

Education Committee

Oral evidence: [Special educational needs and disabilities](#), HC 968

Tuesday 29 January 2019

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[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Robert Halfon (Chair); Lucy Allan; Ben Bradley; Emma Hardy; Trudy Harrison; Ian Mearns; Lucy Powell; Thelma Walker; Mr William Wragg.

Questions 292 - 338

Witnesses

I: Beatrice Barleon, Policy Development Manager, Mencap; Bernie White, Chair, Natspec; Caroline Archer, Employment Service Manager, Action on Disability; David Ellis, Chief Executive, National Star; Di Roberts, Chair of the Association of Colleges' SEN Group; Janine Cherrington, Head of Service, Transition2; Linda Jordan, Senior Development Adviser (Children and Young People's programme), National Development Team for Inclusion; Pat Brennan-Barrett, Principal, Northampton College.

Written evidence from witnesses:

[National Star](#)

[Association of Colleges](#)

[Transition2](#)

[National Development Team for Inclusion](#)

[Northampton College](#)



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Beatrice Barleon, Bernie White, Caroline Archer, David Ellis, Di Roberts, Janine Cherrington, Linda Jordan and Pat Brennan-Barrett.

Q292 **Chair:** Good morning, everybody. We are going to finish the session at 11.25 am today. Thank you very much for coming. It is on tape and on camera but it is an informal session. If we could just very briefly go round the table and we will introduce ourselves for the benefit of those watching outside. I am Robert Halfon, the Chair of the Committee.

Ian Mearns: Ian Mearns, MP for Gateshead and, well, I have been here for a long time.

Trudy Harrison: Trudy Harrison, MP for Copeland in Cumbria.

Caroline Archer: I am Caroline Archer from Action on Disability and I am the Employment Service Manager.

Lucy Allan: I am Lucy Allan and I am the MP for Telford.

Di Roberts: I am Di Roberts. I am Principal of Brockenhurst College and I chair the AOC SEN Policy Group.

David Ellis: David Ellis. I am Chief Executive of National Star College over in Cheltenham.

Janine Cherrington: Good morning, everyone. I am Janine Cherrington Head of Service at Transition2, a small specialist provision in Derby.

Chair: The room has very bad acoustics, so if everybody could talk loudly. Lucy has no problem with doing that.

Lucy Powell: Hi, I am Lucy Powell. I am the MP for Manchester Central.

Beatrice Barleon: I am Beatrice Barleon. I am Policy Manager at Mencap.

Thelma Walker: Good morning. I am Thelma Walker, MP for Colne Valley.

Mr William Wragg: I am William Wragg. I am MP for Hazel Grove in Greater Manchester.

Bernie White: I am Bernie White. I am Director of Education at Seashell Trust in Stockport, and I am here as the Chair of Natspec.

Ben Bradley: Ben Bradley, Member of Parliament for Mansfield in Nottinghamshire.

Linda Jordan: I am Linda Jordan. I work for the National Development Team for Inclusion.

Emma Hardy: Emma Hardy, MP for Hull West and Hessle.

Pat Brennan-Barrett: Pat Brennan-Barrett, Principal of Northampton College.



Q293 Thelma Walker: I want to ask what have been the successes and challenges since the 2014 reforms in supporting young people with SEND, bearing in mind the Government aims for the reforms whether it should be simpler, improved and consistent. Would anybody like to consider what are the successes and challenges?

Di Roberts: The AOC was fully involved right from the start of drafting the legislation—we helped shape it—and still very much support the vision of the legislation having the child and the young person actually at the heart.

Perhaps one of the most important successes has been raising the profile of further education and post-16 providers with local authorities. Before that I think we were a sort of hidden sector and we were doing brilliant work with our young people but I don't think the local authorities really understood.

As you can imagine, it has been an interesting journey around working with local authorities. In some instances it has worked really effectively, even though it may have been quite a difficult journey. For instance, I will give you the example of East Kent. East Kent did have quite significant problems at the beginning, even to the extent they were nearly going through to a judicial review about the fact that they did not feel that the local authority was funding them correctly or understanding. However, through the perseverance of the principal and the team there and the local authority, they have now come to an agreement. They have agreed a three-year funding deal, which actually gives the college that certainty around being able to invest and to have the staffing necessary. It is a shame it took going through a judicial review.

Q294 Thelma Walker: Would you say three years is long enough for funding?

Di Roberts: It is better than what we have in most places, where it is literally one year to the next year. In my own college at the start, Hampshire has always been brilliant but Dorset in one year we did not get paid for our students until the following November, which is unacceptable. They have come together now and they are working effectively with us.

If we could have that certainty of funding—as everyone will know, high needs provision requires that planning, requires that investment in staff, in facilities, and trying to do it on a year-by-year basis is very difficult indeed.

There have been successful partnerships, and I think we must not forget that at the heart of all this is the young person and of course, through that, having that greater awareness of what post-16 institutions can offer. I think those young people have been presented with more opportunities and have been more successful in their transition into adulthood and employment.



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Bernie White: From a special college point of view, I would echo that we too were very pleased and supportive around the aspirations of the SEND reforms. Our journey mirrors some of the things that you have raised in raising the profile of post-16, raising the ambition across the whole of the sector about what young people with special educational needs and disabilities can achieve.

We have not yet consistently found ourselves in a positive partnership relationship with local authorities. We would love the idea of a three-year planning funding deal that would enable very small organisations to effectively plan and resource the services, recruit and keep up that level of expertise that we know is so important to the small number of young people who require that more specialist provision rather than being able to access local mainstream.

Beatrice Barleon: I echo the comments around some of the successes. This focus on post-16 has been really welcome and I think it has also supported some developments around some of the other training opportunities that are coming up post-16, so supported internships, traineeships and now also accessible apprenticeships.

I think the challenges are in the implementation ultimately and the implementation across all the different local authorities. We see quite a bit of postcode lottery in how much local authorities engage in that.

One of the other challenges—and I come from an employment perspective here—that we would like to highlight is with the reforms has come a focus on those EHC plans. We will probably come on to that later on, but sometimes we fear that that can come to the detriment of those who do not have those and we can explore that further.

David Ellis: You want to go for the challenges of the reforms, but the successes definitely are about raising the aspirations. There is no question of that.

On the challenges, I think it would be useful to go back to the aspirations of the Bill. The aspirations of the Bill talk about avoiding the battle that the parents have faced. That has failed. The battle is still there, if not worse. The aspirations of the Bill talk about the need for education, health and social care to work more collaboratively. That is not working. The aspirations of the Bill talk about the need to avoid the perception of a conflict of interest. That is still there. Therefore, I think it would be really helpful to go back to the aspirations of the Bill because the pressures that brought the Bill into being in the first place are still there. They have not been solved.

Q295 **Thelma Walker:** At a previous evidence session one parent spoke about having to fight for their child. I mention the interesting use of language and that echoes what you are saying there.



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David Ellis: It is very definitely a battle. There is no question of that, and parents again and again talk about the fight, the battle that is exhausting. If you have stamina you have more chance. If you don't have stamina and money you have a much—and there is a real inequality in there.

Bernie White: We have some examples coming from our member colleges where young people following a two-year programme—for example at A level—don't get confirmation that they can progress from the first year to the second year until very late. That is a typical story where there is a qualification attached to that or not where young people are demonstrating that they are learning, they are progressing, they are developing their independence and skills but there is a doubt hanging over them whether they can proceed from one successful year to the next. It comes about from a concern with funding and whether there is sufficient funding in the system—

Q296 **Thelma Walker:** This is already coming through as a thread, this uncertainty of funding, yes. Linda.

Linda Jordan: Thank you. One of the biggest changes that the reforms brought in was the focus on outcomes. That is such a big change and I think the system is struggling a bit to come to—

Chair: We are going to come on to the outcomes in a bit.

Linda Jordan: Yes. The NDTI runs a programme called Preparing for Adulthood, so we are working across the country with every local authority to support them particularly with the 14-to-25 cohort. I think the success is that people do now understand that the aim is to support you into adulthood with employment, independent living, relationships, being part of their communities and having good health. That is now embedded in people knowing that is what we should be doing, and we have some fantastic success stories.

The number of young people on supported internships, while it is very uneven across the country we have some areas where there has been extremely good progress. Manchester College, for example, has 51 supported interns a year. That has been so for five or six years and other colleges are increasing their numbers of young people in supported internships, so that is a really important success. The challenge is: how do we spread that so that that is business as usual in every college in every area?

Q297 **Thelma Walker:** Would you say that is a postcode lottery as well, which was mentioned?

Linda Jordan: There is certainly variation across the country, yes.

Caroline Archer: There are a couple of things with the supported internship. We are running supported internships and we have six that we run in west London. They have been very successful, ranging from a 60%



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to 98% outcome of young people becoming employed. I think that is a success because what it is doing is creating inclusivity: an inclusive society and an inclusive workforce and independence for the young person.

Chair: We are going to come on to the outcomes later.

Caroline Archer: Are we? Okay.

Chair: We have a very tight time schedule. What you are saying is very important but can we come on to it a bit later on?

Caroline Archer: Absolutely. I wanted to comment about the parents not feeling like they are being heard. There is some good practice in some of the local authorities that we are working with, where local authorities are very keen to listen to what parents have to say and how they can make improvements in their services. That is an ongoing dialogue and conversation. It is not perfect but there is definitely shape and moving forwards in providing a service that suits the young person and the parents, and they are being listened to.

Thelma Walker: Successes and challenges. Okay. Pat.

Pat Brennan-Barrett: We have heard of some successes and I am going to talk about the challenges, because I have been steeped in this for 30 years and I am deeply concerned about the postcode lottery of funding. The devolvement of the budgets, the interpretation of the language of the code and how that is used is deeply concerning. East Kent College is great. That is one college out of 266 at the moment and I think we have to look at that in the bigger picture and think about the wording. The wording was "may". How do we define progress?

You will find county councils saying that progress means they have to go from entry to level 1. No. In SEND progress could mean you sustain your ability, so they are the problems we are facing and in the Midlands I am the chair on the Midlands and I know that most of the Midlands are in trouble here, so we have to look at the successes in proportion to where the challenges are.

I think, too, somebody has already alluded to the issues about those that do not have EHCPs. At the moment, there is a trend to only try to give EHCPs to the age 19 and there is a focus on not giving an EHCP to age 25. That means you can use your adult funding to support students yourself. We do that in our college. We cannot continue to do it. We cannot afford it. It is costing us over £300,000 a year.

Also, those that do not have EHCPs are far larger and the disadvantage funding is reducing. You are talking thousands perhaps in a college like mine, and those with dyslexia or dyspraxia who would not qualify for an EHCP but, equally, could contribute to the economy well is excellent.



I do want to make one more point. I am just conscious of time. Part of the issues we have come across with internships is we do not have the US model or the model in Ireland where, if you are earning money, your benefits are not affected. A lot of the parents are afraid that if the young person starts to earn money their benefits are affected and then they have to apply again. In Virginia in the States I know that your benefits are adjusted but if your job falls through there is a safety net, and the same in Ireland. It is very different there, so those are the points I would like to make at the moment.

Q298 Ben Bradley: It is really interesting feedback. You mentioned, David, the aspirations of the original Act and what it was meant to achieve. We have heard over a number of meetings, in a number of ways, particularly perhaps the imbalance with kids with EHC plans and those who don't. That has come up time and time again. Particularly, obviously, post-16 and this additional challenge of delivering that through to 25 and what you said about is that happening beyond 19. It often seems to not be. Do you feel that the aspirations of the Act are unrealistic in what it actually delivers? Are there things that that we can achieve within the Act? Are the parents' aspirations, which have perhaps been raised by the Act, unrealistic or is it simply a work in progress that will take time to deliver?

David Ellis: I do not think for one minute that the aspirations are unrealistic. I think the way we are implementing them is causing problems that do not need to be there, so the devolution of funding to local authorities—and Pat talked earlier about the postcode lottery—local authorities doing their own thing. That does not need to be there.

Isos did a report last week or the week before saying that the increase to 25 is putting pressure on the high needs block, which is very misleading because those costs are already in the system. They haven't put increased cost in the system. They have just moved them from adult services to education, so we have to look at this in the round not just with an education focus.

Di Roberts: On the guidance from DfE, we have found that the DfE officials in the high needs area have been incredibly supportive. They actually understand the issues that colleagues are facing. I went to a meeting and they asked me to talk about the funding issues. They put a slide up and they captured all of them, but then you have the DfE coming out with guidance that says, "The majority of young people with EHC plans should complete their education by 19".

Let me give you two examples of two of my students who did not have EHC plans but they both came from special schools to us at 16. They had no qualifications. One of them went on to foundation level, level 1, level 2, level 3, and at the age of 21 he has secured a place at the University of Kent. The other one came to us—again, special school, no formal qualifications, joined our foundation learning, went on to our traineeship programme, then went on to an apprenticeship and then he is in permanent employment.



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Those learners were 21 and 20 and they did not have EHCP. For students that do have EHCPs—which is probably indicating they have more profound learning differences and disabilities—how can we then expect that they should all be finished by 19? It is totally unrealistic.

Q299 **Ben Bradley:** That is one that, as you say, is not built into that but is an interpretation at a local level. Janine, do you want to come in?

Janine Cherrington: The support and aspiration Green Paper that came out in 2011 gave us a real sense of hope in the sector. I think we have the support bit right in some areas but not the aspirations particularly. What we have lost is that sense of what the local offer was designed to do originally, and a weak local offer—which we are seeing across the board—I think the foot has been taken off the pedal of the local offer particularly.

That has not contributed very well to the outcomes of families joining together. They are having to come together in large groups with a very strong voice in order to be able to guide each other, and that is not how it should be. There should be support across the equal stakeholders, and one of the things that we struggle with is that, when parents are coming together and they are not able to understand some of the aspects of equity in the system rather than equality, they are looking for the same outcomes and we are losing that aspect of person-centeredness: a sense of equity with the right person having the right support at the right time for quality of life chances. We are missing that a little bit. Part of that needs to come back to the local offer, which is what the support and aspiration was so strongly guiding us towards.

Pat Brennan-Barrett: May I expand on Di's to give you actual examples? We have 240 students in our college who have EHCPs and 50% of them are cross-college. They are going to university. They are going into work. They will not make that before the ages of at least 23, so under the Disability Discrimination Act, it is necessary to make reasonable adjustments. We are not making those reasonable adjustments with the local devolvement because they are under pressure with the budgets and they budget has to be divided between a five year-old to a 25 year-old, so that is part of the problem.

The vote comes within the Schools Forum. The Schools Forum is where they decide where they are going to spend the money. I have one vote on the Schools Forum. There are about 40 schools and so, even though we represent more people at 16 to 18, we only have one vote so we cannot change that locally. I think that is really important and it is important to look at discrete courses as opposed to cross-college courses, because with discrete courses you may be maintaining skills and looking perhaps at low-level jobs but, particularly with cross-college courses, you are looking at level 3, level 4, level 5, level 6 and people going into work at a much higher level. It is important that those people are given a fair chance with a longer age to get there.



Bernie White: Looking at the LGA Isos report, there is clearly a lot of anxiety around the idea that students can participate in learning until they are 25, particularly when it focuses on them having the right to go to a specialist provider and that is seen as taking away from others. The reality of the situation is that there are virtually no learners in specialist colleges who are 25, so the anxiety is overruling the facts in terms of thinking.

I hear the issue that you raised about the Schools Forum deciding funding but specialist colleges have no place, and it is not sufficient that the GMC only have one place but there is an imbalance on that decision-making and perspectives. People are not making well informed decisions.

Despite this, the value of that 19-plus experience for learners is enormous—including those who need to go to specialist colleges—and they are achieving outcomes way beyond expectations. We too are getting people into employment. We have some excellent organisations in our membership where people are achieving 85%—Foxes Academy—of learners progressing to employment and that is sustained. Doncaster College got all of its learners with a vocational outcome into work.

This is right the way through to people with very complex needs, where we are looking to use our expertise to push the bounds and make sure that there is a pathway for those who need supported employment and whose needs have never been considered as compatible with employment. They too can progress that way.

Q300 **Ben Bradley:** I get the impression that people broadly feel that the outcomes are not impossible within the confines of the Act that came forward and the ideas and aspirations are the right ones, so is it the case then that people feel that the problem is how that is interpreted on a local level? It is too loose. It is the postcode lottery. If that is the case, how do we fix that?

Pat Brennan-Barrett: It is money and the use of the language and the implementation of it. The understanding of the word “progress”, the word “may” should be removed. It should be “must” and it is too—

Q301 **Ben Bradley:** You are clear that we should do that?

Pat Brennan-Barrett: Yes, and it is money.

David Ellis: I do not disagree with that. It is money but it is not just money. It is the way the money is distributed because one of the problems we have at the moment is the local authorities are put in a confrontational relationship with parents. Let’s go back to when local authorities were partnering with parents and trying to provide the best for the individual. The way the money is distributed—particularly with the very high needs and very complex students—creates that confrontational relationship. With no more money we can create a different culture by distributing it differently.



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Q302 **Ian Mearns:** But there is a cut next to that because you say no more money but most local authorities, particularly the ones in the north of England, have a lot less money than they had 10 years ago. My own local authority had a revenue budget of £305 million in 2010 and now has a revenue budget of £200 million in 2019. That is a lot less money and that is, by the way, not taking inflation into account.

Di Roberts: Indeed, colleges are in the same position. My students were here for the parliamentary petition last Monday, and thank you, Mr Halfon, because you really spoke eloquently on their behalf. Colleges have had a freeze in funding, a 30% cut effectively.

I have just found out that the disadvantaged funding—which is designed to pay for everything that isn't the EHCP—the latest calculation I have has come through and instead of £0.5 million I am going to have a reduction of £200,000. How am I supposed to manage with £200,000 less when incidents of SEN are increasing, mental health is increasing? It is coming to a situation where it is just not possible.

There is a significant aspect around money, as Pat said, but a lot of time, effort and money are also wasted on the bureaucracy that this has all created. We had a letter from Nadhim Zahawi who said they were going to look at having standard paperwork, standard processes, because if you are working with several or tens of local authorities they all quite often have very different systems, very different requirements. If I could take away from my frontline people all the amount of paperwork and bureaucracy and put that into frontline delivery that would not cost any more money and it would make the limited resources we have go further.

Chair: Just a brief comment because I have to move on.

Beatrice Barleon: Just very quickly to say that necessarily development to go up to 25. The other thing I think that challenges the implementation of that is that some of the other training provisions—staff becoming available, you have supported internships but traineeships and now we are working on accessible apprenticeships—are not rolled out across the country yet. In some ways it has spurred on some thinking around that but I think that needs to happen. For example, we have 15 accessible apprenticeships so far and they are mostly internally in Mencap so we are testing that, but I think when that rolls out it might help.

Q303 **Emma Hardy:** One of the things we heard so much from parents, and when we were talking to schools about this, is the fact that parents saw having an EHCP as a passport to getting their child's needs met, which is where they talked about this confrontational relationship with the local authority. One of the things that I am becoming increasingly concerned about is those children who do not have an EHCP, are they getting their needs met? Are they getting the help and the support that they need?

I would like to go back to something you said, Beatrice, about your concern about this group of children and what is your opinion. Do you think they are and what could be done differently?



Beatrice Barleon: When you look at the cohort of those with SEND—and I am coming from a learning disability perspective—you have only 80% of those who have a moderate or severe learning disability that get an EHC plan. You have another 80% who don't. That does not mean that they do not have challenges because they have obviously been identified as having some challenges along the way.

What we are finding—and I am coming again from an employment perspective because that is where we think the future for lots of people should lie—is that you have supported internships for those with EHC plans. You have accessible apprenticeships. You get the flexibilities only if you have an EHC plan around maths and English. You get the extra money to provide that if you have an EHC plan.

Traineeships offer an opportunity but the funding is poor and it is not really incentivised for providers of those traineeships to go out there. What will happen to those others is that, ultimately, they will have to go down other routes that might be available for employment support. Just yesterday I came across a local authority where these services are being cut on a regular basis. One point escapes me just now but I will come back to it.

Yes, the offer is not necessarily there and when you look at the local offers, I have to say anybody who can make their way through a local offer and find something that is on offer to them I salute them. I think some of them will provide some insight but many do not.

Q304 **Emma Hardy:** Does anyone else want to comment on if you believe that the children who have SEN and do not have an EHC plan are having their needs met?

Linda Jordan: I think it varies. It is about the quality of teaching and learning within the individual institution and how the organisation works. The expectation should be that any young person's needs can be met but that requires ongoing training for staff, for support staff, making sure that people know what best practice is for teaching and learning. The bottom line is that the additional support is only going to add value if the basic teaching and learning is right.

Pat Brennan-Barrett: I can expand on that and say that it is a bigger problem of identifying and I would say the catch frame SEND does not take into account SpLD, which is dyslexia and dyspraxia. What we are finding in the Midlands are students coming in without basic GCSEs, without basic English and maths.

To give an example that will help: we tested over 250 of our level 1 students and we found 80% of them had an SpLD. They were dyslexic. They had come through the system but they had, in the main, cognitive ability within normal limits so they were labelled as all sorts of things—lazy and that—but what had happened is they had not been identified through the system. That was very serious. We were in a position that we



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could at that point address them. I am waiting for my disadvantage funding to come through. After listening to Di I am dreading it because will we be in a position to support them further? We won't.

The other point is that many teachers are not trained to do that now. There was a fantastic report called the "Rose Report". As you know, many of the secondary schools trained up their people, some of the colleges trained up their people. That could perhaps be expanded. That initiative was excellent and perhaps we could look at that because you don't always have to have specialists. You can have a teacher who knows how to unarrest a student.

Q305 **Chair:** Just to come in on what you said if you may, the maths and English I read that something like one-third of students are FE colleges who have to do the maths and English resits of special educational needs. What kind of support is there given to colleges in order to deal with that because there is so much pressure on the FE colleges to deal with resits of maths and English?

Pat Brennan-Barrett: That is a really good point, Robert. We do not have support necessarily ringfenced for that. We are given a disadvantage fund. That used to be the old ALS fund—the Additional Learning Support fund—which was ringfenced to the students who needed it. With the disadvantage fund there is pressure on that budget to do everything, so to help with mental health and to help with lowering the food in the canteen, all that sort of stuff, and it is no longer ringfenced.

If you have perhaps senior teams who do not understand it or who don't understand what the difficulty is, that may not be protected and it is a budget that is shrinking. Looking to secure some type of funding that would assist would make a difference to the development of English and maths, which is exceedingly high. I think one-third is quite low.

Q306 **Emma Hardy:** I want to bring Caroline in. You mentioned before about parents' voices. Do you believe that the needs of children without the EHCP but with additional needs are being met accurately?

Caroline Archer: Coming from the employment perspective, we have had a number of instances where young people have applied to come on to the apprenticeships and they are coming up to their 25th birthday, so it is almost too late and they don't have an EHC plan. We have had to have a number of meetings with the local authority to see how we can work around that, and out of goodwill we have had the young person come on to the supported internship. However, no funding has been attached. We have just had to spread the funds across that young person.

We have another project at St George's Hospital where it has been quite commonplace that we have six young people but maybe only a few of them have an EHC plan, but because the school, Cricket Green, is very



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passionate about young people with disability finding their independence and becoming part of the workforce and contributing to society, it has supported that person on to the apprenticeship without an EHC plan attached to them, which obviously is attached to funding. If it was to continue it would become a detriment to the project, so we—

Q307 **Emma Hardy:** Is that because it does not have the money?

Caroline Archer: It does not have the funding. As a result, we have had to then think quite harshly about whether we have the young person on the supported internship or not.

Q308 **Emma Hardy:** Theoretically, you could have two children who need to attend a programme such as yours. One of them has a plan and one, for various reasons, doesn't. The one that doesn't then just misses out because they are missing that plan?

Caroline Archer: Yes, if you are depending on the projects, yes, absolutely. Depending on the conversations that are had with all partners, how passionate people are on the project and how much they want this person on because they can see it is going to be of value then they would make it happen. Generally speaking, if we are thinking about how we are going to run the project financially, we would say we cannot have them on, yes. That is a huge shame because everyone should have the opportunity to benefit from the supported internship.

Emma Hardy: Absolutely.

Janine Cherrington: I am just going to come back to your point, Emma. I think one of the distinctions that we have between the non-EHCP and the EHCP is moving us a little bit into that: what is specialist? What we are lacking is that sense of to our young people and the young people that we all work with being ordinary special and having that ordinary life outcome at the end of the line is special. The quality of the relationships cannot be bought by the funding and I think we need to go back to what it means to be ordinary and what it means to be special.

Part of that is the media coverage. In this last year we have had significant media coverage, and if they are not being abused in group homes or exploited through crime or dying younger than everybody else or undateable, while other things are really important for us to recognise we are not getting those role models out there. What we are lacking, all the young people, whether they have an EHCP or not, are experts by experience and their families are experts by experience and they need to be going back through the system.

We work quite closely with the NDTi and with Natspec and one of the things with welfare organisations is that it is about experts by experience. It is about the younger person and it is about the family going back to role models, some of those things. Undateable is not an ideal image really.



Di Roberts: I would like to mention the rise in home educated young people coming through to colleges and, indeed, coming from alternative provision. If they have been home educated they are not going to come with an EHCP. Therefore, if they have particular special educational needs you have to get them assessed. By the time you have done that you are probably a third of the way through their education career. Also, where they are coming from alternative provision, in alternative provision they will be funded at the rate of £10,000 to £18,000 per year. They will come to us. If they don't have an EHCP we have over £4,000.

Q309 **Emma Hardy:** To go back to the point you made about the disadvantaged funding, what would you like to say to the Government about the importance of that?

Di Roberts: The disadvantage funding needs completely overhauling. I know it is very difficult to look at a measure for special educational needs, but looking at it so that it is either by postcode or by whether they have English and maths is totally inadequate. It does become very much a postcode lottery but, equally, it is lagged. Therefore, if my funding is £200,000 less for next year, that is not based on the learners that I have, it is based on something that might have happened two years ago.

Q310 **Lucy Powell:** Very briefly because you touched on it in the conversation and it has come up in other inquiries as well as this, so while I have you here. The requirement for resitting English and maths set in the context of comparable outcomes, the lack of funding that you get with that, what would be your message about that going forward from your college point of view?

Di Roberts: In terms of resitting.

Lucy Powell: Do you think it is a good thing or—

Di Roberts: I think it is important for young people to continue with their English and maths, whatever. It should not finish when they are 16, but the hurdle of I have students who are taking five times to get through. Yes, some of them will but you imagine for that young person they are failing, they are failing, they are failing.

Going back to the supported internships and, indeed, for the apprenticeships, they cannot go on to an apprenticeship if we do not think they will meet the requirements for English and maths unless they have an EHCP. That denies so many young people that opportunity, so it is about—

Q311 **Lucy Powell:** Apparently they are going to flex up the T Levels, so if they are going to flex up the T Levels why not for broader apprenticeships and internships?

Di Roberts: Yes. I think we should be continuing with English and maths—

Lucy Powell: Yes, but not the GCSE.



Di Roberts: —but this whole hurdle of trying to get them over the GCSE is a false hurdle.

Pat Brennan-Barrett: If I can add on to that, we had a really good system, which was called additional learning support. It was there. We could do that again because that was based on your actual learners who got learning support not on the postcode lottery. That was very fair and it was ringfenced. You could not move it, so the accountant if you took your eye off him could not move it to something else. It was ringfenced for those students.

Q312 **Lucy Powell:** It was sort of like a pupil premium for post-16?

Pat Brennan-Barrett: Yes but a little bit more flexible and it really worked for colleges.

The second point is on the English and maths. We have thousands resitting English and maths. They should of course develop their English and maths but trust us as professionals to decide whether they go on a functional skill or a GCSE, and bring back the stepping stone qualification, which is a 1.5 qualification where if you have not made your GCSE you can do it by doing a 1.5 and then moving on to a GCSE. We did have that a couple of years ago and then it was withdrawn.

Q313 **Lucy Powell:** That could be the entry level to apprenticeships, supported learning that kind of thing, supported internships?

Pat Brennan-Barrett: Further education and higher education. By supporting that it means we will support the general outcome as well.

Q314 **Chair:** That is my question, which is one-third of students doing the resits are children with special educational needs, so there is enormous academic and financial difficulty for it.

Pat Brennan-Barrett: I would suggest to you, Robert, that in my college it is 80%.

Q315 **Chair:** Right. Obviously, you cannot use the disadvantage funding you have just—

Pat Brennan-Barrett: No. We can use some of it, of course, so one of the things we did—which I think you might find interesting—is because we did not get the funding that the ROSE project had recommended to schools, we trained five teachers SpLD, which is a qualification in dyslexia and dyspraxia, a broad qualification, a good qualification, at level 5. Then we went on to train another three at level 7, which means they can assess.

We placed those teachers in the English and maths team. We have seen some really good work, but we do not have the equivalent for dyscalculia in maths so that is work that the universities could be doing: what sort of qualification could we get to have specialist in maths?



Q316 **Chair:** Are we able to find out what proportion of FE colleges' disadvantage funding is spent on the English and maths students?

Di Roberts: Yes, we could.

Q317 **Chair:** Would it be possible off the top of your head to give a very rough figure or not?

Di Roberts: Not off the top of my head but we can certainly come back and give that information.

Q318 **Chair:** That would be easing into the disadvantage funding for the whole college.

Di Roberts: Absolutely.

Q319 **Lucy Powell:** For those students, is that what you would spend the maximum of their extra support on? They are not going to become mathematicians necessarily or authors, but you can't have the money to spend on what they might go on to do because you are trying to get them over that hurdle of English and maths GCSE.

Chair: We have a tight schedule.

Caroline Archer: Could I just add on the English and maths?

Chair: Please.

Caroline Archer: On the supported internships, the young people do continue with their English and maths and some of it is qualification based. We don't put a high importance on it because we are more concerned about the young person developing skills within the workplace, how they relate to their colleagues and how they use their initiative. It is all the soft skills that we are very interested in as opposed to it being English and maths. We do come across jobs and employers that ask for the English and maths but, in reality, how much of the English and maths is that person actually using? It is a functional skill, so how do we contextualise and bring it into the workplace so that the young person is developing their English and maths there as opposed to on a table as an exam or it being paper based? It does not hold as much value.

Q320 **Ian Mearns:** I am really interested in pursuing this issue of youngsters going into FE having come out of home education or out of alternative provision, because I have a sneaking suspicion from inquiries that we have been doing—and there is a growing evidence base—that there are an awful lot of youngsters who are being euphemistically home educated but it is nothing of the sort. No disregard, by the way, for the people who are doing proper home education and have done elective home education for many years. The problem is, if schools are discarding pupils or off-rolling them, sometimes parents have no other opportunity but to register them as being home educated and they are not getting any education whatsoever.

Is anybody doing any proper research into that in the FE sector on the



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number of youngsters who are now filtering through who have not had their needs properly assessed, because they have been off-rolled or they have been sent to an alternative provision and then are coming into FE and do need a proper assessment that actually might lead to an education, health and care plan?

Di Roberts: In my own college, we started up a programme that we call a preapprenticeship course for employment and we have quite a lot of students who are coming on that, particularly from alternative provision. We started off and we now have 40 learners.

We put a special programme together for the home-educated learners—which requires that they need to be in smaller groups because they have been home educated; they are not used to being in a class of 20—and it is growing. We can do some further research and get that through to you by doing a survey of our colleges about the rise in home education and the rise in students coming from alternative provision. Anecdotally, from my own college, it is becoming quite a significant part of what we offer.

Q321 **Ian Mearns:** Additionally I would be interested to see how many youngsters are getting an education, health and care plan post-16, never having had one prior to 16.

Di Roberts: Yes, we do get some through, but we tend to educate the young person and we do the education, health and care plan hoping that we might get something through on that for them moving further on. It is very difficult, once they get to 16 if they have not already had an EHCP.

Beatrice Barleon: On our employment services side, we have had some cases where we have been able to refer people through an EHC plan post-19 even and have managed to get them through. It was probably some forward-looking local authority who knew what comes with that. Whether that is the norm I do not know, but it can happen. We found that quite useful because it meant that the outcome from what is in the EHC plan is very much related to the next stage of life.

Q322 **Ian Mearns:** Given what a number of you have said already today, do you think we should be looking for some sort of national change, whereby education, health and care plans can be issued up to 25, for instance?

Di Roberts: Yes.

Pat Brennan-Barrett: On your other question, which is not just students coming from alternative provision but looked-after children, that is a growing concern because they have the same challenges.

Q323 **Ian Mearns:** Yes, because around the country numbers of children who are looked after have grown significantly, haven't they?

Pat Brennan-Barrett: Yes.

Linda Jordan: I was just going to say that EHC plans can be issued up to 25.



Q324 **Ian Mearns:** Yes, but it is not routine though, is it?

Caroline Archer: It has to be before their 25th birthday.

Pat Brennan-Barrett: I think in the main that is resisted, because it costs more money. In the Code it says “may” and it says “progress” and when I spoke about the language we are finding that that language is being interpreted differently to how we are interpreting it. It would make a big difference if the word was “must” and “progress” was defined as level of progress depending upon the additional learning or special need.

Janine Cherrington: On the cliff edge side of things, we do create a cliff edge if it goes up to 25. One of the things that we struggle with anyway is stepping into adulthood and the more we focus on this specialist support, specialist time, 15 minutes at this point in time for that prolonged period, you are denying the opportunity to move into that adult world, which is going to feel very different anyway, even if you do not have an education, health and care plan. If you have and you have had that specialist support, there is a massive gap there.

Q325 **Ian Mearns:** But there is a problem. If the cut-off is 19, the cliff edge is 19 as opposed to 25. That then misses out the youngsters we were talking about before who are getting some qualification or getting the capability to progress when they are 20, 21 or 22.

Janine Cherrington: I think you need that one size fits one opportunity, because some people are ready to move on. Some people are ready to move on at 16 and we need to not take our eye off that ball as well, to be able to merge the employment with the education. I think if we start to block it out too strongly it is not going to give a healthy sense of general transition to adulthood.

Ian Mearns: It is just creating a safety net though, isn't it, surely? It is not compulsory but if the capacity and the capability is there?

Linda Jordan: I think we need to also bear in mind that having an EHC plan does not necessarily guarantee that your needs are met, and we have apparently a couple of thousand children with EHC plans without a school place at the moment. I do not think we should see an EHC plan as the end of, the guarantee—

Q326 **Ian Mearns:** I think the number of tribunals that appeal against EHC plans and the way they are written is testimony to that.

Linda Jordan: I think it goes back to how do we make sure we meet the needs of every young person who has additional needs? The reason that EHC plans were necessary for a supported internship was it was an attempt to meet the needs of that group of young people who did not get employment. The intention was a positive one that internships are for the groups of young people furthest away from the labour market. What we now need to do is think about how we enable other young people with complex needs who do not have EHC plans to also be able to draw down



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Access to Work money. The advantage of having an EHC plan to go on to a supported internship is that you get higher needs funding but also Access to Work funding.

Q327 **Chair:** Even when you are an apprentice you get the Maynard exemptions that you do not get if you do not have a plan.

Linda Jordan: While a group of young people without EHC plans have to be on a study programme with work experience, that work experience may only be for an hour or two hours a week or one day a week, because there is not the funding for them.

Q328 **Ian Mearns:** The way in which the EHC plan was originally drafted in itself is a form of rationing of resources available. The whole planning exercise, which is done across the local authority, is about managing within the resources that the local authority has. It is not a needs-based exercise, it is a resource-based exercise. Am I wrong in thinking that?

Linda Jordan: It varies.

Pat Brennan-Barrett: The commissioners are the funders. That is part of the problem. Also just to remember and remind people that if you do not have an EHC plan you do not have transport costs met.

Caroline Archer: And you may not have transport costs anyway.

Pat Brennan-Barrett: Exactly.

Q329 **Ian Mearns:** Can anybody highlight any particular successes that we have had regarding youngsters getting an EHC plan and then going on to do really well?

Pat Brennan-Barrett: We have some. They are few and far between but we definitely have them. In fact, we had a young lady who wanted to work in a particular shop. That was her ambition and she has got that job in that shop. When you go in there she knows where everything is in the shop, but she has also started now to live independently and has a relationship. That is one person where aspiration worked, but she had parents who could work the system.

Linda Jordan: There are some good examples of young people doing really well and I think we have to get better at working out how that happens and how we make that more—

Bernie White: What is needed is a national strategy that identifies and recognises where universal services can meet need and resource that, and where more specialist services are required, but with a view on every young person having their needs met.

Q330 **Chair:** We are touching on the same area. I am very interested in outcomes, not just in job and skills outcomes but also if they are going to be independent, because the parents, if they have a parent, are not going to be able to do it all. How would you regard the state of play with



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outcomes? We have had a lot of evidence sent into us, some from you but some from others, about the lack of information that SEND does not pass on to apprenticeship providers. We mentioned the problem that if you do not have an EHC plan you do not get the Maynard reforms for apprenticeships. Also we have had evidence suggesting that schools do not believe it is their job to prepare these young people for work. There are some good examples and you have mentioned some. There is an organisation that I am aware of called Project SEARCH that in essence has an employer and a job coach. Are you aware of those kinds of organisations?

Caroline Archer: Yes, we are aware of Project SEARCH. We are working on Project SEARCH internships.

Q331 **Chair:** I would like to know how you see the state of play and whether or not the Government are doing enough to look at what is working and whether or not we could do more things like Project SEARCH and the work that you are doing?

Linda Jordan: The requirement in the Code of Practice is that children should be supported to plan for adulthood from year 9 at the latest. We should be aware of what needs to happen to support independence and friends and relationships from the early years, but from year 9 the EHC plan or the SEND support plan should be clearly thinking about preparing for adulthood, so employment, independent living, friends and so on.

There are some issues. I think the Code of Practice does have some contradictory messages. The Code talks about the preparing for adulthood outcomes throughout, I think they are mentioned in every chapter, but it also talks about education, health and care outcomes. Most education, health and care plans are constructed with the outcomes under areas of need. There is an element of confusion and that is mostly what we do, helping people to work through those contradictions and to think about that the most important outcomes are life outcomes, as Janine mentioned earlier, life outcomes for young people. It is perhaps moving away from some of our traditional ways of constructing outcomes in quite short-term, narrow education objectives more into how we are going to support this young person to be as independent as possible, to have relationships, friends and so on.

I think that people are beginning to understand it gradually. It is slow progress. We could think a bit more about how we could accelerate that, perhaps by giving stronger messages particularly to schools. One of the problems is that we need to increase the knowledge mainly in schools as to what works to support young people.

Q332 **Chair:** Are you aware of the Careers & Enterprise Company?

Linda Jordan: Yes.

Q333 **Chair:** Have they done any work on this?



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Bernie White: This year it is required to extend its services to further education, but I do know of colleges that have made an approach to it to get access to an enterprise or adviser, because we hear that SEND hubs are to be established, only to be told, “No, we work with schools” so I do not think the development is as far along—

Q334 **Chair:** It is helpful to know that. Thank you. I think you were going to speak next.

Caroline Archer: On Project SEARCH. The question is what are the Government doing to help schools?

Q335 **Chair:** Are the Government doing enough to evaluate what works and support things like Project SEARCH to support you and so on?

Caroline Archer: No. We work very closely with Project SEARCH. We get our training from Project SEARCH and we work very closely with the partners who will be the host employer and the college. We all work together in making sure that we are following the structure of Project SEARCH. Everything is really in-house. We do not have particular support from the Government for Project SEARCH.

Maybe what would be quite useful—and I am saying this because supported internships, including Project SEARCH, is something that has been rolling for several years and now we have hundreds of young people, thousands of young people, in work. What we do not have is a permanent in-work support service that can provide support to employers and to employees on an ongoing basis. We have Access to Work, so the Government are helping with that, which is great and it is very useful, but it is time-bound, up to six months. Sometimes we can stretch it for a year. If circumstances change we could potentially get some more Access to Work to support the employee and the employer in the workplace with disability equality training or have a job coach. Circumstances have changed for the individual on a personal level and it is affecting their work, so we can bring in a mentor. Sometimes things happen and things change. Disability does not go away.

What is happening is that organisations such as ours are becoming quite stretched in continuing to deliver services once the six months or the year is up. We have a number of people who have come back to us year on year asking for support and we have employers coming back asking for support. We do as much as we can and may refer them to other services within their catchment area, if there are services. If there aren't, there is the potential that the person could lose their job and then we are back to square one. The Government could help in trying to develop a support service for employers and employees. That would be really useful.

Chair: That is helpful, thank you.

Di Roberts: I have two examples. In Hertfordshire the council and the schools and colleges have got together and have jointly funded three



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transition workers who go into the schools. They are helping the young people make informed choices and put together better written outcomes about moving into adulthood.

The second one is link courses. We work with our local special schools. They come into the college either for a week or on a regular basis every day. That allow them to make informed choices, to talk to our current learners and see what their aspirations are. They get to meet the employers that we have work placements with. Therefore, when they are looking at their aspirations and what they want to achieve, it is much more informed and it works really effectively with the school. If we could have funded link courses so that that was part of the transition from pre-16 to post-16 I think that would be incredibly effective in making sure that the EHCP outcomes are better written, but equally in raising the aspirations of the young people about what happens as they move into adulthood.

David Ellis: There is a general feeling that local authorities are moving towards commissioning EHCPs really focused on employment outcomes and they are beginning to lose sight of the other valuable outcomes. Robert, I think you introduced whether it is independent living, communication, control or even just confidence. We have been talking about some of the youngsters without EHCPs. Let us not forget the other end of the spectrum. There are some very complex young people who have some very complex needs for whom the outcome is never going to be employment, but the other outcomes are just as valuable with the softer skills.

It is a few years old now, but let us not forget the NAO report from 2011. That quoted a figure for that upfront investment in education and looking at the right outcomes of about a £1 million saving over the lifetime of the individual. That takes us to one of the challenges, which is long-term planning in this area. It is a plea not to forget those really valuable outcomes for the students with the more complex needs, for whom employment is not an outcome.

Janine Cherrington: We have some lovely outcomes to share with you and it would be really nice to be able to have the time to do that, but we don't. From our perspective as a post-19 transition organisation there is genuine transition. It is not courses; it is completely bespoke individual for the young person in our curriculum.

What we see are three barriers to employment outcomes and the independent outcomes. One of them is that there are some brilliant work experience examples in schools. They are always washing cars for children in need and baking cakes at Macmillan, but who ends up working in a garage and who ends up working in a bakery? It is trying to get the difference between work experience and jobs. We are still talking about work experience in FE but it should be further back; we should be getting the job in FE.



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I think the second barrier is that we have an education, health and care plan and are the partners to employment health and social care or are they family and business? Really we do not have the right partners at this end.

The other thing that we need to remember is that the DWP needs to have an aspect of transition as well. We have some elephants in the room always with funding and I think one of the things that we struggle with is what does work ready look like on the financial impact of that family? What does independence look like on the financial impact of that family? We had a conference in the summer, which was young persons' voice and parents talking about what the financial impact was and shining a light on it for their families, families who have had to move house when their young person moves out. We need to hear those stories so that we are not frightened to share them. Sometimes we have a family with a higher rate mobility vehicle sitting in the drive when the local authority commission taxi pulls up to take the young person to a course where they are learning to catch a bus and travel independently.

Beatrice Barleon: To pick up on that point about the co-operation between different Departments, I think it is something that the Government could look at. There is some work going on, for example, in DfE with apprenticeships and broadening, potentially, and whether the flexibilities could be broadened to other groups. There is some good work going on, I think, but the linking up between what the expectations are in DWP on adults with a disability and how that links in with this kind of whole Act and the development of that individual is a really important part. There is some co-working that should be going on or could be going on.

The other thing I think would be worth looking at that we have been exploring a little bit is the levy for apprenticeships and whether some of that funding could be potentially used for traineeships, for other employment programmes rather than purely focusing on apprenticeships. In some ways that would make some funding available for exactly this group potentially that is currently not available.

Chair: Thank you. We suggested in our apprenticeship report about using some of the levy for social justice funding mainly for apprentices, so it is definitely something to consider.

Q336 **Mr William Wragg:** A last question to spur our discussions, and maybe it is quite telling that this is the last question. I know about advancing the positives and the life chances of the young people who come to you, but what about the views of the young people? It has been touched on particularly by Di and Janine, but I really want to know from everybody how the views of young people are proactively taken into account in your different settings?

Janine Cherrington: One of the things that I think we are good at is harnessing the voice of the young person throughout education generally.



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Particularly in the last few years we have seen as part of the Brexit outcomes that it was the young people who were out there saying, “My voice was not heard”. Well, it was heard, it just did not win. I think we have to go back to what it means to have a voice and what it means to have an informed voice.

When we have young people—and you will know the young people yourselves—who come to us at 19 and they cannot make a choice between blackcurrant and orange, how are they going to choose where they want to live or who they want to live with? Those choices need to be pushed back through the system. We have young people using the bathroom at Transition2 and we give them a choice between a flannel, a hand towel, a bath towel and a bath mat. They choose what they dry themselves with and then we have the discussion. Those are the choices that the young people need to be able to make to feel secure in their own life choices and we are doing it too late in the day.

Di Roberts: I definitely agree with that. It is about making sure that the students have the experience much younger so that they can see the possibilities. We have an independent living house, so where we have some of our link students they will see our current students staying there for a week. They are learning how to manage budgets, how to cook, how to look after themselves, but if they do not see that it is difficult for those young people to imagine. I think getting that opportunity so that they can experience right from before year 9 is really important.

Bernie White: The challenge for young people who are non-verbal communicators of having their voice heard is greater still. That requires expertise throughout the school experience but also at the FE stage, as well as organisations understanding other laws, like the Mental Capacity Act, and how to secure the rights of young people to be the decision-makers, even if they cannot make a complex decision but contributing towards that complex decision. That is showing through in decisions.

What we are not seeing is that learner voice coming through at the decision-making stage about which route for their further education.

Q337 **Mr William Wragg:** That is right. We have talked about the Code of Practice quite a bit, but it does clearly state that from 16 onwards it is the child’s right to be able to make requests and decisions. It is interesting that you bring that up.

Pat Brennan-Barrett: I would like to talk about the other group of people that we have not discussed, and that is the people who may have the EHCPs but they do not have cognitive disability, so they do not have learning difficulties. At our college we look at their IAGI, what sort of advice they are getting, but it is really important to raise their aspirations at school level so they know they can go to university, become a teacher, a lawyer, a marketing expert, whatever they want to do. We have a lot of those students in the system who previously perhaps would not have been given the opportunity to progress to university. The outcomes are



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now such that they can progress to university and we need to be listening more to their voice.

Linda Jordan: We see fantastic practice across the country of how professionals find out young people's views, young people with very complex needs who do not use words, and it goes back to what was said earlier. We need to get better at sharing that practice. We almost need a repository of good practice in teaching and learning that includes pupil voice and includes planning for the future.

Going back to your earlier question, Robert, when you asked if we are evaluating, we have a massive body of evidence of what works in employment, independent living, people voice, friends and relationships. We just need to be better at spreading what works. We do have the evidence base.

David Ellis: As a special provider, National Star, it sounds flippant but every hour of every day, it does not matter what professions, therapists, care workers and tutors are helping the students gain a voice and confidence and declare what they want to do, whether it is about the course they are doing or how they are living.

The point I wanted to make is that there is a push towards integration into mainstream. Sometimes as a specialist provider we are seen as not required or not wanted because there is this move towards integration. It is often the students with complex needs who go into mainstream provision who do not have their voice heard. On the altar of inclusion they are the ones who say, "The only time I am included is when there is a class photograph. All the other times I am not part of it and I don't have my voice heard". It is about the value of specialist providers and sometimes it is not for everybody, but sometimes that move to integration into mainstream is where they lose the voice.

Caroline Archer: On the supported internships that we work on it is general practice to develop the view of the individual and have their voice heard, not to put words in their mouth, and really get to know that person and what it is that they like. That occurs on a daily basis but also on a half-term basis, where we meet with them and their parents, sometimes staff will challenge the parents so that we can—

Q338 **Mr William Wragg:** Yes, I could ask about that. That is a whole different debate because of the interaction between the parents.

Caroline Archer: Yes, but challenge the parents so that we can really hear what the young person, the intern wants, what their next steps and goals and aspirations are. It is general practice. What I really enjoy seeing is the confidence that grows along the internship journey, from this individual being very quiet and not necessarily engaging and being quite shy to then becoming very much outward and confident about who they are.



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Janine Cherrington: Part of the barrier to young person's voice sometimes is the inaccessibility of the education, health and care plan itself. In the majority we see young people who may have contributed a sheet to the education, health and care plan but they do not know what it is. We work very hard at Transition2 to embed all our bespoke outcomes with the education, health and care plan. They know what it is, where it is, it is on their individual board. This year we are modelling pocket plans so that they can have small plans that they take out with them, and it is a meaningful document that they have with them. They know what it is.

Some of the education, health and care plans do not even have a photograph of the young person, so they would not even know if it was theirs as non-readers. Sometimes they cannot recognise their own name and that is a bit of a barrier as well. I think they need to have a voice all the way through.

The other thing is that we operate a "nothing about me without me" agenda. We insist that the young people are present at least at some part of their own meetings, and that is not really what we are finding happens in specialist schools because of the anxiety of being present. The sooner we address that and the sooner we get over that with confidence and make it something exciting, that you want to be in that room and share what you are doing, I think we can resolve that quite quickly.

Di Roberts: It is very much, as Janine says, about developing confidence. We have had some of our students who have spoken at national conferences. If you put a young person in that position it is very nerve-wracking, but if they are in a supportive environment where they are used to their voice being listened to, they have done it and have done absolutely amazing work. It is just heart-stopping when you have them talking to such a large audience, but it is about constantly building their confidence, constantly knowing that their voice is valued. If you have the culture and setting right that will happen.

Linda Jordan: The process that Janine described is called person-centred planning. The code does expect EHC plans to be developed using person-centred planning, but we are a long way from that being normal practice. I think that is one of the biggest barriers as to why EHC plans are not as good as they should be. The planning process has become fragmented, so rather than people sitting together to develop the plan and the outcomes it is individuals that are asked to send in advice or views, so it is young person views, family views and professional advice and then a case officer has to write the plan. It is much better to do the planning together so that the whole conversation is starting with the young person and you are much more likely to get their voice, find out what is important to them. Person-centred planning needs to be given a much higher priority and profile.

Chair: Thank you. That was really extraordinary evidence. Thank you very much. Just hearing you, clearly there needs to be a much clearer



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and tougher framework for post-16. It seems to be a big tangle, not just about funding, which is crucial, but in every other part of it, from the plans, to those who do not have the plans, to the outcomes, and it seems to be a big, tangled mess. That is the conclusion I have reached. Obviously there are some good things that are going on. What would be really helpful is if you could send examples. You mentioned that you had great outcome examples, good examples of best practice and things where they are working and that we could learn from. I am very keen that our evidence and our report, when it is published, also looks at best practice and how we can replicate that. Thank you very much indeed. That is really helpful.