



'I can't read or spell properly - how can I fill in forms?
I could go a lot further if I got some help'

young person in focus group

'I don't want to be another wasted life - I want to achieve
something with my life'

young person in focus group

"One day I realised that I had no qualifications and that I
was going to have a very tough time"

(Lizzie, 18 years)



3 Profile of the Young People

Introduction

3.1 Our key recommendation is that Inclusiveness should be the underpinning principle for all post-school learning and support. Inclusiveness places the young person at the heart of provision. It was, therefore, important that our first question was "Who are the Young People?"

3.2 The focus of the Committee's considerations has been young people in the post-school period, approximately in the age range 16-24. In the course of our consultation exercises and evidence-taking, we have also received a range of views about the problems and difficulties experienced by some young people in the years leading up to school leaving age. Among young people making the transition from school to post-school learning or employment, and in the succeeding period, there is a wide range of diverse and complex needs. In this chapter we set out some of the key information which demonstrates the diversity and illustrates the potential benefits of an Inclusiveness approach designed to recognise, understand and meet the needs, abilities and aspirations of the young people. Illustrative case studies are given to highlight the difficulties which the young people have in making transitions and ways in which these can be overcome. The real names of the young people have not been used.

Sources of Information

3.3 The members of the Committee brought with them a wide body of knowledge and experience from the fields of guidance, education and training, the voluntary sector and business. We also reviewed published data and existing research; commissioned a focus group study; and conducted an extensive consultation exercise. Video and tape-recorded evidence was also presented at the Committee's Evidence Day.

3.4 For the Committee, the most telling evidence about "who are the young people" comes from the young people themselves. In the Focus Group Study, discussions were held with a wide range of young people, some with physical disabilities, learning difficulties and/or disabilities or mental health problems, and others who had experienced emotional and social difficulties. Many were disadvantaged in multiple ways. The discussion focused on the young people's needs, aspirations and goals. The study found that the young people, despite their varying difficulties, shared a similar outlook on life. They want to participate in society and, for most, "employment" is the key to realising this aim.

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Transitions

3.5 The Committee was broadly concerned with young people between the age range of 16-24 who may experience difficulties in making the transition to post-school education, training and employment. The first transition may come when young people complete compulsory education, or when they reach 18 years old (in the case of those in special education). We recognise that for others the transition may come, in reality, before 16 years if young people stop attending school or are excluded.

Case study 1

William is 14 and has severe literacy and numeracy problems. He was embarrassed reading aloud in school. His frustration and lack of skills resulted in highly disruptive behaviour and eventually he stopped attending school altogether.

William is now attending an education initiative run by a training provider. He has benefited from intensive one-to-one support to improve his literacy and has shown considerable improvement. William has also received assistance to improve his confidence and motivation. His attendance record has been excellent and William's parents are very pleased with his progress.

3.6 For most young people, preparation for transition will start several years before they reach school-leaving age. Preparation will include careers education, work experience and other education/business activities, and discussions with teachers, careers advisers, and parents. Some young people will require an extensive period of transition and on-going support. We are aware of others who, on leaving school, will experience multiple transitions in a relatively short space of time. This may be due to personal circumstances or because they find it difficult to sustain a further education or training place or job. It is also important to recognise that young people mature at different rates and some may experience prolonged transition periods. Baldwin, Coles and Mitchell (1997) stress that young people with disabilities and/or learning difficulties may experience prolonged transition and exclusion whereas young people looked after by local authorities tend to experience accelerated and unstable transitions.

Case Study 2

At the age of only 16, Stuart was frustrated by work. He was good at interviews and could secure employment, but could never sustain it. He was referred to a specialist training provider and was coached on what type of work would suit his skills and interests. A lot of time and effort was spent on improving Stuart's ability to work within a group. Eventually a placement for Stuart was arranged with a caring employer. The company was so impressed by Stuart's eagerness and commitment that they offered him a full-time position. He is also working hard towards a vocational qualification.

3.7 Different transition routes for young people have been highlighted in research into provision and assessment for special training needs by Ward et al (1998). They studied two populations of young people and found that they experienced different transition routes. These related to the extent to which each of the groups of young people would have experienced systematic and continuing assessment procedures. The two populations were:

- a cohort of 469 trainees in vocational training;
- a cohort of 123 college extension course students from the researchers' previous work.

3.8 Three different constituencies were represented in the total cohort: two groups which experienced relatively stable transitions; and one whose post school experience was more transient.

- Young people who left school to pursue college extension courses prior to training. They tended to have mild to moderate learning difficulties, a Record of Needs and had undergone extensive assessment.
- School leavers who entered training and remained with the same training provider.
- Young people, who experienced transient and mainly unsuccessful periods in vocational training or employment, followed by periods of unemployment. They were more likely to leave training early.

A Range of Individual Needs

3.9 The young people with whom we are concerned are likely to require more than one type of support and their needs may change over time. In some cases this will be because their circumstances have changed. In other cases, it may be because they have progressed in their current setting but require different kinds of support to make the transition to the next stage. Where young people are not in regular contact with statutory agencies or have "fallen out of the system" little information will be available on their needs.

3.10 Young people may require additional support as a result of their lack of qualifications; circumstances; personal characteristics and attitudes; disabilities or health difficulties; or social, emotional or behavioural problems. Many young people will have a combination of needs for which they will require extra support.

3.11 Some young people may share some characteristics and experience similar circumstances. For example, many young people with disabilities or young people who have been looked after can find themselves among the long-term unemployed, the homeless and the socially isolated (Baldwin, Coles and Mitchell 1997). However, the social processes which they go through may be very different.

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Case Study 3

A training provider working with young people with support needs estimates that

- 98% of their clients come with no qualifications
- 89% have literacy problems
- 88% have numeracy problems;
- 73% admit to using drugs for recreational purposes;
- 63% do not live with a parent or guardian;
- 73% have never worked;
- 82% feel they have nothing to offer an employer

The following sections illustrate the range of circumstances and needs of young people.

Qualifications and Participation in Post-School Education and Training

3.12 There has been a major increase in the numbers of young people staying on at school, entering further or higher education or work based training opportunities. In 1996-97 there were approximately 190 000 16-18 year olds in Scotland of whom 86.8% were in some form of full-time or part-time education. This compares with a figure of 54.6% in 1986-87.

Table 1 shows the significant increase in the number of 16 and 17 years olds who remain at school.

Table 1

	16 years old	17 years old
1986-87	50.5%	22.7%
1996-97	66.7%	40.5%

3.13 The proportion of young people leaving school with no Standard Grade qualifications has also decreased from 19.3% to 6.5% over a ten year period. However, around 40% of school leavers have not achieved a qualification at ASCETT level 2, broadly equivalent to 5 Standard Grades (1-3), SVQ Level 2 or 5 intermediate Levels above intermediate 1 Grade C. 83% of pupils who leave school in the winter of S5 or before have not achieved a Level II qualification.

The following table shows school leavers by their highest SCE qualification held.

Percentage of Leavers

Table 2

Academic Year	Total	Highest SCE Qualification held								
		None ⁽¹⁾	Standard Grades					Higher Grades		
			@ 4-7 ⁽²⁾	@ 1-3 ⁽³⁾			@ A-C			
				1 or 2	3 or 4	+5	1 or 2	3 or 4	+5	
1986-87	100	19.3	12.7	16.9	9.7	8.0	12.0	10.5	11.0	
1993-94	100	8.8	14.3	15.0	8.9	8.9	14.2	11.8	18.1	
1994-95	100	7.9	13.4	15.2	9.6	10.5	14.0	12.3	17.0	
1995-96	100	7.2	13.4	14.9	9.9	11.2	13.7	12.3	17.3	
1996-97	100	6.5	12.8	14.6	9.9	12.1	13.7	12.8	17.5	

(Statistical Bulletin: Scottish School Leavers and Their Qualifications: 1986-87 to 1996-97)

- (1) No SCE qualifications, or none found during the matching process (see annex, section 1.2)
- (2) Including 0 Grades @ D-E/4-5.
- (3) Including 0 Grades @ A-C/1-3.

3.15 Table 3 gives an estimate of the qualifications of young people 18-24 joining the New Deal. This information is collected at UK level from clients at interview and is based on a sample of about 50%. 3715 young people reported having no qualifications and 2725, qualifications at NVQ/SVQ Level I or below. 4172 had some other qualifications. Those young people entering the New Deal at more than 6 months unemployment tend to have fewer qualifications.

Qualifications on entry of those joining 18-24 New Deal to February 1999 (UK level)

Table 3

	Total	Normal Entry		Early Entry	
		At 6 months	At more than 6 months	At less than 6 months	At more than 6 months
None	3715	1532	1627	186	370
Foundation	1212	511	511	90	100
NVQ/SVQ level 1	1513	686	609	116	102
NVQ/SVQ level 2	2020	1050	703	115	152
NVQ/SVQ level 3	464	228	165	34	37
NVQ/SVQ level 4+	308	168	108	13	19
Other Qualifications	4172	2018	1536	231	387

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3.16 The main routes of education and training chosen by 16–21 year olds between 1992 and 1997 are shown in Table 4. The majority of young people in 1996–97 were in higher or further education or were still at school.

Participation in Education and Training by 16 to 21 year olds in Scotland

Percentage of the total 16–21 population

Table 4

	1992–93	1993–94	1994–95	1995–96	1996–97
School	15.0%	16.0%	16.6%	17.9%	18.6%
Full Time FE	3.9%	4.3%	4.8%	4.8%	5.6%
Part Time FE	9.0%	8.2%	6.5%	9.4%	10.3%
Full Time HE	18.6%	20.5%	21.9%	22.3%	24.1%
Part Time HE	2.5%	2.2%	2.1%	2.0%	2.0%
Skillseekers	N/A	1.8%	3.3%	6.6%	8.7%
TOTAL	49.0%	53.1%	55.2%	63.0%	69.3%

(4th: Statistical Bulletin: Participation in Education by 16–21 year olds in Scotland 1986–87 to 1996–97. Except for the Skillseekers data which was collated separately. There may be some overlap between Skillseekers and further education.)

Young People Not in Post-School Education and Training

3.17 There is a group of young people who leave school with few or no qualifications and do not enter education or training. Many of these young people will enter a cycle of short term, low paid, low skill jobs, and unemployment. It is difficult to obtain an exact figure for the numbers of young people who are not participating in education, training and employment as many "disappear" from the system. The Scottish Executive estimates that around 6000 – 8000 16 and 17 year olds may not be in any form of education, training or employment. The number may be almost double if 18 year olds are included.

3.18 Young people not participating in any type of post-school education and training are not a homogeneous group. However, evidence from the House of Commons, Education and Employment Committee indicates that there is significant over-representation among this group of:

- males;
- children who have been looked after by local authorities;
- young offenders;
- those from difficult and disrupted family backgrounds;

- young people lacking self-confidence and self-esteem;
- those with few "basic skills";
- those with emotional and behavioural problems;
- those with a high prevalence of risk-taking behaviour, e.g. smoking, substance abuse.

3.19 Young people not in any form of education, training or employment are at risk of social exclusion. This has effects on society as well as the individual.

3.20 Anecdotal evidence suggests that more young males are disaffected from education, training and the labour market or have "disappeared" from the system. More young males leave school with lower qualifications. In 1993, 22% of males left school with no Standard Grades at 1-3, compared with 17% of females. Preliminary results of analysis of the Scottish School Leavers Survey by Edinburgh University shows that young males with low attainment (no Standard Grades at grades 1 –3) move in and out of training and employment on leaving school. By the age of 19 over half are in employment with a small number in training and just over a quarter unemployed. However, although more low attaining females are in employment shortly after leaving school (40%) and 28% are unemployed, they are likely to move out of employment either entering training or becoming unemployed. By the age of 19 only a third are in full-time employment and 43% are unemployed, 14% were doing something else; the majority of these had parental responsibilities.

3.21 There is a number of young people whose circumstances, regardless of their abilities, may make it difficult for them to participate in post-school education, training or employment. These circumstances may be due to a short-term crisis, e.g. temporarily homeless or they may be longer term.

Looked After Children

3.22 At 31 March 1998 there were 10 791 children who were looked after by the local authority in Scotland; 58% were boys. This pattern is reflected across all ages but is most marked in the 12-16 age range where there were 6129 looked after children; 61% were boys and 39% were girls. (Source: *Information on Looked after Children: at 31 March 1997 and 1998*, Scottish Office 1998. For tables see Annex E).

3.23 Around half of the children who are looked after are living at home. In 1998, around 51% of the children looked after were at home; 25% were with foster carers and 17% were in residential care. The remaining 7% are living with friends/relatives or in other community settings.

3.24 There are many reasons why children may be taken into care to be looked after by local authorities. A child may have behavioural or health problems or there may be difficulties at

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home when a parent requires extra support or assistance for a short time.

3.25 Evidence presented to the Committee from the Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum and Who Cares Scotland outlines a number of significant difficulties which young people who are looked after may face. The transition from school to post-school education, training or employment coincides with the time when young people leaving care are having to face issues related to their backgrounds, their identity and their future. In addition to this, many care leavers have financial pressures and may be moving into independent accommodation, assuming domestic responsibilities.

3.26 Young people who have been looked after have often had a disrupted educational experience and may have underachieved in terms of formal qualifications. A Department of Health report in England in 1997 and a report by Barnardos for the Action on Aftercare Consortium in 1996 estimate that over 75% of care leavers leave school with no qualifications. Many looked after children are not in school during their final year and do not engage with agencies. They may not have had an opportunity to meet with a careers adviser and some young people do not even have a National Insurance number. For young people who have moved frequently between care establishments, school records do not always keep pace with the move and they may miss out on education support services. Young people leaving care tend to have less access to work experience and no "role models" in the labour market. There may also be a lack of opportunities available to them on leaving school. Research indicates that half of care leavers were unemployed within a few months of leaving care and almost two thirds were moving between casual work and other types of training or employment (Biehal et al 1995.) A survey of young people leaving care and homeless young people on behalf of the South Lanarkshire Youthstart Project (1998) indicated that 63% of all the young people were unemployed at the point of admission to supported accommodation.

3.27 Many young people from care who have achieved qualifications and employment feel that, in retrospect, they were not pushed enough at an earlier point in their lives. In Focus Groups on behalf of South Lanarkshire Youthstart Project some young people felt that they required an increase in their personal confidence to enhance their employment prospects. One respondent wanted:

"Someone to push me because I feel that I will not be able to do it."

Homelessness

3.28 It is difficult to estimate how many young people are homeless. Official statistics estimate that there were 10 900 single homeless applicants under 25 in 1996/7 (Scottish Office 1998). The Scottish Council for Single Homeless estimates that at least 20000 young people become homeless in Scotland every year.

3.29 The Bridges Project (1997), an Edinburgh based organisation working with homeless

young people have analysed referrals to their One Door Initiative over a 3 year period (August 1994-August 1997) based on a total of 1233 referrals. A small majority of the referrals were male (56%) and 49% were under 18, with 14% over 20. Sixteen year old females make up the largest grouping (16%) although there are less females at age 18 and above; 31% of the young people had a care background and 76% of these left care at 16.

3.30 29% of young people (43% 16 and 17 year olds) referred had no income. Where the young people did have an income, most were on benefits. The South Lanarkshire Youthstart survey of young people leaving care and homeless young people showed that 84% of all the young people (150) were in receipt in some sort of benefit and 88% of the young people who were homeless received housing benefit.

3.31 Young people who are homeless may experience many and complex problems. Some young people will have no family or community experience of employment or the support which enables them to become independent. Many will have been non-attenders at school. Once young people are homeless it becomes harder to make contact and to sustain contact with them. Other difficulties may also arise such as mental health problems or drug use.

3.32 Some homeless young people can manage to use the standard services which can provide a route out of homelessness. However, organisations working with homeless young people often see a more troubled group of young people who find it difficult to do simple tasks, who regularly fail to keep appointments and experience confusion in describing events and following advice.

Case Study 4

Susan, aged 19 could no longer manage her tenancy. Her period of notice was waived. All she had to do was give written notice and return her keys. However, she consistently failed to keep appointments with her support worker or the housing department. This resulted in massive arrears and exclusion from re-housing with the council in future.

Young Offenders

3.33 Young offenders are at particular risk of social exclusion. Offences by young people contribute significantly to overall crime rates – just under 40% of all recorded crimes are committed by young people under 20 years of age. This represents around 350000 crimes per year or one crime for every 3 young persons.¹

¹ Apex Scotland

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3.34 Many offences are committed by young people under 18 years old although 18 appears to be the peak age for offending. In 1995 26788 children were referred to the Scottish Children's Reporters Administration. Thirty-two per cent of referrals led to a Children's Hearing. Fourteen per 1000 of the population under 16 were referred because of offences. Sixty-nine per cent of referrals for boys were because of offences compared with 32% for girls. (Scottish Office Statistical Bulletin May 1997. See tables in Annex E).

3.35 Young offenders will often have other difficulties which make it difficult for them to engage in post school education, training and ultimately employment. The Apex Cue Ten Project estimates that 60% of young offenders have poor literacy and numeracy skills. Many will also have alcohol and drug problems.

3.36 The Committee received evidence from one young man who had been through the Criminal Justice System but who was now progressing well in his training and working towards a vocational qualification.

Case study 5

James is 17 and has been through the Criminal Justice System. He left school at 16 and was classed as an "under achiever". After being unemployed for six months and entering one unsuccessful period of training, James started training with a charitable organisation which was able to offer him support with his dyslexia. He is now working towards a vocational qualification and in his own words has "been out of trouble for some time and have gained more confidence in myself".

Young People with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

3.37 At September 1997, there were 14912 pupils, or 1.9% of the school population, resident and educated in Scotland (excluding pupils in nursery schools) with a Record of Needs. In addition to recorded pupils, it is estimated that around 20% of pupils in Scottish schools may have a special educational need at some point during their time at school. 5731 pupils with special educational needs were in publicly funded secondary schools, 4270 of these had a Record of Needs. Around 830 pupils attended special units attached to publicly funded secondary schools. 3007 pupils were attending special units attached to mainstream secondary schools for some proportion of their education. Over 51% of secondary pupils attending a special unit for some or all of their time had a Record of Needs.

3.38 Around 8000 pupils were based in special schools in Scotland in both 1997 and 1996, a third of these were female. About 30% were considered to have moderate learning difficulties, while around 1 in 12 had severe learning difficulties and 1 in 9 had social and emotional

difficulties. Approximately a third of pupils had complex or multiple impairments. (Scottish Office Statistical Bulletin End/B1/1998/9. For tables see Annex E.)

3.39 Approximately 21604 students were enrolled on special programmes in 46 further education colleges in 1997/98.² 19350 students were enrolled on a part-time basis. (SOEID 1998) Although about 15% of young people on Skillseekers endorsed as training have a special training need (STN), only a small proportion of these will have a disability. Many young people who have low qualifications, poor motivation and difficult social circumstances may also have mild learning difficulties.

3.40 In research into provision and assessment for special training needs (STN), Ward et al (1998) found that within a data set of 469 trainees in Skillseekers, the main support needs of 403 young people were learning difficulties and/or difficulties with literacy and numeracy. 312 (66.5%) of the trainees had social, emotional, behavioural or motivational problems as a single or complex support need. This compared with a group of 123 students on extension courses studied in an earlier piece of research, (Ward and Thomson, 1997) where 113 (91.9%) had learning difficulties and 48 (39%) had social, emotional or behavioural difficulties.

3.41 Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities may find it more difficult to make the transition to further education and training and progress on to employment. Pearce and Hillman (1998) found that such young people are over-represented amongst those who are not participating in education and training.

3.42 Data available from the 1991 census estimated that over 634000 people in Scotland had some form of disability or long term illness. As a group, people with disabilities are at greater risk of poverty than non-disabled people. Poor employment opportunities, reliance on benefits and possible discrimination in the workplace can cause further alienation.

3.43 Evidence from the Committee's focus groups study and from parents/carers of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities highlighted the wish to find a job and participate in society. In the words of one young man:

"We need more jobs that people in wheelchairs can do."

3.44 Ward et al (1994) interviewed young disabled people and their families and found that employment and independent living were of major importance to their vision of the future. However, many young people with disabilities experience prolonged transitions after leaving school which can increase continued dependence on their families and exclusion from the labour market. As one parent who gave evidence to the Committee noted:

² This figure refers to all students on funded or non-funded courses.

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"Parents in this day and age are not prepared to sit back and allow or accept a substandard quality of life for their young adults"

Case Study 6

Stephen had a Record of Needs at school and received learning support. He organised his own work experience placement in his 4th year at school. With the help of guidance and learning support staff, Stephen then arranged day release attendance for his final term at school. On leaving school, at Christmas of his 5th year, Stephen went to college to do a catering course and if successful in his modules, he hopes to do a GSVQ II in catering. He also has a part-time job in a local restaurant which he is enjoying very much.

Case Study 7

Lynn, who has mild to moderate learning difficulties is interested in a career in make-up and beauty. With the help of her specialist careers adviser, a training provider and major employer, she is working towards a SVQ in Retail. Her personnel manager is delighted with her progress, particularly her excellent communication and customer care skills.

3.45 The Committee's evidence included several young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who had made a successful transition to further education, training or employment.

Sensory Disabilities

3.46 Young people with sensory disabilities can experience particular difficulties in making the transition from school. Approximately 90% of deaf children are educated in mainstream schools³. Young deaf people can find the different communication environment in post-school education or training difficult. There may be a shortage of specialist support e.g. trained sign language interpreters. People with a sensory disability may also face misunderstanding from employers. A survey by the Royal National Institute for the Blind found that 51% of employers would not employ someone with a "difficulty in seeing".

³ National Deaf Children's Society

3.47 Dual sensory impairment from birth or an early age leads to problems in the person gaining access to information, in communicating with others and moving around. The combined effects of these can restrict the person's opportunities for employment access to housing, and living and participating in the community⁴.

Case study 8

During her final year at school, Penny, who is profoundly deaf experienced a variety of subjects in her timetable to help her explore her career options. She did work experience at a local primary school as she was keen on working with children, but also kept her options open by attending a day release catering course at college. A multi-agency approach involving the Council, careers service company, LEC, college and a voluntary agency allowed Penny to train as a classroom auxiliary through Skillseekers. Penny helps with two deaf children in the classroom and is really enjoying the experience. She is also working towards a qualification in Childcare and attends college one day a week.

Autism

3.48 There are other disorders which are not always readily recognised or understood. Autism is a disorder which affects approximately 30000 children and adults in Scotland and is characterised by:

- difficulty with social relationships;
- difficulty with communication;
- lack of imaginative ability⁵.

3.49 Approximately 75% of people with autism also have learning difficulties. About a quarter are of average intellectual ability and many are academically and/or vocationally well qualified. People with Asperger syndrome or high functioning autism have impairment of vocal and non verbal communication. Their intellectual capability is not affected but may be obscured. The majority of those at the able end will have attended a mainstream school.

3.50 Young people with autism or Asperger syndrome, even those who have been academically successful, can lack the social and communication skills required to cope with the world of employment. Further education and training can also be problematic due to the teaching

⁴ Sense Scotland

⁵ National Autistic Society

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methods and difficulties in relationships with peers and/or staff. However, with understanding and appropriate support, they can make successful transitions to post-school education or training.

Mental Health Problems

3.51 People with mental health difficulties are more likely to lack personal confidence and assertiveness, have high anxiety levels, and have problems with social integration. They may also have complications due to medication, mood swings and be on a low income. These characteristics may make it difficult for young people with mental health difficulties to fully participate in further education and training and sustain employment. In Edinburgh alone, estimates suggest that there are over 5000 people who have experienced serious mental health problems but who are able to engage in some sort of work.

3.52 Access to open employment is a goal expressed by many young people with mental health problems in Scotland. However, open employment may not be realistically achieved without support. There is evidence that people with mental health problems are severely disadvantaged in gaining employment with only 18% of people having full-time work⁶.

Case study 9

Colin, 17 had no sense of time. He would for example arrive at 5pm for an art class that had taken place at 2pm the previous day. He had great difficulty recalling past events and there were periods covering years where he was unable to remember where he had stayed or with whom. He was diagnosed as possibly having post-traumatic stress syndrome. After considerable support and once his housing situation had stabilised, he began to explore career options and undertook training to allow him to work in the catering trade as a chef. Two years on he appears to have come through his difficulties.

⁶ Edinburgh Community Trust

Case study 10

Grant first began experiencing problems with his mental health at the age of 12 and was eventually diagnosed with schizophrenia. With support from his school and family, Grant was able to continue with his secondary education and go on to college. Unfortunately as the pressure of Grant's studies increased, so did the intensity of his illness and he was unable to complete his exams. He attended the Young People's Unit at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital and through the support and guidance offered to him there, he began to look at employment as an option. However, Grant, like many young people who have experienced mental illness, had no history of employment. The solution to Grant's situation came in the form of a supported employment placement in hospitality through the Edinburgh Community Trust. He is now in his 20's and works 2 days per week under the therapeutic earnings disregard. Grant's overall sense of well being has increased and he is looking at open employment as an achievable goal.

How Young People See Themselves

3.53 The Committee's focus group study found that more united the young people than divided them. Individuals saw their situation as a "given", not good or bad. They did not see themselves as different according to the nature of their disability or other support need, but shared a similar outlook on life. The young people did not see themselves as "special" and did not wish to be treated in an exceptional way.

3.54 Other research emphasises the link between young people described as having special education and training needs and those described as "disaffected". (Pearce and Hillman 1998). These young people represent a continuum of need of young people who have difficulty accessing post-school education and training, and who may feel alienated from the system.

3.55 Young people with disabilities in our focus group research did not want the negative connotations associated with being labelled as "disabled". One young person wanted to be *"respected for who I am, not looked down on for what I am."* Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who participated in workshops for the Tomlinson Committee disliked disability labelling. They wanted to be treated as a "a normal human being" and a "student". However, some recognised that such labels were useful in obtaining the support they required (SCPR and SKILL 1996).

3.56 The young people in the focus group study were asked to give their definition of success. Two broad categories of response were given:

- factors related to money and material possessions;
- factors relating to the individual and his/her role in society - independence, acceptance, a sense of belonging;

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3.57 Young people with more severe disabilities tended to lean towards the human factors whilst the young people with attitudinal, social or behavioural difficulties tended to place more importance on material factors. The common theme, which linked these views, was employment. Most of the young people saw jobs as the key to material "success" and allowing them to play their part in society.

3.58 Despite having a range of difficulties, the young people, especially females, had a positive outlook and were generally hopeful about their future. This is likely to have reflected their current situation – whether they were participating in further education, training or employment. Discussions with parents/carers highlighted the fact that when participating in education or training, the young people's self-esteem, confidence and general outlook on life improves but regresses when they finish their course or training programme.

3.59 The most salient message from the young people was that they wanted from life what most of us want – to have a job, to be independent, to have their own home, to have a social life and to have a family.

"Success... to me that means leading a normal life- having a job, keeping a house, those sorts of things."

(Nadine, aged 21)

