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Post-school Transitions of People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

**Mariela Fordyce, Sheila Riddell, Rachel O'Neill and
Elisabet Weedon**

Centre for Research in Education, Inclusion and Diversity

The University of Edinburgh

www.creid.ed.ac.uk



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INTRODUCTION

For all young people, the process of transition to adulthood is likely to present a series of risks and challenges. This is especially likely to be the case for young people who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH), who may face additional environmental and attitudinal barriers linked to the challenges of communicating in a hearing world. This research was designed to provide insights into experiences of transition of young people who are deaf or hard of hearing. It draws on administrative data from a range of sources to reveal broad patterns of transition, but also uses case studies of 30 young people to illuminate individual lived experiences.

The research questions addressed in the study are the following:

- What are the post-school destinations of DHH young people in Scotland and how do they compare with those of non-disabled young people and young people with other types of additional support needs?
- How do DHH young people's post-school destinations impact on their ability to achieve other important markers of adulthood, such as independent living arrangements and the formation of independent relationships?
- What barriers are encountered by DHH young people in accessing post-school education, employment and training opportunities?
- What factors promote 'successful' post-school transitions?

This executive summary firstly presents an overview analysis in response to these questions. This analysis is divided into five sections:

- Summary of findings
- Post school destinations and their significance
- Barriers to successful post school transitions
- Support mechanisms
- Intersecting factors in adult status and identity

Following this, the key quantitative and qualitative data collected is summarised and presented along with some emerging questions and suggested implications for local authorities and other service providers. This section is organised according to six key areas in which data was collected:

- School experiences
- Post school transition planning
- Experiences of higher education
- Experiences of further education and training
- Employment experiences
- Markers of adulthood

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study has highlighted the wide range of post-school transition experiences and outcomes of young people who are DHH. We have identified patterns of post-school transitions, and the ways these are strongly associated with socio-economic status and educational outcomes at school. Differences were found between those DHH young people with higher levels of qualification who progress into higher education, those with somewhat lower levels of qualification who move into mainstream further education and training, and those with few or no qualifications who move into personal development programmes in college, or who become disengaged from education, training and employment. The latter group includes young people who are DHH and have complex support needs (i.e., hearing impairment as well as other disabling conditions or support needs).

There is a strong association for all young people, including those who are DHH, between socio-economic status and educational outcomes. Young people who are DHH and from relatively socially advantaged backgrounds tend to do well in school and progress to higher education, where they are generally well supported. They also have high rates of employment post-university, similar to the employment rates of non-disabled graduates. Young people from less socially-advantaged backgrounds tend to move into vocational education and training after school, where they have less access to individually tailored support and poorer labour market outcomes. Much work remains to be done in ensuring that all young people who are DHH, irrespective of socio-economic status, have positive experiences in the school system, continued education and, subsequently, in the labour market.

Students from more socially advantaged backgrounds are, at least to some extent, protected from risk. At school and university they receive better support, and have access to social networks which facilitate access to well-paid employment, which in turn facilitates the establishment of an independent home and relationships. In contrast, young people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds who are DHH are, exposed to many more risks, typically receiving less support in school and college, and finding greater difficulty in obtaining reasonably well paid work. For all young people who are DHH, negotiating a positive social identity is a major challenge, although here too the difficulties are mitigated for those with higher qualifications and greater financial security. Whilst most young people in this study are positive about many aspects of their lives, the difficulties and tensions are also apparent. It is also evident that many young people could be helped to overcome some of the difficulties they encounter through provision of more carefully tailored services and the encouragement of more positive social attitudes.

POST-SCHOOL DESTINATIONS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

The review of policy and statistics in Section 1 of the main report shows that, in 2011/12, 26% of young people who are DHH moved from school into higher education. This figure includes those moving into sub-degree programmes in colleges such as Higher National Certificates (HNC) and Higher National Diplomas (HND). However, by far the largest group of DHH leavers moved into vocational or personal development courses in college. A small group of young people who are DHH

were enrolled on training programmes (1.5%) and relatively small numbers of young people who are DHH were unemployed and seeking work (8.3%) or economically inactive (4.5%).

Higher education conferred considerable advantages both in terms of the nature of support available and chances of obtaining a reasonably paid and relatively secure job at the end of the course. Those undertaking further education college courses were less positive about the quality of support and subsequent employment opportunities were less well paid and more insecure. The Scottish Government is devoting a growing proportion of the total education budget to universities in order to ensure that a funding gap does not open up between institutions north and south of the border in the light of different policies on student fees. Higher education students in our sample were clearly benefiting from this investment. By way of contrast, a report by the Auditor General for Scotland, published in September 2013 (Audit Scotland, 2013), confirmed a year on year reduction in college funding, with 110,000 fewer places available in academic year 2011/12. Further education students in our sample were much more likely to encounter problems with levels of support in college, as well as difficulties finding employment on completion of their course.

Those leaving school with few or no qualifications were clearly encountering the most difficult post-school transitions, with disrupted working lives, economic insecurity and limited future prospects.

BARRIERS TO SUCCESSFUL POST-SCHOOL TRANSITIONS

The quality of young people's school experience, described in Section 3 of the main report, underlines its importance in shaping post-school experiences. Lack of appropriate communication and social support in school was undermining of confidence and led to social isolation. There appeared to be particular problems in schools in less advantaged urban areas, where many pupils were likely to have additional support needs. Difficulties in service delivery also occurred in rural areas due to a highly dispersed population.

The majority of young people were taught in mainstream schools using oral communication in the classroom, with a small number placed in mainstream school with hearing impairment departments or in a special school for the deaf. Because only a limited number of pupils were taught with BSL as the medium of instruction, it is not possible to compare the outcomes of schools with different communication policies. However, it is quite clear that many children who are DHH are able to achieve very well using oral communication. However, it was also clear that for a significant group of children problems with bullying and social isolation arose. Three case study young people moved to an academically selective special school for the deaf in England for their senior years on the grounds that the curriculum available to them in special education in Scotland was failing to develop their academic potential. All three achieved good educational qualifications and progressed into higher education.

Barriers were not only associated with restricted educational services and opportunities, but also as a result of poor services audiology services, particularly when the young person moved from paediatric to adult audiology services. Frequent delays were reported in the provision of hearing aids by adult audiology services, necessitating, in one case, the use of a private service.

Poor post-school transition planning appeared to be a problem for young people leaving school with low educational qualifications. Young people who were DHH and lived in socially disadvantaged areas often experienced a variety of problems and sometimes made a sudden decision to leave, in one case to avoid exclusion. These young people might have benefited from much closer engagement by the school and other agencies in a transition planning process, but appeared to receive very little support. By way of contrast, young people in more socially advantaged areas with higher qualifications were relatively unscathed by the lack of transition planning. They were well supported by parents and family, but also by the support offered by the school to all young people in making university applications.

Riddell et al. (2001) noted the lack of meaningful post-school opportunities for young people with significant learning difficulties and complex needs, and this was also reflected in case study findings. The current squeeze on welfare benefits and local authority funding for social services was likely to have a negative impact on the future opportunities of a young man with Down's syndrome.

Many young people had encountered discriminatory attitudes particularly in employment recruitment, which often led to dilemmas with regard to disclosing a disability. It is evident that much work remains to be done in ensuring that employment practices reflect the spirit of anti-discrimination legislation, and that young people who are DHH are not squeezed out of the labour market at a time of rising youth unemployment.

SUPPORT MECHANISMS

The availability of additional aids and services to support communication, including the provision of hearing aids and interpreters, are important facilitators of successful post-school transitions for young people who are DHH. In addition, peer group and family support are clearly also vital, and the young people in our research had very different experiences of access to social capital.

Social capital was defined by Schuller, Baron and Field (2000, p. 1) as 'broadly, social networks, the reciprocities that arise from them, and the value of these for achieving mutual goals'. As noted by Riddell, Baron and Wilson (2001, p. 144):

Social capital is now seen as just as important as financial, physical and human capital in explaining social hierarchies, variations in individual and civic health and well-being, and, above all, differential national profitability.

The network of social and community relations is believed to underpin individuals' ability to engage in education, training and employment, and achieve positive outcomes. The analysis of the school and post-school experiences of the DHH young people in this study suggested that the social networks and advocacy power of their parents were closely related to their socio-economic status. They played a significant role in shaping the young people's experiences of school education, as well as their post-school journeys.

INTERSECTING FACTORS IN ADULT STATUS AND IDENTITY

Establishing an autonomous adult identity is clearly intrinsic to the process of post-school transition. Young people in the study varied in relation to the extent to which they regarded deafness as intrinsic to their sense of self. All of the young people in our case studies acknowledged that being deaf or hard of hearing affected their lives at a very deep level, but many were upbeat and positive about their lives. All had to make very great efforts to communicate with others in a hearing world. Some adopted a strategy of playing down their hearing impairment, socialising with hearing young people and trying to minimise difference.

Overlaying deaf identity were other social characteristics related, for example, to social class, gender and ethnicity. Young people from more socially advantaged backgrounds appeared to be more self-confident and aware of their rights to non-discriminatory treatment. Positive reinforcement came from achieving highly at school, effective support at university and the expectation of well-paid employment. Young people from less socially advantaged backgrounds generally achieved fewer educational qualifications, struggled to find appropriate college courses and subsequently employment which would pay a living wage. In their accounts of current living arrangements and hopes for the future, the young people highlighted the associations between obtaining a reasonably paid job, moving out of the parental home and establishing an independent base.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE REVIEW OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS

- The only publicly-available official statistics about children who are DHH in Scottish schools are statistics about pupils in publicly-funded Scottish schools who receive support for learning due to a hearing impairment. As these do not include the DHH pupils in publicly-funded schools who do not receive support for learning and the DHH pupils in independent schools, actual figures are likely to be higher.
- In 2012 pupils who received support for learning due to a hearing impairment represented 0.34% of all pupils in publicly-funded Scottish schools.
- The most common type of support plan for hearing-impaired pupils in publicly-funded schools was the Individualised Educational Programme (33%).
- Less than 15% of pupils who are DHH are educated in special schools.
- There doesn't seem to be a strong relationship between hearing impairment and level of deprivation among pupils who are DHH in publicly-funded schools.
- In 2011/12, compared with school leavers with no additional support needs, DHH school leavers who received support for learning: (i) left school with no qualifications in far greater proportion (8.9% vs. 1%); (ii) were almost twice as likely to leave school with Standard Grades at 3-4 (14.4% vs. 7.5%); (iii) were almost half as likely to qualify for entry into higher education (36.4% had Highers and Advanced Highers, as opposed to 60.2% of school leavers with no additional support needs).

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE CASE STUDIES

- Most participants went to mainstream schools and were educated orally (25 out of 30). Some went to mainstream schools with resource bases for the deaf. A minority went to special schools for the deaf.
- Those who went to schools for the deaf communicated in British Sign Language (BSL). Unlike the rest of the DHH participants in this study, they seemed to have difficulties finding schools which fitted their academic and social needs, so they changed schools more frequently. Three BSL users from socially advantaged backgrounds transferred to a selective private school for the deaf for their senior years. The other two BSL users in this study transferred to mainstream schools.
- Most of those educated in mainstream schools received academic support from teachers of the deaf. Others were supported by educational audiologists, Learning Support Departments or communication support workers.
- There was wide variation in the frequency of support, from full-time teaching support to brief one-to-one sessions a few times a year. Generally speaking, support was more concentrated in primary years and the first four years of secondary school.
- DHH pupils benefited from a series of adjustments, such as longer time in exams.
- There seemed to be some variation in the consistency and quality of support offered by different schools/authorities. Apart from providing academic support, some local authorities organised deaf peer groups, which gave pupils the opportunity to interact with other DHH pupils. On the other hand, a few young people reported that they had no support at various stages of their school career.
- DHH pupils valued mainstream teachers who were aware of their communication needs and adjusted their behaviour accordingly.
- One third of participants encountered barriers to participation in class and when they engaged in extra-curricular activities. Many young people believed that the barriers they encountered in school were a direct consequence of their hearing loss (e.g., not being able to hear teachers in class or to listen to audio materials). Some also mentioned teachers' lack of deaf awareness. There were frequent mentions of the lack of subtitles on videos shown in class. However, the most frequently cited difficulties in school were not academic, but related to the issue of social adjustment.
- Two thirds of young people in the case studies mentioned that they had been bullied or felt socially isolated in school because they were deaf or hard of hearing. In some cases the bullying had profound negative effects on their academic attainment and general well-being. Findings suggest that those who had DHH friends or family and performed well academically were less likely to be bullied or feel isolated.
- Many young people in the case studies believed that the learning support they received and the equipment they used made them 'stand out' amongst their peers. This was the reason why some of them stopped using radio-aids or turned down academic support in secondary school.

EMERGING QUESTIONS

- **What is the total number of pupils with hearing impairment in Scottish schools, and what proportion receive support for learning?** The information published by the Scottish Government does not include pupils in independent schools and pupils in publicly-funded schools who do not receive support for learning.
- **How does the socio-economic background of pupils who are DHH impact on their educational attainment?** Previous research (Hills et al., 2010) has shown that pupils from poorer areas tend to have lower educational outcomes than pupils from less deprived areas. There is a need to investigate the nature of this relationship for pupils who are DHH.
- **How do the type of school attended and degree of social inclusion influence the educational attainment of pupils who are DHH?** Findings from the case studies suggest that some pupils had difficulties finding schools which fitted their academic and social needs, and that pupils who were bullied left school with lower qualifications. There is a need for further research to explore these relationships.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOLS AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- There is a need for greater consistency in the quality of support offered by different schools in both mainstream and special sectors.
- Pupils who are DHH in mainstream schools should benefit from better academic and social support.
- In some special schools for the deaf, there is a need for more academic stimulation and emphasis on academic achievement.
- For pupils with no disabilities there is a strong association between attainment and socio-economic status. Pupils who are DHH from socially disadvantaged backgrounds may also need much stronger support in school and at home to ensure that they fulfil their academic potential.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: POST-SCHOOL TRANSITION PLANNING

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE CASE STUDIES

- Most participants did not have post-school transition plans. There was evidence that transition planning took place for only four participants. Three of them had learning difficulties and were in specialist provision (special schools or mainstream schools with specialist units).
- Not all those who had complex needs benefited from transition planning. Participants with conditions such as social-emotional and behavioural difficulties or dyslexia did not have transition plans. Neither did all those who were at mainstream schools with resource bases.
- Some of the young people who did not have transition plans found out about support at their post-school destinations from their support workers or their parents.

- Young people who aimed to go to university were well informed about support options offered by universities. Many of these young people reported that their parents were actively involved in planning their transitions.
- Young people who went into further education, training or employment seemed to be less knowledgeable about support options. Many of the young people in this category were still unaware of support options (such as Access to Work) at the time of the interview.
- Almost half of the hearing aid users in the study were dissatisfied with the standards of care after they transferred to adult services. They mentioned long waiting times, less frequent and less thorough check-ups, the lack of a 'named person' and the quality of the hearing aids.
- Difficulties were also reported in making the transition to adult social work and health services. The mother of one young man with complex needs reported that child services were suddenly withdrawn when her son reached school leaving age, with no adult services in place.

EMERGING QUESTIONS

- **What are the criteria by which education authorities/schools decide which young people require post-school transition plans?** The findings from the case studies suggest that DHH pupils who had learning difficulties and were in special schools or mainstream schools with resource bases were more likely to have post-school transition plans. There is a need for larger-scale research to explore transitional practices in Scottish secondary schools.
- **What difficulties do education authorities/schools encounter in delivering post-school transition planning for school leavers who are DHH?** The 2012 report on the implementation of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (As Amended) (Scottish Government, 2012) found variation in the effectiveness of partnership work across local authorities. There is a need for further research into the factors which facilitate or hinder collaboration between the agencies involved in supporting young people who are DHH in their post-school transitions.
- **How does the lack of formal transition planning impact on the post-school outcomes of school leavers, particularly those from poorer backgrounds?** Findings from the case studies suggest that school leavers from socially-advantaged backgrounds manage their post-school transitions with the help of their parents and wider social networks. There is a need for more research into the transition experiences of DHH school leavers from poorer backgrounds, as they are more likely to experience difficulties.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOLS, HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

- Post-school transition planning is exceedingly patchy. This is a particular problem for pupils from poorer backgrounds, whose parents may not have the cultural, social and economic resources to support their children. Better transition planning for DHH young people with lower qualifications and from less socially-advantaged backgrounds is therefore a priority.

- Adult audiology services are seen as providing less individualised support compared with children's services. Adult audiology services need to develop and improve how they support young adults transitioning from children's services.
- Across all agencies, the transition from child to adult services should be much smoother. In particular, the lack of provision for young people who have additional support needs should be addressed and improved support put in place for this group.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: EXPERIENCES OF HIGHER EDUCATION

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE REVIEW OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS

- School leavers who are DHH are less likely to enter higher education compared with their non-disabled peers. In 2011/12, 26% of DHH leavers from Scottish schools entered higher education, as compared to 39% of school leavers with no additional support needs. Fewer school leavers who are DHH entered higher education between 2007/8 and 2010/11. The participation rate was as low as 7% in 2008/9.
- In 2009/10, 0.33% of all UK-domiciled undergraduates and 0.37% of all postgraduates declared that they are DHH. The proportion of UK-domiciled higher education students who declare a hearing impairment has stayed relatively stable in the past 10 years.
- Disabled students who do not have the Disabled Students' Allowance have higher non-continuation rates than disabled students in receipt of DSA and their non-disabled peers.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE CASE STUDIES

- The general level of support in higher education was good, although there was some variation between institutions (e.g., some institutions provided disabled students with communication support and equipment before funding came through, while others did not).
- Most participants received Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) and benefited from reasonable adjustments.
- The DSA was used to pay for communication support and equipment (e.g., laptops and printers). Most DSA recipients had note-takers, while some also had BSL interpreters, readers, scribes and proofreaders.
- Note-taking was considered a valuable form of support, although some respondents acknowledged that it had limitations (there were complaints about note-takers' availability, especially at short notice, about high turn-over rates, and, in some cases, about note-takers' lack of subject knowledge).
- Although they received communication support, many higher education students encountered communication barriers, particularly when they had to take part in group work or go on clinical or teaching placements.
- There was also evidence to suggest that applying for DSA was not guaranteed to ensure appropriate support. Findings suggest that good self-advocacy skills, pastoral support from

Disability Advisors, as well as direct parental involvement in negotiating support also played essential roles.

- Middle class parents typically intervened when difficulties arose, in one case making direct contact with the disability office in order to facilitate re-admission.
- There was less direct intervention by parents from less socially advantaged areas.

EMERGING QUESTIONS

- **What are the socio-demographic characteristics of higher education students who are DHH?** Previous research indicated that disabled young people in higher education (Riddell et al., 2005) reflect the relative social advantage of the majority of higher education students, in particular those in pre-92 universities, where 80% have parents in professional and managerial occupations. There is need to investigate whether higher education students who are DHH also represent a socially advantaged group. This would provide an indication of the factors which contribute to their success.
- **What are the non-continuation rates of students who are DHH? What factors lead to drop-out?** Findings from the case studies suggest that some higher education students who are DHH may encounter communication difficulties during their studies, which may lead to drop-out. An analysis of HESA data would shed light on the non-continuation patterns of higher education students who are DHH.

IMPLICATIONS FOR UNIVERSITIES

- Although universities generally provide good support for students who are DHH, certain groups experience problems. Young people who are BSL users may experience communication difficulties, whilst those with mental health difficulties are particularly vulnerable. Students from less socially advantaged backgrounds are more likely to drop out than those from more advantaged backgrounds. Additional support therefore needs to be targeted on these groups.
- Disabled students advisers and academic staff need to be more proactive in recognising difficulties at an early stage to prevent student drop-out.
- There is a need for more consistency in the quality of support offered by different higher education institutions.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: EXPERIENCES OF FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE REVIEW OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS

- Further education is the most common post-school destination of school leavers who are DHH. In 2011/12, 39% of school leavers who are DHH entered further education, as opposed to 23% of school leavers with no additional support needs. During the previous five years the participation rate was even higher (as high as 57% in 2009/10).

- In 2010/11, 0.55% of all further education students reported that they were DHH.
- A very small percentage of school leavers enrolled on training programmes in 2011/12 (1.5%, slightly lower than school leavers with no additional support needs, at 3%).
- Skills Development Scotland does not collect data on participation rates of young people who are DHH on national training programmes.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE CASE STUDIES

- Most further education students had some communication support from note-takers. Some also had BSL interpreters and readers. Some further education students also received one-to-one tuition from learning support workers.
- There was very little mention of specialist equipment, such as FM systems.
- There seemed to be wide variation among colleges in terms of support standards: some colleges seemed to offer appropriate levels of support, while others offered no support at all. There was also less consistency of support.
- Many students reported that communication support workers were in short supply and were often unavailable.
- Further education students were less appreciative of the disability support services offered by colleges, and more positive about the informal support offered by their peers and teaching staff.
- There were also fewer instances of successful self-advocacy and direct parental involvement in negotiating support. This may be a direct consequence of the fact that further education students formed a less socially-advantaged group, with a higher incidence of learning and communication difficulties.
- Young people on training programmes did not benefit from communication support.
- There were no BSL users among those on training programmes. This may be a direct consequence of the lack of communication support offered to young people in training.
- Most young people on training programmes seemed to be less knowledgeable about support options.
- Some young people believed that they did not require support, although they reportedly encountered various communication difficulties during their training. This may be a direct consequence of the fact that these young people received little support in school. One young person who had adequate support in school expressed concerns that the lack of communication support and deaf awareness on his apprenticeship programme had a negative impact on his learning.
- There was consensus amongst those on Modern Apprenticeships that the training had increased their employability and helped them become more confident and assertive.
- The personal development course attended by a young man with Down's syndrome was time limited and did not have a clear progression route.

EMERGING QUESTIONS

- **How does the model of funding for students with additional support needs in further education impact on the quality of support offered by colleges?** Findings from the case studies suggest that there is a marked difference between the quality of support offered by higher education institutions and further education colleges. Is this difference in support a direct consequence of the difference in funding mechanisms for students with additional support needs in higher and further education?
- **What are the reasons behind the low claims for the Additional Support Needs for Learning Allowance of some colleges?** An analysis carried out by the Scottish Funding Council (Scott and Tye, 2012) revealed that 2010/11 some colleges did not claim any ASNLA, while a small number of colleges claimed more than 60% of the entire ASNLA spent in Scotland. There is a need to investigate the reasons behind this variation in ASNLA spent between colleges.
- **What are the non-continuation rates of students who are DHH in further education and what factors contribute to drop-out?** Findings from case studies suggest that some further education students who are DHH drop out of college, mainly due to a lack of communication support.
- **What proportion of higher education students who are DHH study on higher education courses in colleges?** Scottish Government data on school leavers' destinations and the data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency which are included in this report do not distinguish between DHH students studying towards a first degree and other undergraduates.
- **What is the participation rate of young people who are DHH on National Training Programmes, including Modern Apprenticeships?** Findings from the case studies suggest that training programmes increased the employability of DHH young people who left school with lower qualifications. However, Skills Development Scotland does not collect data on the number of young people on national training programmes who are DHH.
- **What barriers do young people who are DHH encounter in accessing and completing training programmes?** Findings from the case studies suggest that many young people on training programmes do not have communication support. Some may also encounter discriminatory attitudes. There is a need for further research into the training experiences of young people who are DHH.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COLLEGES AND TRAINING PROVIDERS

- Support in colleges tends to be patchy and under-resourced. The Scottish Government needs to ensure that colleges are able to offer the same quality of support as that which is available in universities. This is particularly important at a time when college funding is being reduced.
- Students on personal development courses often find that there is a lack of progression. Colleges need to provide a greater range of lifelong learning opportunities to people who are deaf and have additional support needs.

- Communication support for young people on training programmes is particularly poor and needs further investment.
- There is a need to educate co-workers to ensure that trainees who are DHH do not encounter discriminatory attitudes.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE REVIEW OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS

- In 2011/12 leavers from Scottish publicly-funded schools who are DHH were less likely to be employed than their peers with no additional support needs (15% vs. 25%). They were more likely to be unemployed and not seeking employment or training (5% vs. 2%).
- In 2012 the estimated employment rate of working-age people in Great Britain who have 'difficulties in hearing' was much lower than that of non-disabled people (48% vs. 78%).
- In 2009/10, the employment rates of higher education graduates who are DHH six months after completion were similar to those of their non-disabled peers (around 68%).
- In 2009/10, graduates who are DHH were better represented in graduate-level occupations than their non-disabled peers. 67% of graduates who are DHH were in managerial and administrative occupations, professional, associate professional and technical occupations, compared with 63% of the non-disabled graduates.
- There is no publicly-available data on the employment outcomes of people who are DHH with further education and training qualifications.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE CASE STUDIES

- Young people with higher education qualifications were more likely to find employment with the help of their parents or wider social networks than young people with non-graduate qualifications.
- Most of the graduates who were in employment had worked for their current employers when they were students.
- Graduates were more aware that they could use the equality legislation as a 'battering ram', but at the same time they believed that they could be victims of discrimination.
- Graduates were less likely to register with the JobCentre and receive Jobseeker's Allowance than young people with vocational and training qualifications.
- Graduates were less likely to seek advice from Careers Advisors at college or university. Most young people who went into training straight after leaving school reported seeking help from Careers Advisors in schools.
- Jobseekers with non-graduate qualifications were more likely to encounter potential employers with openly negative views of deafness.
- Several jobseekers with non-graduate qualifications believed that disclosing their deafness in job applications would lower their chances of being offered interviews.

- Jobseekers with non-graduate qualifications were more likely to have limited work experience.
- Many jobseekers with non-graduate qualifications seemed to believe that their hearing loss limited the range of jobs that they could do.
- Many young people who are DHH reported that they encountered communication difficulties at work, such as difficulties using the phone or general communication difficulties due to noisy working environments.
- There seemed to be little awareness of the communication needs of people who were hard of hearing.
- Very few young people used Access to Work. Graduates and BSL users were more likely to know about Access to Work, although relatively few used it.
- Those who did not have Access to Work avoided certain tasks or relied on informal support from co-workers and employers.
- The majority of those in employment were happy in their jobs and pleased to be in work.

EMERGING QUESTIONS

- **How do educational and training qualifications translate into employment outcomes for people who are DHH?** There is a need for further comparisons between the employment outcomes of DHH people and non-disabled people with similar qualifications, in order to account for barriers to accessing employment, such as discrimination and lack of support.
- **What are the employment outcomes of DHH young people who completed further education and vocational training courses?** As the employment rates of DHH young people with higher education degrees are similar to those of non-disabled graduates, while the employment rates of all working-age people who are DHH are much lower than those of the non-disabled population, we can infer that the DHH people with training and further education qualifications are more likely to encounter difficulties in finding work.
- **What types of support are required by Access to Work clients who are DHH?** There is no publicly-available data on the types of support required by Access to Work clients who are DHH (e.g., support workers or specialist equipment).
- **What barriers are encountered by people who are DHH in recruitment and employment?** Findings from the case studies suggest that jobseekers who are DHH encounter a series of barriers in accessing employment, including discrimination and lack of communication support. There is a need for further research into the jobseeking and employment experiences of young people who are DHH.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS AND THOSE PROVIDING EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

- There is evidence of disability discrimination particularly in the recruitment process. It is important that employers' duties to combat discrimination and promote equality for disabled people continue to be emphasised.
- There is a need for greater awareness of the communication needs of young people who are DHH in the workplace.

Young people with low qualifications are particularly at risk of unemployment, low pay and insecure work. There is need for employers to ensure that young people who are DHH, particularly those with lower qualifications, are treated fairly in the workplace, and that attention is paid to career progression.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: MARKERS OF ADULTHOOD

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE CASE STUDIES

- There were clear differences between young people in higher education and the young people who entered further education or training with regard to their ability to achieve independent markers of adulthood.
- University students had independent living arrangements during their studies, while most of those who were in college and training had never left their family home.
- Many university students and graduates wanted to move to different cities or abroad, while college students and apprentices rarely expressed the wish to leave their hometowns.
- University graduates became financially independent sooner than those in non-graduate occupations.
- University students were much more likely to belong to clubs and organisations and do voluntary work, while most further education college students and apprentices spent their free time with family or friends.
- As a direct consequence, university students and graduates had wider social networks, while further education college students and apprentices had fewer opportunities to meet new people.
- University students and graduates were more likely to be in stable relationships.
- University students and graduates were more likely to have clear plans about their future professional careers.
- Young people's sense of identity depended on their degree of hearing loss, the age when it occurred and their preferred mode of communication. BSL users had a clear deaf identity, while those who were educated orally and had milder hearing loss tended to have a hearing identity. Some young people had ambivalent identities.
- Many of those who had a hearing identity held negative views of deafness.
- Most young people believed that being deaf made them more resilient.
- Many acknowledged the importance of being assertive and confident in order to be successful.

EMERGING QUESTIONS

- **Are the school-to-work transitions of people who are DHH longer and more complex than those of young people with no disabilities?** Post-school transitions have become more complex and drawn-out over time and are less likely to lead straight into employment (Riddell et al., 2001). There is a need for further research in order to establish whether

young people who are DHH take longer to enter the labour market and achieve financial independence than young people with no disabilities.

- **What factors support those who are most successful in the education system and the labour market?** Findings from the case studies suggest that DHH young people from socially-advantaged backgrounds are more likely to leave school with higher qualifications and have good employment outcomes. What other factors contribute to their success?

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL SERVICES

- Cuts in social services and benefits payments are affecting those at the social margins. It is important to ensure that young people who are DHH are given every assistance to attain markers of adult status such as independent housing.
- Social services need to ensure that childcare, parenting advice and return to work support is available for young women who become parents at an early age.

IMPLICATIONS FOR DATA GATHERING

- There is a need for longitudinal pupil-level data so that the progress of children and young people who are DHH may be traced from school into post-school destinations and onwards into the world of work.

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The main report and appendices can be found at
<http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/education/rke/centres-groups/creid/projects/postsch-trans-dhh>

Further information

Further information about the project is available from Mariela Fordyce, CREID, Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh, Holyrood Road, Edinburgh EH8 8AQ, Sheila.Riddell@ed.ac.uk. The main report and appendices are available at <http://www.ed.ac.uk/education/rke/centres-groups/creid/projects/postsch-trans-dhh>

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