' and families' interaction with their child's learning. It can take place in the home, at school or in the community. Where it takes place is not important. The important thing is the quality of the parent's engagement with their child's learning, the positive impact that it can have and the interaction and mutual development that can occur as a result of that interaction.** (Scottish Government, 2018c, p.1).

The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 places several duties upon local authorities, schools, and Parent Councils in relation to involving parents in their child's education and in their child's school. The Act aims to help parents to be actively involved in their child's education, for them to be welcomed as active participants in the life of the school and encouraged to express their views on school education life. The Act's provisions cover three broad areas of engagement with parents. These are: Learning at Home, home-school partnerships and parental representation, through parent forums/parent councils (Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006).

In May 2017, the National Parent Forum of Scotland (NPFS) published their Review of the impact of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006. This review was undertaken to inform both the Scottish Government and Education Scotland on the impact of the 2006 Act and whether the legislation is still relevant as practices and procedures in schools have changed. The review makes 38 recommendations, splitting them by the organisational level they are aimed – 21 of the recommendations were made to the Scottish Government and national agencies; 12 of the recommendations were for local authorities to take forward; and the remaining five recommendations were made to schools. The review also made proposals for amending and updating the 2006 Act and the accompanying Statutory Guidance. The key messages from the review include extending the legislation to cover the early years; a requirement for further partnership working between education practitioners and parents; a need to protect and promote the role of the parent council; addressing equality on the parent council; and further implementing the learning at home strand of the act (National Parent Forum of Scotland, 2017).

Providing a national vision for parental involvement and engagement, whilst allowing for local adaptions, Learning together: Scotland's national action plan on parental involvement, engagement, family learning and learning at home 2018 – 2021 is based on both national and international evidence, including the NPFS review and Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC). The vision of the plan is to maximise both parental involvement and engagement from pre-birth to 18. It acknowledges the central role of the family in a child's learning and development, and recognises that all relationships are based on trust, mutual respect, and collaboration. The aims of the plan are to:

- "ensure that parents are supported to be fully involved in the life and work of their children's early learning and childcare setting or school

- encourage and support collaborative partnerships between practitioners, parents and families

- get the right support in place so that parents can engage in their child's learning

- expand access to family learning opportunities which meet participants needs

- improve the quality of all communication between practitioners, staff, parents and families, and

- improve the skills of leaders, front-line practitioners and support staff." (Scottish Government, 2018c, p. 3)

The Achieving Excellence and Equity: 2020 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan highlights that there must be support to parents "to develop the skills and confidence to engage in, and encourage, their children's learning in school and everyday life" (Scottish Government, 2019a, p. 7). The National Framework also highlights the importance of collaboration between parents and education practitioners, highlighting that the International Council of Education Advisors (ICEA) have "emphasised the importance of ensuring that parental engagement is embedded in high school as well as primary school, particularly in the senior phase" (Scottish Government, 2019a, p. 32)

The appropriate transitional support and involvement from parents of children with additional support needs is further highlighted in The Right Help at the Right Time in the Right Place, which states that every child "has the same opportunity to succeed" (Scottish Government, 2019b, p. 6). The success of children throughout school is highlighted by parental engagement, which the Achieving Equity Framework states is "about the partnerships and links between home and school, and the opportunities for parents and families to get involved in activities in a school or early learning and childcare setting" (Scottish Government, 2019a, p. 32). The Review of the impact of Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 examined support and involvement with parents and found that parents of children with additional support needs have also already highlighted that "specific concerns over transitions were common" (National Parent Forum of Scotland, 2017, p. 47).

When analysing best practice to introducing employment within education, Developing the Young Workforce states that early intervention is key when supporting children to have successful destinations beyond school. They suggest that involvement can begin as early as 3 years old to understand the world of work, through to the age of 18, to have fully a developed understanding and be able to make informed choices about the future. They state when it comes to employment that:

**"Half of all young people with a declared or assessed disability are in further education 9 months after leaving school. However, by the time they are 26 they are four times as likely to be unemployed as their non-disabled peers.** (Scottish Government, 2014, p. 2; Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce, 2014, p. 64).

This highlights that more support is needed to ensure young people with additional support needs do not fall into unemployment when compared with their non-disabled peers.

The Scottish Government's School and Employer Partnership (SEP) Framework highlights the need for effective age and stage employer interventions for pupils at key transition and decision stages of secondary school and helps create an understanding of where pupils' knowledge should be when discussing the world of work through high school education. This can prove effective when measuring the views of parents or carers and education practitioners involved in this research to understand how the young pupils with disabilities compare to the promoted guidance (Education Scotland, 2015a).

Developing the Young Workforce also reflects that education, employers and the third sector must work cohesively to secure the best outcomes for young people in education regarding the post high school transition. It is therefore apparent that continued strengthening of sector relationships is vital to improve the prospects for young people with disabilities, particularly due to impact which COVID 19 has had on young people's education (Education Scotland, 2015a).

Previous research carried out by ENABLE Scotland with Developing the Young Workforce showed that young people with additional support needs in school aspired to work, with 90% of young people spoken to stating they would like to work. The sector preferences were also varied, therefore highlighting the wide-ranging aspirations for young people with additional support needs. Employer engagement and work activity exposure was therefore recommended at an early intervention point for young people to make informed choices upon leaving school (ENABLE Scotland, 2018).

The Scottish Transitions Forum also highlight a framework to provide best practice support for young people with additional support needs when moving into adult life. The "Principles of Good Transitions 3" highlight seven areas to ensure success such as decision-making being person centred and led by the young person, support being in place for families and information being clear to all parties about the young person's future choices. The framework is useful particularly in this specific research context and mimics keys areas needed in the findings discussed below (ARC Scotland and Scottish Transitions Forum, 2019).

Research conducted by the Scottish Government (2019c) in 2018 examined the experiences of children and young people with additional support needs, and the experiences of those who support them, both parents and education practitioners. It found that parents and carers were generally happy about their child's experiences at school. There was a general positivity about the relationships that parents had with school staff, and they valued when communication was good, additional support was available to their child and that their child felt comfortable at school. Parents felt that they were included in the decision-making process about their child, but for some of the parents, their involvement was limited and did not included decisions made about the level or type of support their child received, or even which school they attended.

Most of the parents with children in mainstream schools indicated that there was something they would like to change or improve. Issues raised included concerns about resources, staff and infrastructure, and the high turnover of staff. Parents whose children attended ASN schools liked the ratio of staff to children, the size of the school and classes and the

access to both indoor and outdoor physical spaces. The parents were split when discussing achievement – some felt that their children achieved more due to attending a special school, whilst some were concerned about the level of academic challenge. The parents who had children who were on split provision, part-time in mainstream school and part-time in special school, there was agreement that the needs of the child were better met in the specialist provision. Many of the parents agreed that the biggest challenge has been getting their child in the right environment, and the time it took. A range of issues were reported, including long assessment and diagnosis periods, lack of understanding from staff in mainstream schools, their child experiencing bullying, and them having to push to get their child into specialist provision, whether in an ASN unit within mainstream school, or within a special school.

The research found that young people had a range of differing experiences of school. Children in mainstream primary school were generally positive about their experiences – they liked their friends and teachers, they felt that they were listened to by teachers and had opportunities to learn in a way that suited them. A few primary children indicated that they would not change anything about their schooling. However, some indicated that they wanted more help, whilst others said they felt they missed out when having to leave their class to attend the ASN base. Mainstream secondary pupils had differing reactions and were split when discussing their school experience. Whilst some were generally happy, enjoying the range of subjects they studied and happy with the level of support they received, some indicated that there were parts of the experiences they did not like. Some respondents stated there was nothing they liked about school, with some pupils going as far as saying that they hated school and did not want to attend. Many mainstream secondary pupils felt that their views were acknowledged by teachers, but a few felt that they were not listened to. Even if listened to, some of the respondents felt that teachers did not make the adjustments that they required. A number of pupils with ASN in mainstream secondary education responded that they currently or had previously felt unsafe due to bullying. Half of all female secondary pupils indicated they had experienced bullying, with two highlighting that they had moved schools due to experiences of bullying. When asked about inclusion, most pupils in mainstream school indicated that they had friends and had had no issues in making friends and that they felt included in school life. Amongst those who attended ASN bases within mainstream school, some pupils felt that they only felt included within the ASN base. A few pupils felt that being able to attend the ASN base within a mainstream school would help them achieve more whilst at school. Of the secondary pupils who did receive additional support or attended an ASN base, many said that they enjoyed attending the targeted support sessions and that the quiet helped them to concentrate. However, a small number of secondary pupils felt that they did not receive the support they required.

Pupils attending ASN schools had differing experiences in comparison. Most pupils said there was nothing they did not like about school, and that their teachers and support staff listened to them. There was a diversity in the dislikes that were indicated by pupils who attended special school, and included noise, schoolwork, friends, and lack of independence. A small number of pupils said that they did feel unsafe at times due to other pupils acting violently or aggressively towards them. Half of the pupils at special school said they felt included and had lots of school friends. However, some stated that they found it difficult to make friends.

Most educational practitioners, whether local authority officers or school staff, felt that most of the children with ASN had positive experiences in school, that they were included and that their needs were reasonably met. However, many recognised that resources were very limited and this could lead to mixed experiences for some pupils, with almost all respondents recognising that there was room for improvement. It was acknowledged by many that the number of pupils with ASN was increasing, as was the range of different ASNs and the complexity of needs and this was challenging as staff numbers across all levels of education were under increased pressure, and/or decreasing in number. The majority of school staff felt that pupils they worked with were able to express their views and that the views were recognised by the school. It was felt by school staff that involvement with both pupils and parents worked best to meet the needs of the child if it was an ongoing and genuine process. Responding teachers did highlight that as the number of children with ASN increased, there was an increasing challenge in balancing their time between the whole class and pupils who required additional support, with a few teachers expressing the view that the inclusion of pupils with ASN into their classes was having a negative impact on overall learning within the class, which could impact on the aim of raising the attainment of all children. (2019c).

# Methodology

ENABLE Works set out to conduct a mixed methods research project, utilising both qualitative and quantitative approaches with parents and educational practitioners across Scotland. The aim of the research project was to look at factors that influence children with additional support needs and disabilities when they are transitioning from school into employment.

Parents and education practitioners involved in the schooling of young people from early years through to senior phases of high school, were invited to participate in both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The intention of these methods was to identify factors that influence the transition of a young person with additional support needs, such as subjective opinions of adults in their lives and socio-economic factors.

## Literature Review

The initial stage of the research project was conducting a review of literature related to the aims of the study. Initially six keywords were identified, and these were used separately and in different combinations to conduct searches of online academic and journal databases. The keywords were: Aspirations; Disability; Parental; Employment; Attainment; and Transition.

As a result of these investigations a number of papers and studies were identified. After review, some of the papers were discarded due to relevance or age. The remaining papers and studies were used to help identify further relevant literature that has been included in the above literature review.

During the process of the searching for the literature it became apparent that there was a wealth of policy and legislation that are related and relevant to this research. This was investigated further, and the results of these searches can be found in the above policy context section.

## Online Questionnaire

The first phase of the participant research utilised two multiple-choice online surveys, one for parents and one for education practitioners.

The questionnaire for parents was designed to begin exploring their views and opinions on their relationships with education practitioners, particularly around their child's transition using open-ended questions. The questionnaire also collected key demographic data relating to the participant, their family and household circumstances including disability, ethnicity, gender, age and where they lived.

Similarly to the questionnaire for parents, the survey designed for education practitioners used open-ended questions to begin exploring their views and opinions on their engagements relating to the transitions of pupils with ASN and the engagements and relationships with the pupils' parents. The survey also gathered data about the education practitioners working life, including the local authority area they work in, the type of educational establishment, and the information about the numbers and ages of pupils that they teach. Full details of the two surveys can be found in the appendices.

## Focus Groups and Interviews

Following on from the online surveys delivered in phase one of the participant research, all participants, both parents and education practitioners, were offered the opportunity to be involved in the second stage of the research. This stage was designed to further explore issues relating to the transitions of young people with additional support needs using qualitative research methods, with separate question sets for parents and for education practitioners. The primary approach that was proposed to be used was online focus groups, with separate focus groups for parents and education practitioners. If a participant could not take part in a focus group, whether due to personal preference or due to other commitments, they were offered the opportunity to talk directly to the researcher in a one-to-one interview through an online video call.

It was found when asked that many of the participants preferred to take the option of an interview, rather than take part in the planned focus groups. Due to this demand, there were issues scheduling all interviews at times that were suitable for the individual participants and the researcher. In order to maximise participation, the qualitative questions were offered to participants using Microsoft Forms, allowing the participants to respond in their own time.

The two question sets can be found in the appendices.

In total, 107 participants (73 parent and 34 educational practitioners) completed the qualitative stage of the research. Of these, three parents had not previously completed the first stage of participant research.
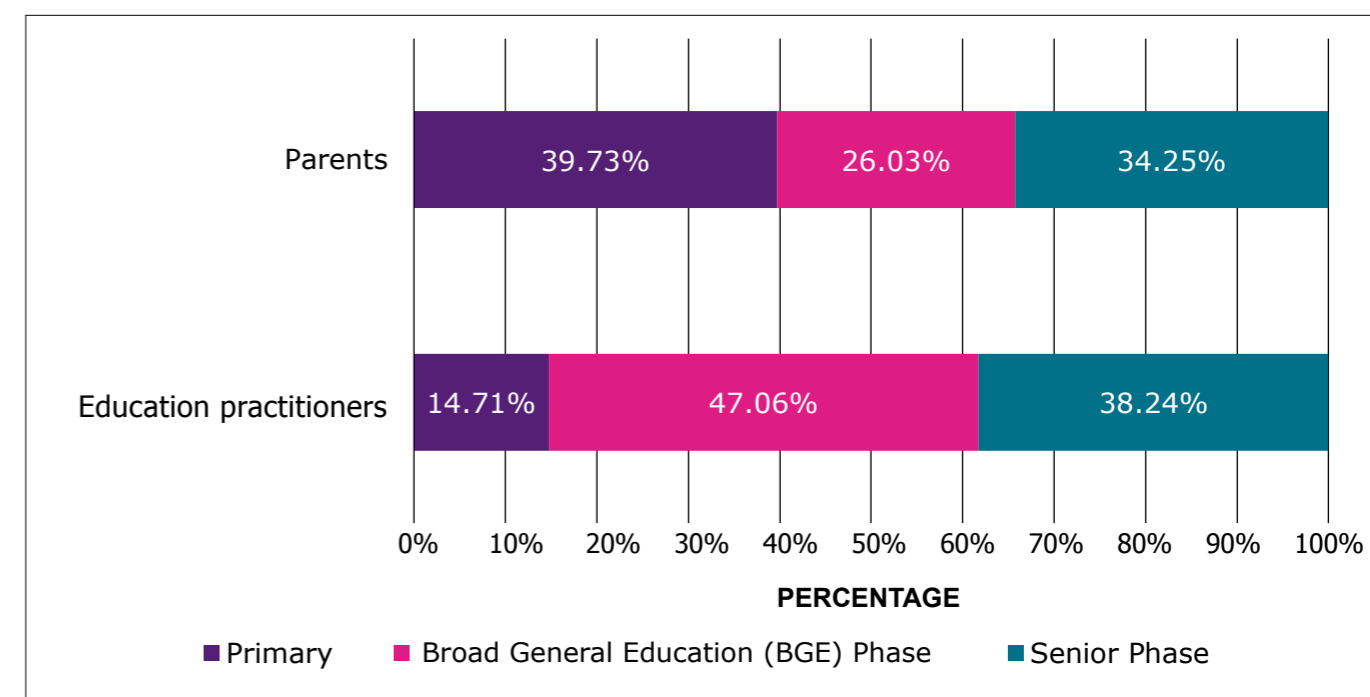


*Figure 2: Breakdown of parent/carers and educational practitioners who completed qualitative stage of research by school phase*

Of the 73 parents who participated in the qualitative stage of the research, a clear majority (60.27%; n=43) had children in secondary education, with the remaining 29 participating parents (39.73%) having a child in primary education. Amongst the education practitioners, only 14.71% (n=5) of those who completed the qualitative questions worked in a primary setting, with the remaining 29 (85.29%) working in secondary education.

## Impact of COVID-19

The restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on this research project. When first designing the methodology for the project, it was hoped to conduct as much of the research in person, particularly phase two of the participant research.

Due to the restrictions on meeting in person, it was necessary to alter the approach and it was decided to use online video calls to complete the focus groups. However, disruptions caused by lockdown, including working from home and children studying from home, meant that it was difficult to co-ordinate times that a suitable number of people were able to attend an online focus group. In order to maximise responses, it was decided to use online video calls for one-to-one interviews with participants, rather than focus groups.

Unfortunately, it still proved challenging to arrange suitable times for interviews with some participants, so it was decided to offer the questions that had been drafted for focus groups and interviews through an online questionnaire. This allowed participants to respond to the questions at a time that was suitable for them.

One benefit that resulted from utilising remote research methods was the ability to extend the reach nationally in Scotland to include a wider range of parent and education practitioners and informing conclusions based on a national context. The participants of this research were drawn from 14 local authority areas.

## Limitations

Whilst the use of online research methods did allow for the sampling frame for this research project to be extended to the whole of Scotland, it is important to acknowledge that certain socio-economic factors, including digital poverty and digital exclusion, may have restricted the access and participation of some parents.

To maximise participation the research was promoted through a range of channels and networks. These included third sector organisations, education establishments and parental support networks, as well as utilising social media.

## Research Ethics

The online platforms were audited by ENABLE Scotland's Information and Communications Technology Team (ICT) and legal department to ensure full online safety and compliance with Data Protection Act 2018, that incorporated the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) into UK legislation.

All participants were invited for an initial discussion with the researcher if desired to understand the participation in advance. A confidentiality statement was included at the beginning of the online survey for agreement along with a video recording consent form to complete for participation in online focus group or interviews. Participants with support needs were also asked if adjustments were needed along with a verbal reminder from the researcher when discussing the participation.

The researcher also made participants aware that they could choose to withdraw from the process at any stage and furthermore confirmed that all views would be discussed anonymously to ensure parents and education practitioners felt safe in disclosing information.

# Discussion of Results

The use of both quantitative and qualitative questions across the two phases of participant research in this project proved successful at providing a varied and detailed range of responses in order to evaluate opinions, thoughts and experiences of the participants related to the transitions of young people from school to employment.

## Research Participants

In total, there were 109 responses to the online questionnaire for parents in phase one of the participant research, including duplicate responses and survey tests. After initial analysis and verification, 102 responses have been included in the following analysis.

Of these, 70 (68.63%) completed both phases of the participant research, with three parents completing only the second phase of the participant research.

A total of 48 education practitioners responded to the online questionnaire in phase one of the participant research. All responses were verified after initial analysis and included in this report. Of these, 34 (70.83%) participated in the second phase of the participant research.

## Location of Participants

Participation in the research was promoted nationally for both parent and educational practitioners.

Whilst the parent participants were distributed across 14 local authorities, it can be clearly seen in figure 3 that over half of the total participants (51.96%; n=53) lived in the Fife Council area. This figure can be attributed to the established links that ENABLE Works has with both educational establishments and parent networks in the region.

Only three of the remaining council areas had 5 or more parents involved in the study: North Lanarkshire (n=11; 10.78%); City of Edinburgh (n=10; 9.80%); and East Lothian (n=5; 4.90%).

When examining the location of where parents live using the overall SIMD classification, it can be seen that whilst parents are distributed across the 10 SIMD deciles, a larger proportion live in more deprived areas, with 21 participants (20.59%) living in areas within the 15% most deprived in Scotland.

The National Improvement Framework highlights the need to "close the poverty related attainment gap between the most and least deprived children" (Scottish Government, 2019a, p. 8). Since there is a proven attainment gap between children living in poverty and those not living in poverty, it is clear that parents in these areas may need further support to be fully involved in their children's post school ambitions and decisions about transitions. As the framework further highlights *"Parental and family engagement is a key factor in helping all children and young people achieve the highest standards whilst reducing inequity and closing the attainment gap"* (Scottish Government, 2019a, p. 32).
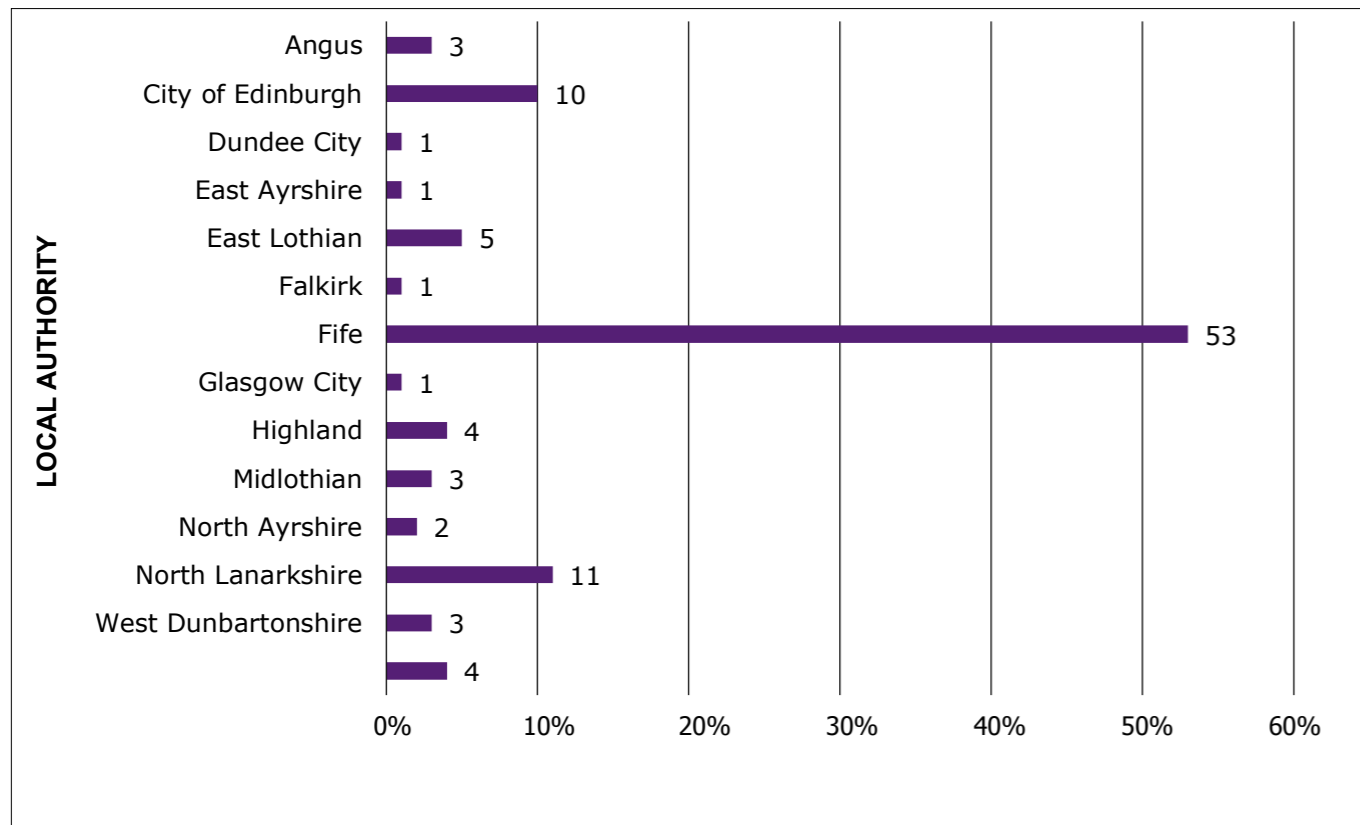
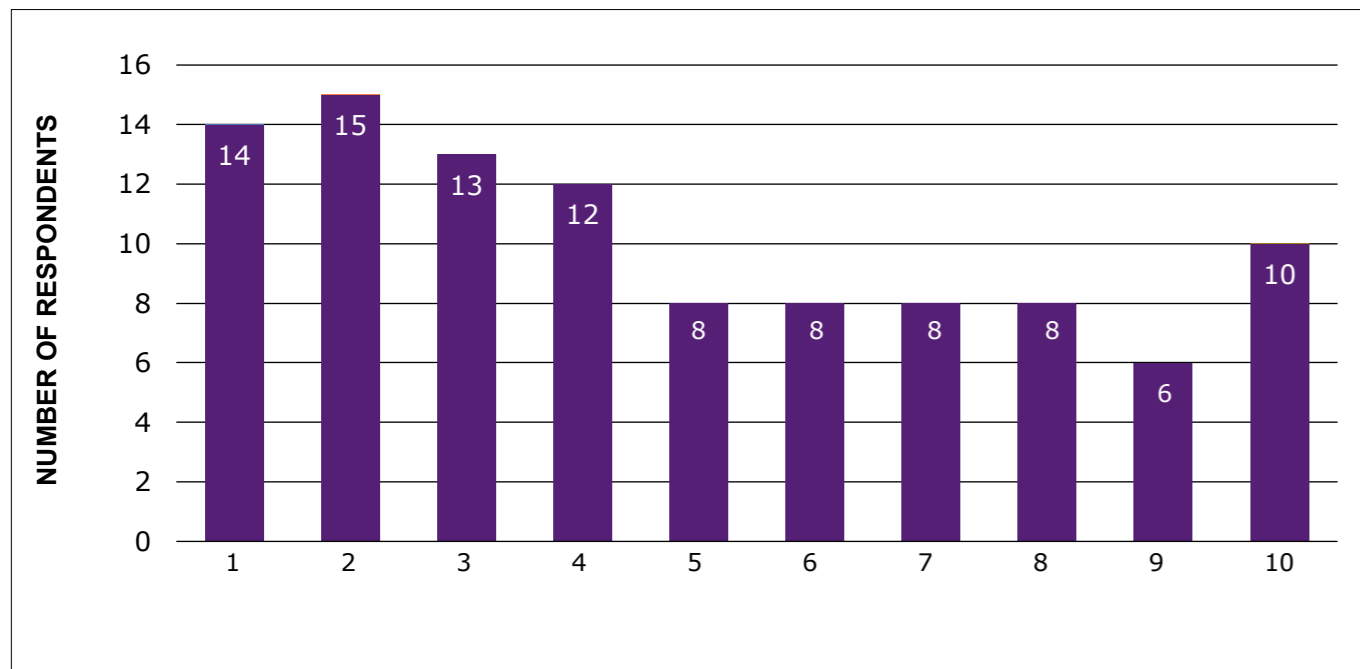Figure 3: Location of parent participants by Scottish Council area



Figure 4: Location of parent participants by SIMD decile

This is further highlighted in the findings relating to parents or carers in employment and living in areas of deprivation. For parent and carer participants living in SIMD deciles 1-5 the employment rate is 43%. However, in comparison, the employment rate for parents in SIMD deciles 6-10 is significantly higher at 72%. The employment rate for parents is not the only factor that can influence the aspirations of young people. As highlighted in the literature review, children facing multiple barriers, aspirations decline markedly in response to their understanding of society and their own circumstances (Gutman & Akerman, 2008), with people in more deprived areas more likely to be affected by lack of connections and opportunities.
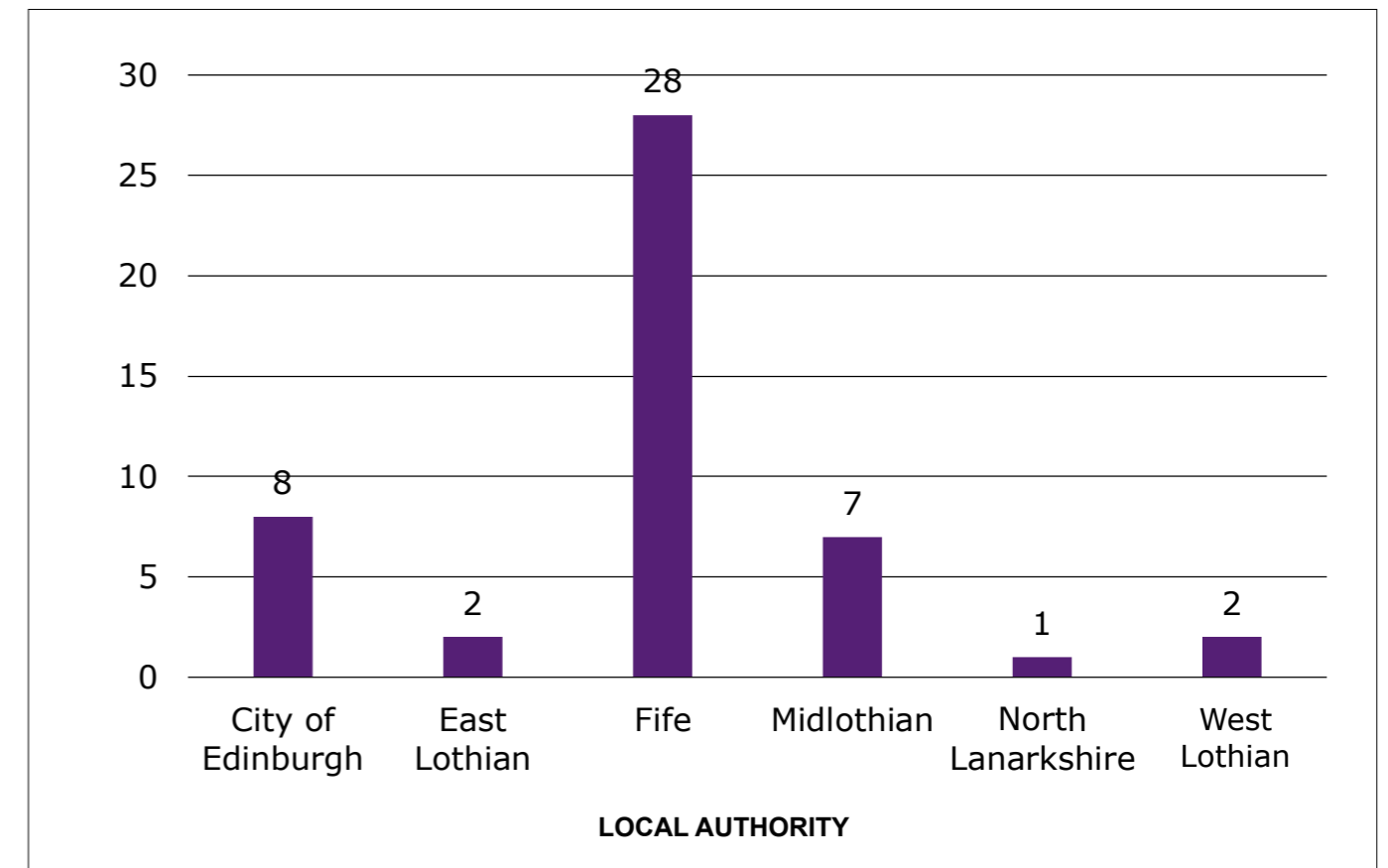


Figure 5: Location of education practitioner participants by Scottish Council area

When examining the distribution of the educational practitioners involved in the research, it can be seen in figure 5 (previous page) that participants worked across six Scottish Council area. As with the parent/carer participant, the clear majority of education practitioners are located within the Fife Council region (n=28; 58.33%). The next two most populace areas were Edinburgh (n=8; 16.67%) and Midlothian (n=7; 14.58%).

## Additional Support Needs

As part of the research, parents were questioned about both their own additional support needs (ASNs), and the additional support needs of their children.

When asked about their own additional support needs, 97.06% (n=99) of the parent participants responded to the questions. Of the respondents, 18 (18.18%) identified as having an additional support need, with 10 of these reporting multiple additional support needs.

Figure 6 (below) shows a breakdown of the identified ASNs amongst the parent participants. As can be seen the most prevalent identified ASN's was Physical Disability (n=9) and Mental Health Conditions (n=8). Amongst those identified under the other category were fibromyalgia, arthritis and diabetes.



Figure 6: Additional Support Needs of parent participants

The parental questionnaire in phase one of the research asked two questions relating to the ASNs of the participants children. The first question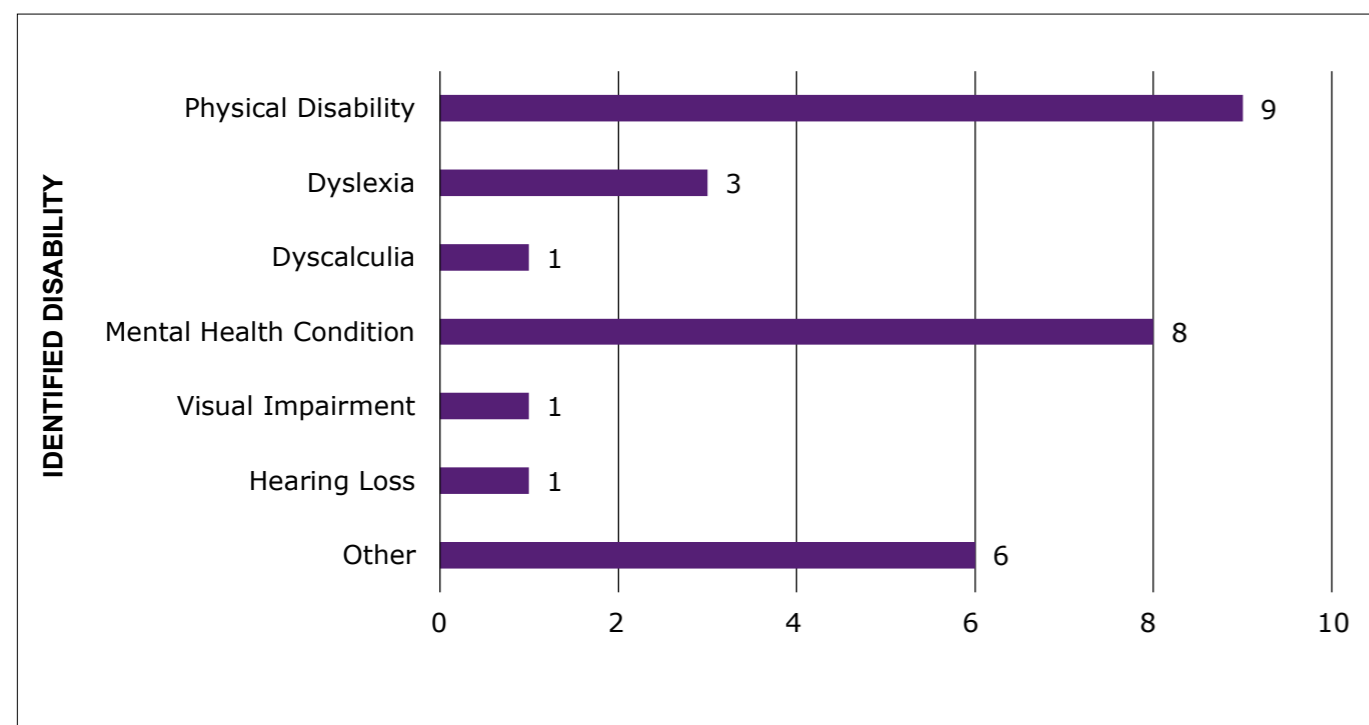 explored how many children within the family have an ASN, with 92 (90.20%) of parents responding. As can be seen in figure 7 (below) the majority of respondents identified that they had one child with an ASN (n=74; 80.43%).

| Number of children | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| 1 child | 74 | 80.43% |
| 2 children | 17 | 18.48% |
| 3 children | 1 | 1.09% |

Figure 7: Frequency and percentage of the number of children in family with ASNs

The second question asked parents or carers to identify their children's additional support needs, with a range of conditions being highlighted. As figure 8 shows, 66 of the responding parents (71.74%) identified their child as having an autism spectrum condition; and 38 identified their child as having a learning disability (41.30% of respondents). Amongst the 29 other responses, identified ASNs included epilepsy, cerebral palsy, Down Syndrome, and hypermobility, with many of the parent carers identifying multiple conditions in their responses.
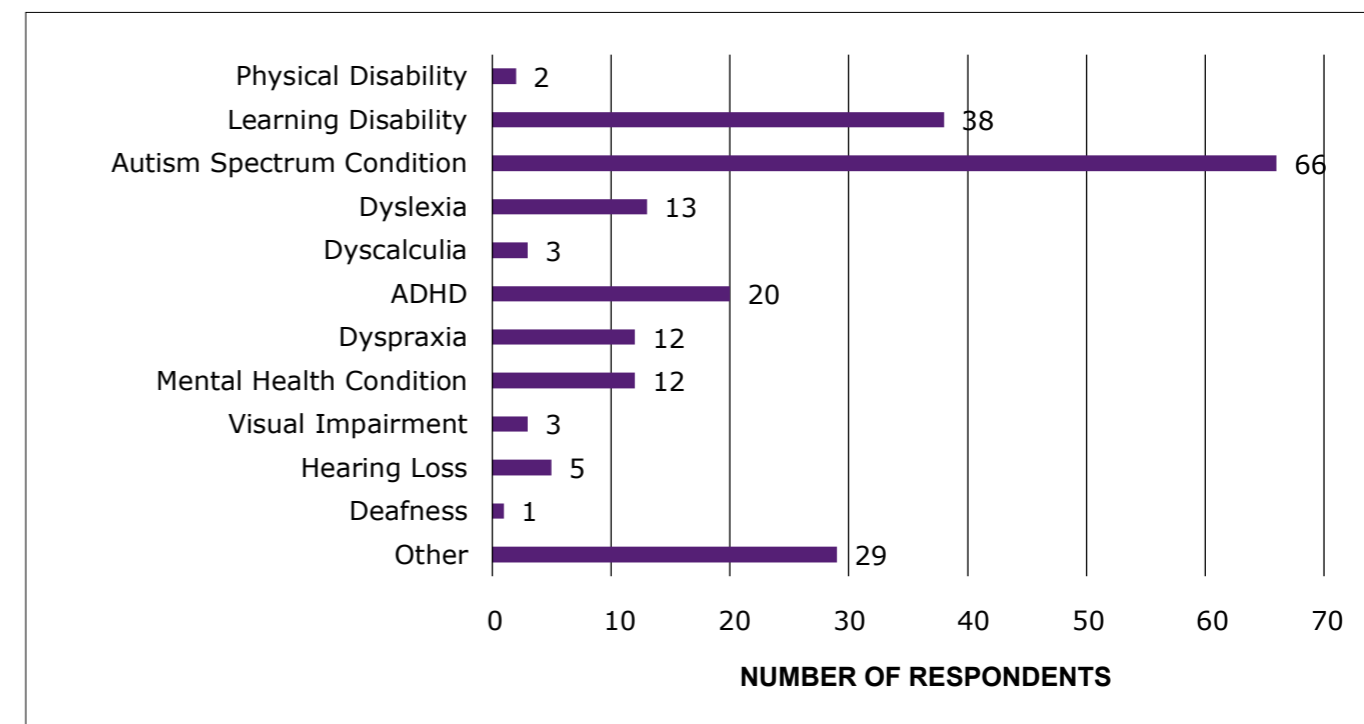


Figure 8: Additional Support Needs of the children of parent participants

Further to the poverty attainment gap, according to Every child, every chance "Disabled children are at higher risk of poverty. Actions to help signpost them to support services, including financial support, could impact on all the targets" (Scottish Government, 2018c, p. 89). It is therefore the case that the children and young people being discussed in this research face multiple socioeconomic barriers to achieving employment when living in areas of deprivation in addition to having a disability. Amongst parents and carers living in more deprived areas (deciles 1-5), 22.58% identified as having an ASN, this compares to 10.00% among those living in deciles 6-10.

Figure 9 shows the number of families with at least one child or young person with an ASN by SIMD decile. It can be seen that areas of higher deprivation consistently have a higher number of families that have a child or young person with an ASN compared to areas of lower deprivation.

According to the No One Left Behind delivery plan, the disability employment gap shows signs of widening further due to the impacts of COVID-19:

*Figure 9: Number of families with at least one child or young person with an ASNs by SIMD decile*

It is therefore important to understand how COVID-19 may have impacted the parents with ASNs employment prospects, over and above the already lower employment rate existing for disabled people.

Understanding the unique support needs of the children with disabilities is important to ensure effective support is put in place. As No One Left Behind states "A lack of employment can be a 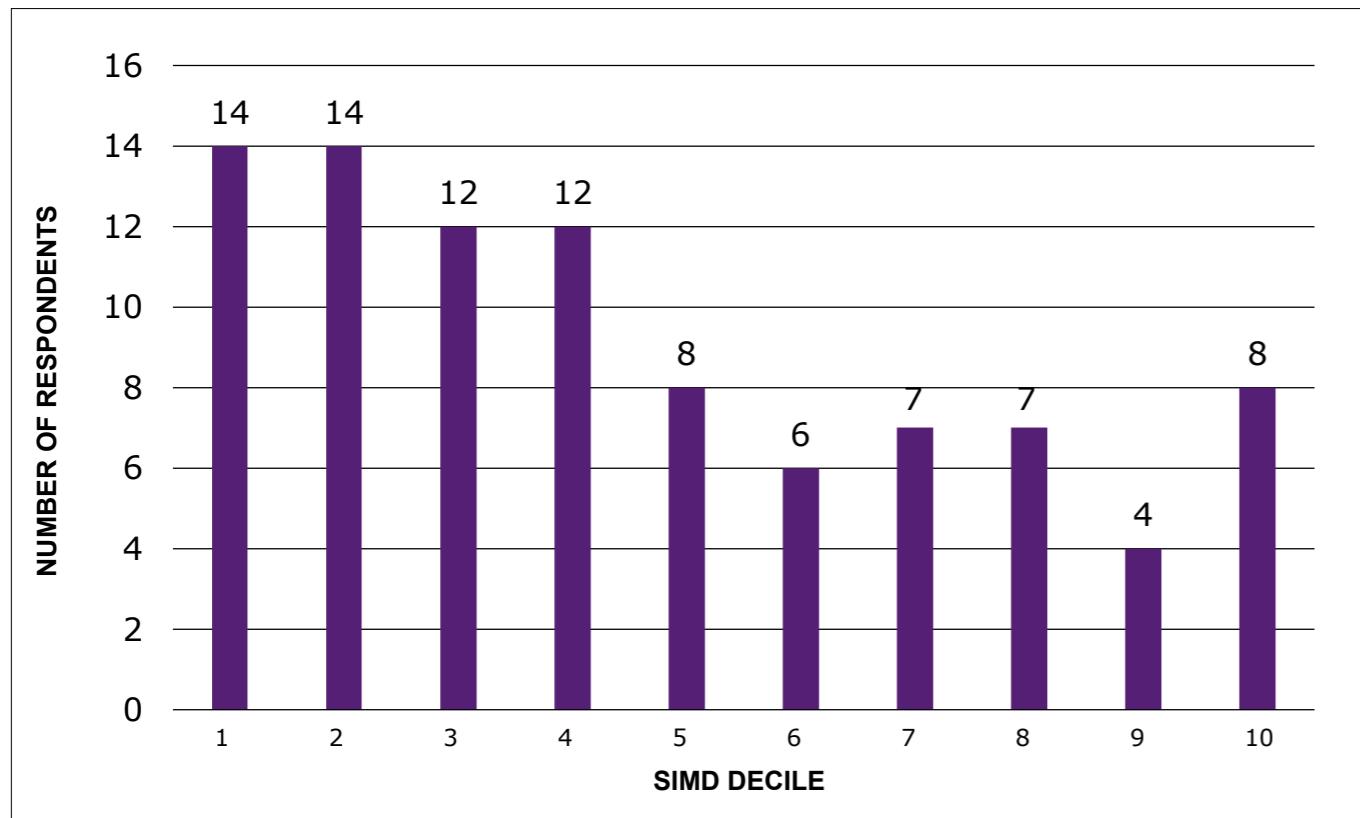key factor in the health of a person, and long periods of unemployment can also have a detrimental impact on their mental and physical wellbeing" (Scottish Government,

**"The most recent data for the year to July to September 2020 shows that the employment rate of disabled people has declined in the last year, and the disability employment gap widened, although the gap still remains lower than in previous comparable years.**
(Scottish Government, 2020, p. 6).

2018b, p. 17). It is clearly recognised that young people who aspire to work need the correct support at the correct times, as otherwise there are evident correlations between unemployment and health deterioration.

## Parental Employment

The parents who participated also had varying experiences of employment. As figure 10 shows, when examining the full cohort of parent participants, over half of them (53.92%) reported that they were employed at the time of the research.
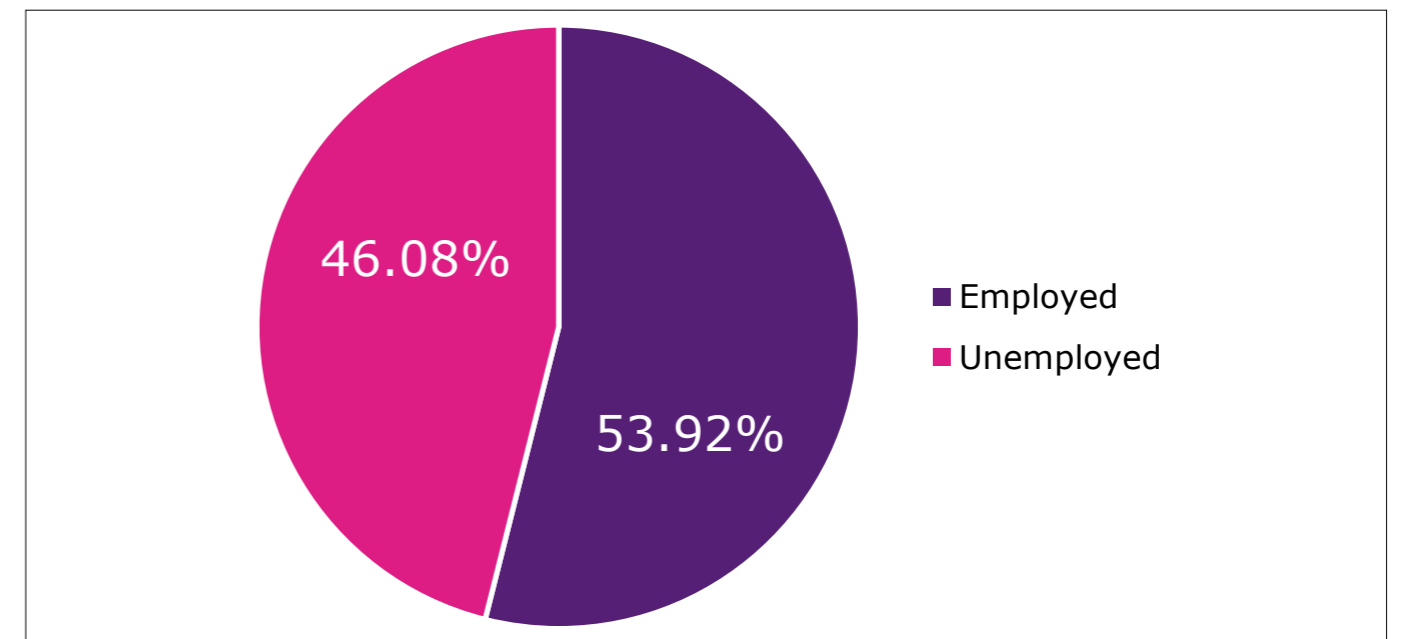


*Figure 10: Employment status of parent participants*

However, when examining the employment rates by SIMD decile for parent  participants figure 10 shows that those living in less deprived areas, the more likely they are to be employed. Decile 7 stands out as being an anomaly amongst the data by having more people unemployed as employed. This anomaly could be due to the geographical spread of participants, and the lower number living within areas in the seventh decile.

Of the parents who are employed, the sectors which they work or have worked in is varied with Health and Social Care and Retail and Hospitality making up most job roles. No One Left Behind further explains that disadvantaged groups have been worst affected due to being primarily low-income roles in most COVID-19 impacted sectors (Scottish Government, 2020). Therefore, the most common area of employment for participants being Retail and Hospitality may be problematic going forward as parents or carers could be at risk of redundancy or find difficulty entering these commonly identified areas of employment.
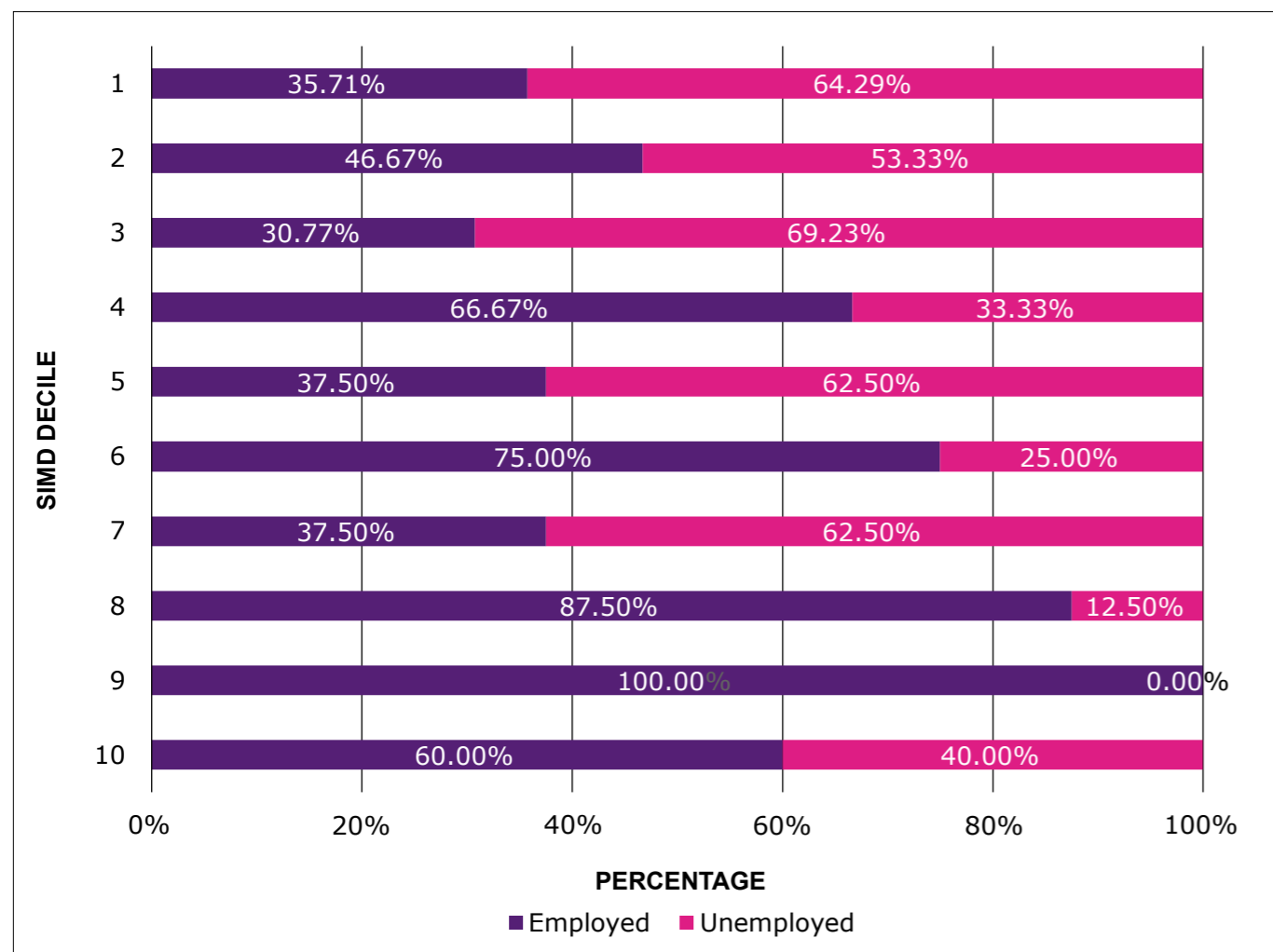
Figure 11: Employment rates of parent participants by SIMD decile



Figure 12: Job sectors of employed parent participants

Aside from the potential job loss risk to parents currently employed in COVID-19 impact sectors, there are other reasons which may explain the unemployment rate of participants. According to the Edinburgh Poverty Commission Action Plan, *"childcare, learning and employment opportunities are not flexible enough to enable parents to balance improving their prospects with caring for their families"* (Edinburgh Poverty Commission, 2020, p. 41).

It must be remembered that it is not just children and young people diagnosed with an ASN who may require additional support. The impact of factors affecting parents have come to the fore during the COVID-19 pandemic when they have been responsible for overseeing their child's education. Whether a parent is employed, or face multiple barriers in their own lives, these factors can be seen to have impacted on the education of their children during the lockdown caused by COVID-19. According to the Edinburgh Poverty Commission *"education can be limited or undermined when it is delivered in isolation for the child and not integrated with wider family support"* (Edinburgh Poverty Commission, 2020, p. 41). It can therefore be suggested that children currently being taught at home without the support from their parents will be disadvantaged compared to those with parental support in place.

## Discussion Themes

Both phases of the participant research in this project included questions relating to a range of factors that can affect the transition of a child or young person. Parents were asked about the aspirations of their children, levels of support, and the relationship they have with the education establishment, including communications. Whilst the questions asked of education practitioners were based around the same themes, they were adapted to the stage of school the practitioner worked in, whether early learning and childcare, primary, or secondary. From the analysis of responses from both participant groups, common themes have emerged.

The majority of the data explored in this section comes from the second phase of participant research. As mentioned in the methodology section 107 participants (73 parent and 34 educational practitioners) were involved in this phase of the research. A small proportion of the discussion points included in this section did come from the first phase of participant research, where qualitative questions were included in the online survey.

During the analysis one clear overarching theme was evident from all participants, and that is the desire for equality and support to succeed for children and young people with additional support needs.

## The views of parents on support, communications, and relationships

A number of key issues were raised by parents in their responses to the qualitative questions. Through the analysis of these responses, it was clear to see the relationships between the different issues that were raised, particularly the interconnectivity of support, relationships, and communication.

In terms of the support available for children and young people with additional support needs, just over half of parent participants (54.79%) responded that they are generally satisfied with the support that their child receives, with a third of these respondents reporting that the support is good. Amongst the respondents who were not generally satisfied with the support their child was currently receiving, the commonalities amongst the responses were inconsistency in levels of support; differing levels of knowledge amongst education practitioners; and changes in the level of support, whether due to a change in staff or following a change of education establishment. Some parents also highlighted that they felt their children struggled to fit into the school and make friends, and there were concerns raised that their child could be the victim of bullying.

A small number of parents raised concerns that following a diagnosis their child was automatically moved into classes in an Additional Support Needs (ASN) base or Department of Additional Support (DAS) before it was fully understood how the diagnosis may manifest itself and whether their child needed to be removed from their classes. Two parents stated that the diagnosis of their child had not affected their capacity for learning, but that they were struggling to get the education establishment to allow their children to sit National 4 and 5 qualifications, as qualifications in the DAS unit were only offered up to National 3 level.

In terms of preparing their children for the transitions, whilst just over three-quarters (76.28%) of parents stated they had some level of information about the steps that were being taken to prepare their child, only 11.64% said they felt fully informed on the progress of their child towards transition. In their responses parents highlighted that they wish to have more support themselves along with more information about their children's transitions throughout school and after school, with some feeling that they were not informed of all the options that were available for their child. In some cases, parents felt as though decisions were being made without any input from them or their child.

Parents had mixed responses around the relationship they have with the education establishment that their child attends. Whilst 16.44% of parents (n=12) enjoy what they describe as great relationships with the education establishment their child attends and the education practitioners that interact with their child, nearly a quarter of parents (n=18; 24.66%) felt that relationships they had with the education establishment and its staff were poor.

Parents regard communication as a key part of the relationship that they have with the education establishment that their child attends. Feedback on communications was very mixed – whilst some parents state that the communication is positive, open and honest and that they feel well informed by their child's education provider, others highlighted that the level of communication with the education provider is less than they would like.

Just under a quarter of the parents (24.66%) reported in their responses that it was them that usually had to initiate communications or ask for meetings to discuss their child, with some parents stating that they were only contacted by the education establishment if there are problems. It was also reported by parents that often the only opportunity that they have to talk directly to some education practitioners is on parents' evening, and then they only get a maximum of five minutes per subject.

Nearly all parent participants (92.65%) stated that there was at least one thing that they would like to change about the support their child currently receives and the relationship they have with the education establishment their child attends and the education practitioners that interact with their child. The single most commented on change was the improvement of communications and making it easier for them to feel involved and engaged with their child's education. Some parents identified specific areas that they would like the support of their child to improve. These included their child having more access to specialist support, whether one-to-one or through an ASN base or DAS unit; their child having more access to resources that support them; and more creative opportunities in education establishments.

## Views of education practitioners on support, communications, and relationships

As with the responses of parent participants, the education practitioners who provided responses to the qualitative questions in the two phases of participant research also raised a number of key issues, including support during transitions, the role of parents and communications.

Education practitioners recognised that the number of pupils they interact with that have an ASN has risen over recent years, with the acknowledgement that this can bring challenges in the class, ensuring they are engaged with the class, and balancing their time between the whole class and pupils that require additional support. The majority of education practitioners felt that they are meeting the needs of the pupils with ASN that they interact with, and that this is easier when the pupil has the support of a Pupil Support Assistant (PSA). However, some respondents identified that there can be a shortage of PSAs to meet demand. Amongst those that identified that they were not always meeting the needs of pupils with ASN, nearly three-quarters (73.94%) recognised that with more information, support and training they would be better equipped to meet the needs of pupils. The importance of training and information related to ASNs was not limited to this group but acknowledged by many of the responding education practitioners. However, whilst practitioners would happily undertake training, it was recognised that training opportunities were often limited to in-service days, and that opportunities for individual training were often limited on these days due to other priorities.

The majority of education practitioners felt that they have the capacity to assist all pupils to prepare for transitions, not just those with additional support needs. It was recognised by some that the flexibility that they had in their timetables helped them to make time to support pupils. The need for partnership working with other professionals, both colleagues from the same education establishment or from partner organisations such as Skills

Development Scotland was recognised by education practitioners. It was recognised by education practitioners that in most cases pupils with additional support needs, that they interact with, progress to 'suitable' programmes at colleges of further education when they leave school.

The need for a partnership approach with parents was also recognised as important by many of the education practitioners. Similarly to the responses from parents, a proportion of education practitioners recognised that often direct contact with parents is limited, and often messages are passed through an intermediary within the education establishment. It was felt that this complicated communications, as there was a concern that the meanings of messages could be misconstrued and made building relationships with parents harder.

The influence of parents, and how it impacts on pupils' post school ambitions was also recognised by education practitioners. Whilst some parents actively engaged with their child's education and post-school ambitions, it was felt that this is not the case for all parents – although this behaviour is not limited to the parents of young people with additional support needs. When asked what factors the participants feel prevent the parents from being involved, there were a range of responses and suggested barriers. Education practitioners understand that parents may be reluctant to be involved in their child's education if they had a previous negative personal experience of education and do not wish to engage, or if there are barriers such as the parents' own learning needs or literacy skills. Education practitioners also understood that there could be complex barriers preventing participation but highlighted that often they are not aware of specific issues affecting parents.

Along with the recognition that they require additional support, training and information, education practitioners identified that the same is true for parents. It was felt that by using a holistic approach to ensure parents are supported, as well as being better informed of the processes and tools that were used in schools, they could better understand the options for their children. A clear concern of education practitioners was that if parents experienced digital exclusion or digital poverty that they would struggle to access many of the resources and tools that they could use to support their children, as they are only available online.

## Aspirations and Expectations

| Question | Yes | No | Did not answer |
|---|---|---|---|
| Do your children talk about having a job when they are older? | 62.84% | 26.38% | 10.78% |
| Do you talk to the children about employment after school? | 50.16% | 28.63% | 21.21% |

*Figure 13: Percentages of responses from questions asked of parent participants about discussions about their child's future plans*

To understand how children and young people discuss their future aspirations, the research asked parents and education practitioners questions about the types of discussions they were having with children and young people about their aspirations and future plans.

As can be seen in the Figure 13, just under two-thirds of parents indicate that they talk with their children about working and having a job when they are older. But this figure drops to just over half when asked if they speak to their children about employment after school.

For parents who gave an affirmative response, many of them stated that whilst they had these conversations with their children, they would welcome more information about the different post-school options so that their conversations could be more informed and based on contemporary information, rather than based on the experiences that the parents had. It was also felt that more information about post-school options should be available in formats that their children can understand to help facilitate these discussions at home.

Amongst parents who responded that they were not having the conversations with their children, some felt that their children were too young and/or felt that having to make decisions about post-school destinations was too far in the future. Parents also recognised that their child's additional support need could make it difficult to discuss the future as this would mean a change in the routine of their child. This was particularly true of parents of children with Autistic Spectrum Conditions.

Many of the parents felt that there are limited opportunities for their children and felt they needed more information about their future choices. It was recognised by parents and education practitioners that it is incredibly important to provide young people with additional support needs the opportunity to experience the world of work and be given information to understand their employment options. This will provide young people the chance to explore different opportunities, whilst providing the opportunity for education practitioners and parents to fully understand the young person's potential to aspire and succeed in various options which may otherwise not be known to them.
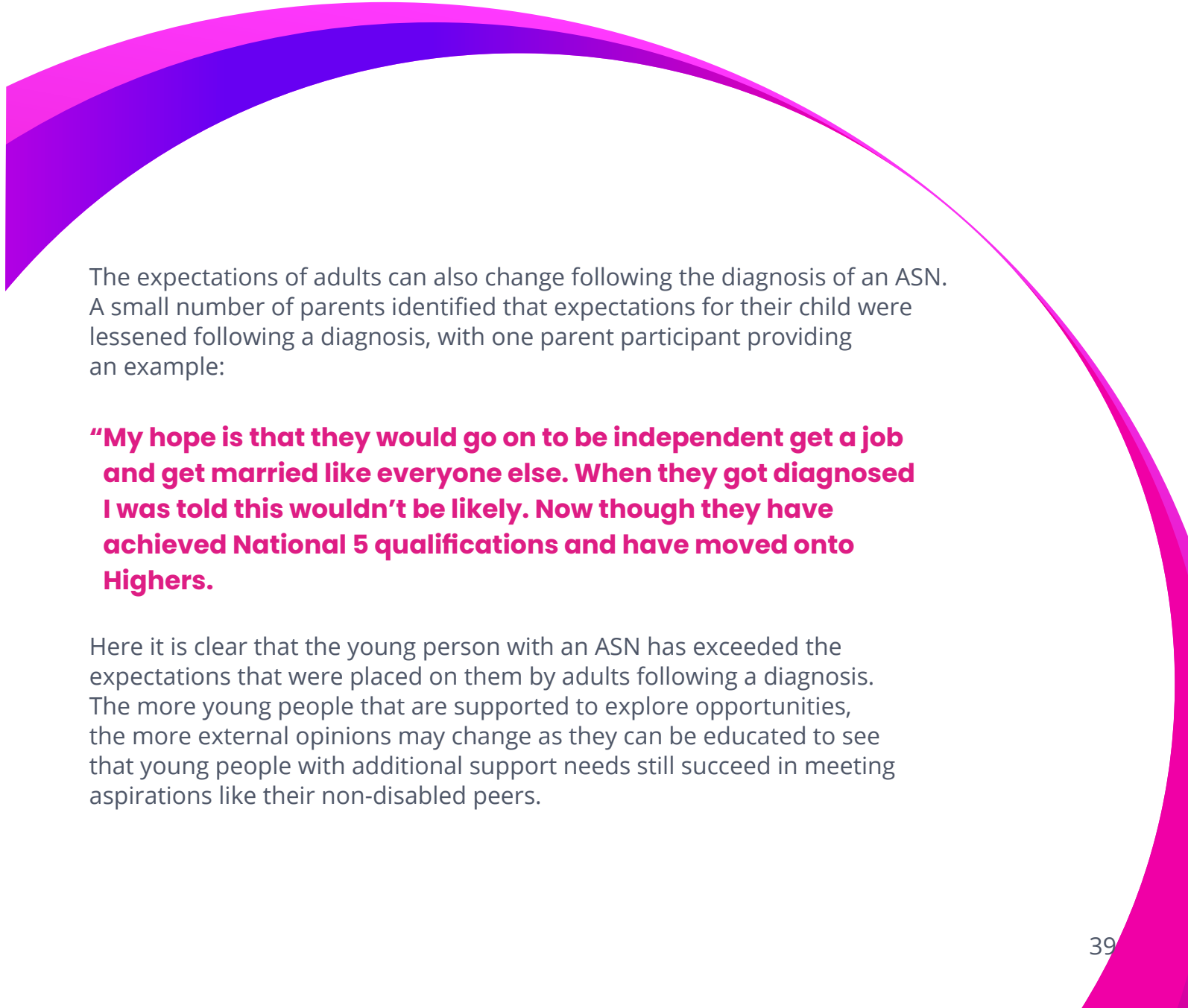
When asked the two questions highlighted in figure 13, there was a difference in the responses of education practitioners. All practitioners working in primary education establishments stated that no specific conversations were had with pupils about post-school options. Some of these practitioners did confirm that they have conversations about employment, as well as other post-school options with all the pupils they worked with, but these were more general conversations rather than focusing on aspirations of individual pupils. When asked why conversations were not had, primary practitioners stated that it either was not applicable or that they felt their pupils were too young.

In comparison, all practitioners that worked in secondary education responded affirmatively that they had talked to their pupils about employment after school, with all respondents stating that not only do they speak to their pupils about future employment, but also encourage them to consider what they would like to do. The follow-up question to this asked about when these conversations started. It was found that 70.62% of respondents stated that the conversations start in the first year of secondary school and continue throughout the Broad General Education (BGE) phase of secondary school and into senior phase, with additional emphasis and focus added each year. Secondary practitioners also stated that it was not just them that had the conversations with their pupils, but in some cases the conversations were led by Skills Development Scotland.

However, whilst education practitioners are having the conversations with their pupils with ASNs there was a feeling that there was limited understanding of the available post-school options and expectations amongst the pupils they taught. There was also a feeling that for many pupils with ASN there are limited opportunities and that some of the options do not have the required resources for coping with some levels of need.

Education practitioners also recognised that a pupil's future aspirations were influenced by home life. There was a sense from the responses of some practitioners that they felt that the level of aspiration that the parents exhibit for themselves will influence the level of aspiration exhibited by their child.

The findings of the research reflected that there can be a divide between the aspirations of some young people with additional support needs and the expectations of adults, both parents and education practitioners, of what the young people can achieve. Respondents from both groups of adults felt that job aspirations for some children and young people can be unrealistic. It was acknowledged that this behaviour is not limited to children and young people with additional support needs but was evident in most children and young people at some point. Some education practitioners highlighted that whilst the behaviour is seen in many children and young people, it can be harder to for those with additional support needs to understand that their aspirations are unlikely to become a reality. The responses from interviews also highlighted that the expectations that adults have for the young people they interact with are often different, with some respondents admitting that they potentially underestimate what a child or young person could achieve.

The expectations of adults can also change following the diagnosis of an ASN. A small number of parents identified that expectations for their child were lessened following a diagnosis, with one parent participant providing an example:

**"My hope is that they would go on to be independent get a job and get married like everyone else. When they got diagnosed I was told this wouldn't be likely. Now though they have achieved National 5 qualifications and have moved onto Highers.**

Here it is clear that the young person with an ASN has exceeded the expectations that were placed on them by adults following a diagnosis. The more young people that are supported to explore opportunities, the more external opinions may change as they can be educated to see that young people with additional support needs still succeed in meeting aspirations like their non-disabled peers.

# Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research, there are clear and noticeable areas that require some level of improvement to ensure that young people with additional support needs are allowed to explore their aspirations and different opportunities that will help to prepare them for the transition from education into employment.

As a result of gathering the views from key adults in children and young people's lives, and the recognition of these areas of improvement the following recommendations are proposed.

## Information about future options is needed earlier

It is evident from the responses of all participants, particularly parents, that it is felt that there is a need for children and young people with ASNs to be given information about their future options.

As highlighted in the Developing the Young Workforce strategy, early intervention is key when tackling attainment issues for young people with additional support needs. Due to the nature of some young people's needs, change can be difficult and therefore a more gradual introduction and exposure to the world of work or other future opportunities will ensure a smoother transition with time for young people to process and adapt (Education Scotland, 2015a).

"I haven't had any information from the school even though he is 11 and will be starting high school next year it's going to be such a big change.
— Parent or Carer

A lack of information, we have sort of been left.
— Parent or Carer

I've definitely not had any information on her future choices.
— Parent or Carer

I have huge concerns. I know we are going in one direction but I don't know if it's the right direction. I feel I need some kind of access to information, I don't want (him) to just leave school and him doing nothing.
— Parent or Carer

Whilst the nursery aged or young primary aged children seem too young to discuss the future, conversations around hopes and aspirations should start early. Developing the Young Workforce advocates that the journey of preparing children and young people for the world of work starts in the early years, continuing throughout a young person's education, with the requirement of appropriate support and guidance as they progress (Education Scotland, 2015b). Starting these topics of conversation earlier in the curriculum could mean that parents or carers will be ready to discuss these topics too and have further information available to them not only about the child's post school transition, but about their progression throughout education in terms of developing general aspirations. This will help parents or carers relieve anxiety about the impact of change on their child and ensure smoother educational transitions.

Again, as stated in the 'Principles for Good Transitions 3', making information available and accessible for all parties is crucial to ensure a successful school transition for the young person. This appears to be an area which parents have overwhelmingly felt they lack support with (ARC Scotland and Scottish Transitions Forum, 2019).

## Employer engagement is needed earlier

The earlier in their schooling that pupils, with and without additional support needs, can engage with employers, the earlier they will gain understanding of the world of work and build informed understandings about their future options.

Therefore, having earlier employer engagement activities for young people with additional support needs will highlight potential future options earlier and allow them to aspire to be ambitious, make informed choices, and most importantly understand that their additional support needs do not limit their chances of success.

Many of the parents engaged with the research felt that information about the differing options was not made available to them with some seeking the opportunity to understand more about job opportunities available to their children.

It is not necessarily that the information that parents are seeking does not exist, but that parents are not aware of it and/or do not know how to access it. One issue in access could be that the information that parents are seeking is available online, and the parents are experiencing digital exclusion or digital poverty.

A common discussion theme was the concern that the young people have unrealistic expectations when thinking about the future. However having practical understanding of the world of work would support young people to feel more confident and informed about their future choices. Having the opportunity to thrive in real work experiences and environments will also build young people's confidence and perhaps challenge any perceptions held that their post school options are limited.

What is key, is that young people with additional support needs are offered meaningful employer engagement opportunities to aid their aspirations, rather than limit them. Person centered planning is crucial to ensure that the young people's needs are taken into account and that they are supported to voice their opinions on making choices.



**" There is a lack of information for kids with additional support needs, you've got to look for it yourself but then you don't know what you're looking for. Nobody points the information out for you.**
– Parent or Carer

## Role models are needed to inspire young people and parents

Young people's aspirations can be positively influenced and impacted through lived experiences. For example, a role model or mentor can show both a young person with an additional support need and their parents what is possible and help to inspire them.

Building mentor schemes for young people with additional support needs is a reassuring and motivating example to other young people and parents that aspirations are possible. Parents discuss hopes of inclusion and being free from discrimination – a right that can be reiterated by other young people with disabilities who have succeeded themselves.

Role models for young people in education may also challenge the perceptions that their options are limited and instead provide an example of what is possible for every individual young person with the right support.

## Education practitioners would benefit from relevant bespoke training and input

It is clear from the evidence of this research that education practitioners want to be involved with children and young people with ASNs, and to assist and support them to make future choices. As previously highlighted, 100% of high school professionals stated that they have conversations about employment with their pupils. They also highlight how crucial parental involvement and engagement is to support them with this. Education practitioners currently plan activities and speak positively of the other professionals who are known to them supporting transitions. However, there are also identified areas which could relieve education practitioners of additional pressure therefore giving more time for young people's transitional support. Having specialist input would aid education practitioners' capacity and also help them to understand the specific support needs of each pupil.

One parent suggested additional training could be beneficial to allow education practitioners the chance to understand support needs:

**"I would like to see more staff being educated in additional support not just on a 1-3 day crash course.**

Education practitioners themselves also highlighted areas they feel could support their abilities to be positively involved with the children's future choices:

**I need more time but have good support from SDS and other colleagues.** – Education practitioner

**More time for transitions, more visits. A list of suitable placements.** – Education practitioner

**We have limited technology to access the internet and limited time with our classes (including numerous timetable changes throughout the year) our capacity is limited. We need dedicated time.** – Education practitioner

**A glossary/compendium of resources and organisations that we could go to so we know what is out there for a wide range of pupils with a wide range of ASN.** – Education practitioner

What is clear from both sets of participants, both parents and education practitioners, is that they wish to be involved but that communications between the two parties can be challenging.

Specialist input could also ease this difficulty and support clear communication across all parties. This could particularly address the common theme of differing expectations, as young people can be supported to explore opportunities and build understanding whilst parents and education practitioners can meanwhile witness young people succeeding in a range of areas.

Training should also be provided for education practitioners to understand additional support needs and have practical tools which professionals can utilise when supporting pupils. Most importantly and as highlighted by the parent above, the training needs to be effective in addressing the concerns of education practitioners and parents when it comes to supporting young people's transitions. Additionally, understanding the barriers that prevent some parents from being involved in their child's transitions may aid the communication between parties.

## Parents need tailored support

It was highlighted by members of both participant groups that there are factors which can prevent, or were felt to prevent, some parents from participating in their children's education and future decision making. These included lack of understanding or knowledge, lack of information, and issues relating to digital exclusion or digital poverty. It was also highlighted that there could be other barriers, such as those outlined below, that could limit a parent's capacity to be involved with their children's future and positively impact on their aspirations.

Equally, it was highlighted by some parents that they have the information they need, but that it is a continuous 'fight' for them to ensure that their child is in receipt of the support they need.

As well as highlighting the fact that some parents can lack the required capacity due to personal barriers to advocate for their children in this way, it is also clear from participants who spoke to our researcher that they are struggling to cope with this process and were understandably very emotional when having these conversations.

It is clear from the National Improvement Framework 2020 action plan, that parental involvement is crucial in the process of impacting children's future choices and they highlight what is meant by true parental involvement in the curriculum.

"Parents ask me how I have kept fighting for so long, I says you have to as a parent because nobody else does!
– Parent or Carer

It feels like groundhog day, I'm sure lots of parents feel that. It has been a fire fight all the way for the support.
– Parent or Carer

I have tried honestly I have put so much into trying but I constantly get shot down. It's so tiring. – Parent or Carertimetable changes throughout the year) our capacity is limited. We need dedicated time.
– Education practitioner

"Parental involvement includes parental representation in decision-making, collaboration between parents and educators in matters such as school improvement planning, using the skills of parents and carers to enrich the curriculum, and communication between home and early learning and childcare settings and school.
– Parent or Carer

Parents or carers therefore need supported to be fully included to create this impact, which many parent or carers highlighted as an issue,

We have had no support whatsoever, so with no support from professionals there is only so much a parent can do.
– Parent or Carer

I don't know if she has the capacity to go into work, but I find this area quite emotional. – Parent or Carer

Not only should parents be supported to be involved in their child's education, parents should also have access to their own personal support to ensure their own wellbeing and ability to positively contribute to their child's future. For example, having support to understand the different levels of support that are available, as well as the welfare system and financial help. As referred to in the findings, most participating parents live in areas of deprivation and therefore may benefit from this additional level of support.

Parents also spoke of a general lack of support, not specific to just being involved with their child's education,

**"Not enough information on services to support not just my son but me as a parent.** – Parent or Carer

**I'm by myself and need this information to help my kids, I try my best, but I just don't know where to get the right support.** – Parent or Carer

When further asked what this support should look like, many parents stated that the support needs to be one-to-one to truly understand their child's need and support them to successfully achieve their future aspirations. Others identified that they simply need full information for their own lives and also for their child's transition from school.

## Ongoing support is needed after leaving school

Education practitioners discuss the support put in place for pupils leaving school however according to Principle 3 of Principles of Good Transitions, this support should continue for young people with additional support needs up to the age of 25 (ARC Scotland and Scottish Transitions Forum, 2019). Some education practitioners suggest the college route takes place for young people leaving school at which point the transitional school support has stopped. However, to ensure long term success, young people with additional support needs should have long term transitions support and ideally support which is consistent and chosen by the young person; highlighting another principle stating that young people should be at the centre of their transitions planning.

The support should also continue throughout the young person's positive destination if desired. For example, providing employment and in work support following best practice guidelines of the Supported Employment Model (European Union of Support Employment, 2010) to ensure employment is sustainable and suitable for each young person's needs.

Long term support also needs to be essential for young people with additional support needs as some individuals may need more time to make decisions about their future along with more time to explore opportunities available to them. The emphasis on having time to do this is crucial, as opposed to pressured decision making. Having access to long term support may also alleviate pressure on parents or carers who discuss the fear they have around their child leaving school without options,

**"I have the fear his education is no longer going to be meaningful for him because they don't have the funding to make sure my son has the right support for him. If they spent the right money on him now they would save so much in the future. They have a commitment of getting it right for every child and they have failed miserably on that for a disabled child.** – Parent or Carer

# Conclusion

This research study set out to explore three key aims using both quantitative and qualitative research approaches – an online survey, then a combination of online interviews and self-completion qualitative questionnaires. The three aims were:

- consider what influence parents and educational practitioners have on the transitions of young people with additional support needs into the world of work.
- explore key factors relating to supporting and growing the aspirations of young people with additional support needs and disabilities, and the preparation for their transition from secondary education into employment.
- consider influences of specific socio-economic factors e.g. gender, age, disability

A range of views were shared from both groups of participants, parents and education practitioners. When hearing from the parents of children of all ages, all parents could identify hopes for their children's future. These hopes are important to understand as they also reveal the fears parents hold around their child's potential exclusion from the opportunity to achieve employment. Many of the views simply highlight the desire for equality and support to succeed.

It is clear that parents aspire for the best opportunities and inclusion for their children and as their children progress through education options and support must be available. Particular attention is needed on supporting parents who are facing multiple barriers and arguably could not be included in this project's reach.

Equally, education practitioners want the best for the pupils they teach. They recognise that they have an important role in helping to shape the aspirations of young people and prepare them to transition from school. Practitioners also accept that parents have a far greater role to play, particularly in shaping the ambitions of children and young people.

The need for additional support and information was highlighted by both participant groups. It was recognised that simply making the information available is not enough, it has to be promoted to the right people and available in the formats that work for those who both want and need to access it.

It is hoped that the recommendations of this report are taken forward and delivered in full. A holistic approach is needed to tackle a range of factors discussed in this report as they influence children's aspirations from an early age. With the right support, it is possible to improve the transition process from school to the world of work whilst at the same time, also improving young people's transition experiences and their longer term employment opportunities.

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# Appendices

# Appendix 1 – Acknowledgements and Consultees

We would like to acknowledge the consultees who supported this evaluation process. Their co-operation and inputs were hugely valuable and much appreciated.

## Steering Group Members

**Tracey Francis** – Policy and Development Worker, Scottish Transitions Forum

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**Cheryl Burnett** – Scottish Transitions Forum

**Jamie Rutherford** – Director, ENABLE Works

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In addition, we would like to acknowledge and thank the 102 parents and 48 educational practitioners who volunteered their time and energy to contribute their thoughts, opinions, and feelings to the findings in this research.

# Appendix 2 – Content Review

Policies that informed this report include the following:

**A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People (2 Dec 2016)**
This document outlines the action Scottish Government will take to meet its ambition to at least halve the disability employment gap in Scotland. It aims to summarise: the nature of the challenge; some of the initial key actions that will be taken during 2019 – 2021; and how they will continue to develop a collective approach to achieving the ambition, including through an annual update of the plan. A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People, launched in 2016, includes 93 actions that seek to reduce these barriers.

**No One Left Behind (27 Mar 2018)**
This provides the national action plan for creating a joined-up approach and improve employability prospects for disadvantaged groups. It states that a person-centred system that is more flexible and responsive to the changing labour market, tackles inequalities and grows Scotland's economy is needed now more than ever as we shape our collective economic and wellbeing response to the current public health crisis.

**Achieving Excellence and Equity - 2020 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan**
Underlining a moral imperative to ensure that all young people in Scotland receive a first-class education in their local school. That is why the relentless focus of this

Government is to deliver an education system in Scotland which raises attainment for all, closes the attainment gap, and enables all children and young people to fulfil their potential. The National Improvement Framework (NIF) was introduced to help us achieve that vision.

**The Right Help at the Right Time in the Right Place 2019**
Scotland's Ten-Year Strategy for the Learning Provision for Children and Young People with Complex Additional Support Needs 2017-2026 was published on the 5 June 2017 for public consultation. This document has been updated following consideration of the responses to the consultation. The document outlines our vision in Scotland for the education of children and young people with complex additional support needs. Our ten-year strategy sits within the context of other policies and strategies to improve the learning outcomes for children and young people with complex additional support needs living in Scotland.

**Impact of Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006**
Parents of children with additional support needs have also already highlighted that "specific concerns over transitions were common" according to the Review of the Impact of Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) 2006. The policy focus on support and involvement with parents is therefore a key point of discussion when discussing influential factors on disabled young peoples' future aspirations.

**The Scottish Government's School and Employer Partnership (SEP) Framework**
Which highlights "effective age and stage employer interventions for pupils at key transition and decision stages of secondary school" and helps create an understanding of where pupils' knowledge should be when discussing the world of work through high school education. This can prove effective when measuring the views of parents and education practitioners involved in this research to understand how the young pupils with disabilities compare to the promoted guidance.

**Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) Impact Report**
Determining early intervention is key when supporting children to have successful destinations beyond school suggesting that involvement can begin as early as 3 years old to understand the world of work through to the age of 18 to have fully developed understandings to make informed choices about the future.

**Parents and Carers Research 2018 Final Report**
This research focused on parents and carers views, role and influence on their child's education, employment and training, including the types of information they use or need to help them support their child to make informed choices about their post-school options. The research combined qualitative and quantitative methods to explore parents and carers understanding in this area and to gauge their information needs.

**Revised SEIC Plan September 2019**
The South East Improvement Collaborative recognises that the accountability for improvement remains with each local authority and that the regional improvement collaborative exists to provide added value or additionality. By working collaboratively at establishment, local authority, Regional Improvement Collaborative and national level we believe that we can accelerate progress in our priority areas giving the best chance for us to achieve excellence and equity for all of our children.ambitious targets. In Midlothian the vision reflects this national framework.

**Midlothian Local Child Poverty Action Report 2019**

Building on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) provides the vision for our work in Scotland to ensure that every child has a good start in life with a safe, healthy and happy childhood. Ending child poverty is a central part of making that vision a reality and the Human Rights perspective embodied in UNCRC is central to Scottish Government's decision making and action in this area.The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 embodies this approach and sets out Scottish Government's commitment to eradicating child poverty by 2030 by meeting a set of ambitious targets. In Midlothian the vision reflects this national framework.

**Best Beginnings - Inclusive support for parents with a learning disability**

This strategy emphasises the importance of enabling people with learning disabilities to meet new people, form all kinds of relationships, and to lead a fulfilling life with access to a diverse range of social and leisure activities. It also emphasises their right to become parents and the need for adequate support to sustain the family unit. Parents with a learning disability do not get sufficient access to support, putting families at risk of enforced separation.

**Every Child Every Chance 2018-2022**

This Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan is the first crucial step in our journey towards meeting the ambitious targets set out in the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. The Act is a landmark piece of legislation that clearly positions Scotland as leading in the UK on tackling child poverty. The Plan represents our first comprehensive and impactful programme towards achieving the child poverty reduction targets, covering the period 2018-22. Based on the best available evidence to date, they have developed a theory of change – a theoretical underpinning for how we expect to meet our targets.

# Appendix 3 – Online Survey Questions (Participant Research Phase 1)

**Online Survey Questions: Parents**

- Email Address
- First Name
- Last Name
- Do you consent to taking part in this survey and to having a follow up discussion?
- Please state your name
- Which of the following best describes you?
- Parent or Guardian
- Please give a contact number
- Please give an email address
- What is your name? Please note, your name will not be disclosed in any findings. This is to allow us to monitor who has completed the survey.
- Where do you live?

- What is your postcode?
- Which age bracket do you fall into?
- What is your race or ethnicity?
- How many working adults are in your household?
- If you are/have been employed – what job sector do you/did you work in?
- Are you employed?
- How long have you been unemployed for?
- How many hours per week do you work?
- Do you have a disability? Please select which applies to you:

  - Physical Disability
  - Learning Disability
  - Autism Spectrum Disorder
  - Dyslexia
  - Dyscalculia
  - Dyspraxia
  - ADHD
  - Mental Health Condition
  - Visual Impairment
  - Hearing Loss
  - Deafness
  - Other (please specify)

- Do you receive any benefits for yourself? Please select which apply:

  - Personal Independence Payment (PIP)
  - Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
  - Housing Benefit
  - Income Support
  - Job Seeker's Allowance
  - Working Tax Credits
  - Employment and Support Allowance (ESA )
  - Child Tax Credits
  - Universal Credit
  - Carer's Allowance
  - Other (please specify)

- Do you receive any benefits for your children? Please select which apply:

  - Personal Independence Payment (PIP)
  - Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
  - Housing Benefit
  - Income Support
  - Job Seeker's Allowance
  - Working Tax Credits
  - Employment and Support Allowance (ESA )
  - Child Tax Credits
  - Universal Credit
  - Carer's Allowance
  - Other (please specify)

- What is your marital status?

- How many people live in your household?

- How many of your children have a disability?

- What are your children's disability? Please select all that apply:

  - Physical Disability
  - Learning Disability
  - Autism Spectrum Disorder
  - Dyslexia
  - Dyscalculia
  - Dyspraxia

  - ADHD
  - Mental Health Condition
  - Visual Impairment
  - Hearing Loss
  - Deafness
  - Other (please specify)

- How frequently do you discuss your children's future with their childcare/education practitioners?

- Do your children make reference to the world of work?

- Do your children talk about having a job when they are older?

- Are you aware of any future options available to your children when they leave school? (e.g. Further Education/Employment)

- Would you be interested in taking part in a focus group discussion to support this research? (5–10 people group size)

- Would you prefer to be contacted for a one-to-one discussion to support this research?

- Do you have access to any of the following communication methods? (Please select all you can access) – participants were provided different options of communication methods to choose from.

**Online Survey Questions: Education Practitioners**

- Email Address

- First Name

- Last Name

- Do you consent to taking part in this survey and to having a follow up discussion?

- Please state your name

- Which of the following best describes you?

- Education Practitioner

- Please give a contact number

- Please give an email address

- What is your name? Please note, your name will not be used in any findings. This is to allow us to track who has completed the survey.

- Which local authority is your nursery/school located in?

- What nursey/school do you work in?

- How many children do you teach? Please give a number:

- What age group do you teach?

- What is the normal ratio of staff: children in your nursey/school setting?

- How many children in your class have a learning disability?

- Do the children ever talk about their transition into work or further education after High School?

- Do you talk to the children about their transition into further education after High School?

- Do you talk to the children about employment after High School?

- Is there support in your place of work for children to consider their options after school?

- Do you have enough capacity in your role to support children to consider their transition after school into further education or employment?

- How many parents engage with you about their children's education? Please give a number:

- Of the parents who do not engage in their children's education, what are the factors which influence their ability to get involved?

- How many parents engage with you about their children's transition into employment after high school? Please give a number:

- Of the parents who do not engage in their children's transition into employment after high school, what are the factors which influence their ability to get involved?

- How many parents engage with you about their children's transition into further education after high school? Please give a number:

- Would you be interested in taking part in a focus group discussion to support this research? (5 – 10 people group size)

- Would you prefer to be contacted for a one-to-one discussion to support this research?

- Do you have access to any of the following communication methods? (Please select all you can access) – participants were provided different options of communication methods to choose from.

## Appendix 4 – Qualitative Questions (Participant Research Phase 2)

**Online Questions: Parents**

1. What aspirations do you have for your child/children that have a learning disability for their future/adulthood?

2. Do you talk to your child/children that have a learning disability about their life after school/adulthood?

3. Is there anything that prevents you from being able to understand your child/children's future choices?

4. Are you aware of any aspirations your child that has a learning disability may when they leave high school?

5. Do you think their aspirations are achievable? Please expand your rationale.

As you are aware ENABLE Scotland supports young people with disabilities in school to explore their future options. The next set of questions are to get your opinions on this for your child.

6. What support is available in school/nursery to help your child/children's transition after school into work or further education? Is there anything specific about their learning disability to consider?

7. What kind of support do you think is needed for your child/children with a learning disability to reach their aspirations once they have finished high school?

8. Do you have enough information about your child's future choices once they finish high school, specific to their support needs?

9. Do you need support to understand the options available to your child/children's once they finish high school?

10. Please explain your relationship with your child's/children's school in terms of communication about your child's future and their support. Is there a specific member of who has advised you of options? What is their professional role?

11. Have you attended any specific events about your child's options after school? If so, who hosted these? Did they consider their support needs/accessible?

12. Do you have any further concerns about your child/children as they progress through education and leave high school because of their support needs?

ENABLE Scotland supports young people with disabilities into employment after school if applicable. These next questions are specific to employment.

13. Do you talk to your child/children that have a learning disability about having a job?

14. Do you have an understanding of the job opportunities available to your child/children that has a learning disability?

**Qualitative Questions: Education Practitioners (Early Learning and Childcare – pupils aged 0-5)**

1. Do you think children with additional support needs in your nursery have an understanding of aspirations when they grow up?

2. Do your children with additional support needs talk about what they want to be when they grow up?

3. Do the children with additional support needs talk about their life when they grow up? What does this include? (note for facilitator: job, family, house)

4. What common barriers do you think children with additional support needs face day to day?

5. Do parents discuss their aspirations for their children with additional support needs with you?

6. How comfortable are you talking to parents about their child's with additional support needs aspirations and realistic expectations for life after school?

7. What factors do you think influence parents' ability to be involved with their children's future? (notes for facilitator: employment in the household, marital status, areas of deprivation)

8. Are you aware of any support that children with additional support needs can access to help them explore their aspirations for life after high school?

9. Do the children with additional support needs that you teach make any reference to the world of work or their goals in the future?

10. Do you think that the children you teach with additional support needs will move into jobs in their future?

11. Has your nursery engaged with any employers through work place visits or attending the nursery? How accessible was this for your children with additional support needs?

12. Do you think the children you teach with additional support needs have realistic expectations about their future?

13. How comfortable are you talking about the children's aspirations for life after school with them? Including their parents.

14. Do you work with any specialist organisations to help parents and young people to consider their options for the future? i.e. school- post school options like college, employment?

**Qualitative Questions: Education Practitioners (Primary – pupils aged 5-11)**

1. Do you think children with additional support needs in your primary school have an understanding of aspirations when they grow up?

2. Do the children with additional support needs talk about their life when they grow up? What does this include? (note for facilitator: job, family, house)

3. What common barriers do you think children with additional support needs face day to day?

4. Do parents discuss their aspirations for their children who have additional support needs with you?

5. How comfortable are you talking to parents about their child's aspirations and realistic expectations for life after school?

6. What factors do you think influence parents' ability to be involved with their children's future? (notes for facilitator: employment in the household, marital status, areas of deprivation)

7. Are you aware of any support that children with additional support needs can access to help them explore their aspirations for life after high school?

8. Do you work with any specialist organisations to help with educational transitions support to prepare for life after high school?

9. Do the children with additional support needs who you teach make any reference to the world of work or their goals in the future?

10. Do you think that the children with additional support needs who you teach will move into jobs in their future?

11. Does your school curriculum have any activities that explore job roles/ what to expect in the world of work for pupils with additional support needs?

12. Are the children you teach who have additional support needs able to relate the work they do at school with the skills needed for work in the future?

13. Has your primary school engaged with any employers through workplace visits or attending the school?

14. Do you think the children you teach have realistic expectations about their future?

15. How comfortable are you talking about the children's aspirations for life after school with them?

**Qualitative Questions: Education Practitioners (Secondary [S1-S3] – pupils aged 11-15)**

1. Do you think pupils with additional support needs in your high school have an understanding of aspirations when they grow up?

2. Do the pupils with additional support needs talk about their life when they grow up? What does this include? (note for facilitator: job, family, house)

3. What common barriers do you think pupils with additional support needs face day to day?

4. Do parents discuss their aspirations for their children that have a learning disability with you?

5. How comfortable are you talking to parents about their child's aspirations and realistic expectations for life after school?

6. What factors do you think influence parents' ability to be involved with their children's future? (notes for facilitator: employment in the household, marital status, areas of deprivation)

7. Are you aware of any support that pupils with additional support needs can access to help them explore their aspirations for life after high school?

8. Do you work with any specialist organisations to help with educational transitions support to prepare for life after high school?

9. Do the pupils with learning disability you teach make any reference to the world of work or their goals in the future?

10. Do you think that the pupils with additional support needs that you teach want to move into jobs in their future?

11. Does your school curriculum have any activities that explore job roles/ what to expect in the world of work specifically for pupils that have additional support needs?

12. Have the pupils you teach that have additional support needs any employer attend

engagement activities such as work visits, work placements or career fairs?

13. If so, who arranged this?

14. Do the pupils with additional support needs you teach understand the skills they need for future employment? (note for facilitator: soft skills and academic skills)

15. Do you think the pupils with additional support needs that you teach have realistic expectations about their future?

16. How comfortable are you talking about the pupil's aspirations for life after school with them?

17. What is your capacity to support your pupils with additional support needs to explore their aspirations for life after school? What help would you need to do this better?

**Qualitative Questions: Education Practitioners (Secondary [S4-S6] – pupils aged 16-19)**

1. Do you think pupils with additional support needs in your high school have an understanding of aspirations when they grow up?

2. Do the pupils with additional support needs talk about their life when they grow up? What does this include? (note for facilitator: job, family, house)

3. What common barriers do you think pupils with additional support needs face day to day?

4. Do parents discuss their aspirations for their children with you?

5. How comfortable are you talking to parents about their child's aspirations and realistic expectations for life after school?

6. Have the pupils' parents attended any activities/events related to their children's transition from school?

7. What factors do you think influence parents' ability to be involved with their children's future? (notes for facilitator: employment in the household, marital status, areas of deprivation)

8. Are you aware of any support or organisations that pupils with additional support needs can access to help them explore their aspirations for life after high school?

9. Do the pupils you teach who have additional support needs make any reference to the world of work or their employment aspirations in the future? How realistic are these?

10. Do you think your pupils' aspirations are influenced by their home life? (note to facilitator – parents' employment, expectations etc)

11. Does your school curriculum have any activities that explore job roles/sectors what to expect in the world of work for pupils with additional support needs? How fully do your pupils understand this?

12. Have the young people you teach with additional support needs attended any employer engagement activities such as work visits, work placements or career fairs? If so, who arranged this? Are they inclusive of pupil support needs?

1. Do the pupils who have additional support needs that you teach understand the skills they need for future employment? (note for facilitator: soft skills and academic skills)

2. How comfortable are you talking about the pupil's aspirations for life after school with them?

3. What is your capacity to support your pupils to explore their aspirations for life after school?

# Get In Touch

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