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# **Lifelong Learning and Post-School Transitions for Young People with Disabilities**



**Professor Sheila Riddell**

**Centre for Research in Education Inclusion & Diversity  
(CREID)**

**University of Edinburgh**

[www.creid.ed.ac.uk](http://www.creid.ed.ac.uk)

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# Overview



Aim – to highlight some issues in the post-school transitions of young disabled people in Scotland.

- Post-school destinations
- Barriers
- Support
- Progress towards independent adulthood

A note on terminology: The term ASN includes (school-age) children & young people who have difficulty in learning for any reason. Disability is a sub-set of broad ASN category. A person is disabled if they fulfil the criteria set out in the Equality Act 2010.





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## Presentation draws on research conducted by CREID over past 20 years



- The Meaning of the Learning Society for Adults with Learning Difficulties funded by the ESRC in 2001
- Post-school Transitions of Young People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing funded by the National Deaf Children's Society in 2012
- Autonomy, Rights and Children with ASN: A New Paradigm? funded by the ESRC (ongoing)



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# What can we learn from Scottish Government statistics?



- Scottish Government has strong rhetorical commitment to equality for disabled people & the wider human rights agenda.
- But headline 'positive destination' data show that those with ASN have worse outcomes than others.
- 'Positive destination' is broad brush measure – drilling down by destination and type of difficulty shows wide variation between groups.



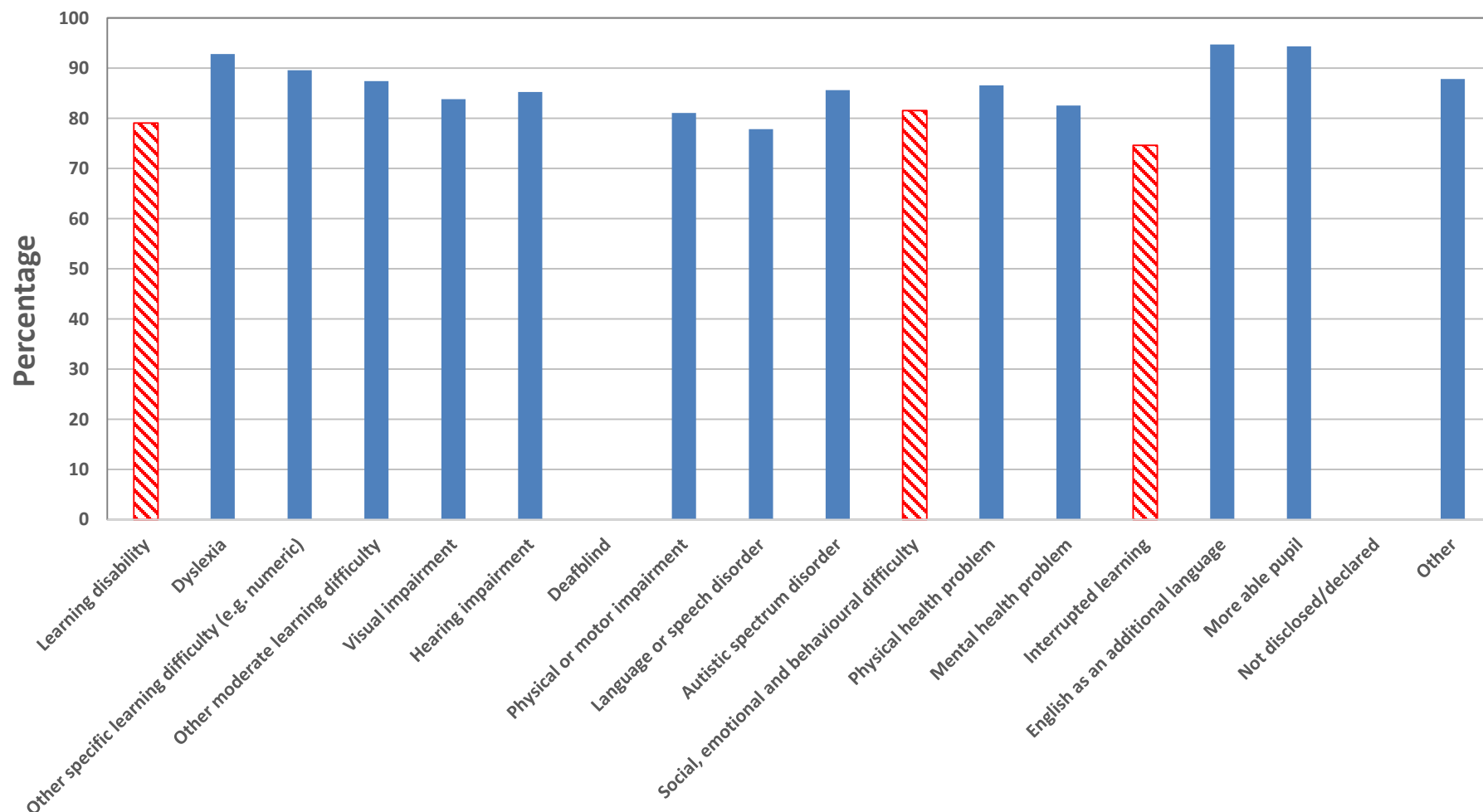


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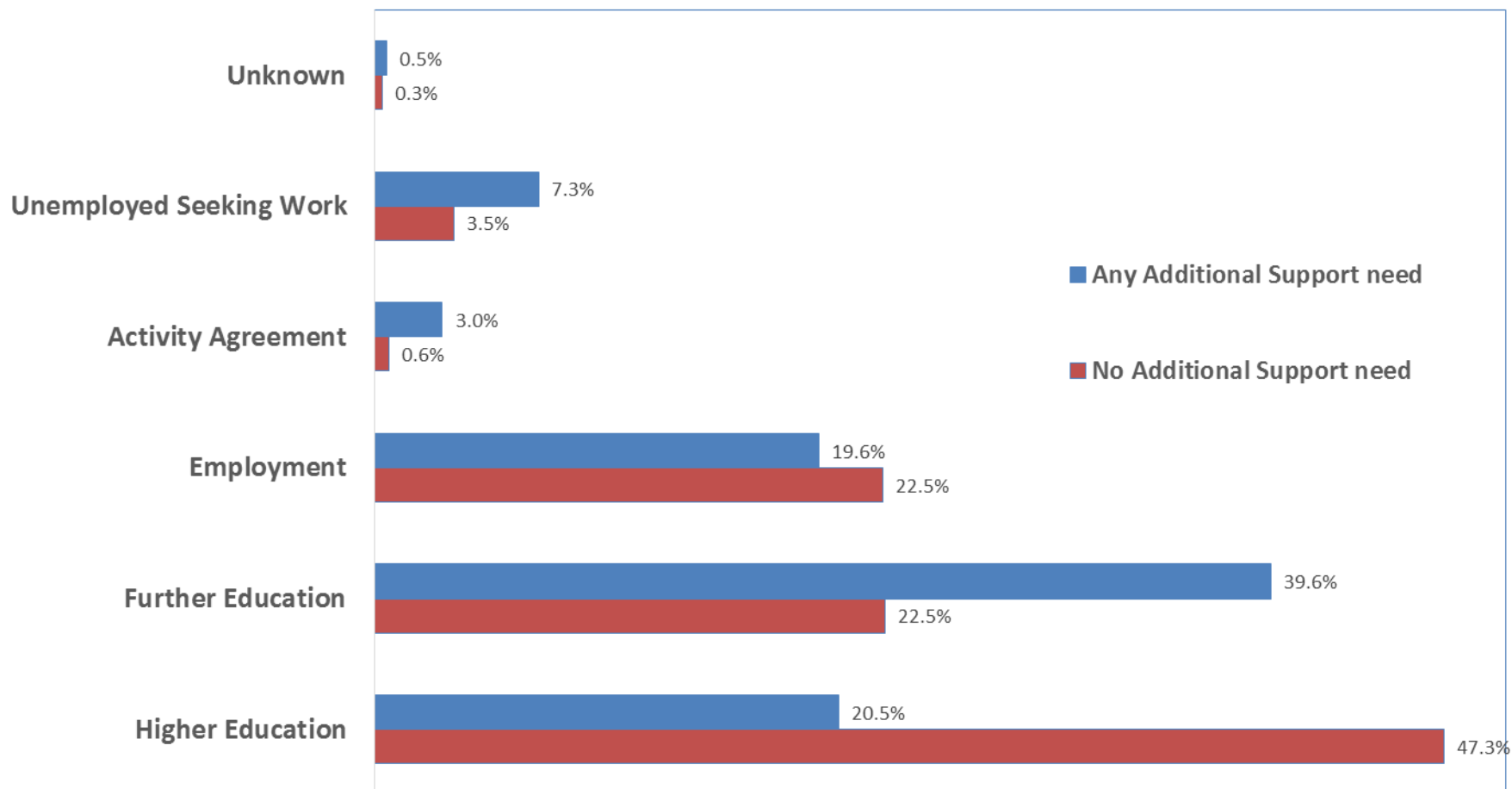
**‘Positive Destinations’ worse for those with learning disability; social, emotional & behavioural difficulty; interrupted learning. (Scottish Government 2018)**





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# Destinations of school leavers with and without ASN (Scottish Government 2018)

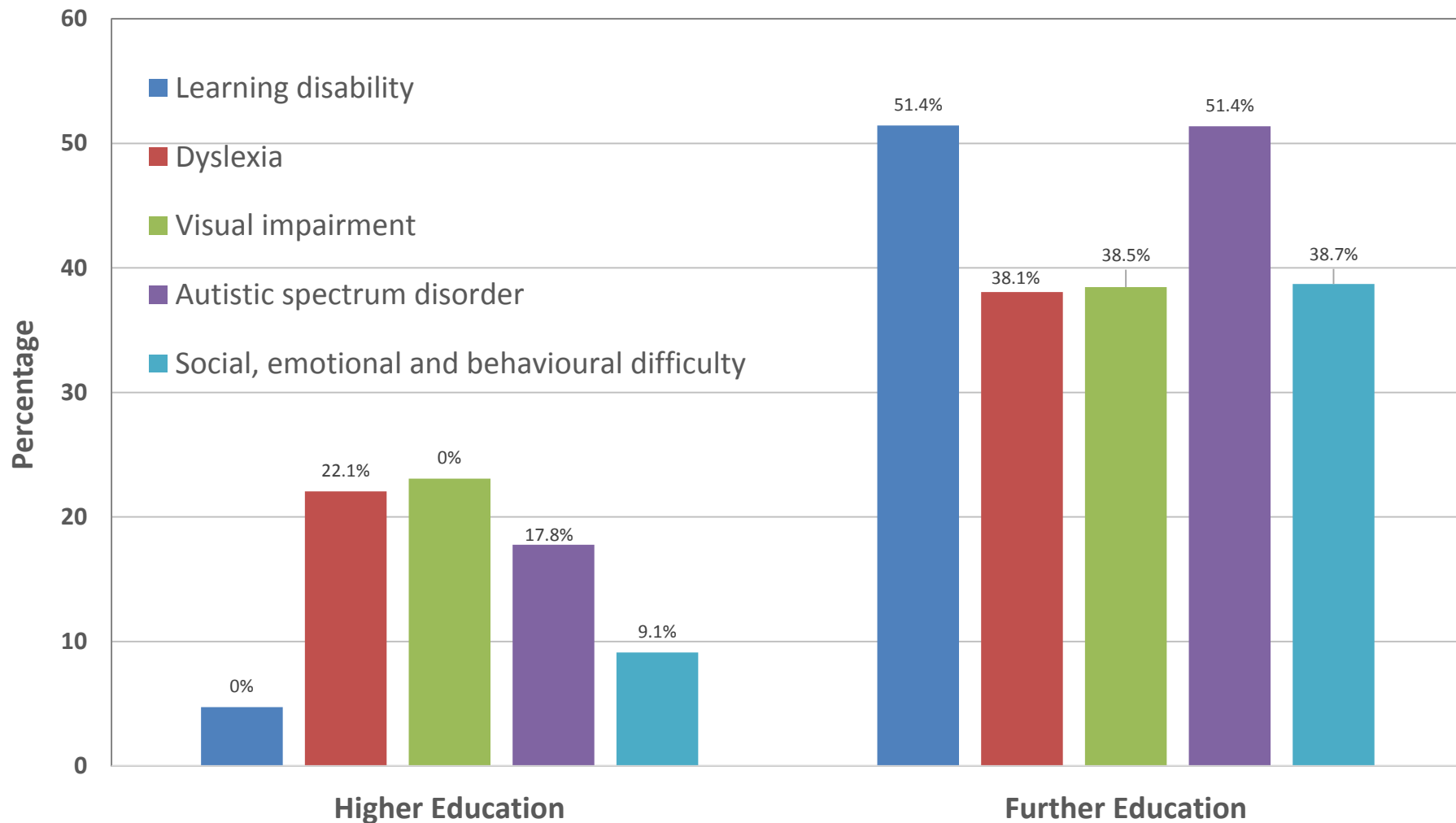






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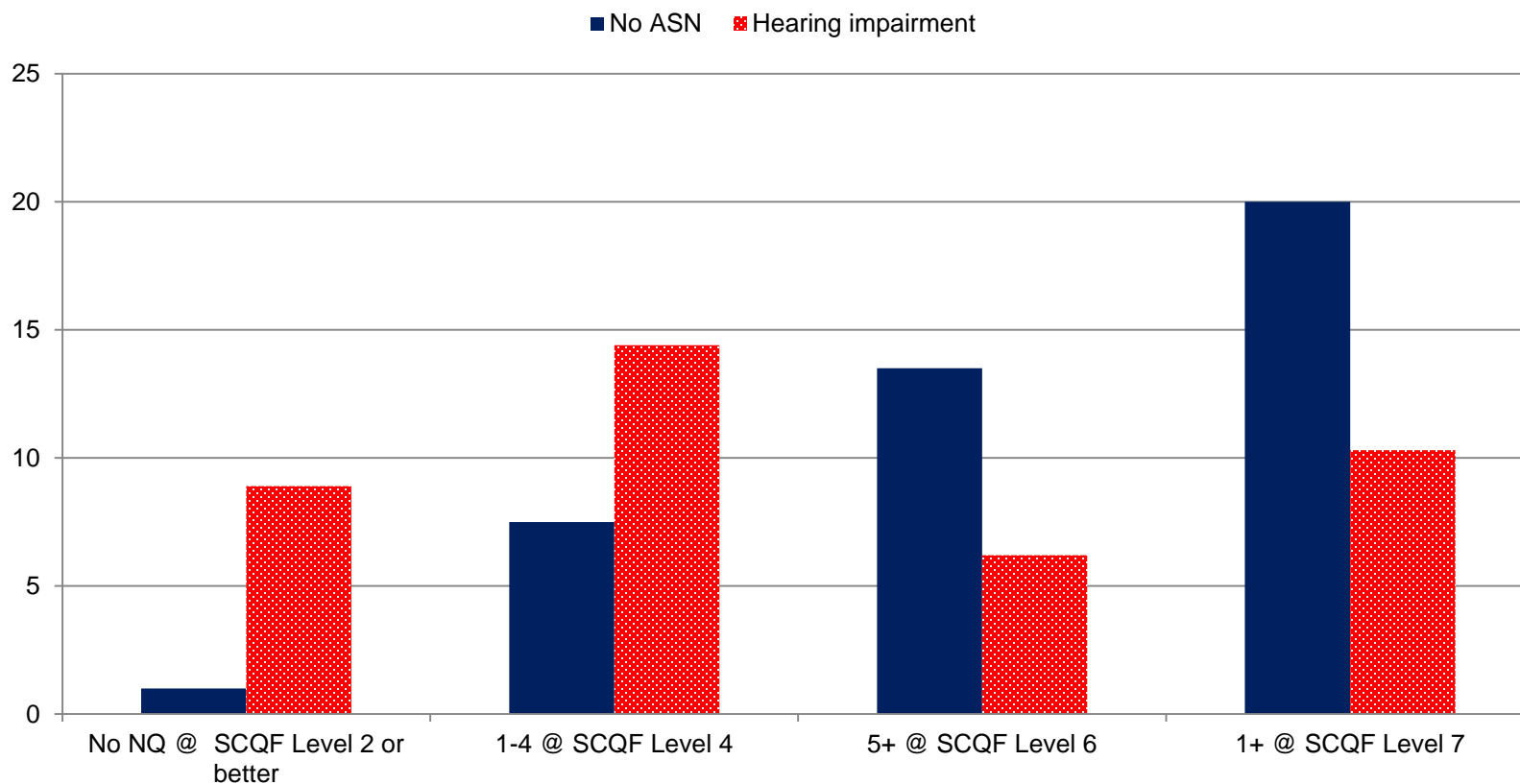
# Wide variation in post-school destination for those with different types of disability – HE/FE comparison (Scottish Government 2018)





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# Unequal post-school destinations partly a result of unequal school attainment: Comparison of pupils with **no ASN** and those with **hearing impairment**



SOURCE: ATTAINMENT AND LEAVER DESTINATIONS, SUPPLEMENTARY DATA. SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT (2013)  
Note. This figure shows a selection of all qualifications; therefore reported percentages do not add up to 100.



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# Post-school transition planning



- Most leavers with ASN do not have post-school transition plans
- School leavers who go to university are much better informed about their rights than school leavers with lower qualifications heading for training, FE or other destination.
- Young people from socially-disadvantaged backgrounds benefit from parental support – inherited economic, social & cultural capital increasingly important.
- Difficulties in transition to adult social and health services





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# Experiences of higher education



- Disabled people who progress to HE have much better experiences and outcomes than others.
- Well-resourced UK universities generally have good levels of equipment and communication support (but some variation between institutions)
- Not perfect – communication & physical barriers persist, particularly in social space.
- Those who succeeded generally had:
  - good self-advocacy skills
  - pastoral support from disability advisors
  - parental involvement in negotiating support
- Disabled students from disadvantaged backgrounds more likely to drop out.



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# Further education and training



- Patchy support in further education & very poor support on training programmes.
- More reliance on informal support from peers.
- More instances of discriminatory attitudes.
- Fewer instances of self-advocacy and parental involvement.

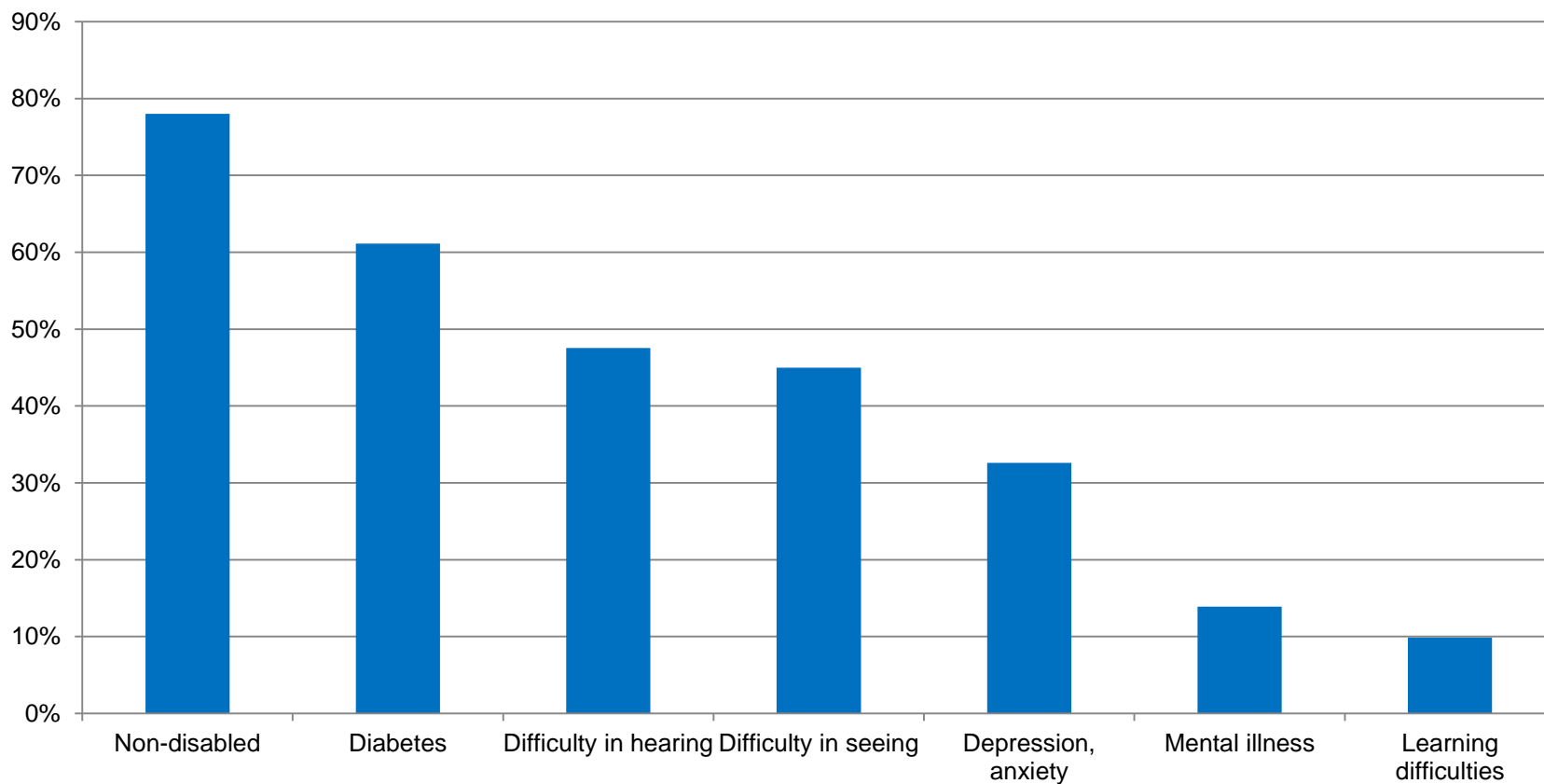






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# Different post school destinations lead to different employment **rates—marked variation** **by type of disability**

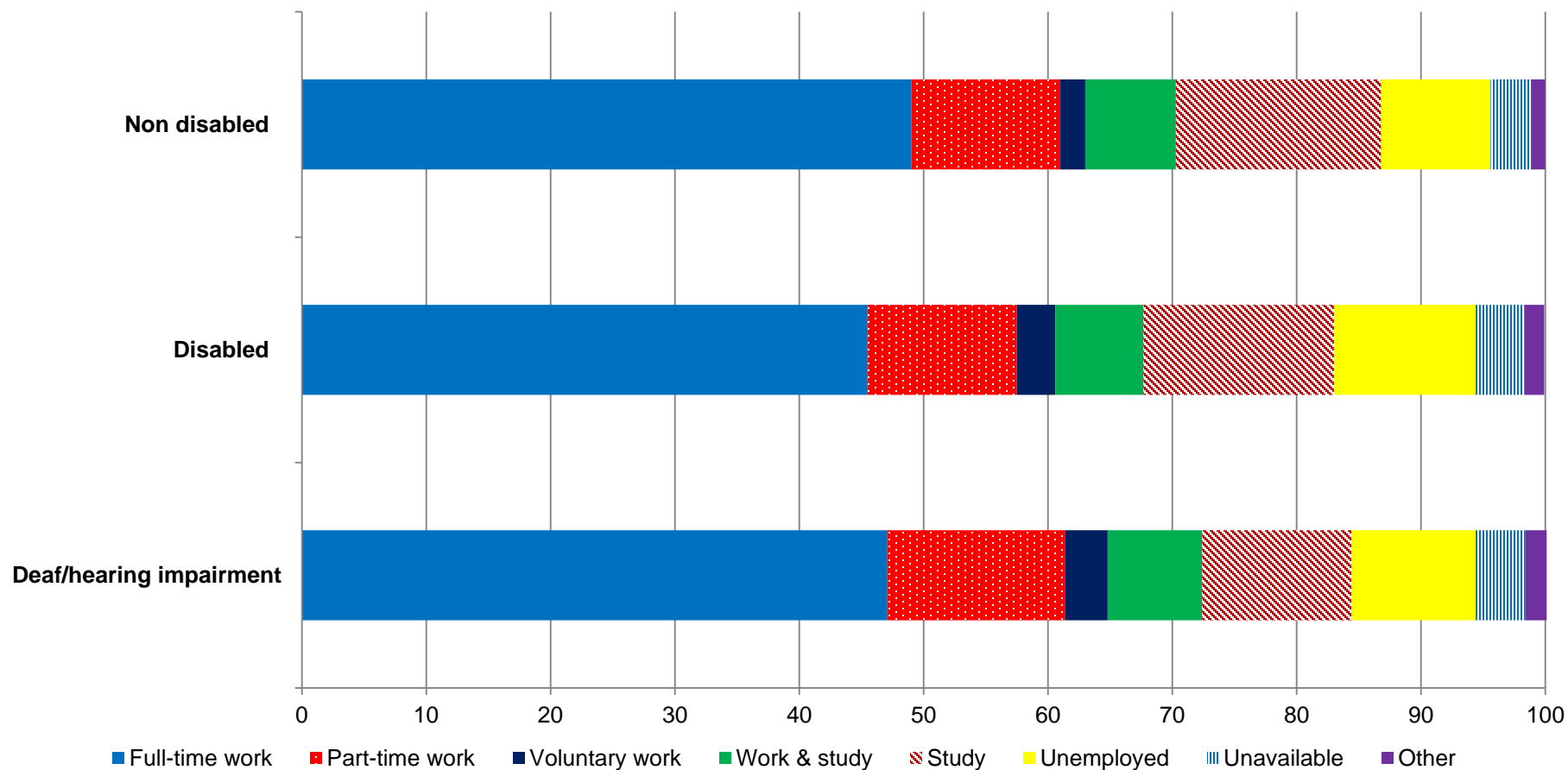


SOURCE: THE LABOUR FORCE SURVEY



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# Disabled graduates do **almost** as well in labour market as non-disabled peers



SOURCE: WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? AGCAS DISABILITY TASK GROUP



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# Labour market experiences of disabled people with different qualification levels



## Barriers to finding and staying in employment

Graduates	People with lower qualifications
Difficulties in applying for work	
Discrimination in recruitment practices	
Lack of disability awareness	
	Lack of work experience
	Limited social networks
	Lack of support in employment



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# Established markers of adulthood



Marked differences between disabled people with HE qualifications and those with lower qualifications in terms of:

- Independent living arrangements
- Geographical mobility
- Financial independence
- Wider social networks
- Career planning



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# Janet: 23 years old, learning disabilities, lifelong learning centre







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# Janet's story 1



- Mr and Mrs C. have devoted their lives to supporting their twin daughters and see parents as the most effective advocates of their children's rights – worry that the rights agenda may be misused.
- Describe a 'constant struggle' over resources with the Local Authority, particularly social work.
- Have used a range of dispute resolution mechanisms, including the threat of legal action.
- Have also fund-raised to get what they believe is the best from the system.



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# Janet's story 2



- Mr & Mrs C. are children's welfare guardians on the grounds that their daughters lack mental capacity to make decisions on their own behalf.
- Jennifer has clear ideas about her future and wants to achieve normative markers of adult status – a house, a job, a permanent relationship, becoming a parent – parents have reservations.
- Parents are sceptical about some of her ambitions
- They are strong supporters of the lifelong learning project– but the future is uncertain.



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# The Way Forward...challenges for young people & families



- Tensions between young people's and parents' rights need further discussion.
- Parents want to protect – but danger of over-regulation.
- Day care services need to be informed by principles of lifelong learning - the belief that all individuals have limitless capacity for development.
- Transitions need to be considered supported throughout people's lives, not only when leaving school.



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# The Way Forward ... social policy challenges



- More direct intervention in labour market by government with the aim of cancelling disadvantages experienced by disabled people.
- Free market policies, where disabled people left to compete with others in open labour market, unlikely to lead to greater equality.
- Far higher investment needed in non-HE post-school provision – in UK this is often run by the private sector, of dubious quality with little regulation.
- Endless cycles of training commonplace for disabled people – much greater focus on individual progression needed.
- Social security benefits paid to disabled people need to be sufficient to banish poverty – the underlying reason for lack of social power.



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# Thank you!



Further information about CREID's projects  
can be found at:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/education/rke/centres-groups/creid/projects>