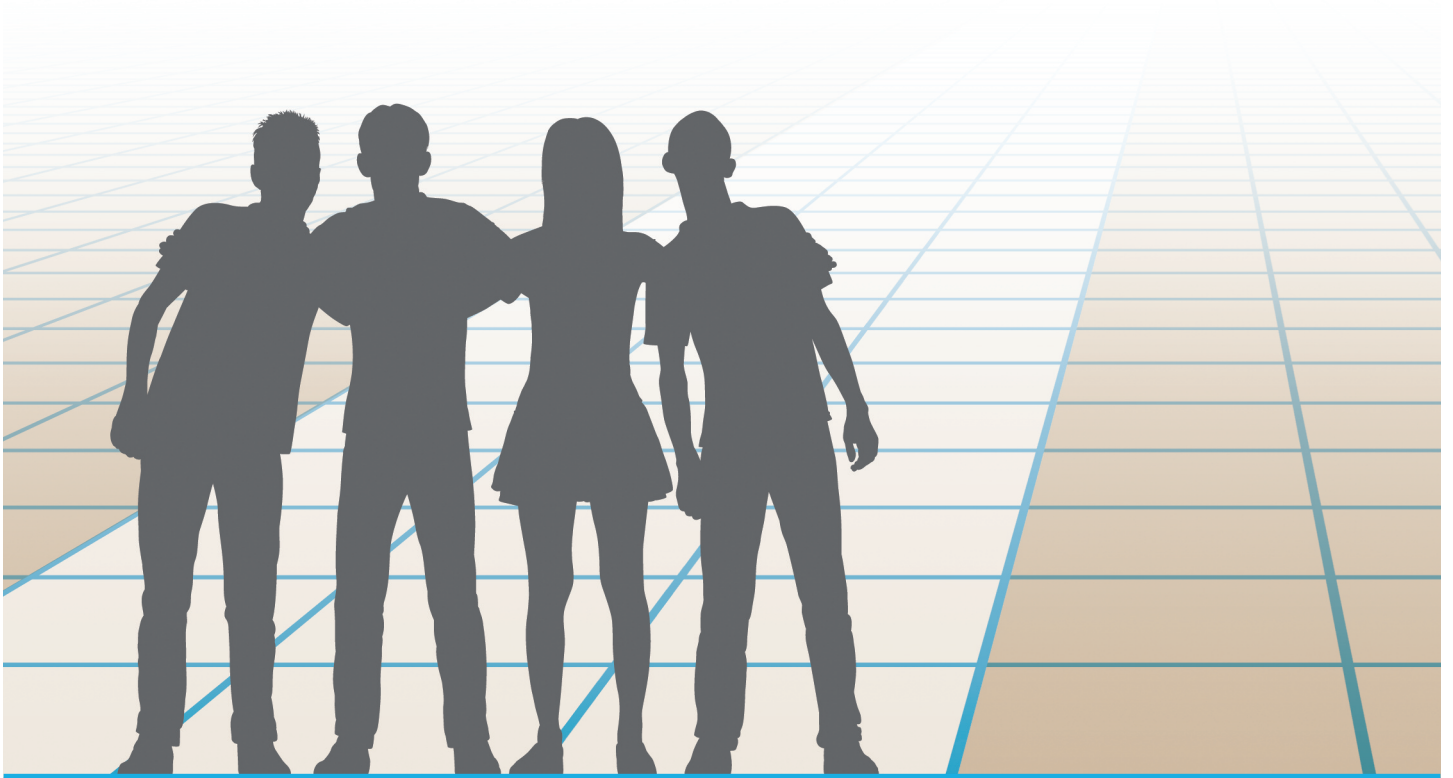


LITERATURE REVIEW

Young People's Transition to a Stable Adulthood



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Jo Wells, Blagrave Trust

LITERATURE REVIEW

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Foreword

The Blgrave Trust works in partnership with up to 60 youth focused organisations a year in the South of England. A significant proportion of our work is focused on the 16–24 age group and has the overall aim of enabling a successful transition to adulthood, in particular for those facing disadvantages. Many of our funded partners support employability and skills development, advice, information and guidance for this age group. They all have a deep commitment to giving young people a voice and listening and responding to what they say.

During 2016–17, many of our partners have become increasingly concerned about the plight of so many young people leaving school without the necessary support they need. In particular, undocumented 'NEETs'; rising homelessness and unaffordability of housing, poor employment options and progression routes, and mental health are all giving increasing cause for concern. Young people facing challenges tell us they often don't know where to turn, especially at the transition point of leaving school.

Whilst we remain committed to supporting individuals in the here and now and putting young people themselves at the centre of solutions, the Trustees felt that we should reflect more on long term social change and how to address the root causes of the problems young people are grappling with.

As a starting point the Trust commissioned a review of the national literature available on the transition to adulthood. *Thanks to Esther Goodwin Brown for her thorough and conscientious work on it.* What follows reveals the scale and multi layered nature of the issues facing young people today, particularly but not exclusively, for the significant proportion who do not enter university or an apprenticeship. We intend to use the findings to inform our future direction but hope this will also serve as a resource for our partners and the wider sector.

Jo Wells

Director, Blgrave Trust
March 2018

Introduction

Living standards for young people have fallen over the last 20 years (Social Mobility Commission, 2017), with young adults now more likely to be living in poverty than the older population (JRF, 2015). The housing crisis and the rise in low paid jobs have led to inequalities in wealth and mean that young people, as a population, are far more disadvantaged than recent previous generations (Roberts & Lawrence, 2017). This relative disadvantage is limiting the life-chances and choices of young people (D'Arcy & Gardiner, 2017). However, the aspirations of young people today are no different from those of their parents. Young people still want, and value, the safety, hope and autonomy that job security, good standards of living and affordable housing offer (D'Arcy & Gardiner, 2017).

"We're not talking about massive amounts of resources; we're talking about the basic fundamentals which every individual should be entitled to. Every individual should be entitled to the ability to go out to earn money, to get a house, to rent a house, to have security and to have safety and that's all it is."

(Grimshaw, 2017)

For the young today, the transition into adulthood has become more prolonged and unstable than for previous generations (Schoon & Silberstein, 2009). When this transition is halted by periods of unemployment, poverty, or, for a growing number, periods of homelessness, the impacts can be long-term (Brewer et al, 2012). Prolonged periods of unemployment before the age of 25 have been linked to longer-term poor health and low pay (Lee et al, 2012). Young people leaving care are more likely to become homeless (Homeless Link, 2014). In addition, the number of young people with multiple and complex needs requiring specialist responses is growing (Homeless Link, 2014).

This paper provides an overview of available literature on the issues for young people transitioning into adulthood. It surveys the many complex issues faced by young adults today.

1. The major issues facing young people

What were proposed as short-term cuts to services and a redistribution of resources as a response to austerity, have led to inequalities that are thought to have particularly disadvantaged the young (Bell & Blanchflower, 2011). The responsibility for youth services was given to local authorities in 2011, yet, few councils currently publish their youth plan (National Youth Agency, 2013). There is promise of improvement, however, where services are moving away from universal solutions towards a more coordinated approach to service integration among youth services, coupled with an increasing focus on early intervention or prevention (National Youth Agency, 2013).

Unemployment and labour market figures

Youth employment is more sensitive to fluctuations in the labour market than the employment levels of other age groups (Bell & Blanchflower, 2011). After the financial crisis in 2008, youth unemployment spiked at 22%. Following the UK Referendum to leave the European Union, the ONS reported for July to September 2016 that there had been an increase of 14,000 in the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). This took the figure to 11.9% of young people 16–24 who were NEET (ONS, 2016). As well as having a direct impact on young people, youth unemployment comes at a huge cost to the economy. ACEVO (2012) estimated the cost of youth unemployment at 2012 levels as over £9 billion per year, in direct costs and in lost output.

Labour market figures at the beginning of 2017 indicated that 74.6% of people aged 16 to 64 were in work: the highest rate of employment since records began in 1971 (ONS, 2017a). Unemployment was 4.7%, down from 5.1%, with a further 21% economically inactive (ONS, 2017a). However, these figures arguably do not reflect the reality for young people. Unemployment amongst young people was three times higher (12.5%) than for the rest of the population (4.5%) (ONS, 2017b). There are a number of reasons why the true reality for young people is not always picked up. More young people are in full-time education, taking them off unemployment records. There is a growing number of young people who are 'unregistered' and are not seeking work or engaging with public services (Maguire & McKay, 2016). Being in work but living in poverty is especially common among those aged 16–24 (Schmuecker, 2014). Quarterly figures only provide a 'snapshot' of the situation for young people, failing to demonstrate how long young people stay out of work or training. Impetus-PEF (2017) highlights that, although there has been a decrease, from 2.1 to 2 million young people NEET in the last year, the number of young people spending 12 months or more NEET has increased from 714,000 to 811,000.

The length of time some young people are remaining unemployed and the high levels of NEET despite growth in the economy point to a deeper structural problem (ACEVO, 2012; Impetus-PEF, 2017). In 2017, 58% of the total NEET were recorded as 'economically inactive' (not looking for or ready for work) compared to those 'unemployed' who had either previously been employed or were looking for work (Impetus-PEF, 2017). Research suggests several possible causes and mediators to this problem. Those with low qualifications are most likely to struggle, including the 15% of young people who currently only hold up to level-two qualifications (Impetus-PEF, 2017).

There is also a mismatch between job/skill supply and demand due to poor education pathways and careers guidance. This is exacerbated on a regional level when highly qualified working age adults migrate to areas where high-level jobs are more readily available, leaving other areas with a greater distribution of people with little or no qualifications (The UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2014).

There is a growing body of evidence on the range of experiences for young people that looks beyond the 'snapshot' produced by quarterly figures. This evidence demonstrates that NEETs are not a homogenous group. The economically inactive long-term NEET are seen as an increasingly important group for policy attention (Impetus-PEF, 2017; Maguire & Mckay, 2016). For some groups of young people periods of unemployment are more common and largely short-lived (Lee et al, 2012). 30% of young people had spent some time NEET in 2017 (Impetus-PEF, 2017). Others are more likely to remain unemployed for long periods, affecting their life-chances and threatening their future earnings at an estimated £225,000 over a lifetime (Impetus-PEF, 2017; Social Mobility Commission, 2017). Being inactive for a longer period is associated with fewer transitions back into work (Maguire & Mckay, 2016). Young women are most at risk of being NEET (OECD, 2015) as well as inactive: 66% of inactive young people are female (Impetus-PEF, 2017). Inactivity is thought to be caused by a number of factors. These may be tangible, including poor education, wages, transport or childcare options (Impetus-PEF, 2017; Maguire & McKay, 2016). But other barriers are less tangible including familial relationships, ethnicity or perceived lack of or entitlement to support (Maguire & Mckay, 2016).

Research on young people finds that young women, in particular, do not feel entitlement to welfare or employment support. They may have been discouraged by attempts to gain employment or from the prospects projected for young people following the recession (Bell & Blanchflower, 2011; Impetus-PEF, 2017). Supporting this, qualitative research found 61% of inactive young women want to work (Maguire & Mckay, 2016). This suggests young women need more tailored support to overcome real and implicit barriers to employment. Work is needed in particular to tackle the issue of young women who feel isolated in their communities, as this is a group likely to be unregistered and reliant on their families. It also suggests there is a mismatch between what is evident in current research and how young people actually feel (Maguire & Mckay, 2016). Impetus-PEF (2017) has put forward a number of recommendations on how to support those furthest from training and employment. Across minority groups, young men and women with high levels of depression and anxiety are found in those out of work and inactive. There is a need to address why young people are spending longer periods of time unemployed, inactive and NEET, and with this the societal barriers and prevalence of mental health disorders in order for more trusted pathways to economic inclusion to be developed (Maguire & Mckay, 2016; Scottish Government, 2017).

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Low-pay

Employed young people receiving low wages are more likely to be in poverty than other employed people (Tinson et al, 2016). The UK has the largest market of low-paid, low-skilled jobs (Schmuecker, 2014) than other developed countries and is in the top 8 OECD countries for low paid jobs. Between 2008 and 2017, young people's wages decreased by 16% (Social Mobility Commission, 2017). Vocational, social and adult care sectors are dominated by low paid jobs. Non-standard employment models are also on the rise, including part-time and zero hours contracts. Increasing numbers of people are now involuntarily filling part-time roles (Cam, 2012).

Young people are disproportionately more likely to fill low-paid, low-skilled jobs given the shrinking opportunities they are faced with on entering the job market (Ernst & Young, 2016). This can lock them in a cycle between low paid employment and unemployment, alongside disabled young people, single parents, minority groups or those with low educational attainment (Schmuecker, 2014; Shildrick et al, 2010). For many young people, stints in low-paid jobs are temporary. However, many, including a large majority of young women, are likely to remain at a low wage. The introduction of the National Living Wage in 2016 has reduced numbers of low paid jobs in the job market for the over 25s (D'Arcy & Kelly, 2015). Despite efforts such as the Living Wage Campaign, we are still a long way from raising the wage-floor for young people 16–24, who often still paid the National Minimum Wage (Eisenstadt, 2016).

Housing and homelessness

The housing options available to young people and support available to them to help them make informed housing decisions are increasingly limited (Eisenstadt, 2016). Rising house prices mean that young people largely cannot afford to buy homes and, as a result, their wealth is accumulating at a much slower rate than previous generations (Marsden, 2015). However, as the number of young homeowners decreases, there have not been concurrent increases in social renting. This means many young people without affordable housing options are forced to rely on supported accommodation or fall into homelessness (Clarke et al, 2015). This has led to forms of homelessness, such as sofa-surfing, where young people with no permanent residency move from place to place leaving them open to exploitation. In 2015, 35% of surveyed young people had sofa surfed, including 16% for prolonged periods. Care leavers, non-British Citizens and those who have previously been in touch with social services were most likely to have sofa-surfed (Clarke et al, 2015). There are risks associated with the length of time young people spend homeless. Research suggests that some young people quickly adapt to homelessness and become embedded in this way of life (Johnson & Chamberlain, 2008).

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As a best estimate, research indicates that there were 30,425 young people under 25 staying in temporary accommodation (13,122 in statutory; 17,303 in non-statutory) in 2013, 18,280 of those within London. In 2013–15 26% of young people said that they had slept rough at one time in their lives, (Clarke et al, 2015). Given the number of homelessness services that are shrinking, the actual scale of youth homelessness is becoming even harder to measure through front-line monitoring. This is compounded by the different statuses of homelessness and the number of young people who are in contact with overlapping services (Clarke et al, 2015). To what extent youth homelessness is increasing and its causes are, therefore, hard to discern from local or national figures. Practitioners working in front-line services suggest it is increasing. This is for a number of reasons, including benefit cuts, unemployment and unaffordable rents. A major issue is housing services' ability to be a barometer to the issue as these are run at capacity as standard practice. This means many young people are turned away or deterred from even approaching these services before they can be counted (Clarke et al, 2015).

Careers guidance and education pathways

Over the last 20 years, educational attainment has increased, supported by policies such as the Pupil Premium. Despite these increases in educational attainment, NEET figures have remained stable over the last twenty years (ONS, 2017a). The Social Mobility Commission (2017) found that policies supporting young people and their entrance into work have underperformed, particularly in comparison to in-education and early-years policies. The transition into adulthood, from education into work, is now seen to be one of the most important policy areas to be addressed in order to improve the life-chances of the increasingly disadvantaged youth population. New interventions are needed that target young people's transition from education to employment, including improved careers guidance, better monitoring of young people during this transition and follow-on support (Holman, 2013; Social Mobility Commission, 2017).

The New Deal for Young People (NDYP) is commonly cited as one of the most successful active labour market policies in this area (Bell & Blanchflower, 2011; Social Mobility Commission, 2017). Introduced in 1997, the NDYP tied young people who had been on job seekers for more than six months into a compulsory intervention that offered targeted support in finding employment. Although costly, the scheme was successful, increasing transitions into employment by 5% (Blundell et al, 2004; Van Reenen, 2004). The scheme was, however, cut in 2004. There is a need to better incentivise institutions to focus on the transition into employment alongside attainment while in school. This might involve providing young people with individualised careers guidance support and opportunities for meaningful work experience, which will better prepare them for the realities of working life (Holman, 2013).

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Since responsibility for careers guidance shifted from local authorities to schools in 2011 and the closure of Connexions in 2012, Ofsted has reported that the standard of guidance is low and patchy (Ofsted, 2016). There has also been a lack of support from the National Careers Service, despite it becoming an 'all-age' service in 2012 (Holman, 2013). There is lack of clarity amongst schools as to their role in careers guidance. They are low on capacity and do not generally have local partnerships with employers that can support meaningful work-related learning or work experience. These factors are all limiting schools' ability to provide careers guidance at the required level (Holman, 2013; Ofsted, 2016). Reviews of current programmes found progression routes were often not flagged in careers guidance, meaning young people were not aware of the steps they should take or the decisions they needed to make (Ofsted, 2016). Careers guidance is a vital a step in all young people's transition into adulthood. Informed advisors with access to current data on the labour market can help young people make informed, supported decisions about their future, and help address the mismatch between skills and available employment (Holman, 2013).

In establishing a set of eight benchmarks for good careers guidance, the Gatsby Foundation state that good careers guidance is characterised by 'linking different activities together into a coherent whole' (Holman, 2013). Similarly, the Fair Education Alliance advocates for a 'whole-school approach', with a trained senior leader responsible for education and careers pathways. On surveying 361 schools, Holman (2013) found no schools were fulfilling more than five of their benchmarks, though nearly all (89%) were aware of the need for good quality careers guidance. Given the calculated cost of implementing the benchmarks for medium-sized schools outside London was less than one percent of schools' budgets (£54 per pupil from the second year of implementation), the Gatsby Foundation has created measurement indicators that correspond to each benchmark in order to support schools to monitor and improve their performance (Holman, 2013).

Contact with professionals is found to increase employability (Mann, 2012). This supports the need to develop better partnerships between businesses and schools. Research suggests that interventions through schools can increase young people's social capital through 'careers-focused' interventions, including through engagement events, placements and meaningful work experience (Hughes et al, 2016; Kashefpakdel et al, 2012). These interventions are particularly beneficial for young people eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) who may have less access to informal networks of professionals than other young people. These interventions support an attitudinal change, by engaging them with working adults and giving them a better understanding of workplaces and the labour market (Mann, 2012). Good careers guidance is,

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therefore, important for social mobility, as it enables young people to learn about and be exposed to avenues that they might not have known about or thought they were eligible to pursue (Holman, 2013). Future First responds to this need in their work establishing alumni in state schools and colleges across the UK (Buckler et al, 2015).

Employers have a responsibility for creating positive experiences for young people as they enter the job market (Russell et al, 2014). Good careers guidance is, therefore, seen as a major priority that should be balanced by a 'push' from schools and a 'pull' from employers (Holman, 2013). Career guidance initiatives should include training on the soft skills needed for employment, as well as work with employers so that they are able to support young people more as they enter the labour market (Russell et al, 2014; Schmuecker, 2014). In 2017, the Government set out new plans to improve the standard of careers guidance for young people, including the implementation of the benchmarks and measurement framework developed by the Gatsby Foundation, in schools and colleges from 2017 (DfE, 2017a).

Academic pathways

Policies in the early 1990s were designed to increase young peoples' qualifications in order to reduce inequalities and boost their employability (Social Mobility Commission, 2017). These policies were largely successful, with significant rises in educational attainment over the past 20 years: the proportion of those with degree qualifications and above having more than doubled in the UK, with the third highest graduation rate of OECD countries (Foley & Brinkley, 2015). However, the employment projections in Working Futures do not match the numbers of highly educated graduates that have invested at a high cost in their education and aspire to progress to highly skilled and well-paid jobs (Brewer et al, 2012).

The persistent percentage of graduates not moving into graduate jobs is now being viewed as a structural problem. There is an oversupply of graduates and a lack of demand for skilled workers in the current market (Foley & Brinkley, 2015). Current graduates have become subject to the trap of low paid work more often associated with low-skilled workers. Graduates taking low paid jobs or long-term unemployment is more prevalent among ethnic minority groups (Wilton 2011). These facts support the view that in-school and higher education careers guidance need to be better aligned with the needs of the economy and national and local labour markets.

Career guidance initiatives should include training on the soft skills needed for employment, as well as work with employers so that they are able to support young people more as they enter the labour market

(Russell et al, 2014; Schmuecker, 2014)

Vocational pathways

Vocational career pathways have typically been undervalued in careers guidance and are less well understood by teachers compared to academic pathways leading to graduate jobs (Holman, 2013). The recent drive on apprenticeships may raise the profile of the vocational pathways that less affluent young people are traditionally directed too. In order to have a positive impact on the labour market, apprenticeships should be targeted at minority groups and young people (Social Mobility Commission, 2017). The Apprenticeship Levy, effective from April 2017, promises to make three million new apprenticeships available. This is a signal of the government's interest in improving technical pathways. However, there are concerns as to whether these new opportunities will actually benefit young people or whether the Levy might be used by some employers to subsidise existing training for working age adult staff. Research suggests the majority of apprenticeships are given to those aged 25 and over (DfE, 2017b). There is also a risk that it will encourage a higher quantity of apprenticeships of lower quality (JRF, 2017). Young women who choose apprenticeships earn 21% less than young men and are less likely to find apprenticeships that lead into full-time employment (Young Womens Institute, 2016). The Resolution Foundation argues that the government should focus on *quantity* through more opportunities for technical provision and courses, *clarity* through clearer pathways and *quality* by ensuring vocational training is of a consistently high quality (Henehan, 2017).

Inequalities and elitism

Some suggest that a major barrier to stable employment for young people is unfairness in the education system and job market (FEA, 2017; Foley & Brinkley, 2015). Despite overall increases in educational attainment, the gap in attainment between wealthy and less-wealthy young people remains (Social Mobility Commission, 2017). The DfE (2017b) has identified a need to bridge equality gaps in the education system. Privately educated students have a persistent advantage in gaining high-paid, highly-skilled jobs, with a 6% wage premium when in similar roles to their state-educated counterparts (Crawford & Vignoles, 2014; Foley & Brinkley, 2015). The high number of unpaid internships that are not advertised and are granted through informal connections, 11,000 of the 70,000 internships per year (Roberts & Ouwehand, 2017), demonstrates this issue. Additionally, there has been a trend towards filling previously paid roles with unpaid internships. Many young people are not in a position to take unpaid roles, meaning only those from certain households can benefit from these potentially valuable workplace experiences, widening inequalities (Gerada, 2013; Sutton Trust, 2014).

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(DfE, 2017b)

2. Disadvantaged groups and transitions into adulthood

Particular groups of young people face barriers during the transition into adulthood, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, those with disabilities, carers, care leavers, migrants and young women (Cassidy et al, 2006; Social Mobility Commission, 2017). Research suggests services are not motivated to reach out to certain groups, including inactive young women who are assumed to be occupied with parental or other caring responsibilities (Maguire & McKay, 2016).

There is a body of research which considers young people and inequalities based on wealth and gender. There is significantly less research illustrating how young people from minority ethnic backgrounds experience the transition into adulthood and how this is different from their white peers (Cassidy et al, 2006). Although the number of young people from black and minority ethnic groups entering university has significantly increased in the last 20 years, a significant attainment gap still remains (Alexander & Arday, 2015). Minority ethnic young people with equal qualifications are less likely to be interviewed for a job (Social Exclusion Unit, 2000) and Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups are much more likely to receive the lowest pay (Peters, 2015). Research suggests that the cultural identity, family and religious commitments young people from minority ethnic backgrounds are an important consideration when they are making decisions about their future (Cassidy et al, 2006, Lessard-Phillips et al, 2014). The research shows that young graduates from ethnic minority groups were more likely to remain unemployed in the search of graduate jobs that matched their qualifications. While their white peers were quicker to take low paid jobs to avoid stints of unemployment.

In 2013, it was estimated that there were 175,000 young carers in the UK. Young carers' transition into adulthood is often problematic. Their caring responsibilities may disrupt their schooling and they may often have to navigate the transition with little parental support (Hounsell, 2013). Young carers are three times more likely to have mental health issues themselves if the adult they care for suffers with mental illness (Becker & Dearden, 2000). Young carers often cannot draw on financial support from their parents, preventing them from accessing many training schemes or vocational pathways. Young carers are more likely than the national average to be NEET, suffer mental and physical health issues, be subject to poverty and miss out on basic education (Hounsell, 2013).

“A young carer becomes vulnerable when the level of care-giving and responsibility to the person in need of care becomes excessive or inappropriate for that child, risking impacting on his or her emotional or physical well-being or educational achievement and life chances.”

(Hounsell, 2013)

Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups are much more likely to receive the lowest pay

(Peters, 2015)

Young people with learning disabilities require particular support during the transition into adulthood. They are likely to achieve the typical markers of adulthood, such as employment, independent living and community participation, much later than other young people (Hudson, 2003; Tarleton, 2004). Although young people with learning disabilities often remain dependent on their families/carers into adulthood, they should also be supported to feel ownership over decisions that affect their lives. This is compared to other young people who are encouraged through policies to become independent and autonomous (Small et al, 2003).

Transition and disengagement from services

Young people experience multiple transitions between the ages of 16 and 24, a wide age bracket which currently bridges the gap between childhood and adulthood. These transitions include leaving school, moving out of the family home and moving into higher education or employment. During this time, young people in touch with services also have to navigate transitions from youth to adult services. These transitions can be difficult given the different processes, cultures and expectations of adult and youth services (Tarleton, 2004). In America, the unique service challenges faced by young people as they attempt the switch over from child to adult services is known as 'Transition Age Youth' and is associated with a large rate of detachment from services and increased risk of disadvantage from poverty, substance misuse and offending (Lane & Carter, 2006).

The age at which young people transition from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to Adult Mental Health Services (AMHS) is not fixed, occurring between the ages of 15 and 18 (Jcpmh, 2012). For this reason and many others, young people transitioning from CAMHS to AMHS are often lost or receive interrupted care. This can have a marked negative impact (Singh 2009). The transition to adult services is also thought to be particularly problematic for disabled young people or those with learning difficulties, including those with ADHD or emotional/neurotic disorders, whose conditions are not well recognised in adult services (Paul et al, 2014).

Care leavers are at high risk of becoming homeless, transitioning as they do from care to independent living at a younger age than most young people who have adult support at home (Shelter, 2005). 20% of care leavers will experience homelessness within two years of leaving care (Biehal et al, 1995). The government has a duty to house young people aged 16 to 17 and care leavers aged 18 to 20, but leaves young people 20+ vulnerable as they transition into adult services and shelters (Shelter, 2005).

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Unaccompanied minors seeking asylum are under the care of social services until the age of 18. A large majority of the 2000 unaccompanied migrants who turn 18 leave care and disengage from statutory services and institutions (Pinter, 2012). Young migrants, therefore, have a particularly unstable status within the current welfare system (Humphris & Sigona, 2017). Support for unaccompanied young migrants varies across local authorities. Young migrants are often found to consciously disengage from services at 18 due to fears around 'detention and forced removal', often leading to poverty, homelessness and poor physical and mental health (Meloni & Chase, 2017). For young migrants and other care leavers the transition to adulthood can feel sudden, stressful and out of the young person's control (Meloni & Chase, 2017).

There is an increasing at risk group of 'hidden' young people. This encompasses young people who, after transitioning out of full-time education, then fail to re-engage with services leaving them no longer registered within the welfare system (Maguire & McKay, 2016). Capacity to monitor the scale of this unknown population is low. Local authorities were previously responsible for tracking and monitoring young people as part of raising of the participation age (RPA). However, tracking has been limited to those aged up to 18, reduced from 19.

Young people may drop out because of fear or mistrust of the system. Because they are unwilling to comply with statutory services, they are reliant on family, employed in informal non-taxed roles or their legal status doesn't allow them access to services, for example recent asylum seekers with unstable statuses (Maguire & McKay, 2016; Pinter, 2012). There is a need for research to fully understand these factors and identify pathways back in. The majority of employment initiatives are targeted at young people who are NEET and ready to work – the 'economically active' (Maguire & McKay, 2016). Given the estimated scale of those inactive, there is a need to understand the barriers for young people who disengage and remain inactive, with greater efforts to introduce or re-integrate them into services, employment or training (Maguire & McKay, 2016; Social Mobility Commission, 2017).

Among the most disadvantaged are young people who are dealing with a range of issues including poor mental health, low education levels, poverty, previously being in care or caring for others. Because they are dealing with multiple issues, these young people will have to deal with a range of services (Singh, 2009), alongside navigating those that are more universal, including those relating to employment and training. The lack of clear, consistent guidance creates more hurdles than many young people and their families can navigate. Even where there are guidelines, such as NICE guideline NG43 for the transition between health and social services, these are not always translated into real support to prevent young people falling between the cracks as they move between services (Crowley et al, 2011).

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(Maguire & McKay, 2016; Social Mobility Commission, 2017)

Young people with multiple needs

Young people's needs are viewed as becoming more complex, with many experiencing overlapping issues including homelessness, unemployment and mental health issues (Homeless Link, 2014; Hounsell, 2013). The Social Exclusion Unit found that 98% of consulted services "said that young people presented a particular service with multiple problems" (2005b, p27). The need to acknowledge and support people with multiple and complex needs, is being acknowledged within adult health and social care (Adamson, Lamb, Moreton, Robinson & Howe, 2012). Within adult services in the UK, a person with multiple needs is defined as someone who experiences at least two of the following: homelessness, reoffending, problematic substance misuse and mental ill health (Adamson et al, 2012). These people are likely to have the most entrenched needs.

The lack of understanding of the complexity of young people's needs is an evident gap in the literature. The Social Exclusion Task Force has begun to acknowledge the complexity of multiple issues among young people, with a framework for outlining the multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion. Risks of social exclusion were seen to overlap leading to multiple disadvantage. Severe disadvantage is identified as those suffering 7 out of 10 sub-domains in the Bristol Social Exclusion Matrix (B-SEM) (Cusworth, 2009). Recent neurological research has found that the brain does not fully mature until the age of 25 and has begun to shape public policy debates (Johnson et al, 2009). The debate related to neuromaturation and maturity of judgement has received particular attention in relation to young people in the criminal justice system (Grimshaw, 2017). New guidelines have been presented by those that believe the maturity of a young person's judgement should be taken into account in sentencing and probation settings (Grimshaw, 2017). Research like this indicates the importance of considering the complex needs and experiences of young people who find themselves trapped in cycles of risky behaviour.

The transition into adulthood is a critical time in which young people require support to make informed decisions about their future (Crowley, et al, 2011). In the period between the ages of 16-24, purposeful and planned transitions will be the most successful. Informed advisors and link workers in schools and services who 'remain available across the period of adjustment' (CGF, 2016) are required. These workers should acknowledge the complexity of the transition to adulthood, seeing it as a process rather than a single point of switch-over. This is vital to ensure more equal experiences and positive outcomes for all young people (Crowley et al, 2011).

Esther Goodwin Brown

March 2018

The lack of understanding of the complexity of young people's needs is an evident gap in the literature. The Social Exclusion Task Force has begun to acknowledge the complexity of multiple issues among young people, with a framework for outlining the multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion.

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