

One in three with vision impairment lack support to gain quality education and employment

June 18 2021



One in three people with vision impairment did not gain quality employment despite earning qualifications in line with the general population. Credit: Mikhail Nilov from Pexels

[A Longitudinal Transition Study](#) just published by the Vision Impairment Center for Teaching and Research (VICTAR) at the University of Birmingham and Thomas Pocklington Trust (TPT) shows one in three people with vision impairment did not gain quality employment despite earning qualifications in line with the general population.

The study tracked 82 participants from England over a period of 11 years (from age 14 to 25) to improve understanding on why this population is vulnerable to becoming long term NEET (not in [education](#), employment or training).

Many of the young people spoke positively about their experiences in school and achieved average or above average GCSE qualifications. But then faced a range of barriers when entering Further Education, Higher Education and ultimately the employment market.

Rachel Hewett, Birmingham Fellow at the Vision Impairment Center for Teaching and Research School of Education, University of Birmingham said: "The research identified key challenges once the young people transitioned into Further Education (FE). Many young people found adjustments were not put in place in time and they had a lack of access to specialist support.

"Careers guidance often focused on keeping the young person in education, with limited support for transitioning into employment. This led to some of the participants 'churning' in the system."

Many barriers were observed once the participants moved into Higher Education, such as an inaccessible application process for UCAS and Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA), and inaccessible virtual learning environments and a failure from institutions to make reasonable adjustments. This led to some of the cohort withdrawing from their

courses, repeating modules or entire academic years, or leaving with a degree classification which they feel did not reflect their ability.

Several of the participants wished to pursue apprenticeships but were unable to identify suitable opportunities or access specialist support to help them consider alternative options.

Tara Chattaway, Head of Education at TPT said: "It is evident that young people with [vision impairment](#) are not getting the support at transition periods in their lives. The lack of support, accessibility and inclusion can impact on the quality of education the young person receives and on then on their employment opportunities. We are calling on Government to bridge this gap and to ensure that the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill and their response to the impending SEND review truly supports the aspirations and learning needs of [vision](#) impaired students."

At the end of the study 66% of the remaining participants were in some form of employment, 17% remained NEET, including seven young people who by the age of 25 had never experienced paid employment. Of particular concern is the lack of support available to help young people with vision impairment access employment once they become NEET, with several of the young people being actively discouraged by Jobcentre Plus staff to search for employment, in favor of long-term benefits.

The research did identify factors that drive positive outcomes for [young people](#) with vision impairment. They include:

- Self-advocacy skills and a good understanding of their vision impairment and the adjustments they require.
- A well developed and broad range of skills for accessing information.

- Mobility and orientation skills, including skills for getting around in unfamiliar environments.

Tara added: "At TPT we understand the importance vision impaired students having the right access to materials, assistive technology and independence skills in order to thrive in education and to transition into [employment](#). More must be done."

More information: Lost in Transition? The post-school experiences of young people with vision impairment: www.pocklington-trust.org.uk/w...ion-final-report.pdf

Provided by University of Birmingham

Citation: One in three with vision impairment lack support to gain quality education and employment (2021, June 18) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-06-vision-impairment-lack-gain-quality.html>

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