

MOVING ON: **Preparing young people with vision impairment for post-16 transitions**

R N I B

See differently

A workshop pack for professionals and organisations supporting young people with vision impairment



Contents

5	Introduction	17	Workshop 2: Deciding what to do next
5	Ensuring successful transitions – The ice cream sundae	17	Part 1: Evidence from the Longitudinal Transitions Study
6	How to use this resource	18	Part 2: 'Deciding what to do next' workshop materials
6	Building blocks	18	What's next?
7	Bridging the Gap	19	Knowing yourself
7	Acknowledgements	20	The crystal ball
8	Workshop overview and resources required	21	Life is a journey
8	Workshop 1: What do we mean by 'transition'?	22	Workshop 3: Studying in Further Education
8	Workshop 2: Deciding what to do next	22	Part 1: Evidence from the Longitudinal Transitions Study
9	Workshop 3: Studying in Further Education	23	Part 2: Studying in Further Education workshop materials
10	Workshop 4: Studying in Higher Education	23	What is Further Education and where can it take me?
11	Workshop 5: Moving into employment	24	Where can I find out more?
12	Workshop 6: Understanding your vision impairment	24	Some ideas to consider:
12	Workshop 7: Technology and assistive tools	25	How can I be independent in FE?
13	Workshop 8: Self-advocacy	27	Workshop 4: Studying in Higher Education
14	Workshop 9: Getting around and living independently	27	Part 1: Evidence from the Longitudinal Transitions Study
15	Workshop 1: What do we mean by 'transition'?	29	Part 2: Studying in Higher Education workshop materials
15	Part 1: Evidence from the Longitudinal Transitions Study	29	Why Higher Education?
16	Part 2: "What do we mean by transition?" workshop materials	31	Before you apply
16	What is transition and why is it important?	32	Making the most of open days
		35	Applying for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)
		37	Preparing for the move
		39	Studying in Higher Education

41	Workshop 5: Moving into employment	62	Workshop 8: Self-advocacy
41	Part 1: Evidence from the Longitudinal Transitions Study	62	Part 1: Evidence from the Longitudinal Transitions Study
43	Part 2: Moving into employment workshop materials	63	Part 2: Self-advocacy workshop materials
43	Voluntary work and work experience	63	Know your needs
45	The Four Rs: Your Rights, Employers' Rights, Your Responsibilities and Employers' Responsibilities	64	Know your options
48	What is Access to Work?	71	Take control
51	Disclosing your disability	72	Self-advocacy scenarios
53	Workshop 6: Understanding your vision impairment	78	Workshop 9: Getting around and living independently
53	Part 1: Evidence from the Longitudinal Transitions Study	78	Part 1: Evidence from the Longitudinal Transitions Study
53	Part 2: 'Understanding your vision impairment' workshop materials	79	Part 2: Getting around and living independently workshop materials
54	Know it, own it	79	Tools for getting around independently
54	Don't bring problems, bring solutions	81	Resolving problems
55	I can, if you...	81	Using technology and other assistive tools
55	Identity and assumptions	82	Cool canes
57	Workshop 7: Technology and assistive tools	85	Budgeting
57	Part 1: Evidence from the Longitudinal Transitions Study	93	Appendix
57	Part 2: Technology and assistive tools workshop materials	93	Transition Questionnaire
58	Accessing information		
60	Using apps		
61	Voice assistants		

Successful transitions

Independent
Self-Advocacy

Understanding
vision impairment

Education

- Choosing courses
- FE
- HE

Employment

- Volunteering
- Employment /
Interests /
Apprenticeships



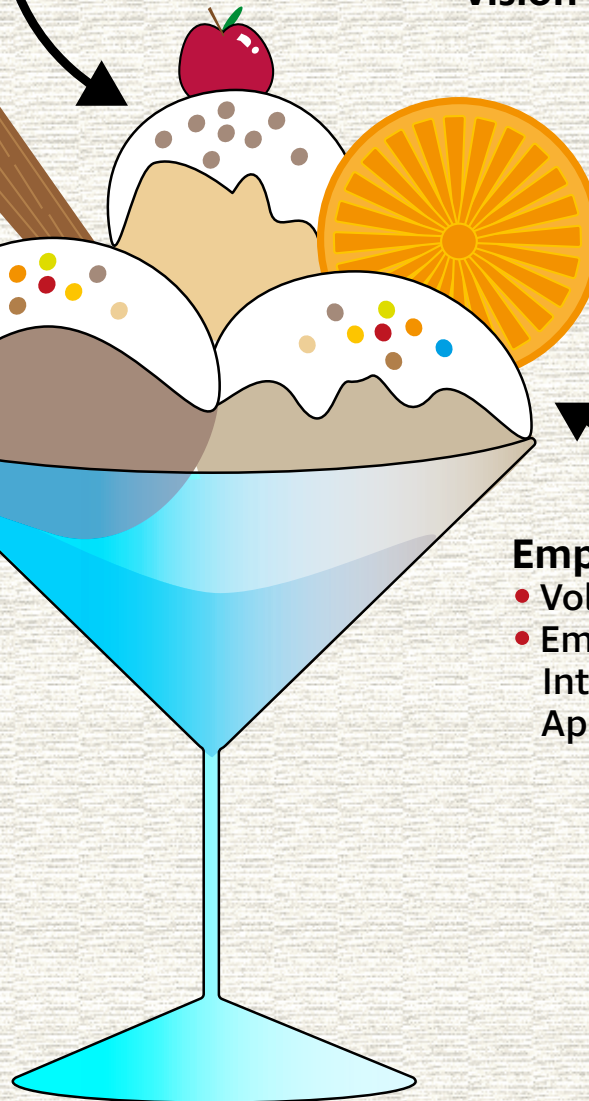
Technology
and Access
to Information



Independent
living and
social skills



Getting around
independently



Workshops

Introduction

Ensuring successful transitions – The ice cream sundae

This workshop pack was co-developed by a group of young people with vision impairment in 2019, with support from researchers at the Vision Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research (VICTAR), University of Birmingham and Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB).

Its content has been informed by the transition stories of more than 80 young people who took part in the Longitudinal Transitions Study: a longitudinal piece of research which tracked the transition experience of a group of 80 young people from compulsory education through to the labour market between 2010 and 2020.

You can find out more about the Longitudinal Transitions Study: <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/victar/research/longitudinal-transitions-study/index.aspx>.

The young people who developed this workshop pack use the analogy of an ice cream sundae to explain the preparation needed for a successful transition on from school.

The three core ingredients of the sundae are three ice cream scoops, which represent, respectively:

Education (choosing courses, FE or HE);

Employment (volunteering, employment/internships/apprenticeships);

Independence and Self-Advocacy.

On top of this, other essential parts of the sundae include 'sprinkles' (technology and access to information, getting around independently and independent living and social skills) and a 'wafer' (understanding vision impairment).

"I think it is really important that we learn from experiences, so that those people who are coming through now in the next generation don't go through the difficulties we went through.

"I think it is important that we can lead on that, as it is all well and good for an academic to sit and write processes and the training programme [but] there are things we have put into [these] documents they wouldn't have thought about.

"So, it is to make sure that those who come afterwards have a better journey than what we have had."

Hasun, young volunteer with VI who contributed to this workshop pack

How to use this resource

This is designed to be a flexible resource which can be used to run workshops in a range of settings by anyone who supports young people with vision impairment through post-16 transitions.

This could include, for example, Qualified Teachers of Children and Young People with Vision Impairment (QTVIs); habilitation officers; transition officers; and children and young people workers at voluntary sector organisations.

The resource consists of nine workshops, each outlining a key aspect of post-16 transitions for young people with vision impairment.

These are:

1. What do we mean by 'transition'?
2. Deciding what to do next
3. Studying in Further Education
4. Studying in Higher Education
5. Moving into employment
6. Understanding your vision impairment
7. Technology and assistive tools
8. Self-advocacy
9. Getting around and living independently

Each workshop is divided into two parts.

- **Part 1:** provides an outline of key **research findings** that have come from the Longitudinal Transitions Study, to provide key information underpinning the workshop.
- **Part 2:** outlines a workshop plan. Every plan is comprised of units, each of which provides a range of activities which have been developed in response to these research findings.

Building blocks

The resource is designed to enable users to choose the most relevant sections needed to develop a complete workshop. For example, a one-day workshop focusing on preparing for HE might include the following:

Studying in Higher Education

- Technology and assistive tools
- Self-advocacy
- Getting around and living independently

We have developed a comprehensive range of workshop activities, but you may wish to build upon its content to fit the young people you are working with.

For some of the activities, it would be very helpful if the young people attending the workshop have access to their choice of technology, and the internet, to get them familiar with conducting their own independent research. The resources needed for each workshop are listed in the workshop overview.

At the end of the pack, there is a questionnaire which workshop participants can be encouraged to complete to audit their knowledge and understanding of key transition topics. Should any of the young people you support require it, there is also information on emotional support, including links to further services and contacts.

Bridging the Gap

This pack is designed to sit alongside 'Your Future, Your Choice: Bridging the Gap': a resource aimed at supporting young people with vision impairment through a range of post-16 transitions.

Country-specific versions of the resource may be found on the RNIB website: <https://www.rnib.org.uk/young-people-school-life-and-planning-ahead-making-transition-school/transition-guide-bridging-gap>. Bridging the Gap includes a comprehensive link to further resources young people may find helpful.

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- The volunteers who were interviewed for these videos.
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- The participants in the Longitudinal Transitions Study, who have generously given their time over the past ten years.

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Photography credit: Helen Lloyd

Workshop overview and resources required

To run each workshop, we recommend the following items:

- Paper/sticky notes and pens
- Equipment for playing online videos/podcasts
- Wi-Fi

It will be helpful for the workshop delegates to have access to their own technology for online research/taking notes. In some workshops, this will be essential. Those workshops are identified below.

For some activities, it will be necessary to prepare written materials ahead of the session. It is important to plan ahead and ensure these are made available in a format accessible to all of the young people taking part in the workshop.

Workshop 1: What do we mean by 'transition'?

Workshop 1 contains one unit with three activities

Unit	Description	Additional resources needed
What is transition and why is it important?	This unit is designed to work flexibly as an introduction for any transition workshop. The purpose is to introduce young people to the concept of transition, and to help them recognise that it is important to prepare ahead of time.	None

Workshop 2: Deciding what to do next

Workshop 2 contains four units with 11 activities

Unit	Description	Additional resources needed
What's next?	This unit aims to help the participants think about their available options and asks them to begin to consider what they want to do next, to think about what stepping stones that they might need to take to achieve their longer-term aspirations.	Examples of local 'next-step' opportunities (e.g. college prospectus) Devices for young people to access the internet

Unit	Description	Additional resources needed
Knowing yourself	This unit aims to help the young people think about their passions, skills, and qualities and the areas in which they are less confident, in relation to their future.	None
The crystal ball	This unit aims to encourage young people to consider what they want to do next, identifying aspirations, expectations and possible limitations.	None
Life is a journey	This unit aims to highlight the benefits of planning and goal setting while giving reassurance that there is no one right path to follow.	None

Workshop 3: Studying in Further Education

Workshop 3 contains three units with five activities

Unit	Description	Additional resources needed
What is FE and where can it take me?	The aim of this unit is to help the young people understand what FE is and how it may be of interest and of use to them. This workshop can be combined with the 'Deciding what to do next' workshop, which covers making decisions on what to study next.	Equipment to play YouTube video Devices for young people to access the internet
Where can I find out more?	This unit aims to help the young people access information and knowledge to help them make informed choices.	Devices for young people to access the internet
How can I be independent in FE?	The aim of this unit is to encourage the young people to think about how they might work independently in FE.	Equipment to play online video Scenario cards prepared in an accessible format

Workshop 4: Studying in Higher Education

Workshop 4 contains six units with 11 activities

Unit	Description	Additional resources needed
Why higher education?	This unit aims to provide an introduction to the HE workshop, while helping young people to think about the options available to them, and their reasons for applying for HE.	Equipment to play online video
Before you apply	This unit aims to help the student navigate some important decisions they will need to make before applying for higher education, and to let them know about a resource that can help them with these decisions.	Equipment to play online video Devices for young people to access the internet
Making the most of Open Days	This unit aims to help the young people prepare for going to an open day by thinking about some of the important questions they might want to investigate.	Equipment to play online video Activity cards prepared in accessible formats
Applying for Disabled Students' Allowance	This unit aims to give the young people more information about Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) and to help them start to think about how they might use it.	Devices for young people to access the internet Case study cards prepared in accessible formats
Preparing for the move	This unit aims to help the young person prepare for making the initial transition into higher education. The aim is to challenge the young person to take responsibility for what they need, but also to give direction for who they might need to speak to.	Devices for young people to access the internet
Studying in higher education	This unit aims to help the young people prepare for some of the challenges they might encounter when in higher education, and in particular to encourage them to self-advocate for what they need.	Devices for young people to access the internet

Workshop 5: Moving into employment

Workshop 5 contains 4 units with 9 activities

Unit	Description	Additional resources needed
Stepping into the world of work	The aim of this workshop is to help the young people to think about the different types of work opportunities that they could engage in, depending on their stage in life. This could include paid work, voluntary work, work experience and apprenticeships. The workshop aims to help the young people to consider how these different options can act as stepping stones to achieving their career aspirations.	Equipment to play online video Range of resources for creating vision board (see Activity 2)
The Four Rs: 1. Your Rights, 2. Employer's Rights, 3. Your Responsibilities and 4. Employer's Responsibilities	The aim of this workshop is for young people to understand their rights and responsibilities and those of an employer.	Handout produced in accessible format
What is Access to Work?	The aim of this workshop is to introduce the young people to Access to Work, including how Access to Work could help them, and how they can apply for the scheme.	Equipment to play online video Devices for young people to conduct research Handout produced in an accessible format
Disclosing your disability	The aim of this workshop is to help the young people prepare for disclosing their vision impairment, including helping them think about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what to say • when best to disclose • what are the benefits of disclosure 	Equipment to play online video

Workshop 6: Understanding your vision impairment

Workshop 6 contains four units with five activities

Unit	Description	Additional resources/ preparation needed
Know it, own it	This unit aims to help participants understand their sight condition and explain it to others.	Devices for young people to access the internet
Don't bring problems, bring solutions	This unit aims to help participants consider how they might overcome some of the barriers they may face relating to their vision impairment.	Plan prompts designed around young people who will be attending
I can, if you...	This unit aims to help the young people find solutions to barriers others perceive.	Scenario cards prepared in an accessible format
Identity and assumptions	This unit aims to help the young people recognise that others (including themselves) can make assumptions about vision impairment.	Scenario cards and age cards prepared in an accessible format

Workshop 7: Technology and assistive tools

Workshop 7 contains three units with 10 activities

Unit	Description	Additional resources needed
Accessing information	This unit aims to inform young people about technology and to help them think about what technology they might need in different settings.	Examples of different types of technology/ assistive aids that can help access information for demonstration
Using apps	This unit aims to introduce young people to using specialist apps to help them overcome challenges relating to their vision impairment.	Young people to have access to mobile devices
Voice assistants	This unit aims to provide a fun activity to demonstrate the possible benefits of using voice assistance on accessible technology.	Young people to have access to mobile devices with built-in voice assistance

Workshop 8: Self-advocacy

Workshop 8 contains four units with 12 activities

Unit	Description	Additional resources needed
Know your needs	This unit aims to introduce the framework 'Know your needs, Know your rights, Take control'. It is designed to help the young people think about their own impairment, limitations and access needs, BUT in relation to their aspirations.	Devices for young people to access the internet
Know your options	This unit aims to help young people understand their right to equal access, and where to go for support by considering RRR: Rights, Responsibilities and Resources.	'True or false' cards and 'match the definition' cards prepared in an accessible format
Take control	This unit aims to facilitate a group discussion to help participants develop self-confidence; to trust their own instincts and be equipped to take responsibility for their own support.	None
Self-advocacy scenarios	This unit aims to get the young people to work through real-life examples of vision-impairment-related obstacles and think about how they could be handled.	Scenario cards prepared in an accessible format

Workshop 9: Getting around and living independently

Workshop 9 contains five units with 11 activities

Unit	Description	Additional resources needed
Tools for getting around independently	The aim of this unit is to help young people understand what is meant by habilitation, offer insight into what a children and young people's habilitation specialist does, and give examples of the kinds of things habilitation can support.	Equipment for playing podcasts
Resolving problems	The aim of this unit is to let students think about how they would resolve a problem if they were faced with it, through some real-life scenarios. The purpose is to let them see there is always a solution.	Scenario cards prepared in an accessible format
Using technology and other assistive tools	The aim of this unit is to help young people think about how they might use technology to enable them to become more independent.	Equipment for playing online video Young people to bring along preferred devices to demo Examples of low-tech solutions for independent living
Cool canes	The aim of this workshop is for young people to learn about different types of canes and to challenge any negative preconceptions they might have about using a cane.	Equipment for playing online videos Examples of different types of cane
Budgeting	The aim of this unit is to encourage young people to start thinking about how best to budget and to manage their finances, and overcome some of the accessibility challenges they might face in doing that.	

Workshop 1: What do we mean by 'transition'?

Part 1: Evidence from the Longitudinal Transitions Study

The longitudinal study intended to give us a better understanding of the transition experiences of young people with vision impairment after they leave school. This included observing the pathways participants took.

Participants followed a number of different pathways after completing their exams at 16. For the majority (over 90%), this included further study in a sixth form, or Further Education (FE) college, as a first step, and about half of these participants continued onto Higher Education (HE). Other participants went straight from school into apprenticeships or employment.

The study strongly highlighted the value of young people with vision impairment being supported to prepare for making transitions, including:

- Ensuring support arrangements are put in place in their next setting.
- Ensuring the young person has access to key information.
- Ensuring the young person has the skills they will need to thrive in that next setting.

Links to other workshops

This 'What do we mean by transition?' workshop may be linked with other workshops that focus on specific transitions:

- Workshop 2: Deciding what to do next
- Workshop 3: Studying in Further Education
- Workshop 4: Studying in Higher Education
- Workshop 5: Moving into employment

Part 2: "What do we mean by transition?" workshop materials

What is transition and why is it important?

Aim

This unit is designed to work flexibly as an introduction for any transition workshop. The purpose is to introduce young people to the concept of transition, and help them recognise it is important to prepare ahead of time.

Activity 1: What do we mean by transition?

Start by introducing participants to the concept of transition. Ask them whether they can give their own definition of transition. Here are some helpful definitions to draw on:

Oxford Dictionary: the process or a period of changing from one state, or condition, to another.

Your dictionary: Transition is passing from one form, or stage, to the next.

Activity 2: Previous transitions

Ask the participants to talk together and share examples of transitions they have made in the past.

Examples:

- Moving schools (primary to secondary; secondary to college).
- Moving classes at the end of the school year.
- Moving house.

- Moving to a new town or city.

Activity 3: Previous experiences

Ask the participants to reflect on how they found that transition.

- How did they feel leading up to the transition?
- What was good about it?
- What wasn't so good about it?
- What helped?
- How might the change have gone better?

Conclusion

Drawing on the responses from the discussion, explain that the purpose of the workshop is to help participants prepare in advance for any transitions that they might make, and to help ensure each transition goes as smoothly as possible.

Workshop 2: Deciding what to do next

Part 1: Evidence from the Longitudinal Transitions Study

Positively, the research participants in the Longitudinal Transitions Study went on to pursue a wide range of options, including Further Education, Higher Education, apprenticeships, training and employment. Their experiences emphasised how valuable specialist support can be for facilitating a smooth transition.

Positive transitions

- The most positive transition accounts were those which had been well planned and person-centred, and ensured the young person had the right support in place in their new setting and that all their aspirations had been considered.

This often required collaboration between specialist services and professionals working in the new settings.

Flexible transitions

- Several of the participants changed their mind about what option they wanted to pursue after getting their exam results, or after facing barriers in pursuing their first option. While it is important to put plans into place to facilitate positive transitions, this highlights the importance of having flexibility in transition planning.
- Of particular note were participants who intended to pursue an apprenticeship but were unable to secure a suitable position. This often meant they made a last-minute decision to apply for FE.

Churning

- It was observed that several participants were 'churning' in the system, by completing FE courses and then returning to retake different courses of the same level (or even lower) and not progressing. It is important for young people to be encouraged to think about how they might move forward.
- A barrier to the participants was not having a clear plan of what career they wanted to pursue, leading to them retaking courses to avoid becoming classified as NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training).

Course choices

- Several of the participants chose to take vocational courses in FE which required them taking a placement. A challenge for a number of these participants was being able to find a placement that would accommodate them. There were concerns from possible placements about the adjustments that would need to be made for them to work in that setting.

Links to other workshops

This 'Deciding what to do next' workshop may be linked with other workshops that focus on making transitions:

- Workshop 1: What do we mean by 'transition'?
- Workshop 3: Studying in Further Education
- Workshop 4: Studying in Higher Education
- Workshop 5: Moving into employment

Part 2: 'Deciding what to do next' workshop materials

The aim of this workshop is to act as a starting point for any young person who needs to make decisions about what to do next. The workshop contains the following units:

- What's next?
- Knowing yourself
- The crystal ball
- Life is a journey

What's next?

Aim

This unit aims to help the participants think about their available options and asks them to begin to consider what they want to do next, to think about what stepping stones that they might need to take to achieve their longer-term aspirations.

Activity 1: Next steps

Ask the young people to volunteer as many next step options as they can. For example:

- Fifth/sixth year study at school (for Scotland)
- Sixth form
- FE College
- Higher Education
- Apprenticeship
- Employment
- Training
- Volunteering

Activity 2: What's next for you?

Ask the young people to expand on these options by thinking about the following sorts of questions:

- Do you have any ideas for what you want to do next?
- Do you have any ideas about what you do not want to do next or are there any things you think you cannot do?
- Do you have any ideas of jobs/careers you might be interested in pursuing?
- What courses are available at school/sixth form/college/in Higher Education that might help you achieve those career goals?

Activity 3: Ticking the box

Ask the workshop participants to share what they understand about the options available for further study or gaining experience, including pre-requisites, mandatory requirements, and combinations.

Prepare some examples of local opportunities tailored to the group, eg

- Entry criteria for courses in local colleges or universities.
- Person specification for local jobopportunities/apprenticeships.

Activity 4: Independent research

For longer sessions, ask the young people to start doing some initial research into the options available, and any entry requirements they might need to meet.

Conclusion

Emphasise the importance to plan ahead, and encourage the young people to think about how the choices they make now will enable them to achieve their long-term aspirations.

Knowing yourself

Aim

This unit aims to help the young people think about their passions, skills, and qualities and the areas in which they are less confident, in relation to their future.

Activity 1: Knowing yourself

Ask the young people to work in small groups and to discuss the following questions:

- What is your favourite subject at school, and why?
- What is your least favourite subject at school, and why?
- What subject do you think you are best at, and why?
- What subject do you think you need to improve on most, and why?
- What do you think is your best attribute/quality?
- What do you think is your best skill?
- What skill would you most like to improve on or learn?
- What do you like to do for fun?

Activity 2: Knowing yourself and your options

Ask the young people to think about their answers in the context of the discussion in the previous unit 'What's next?'

If they are still unsure about what they might like to do, invite some discussion about how they might find out. Eg, work experience, getting a part time job, talking to people who know them well, talking to people in work about what they do.

Conclusion

It is important to take your time when making decisions about your future. Remember that, while you know yourself best, others can help give useful insights of where your strengths are. You might not recognise them all yourself.

The crystal ball

Aim

This unit aims to encourage young people to consider what they want to do next, identifying aspirations, expectations and possible limitations.

Activity 1: Looking to the future

Ask the young people to imagine they know what will happen in the future using a crystal ball. Imagine your life in five years' time:

- What do you look like (how is that different from now)?
- Where are you living (what's good about it/bad about it)?
- What work are you doing?
- What are you doing in your spare time?
- Who are you with?

Activity 2: Looking to a future without boundaries

Ask the young people to imagine that everything and anything is possible in the future

- a. Does your idea of what you are doing in five years change?
- b. Why has your idea changed or remained the same?

Conclusion

This activity is likely to bring up some conversations about what they can and can't do with vision impairment. This will be explored more in the employment workshop (Workshop 5). If, however, a particular job does seem unobtainable due to their vision impairment, you may wish to encourage them to think about what are the particular aspects of that career that makes it attractive, and to think about other careers offering the same type of experience.

Life is a journey

Aim

This unit aims to highlight the benefits of planning and goal setting while giving reassurance that there is no one, single, right path to follow.

Activity 1: Planning a journey

Ask the young people to work in pairs/small groups and to think about setting off on a journey (examples could be travelling to Mars or travelling to the North Pole; the more imaginative the better).

- Where are you going?
- Why do you want to go there?
- When are you going?
- How long will it take to get there?
- How are you going to get there?
- What are you going to take with you?
- What are you going to do when you get there?
- What obstacles do you think there might be, and how will you get around them?

Get them to present back their journeys to the group.

Activity 2: Planning your own journey

Ask the young people to think about how they would reach the future they imagined using their crystal ball, eg working as a teacher, or going to work abroad.

- Where are you going? Do you think what you imagined is possible?
- Why do you want to go there?
- When are you going? How long will it take to get there?
- How are you going to get there? What steps do you need to complete?
- What are you going to take with you?
- What are you going to do when you get there?
- What obstacles do you think there might be, and how will you get around them?

Activity 3: Role models

Ask the young people to think about their parents/guardians/other role models and their journeys so far. This might include their careers, achievements, and important moments.

- How did they get to where they are now?

Conclusion

Remind the young people that there are different ways to get to reach the same destination.

Workshop 3: Studying in Further Education

Part 1: Evidence from the Longitudinal Transitions Study

Moving on from school involves change, and it's important that young people and the different agencies supporting them plan for these times of change well in advance. This will ensure the move, for example, from sixth year to college, is smooth and effective and that they are fully aware of what support they will require and exactly who will be responsible for providing it.

Careful planning is also really important for practical reasons; for example, to ensure they have access to assistive technology, such as screen readers or magnification software, from the outset of their course.

There is a lot of support out there, but they may not be aware of it. For young people, knowing what their needs are and what's available to help them enables them to take control of their future. This allows them the freedom to make informed choices about what they want to do next and how that will help them make future choices.

Independence in Further Education

- One of the biggest challenges for the research participants moving into Further Education was that there was an expectation that they would take more responsibility for their learning, including managing the support they received.

- A barrier to the participants was understanding what their legal rights were as a student with a disability in Further Education, to enable them to advocate for the support they should receive.

Churning

- It was observed that several participants were 'churning' in the system, by completing Further Education courses, and then returning to retake different courses of the same level (or even lower) and not progressing.

It is important for young people to be encouraged to think about how they might move forward.

- A barrier to the participants was not having a clear plan of what career they wanted to pursue, leading to them retaking courses to avoid becoming NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training).

Course choices

- Several of the participants chose to take vocational courses in Further Education which required taking a placement. The most common examples were Childcare and Health and Social Care courses. A challenge for a number of these participants was being able to find an organisation that would accommodate them for their placement, as there were concerns about the adjustments that would need to be made for them to work in that setting.

Links to other workshops

This 'Studying in Further Education' workshop may be linked with the following workshops:

- Workshop 1: What do we mean by 'transition'?
- Workshop 2: Deciding what to do next
- Workshop 6: Understanding your vision impairment
- Workshop 7: Technology and assistive tools
- Workshop 8: Self-advocacy
- Workshop 9: Getting around and living independently

Part 2: Studying in Further Education workshop materials

The aim of this workshop is to help the young people start to prepare for the transition into Further Education (FE). It contains the following units:

- What is FE and where can it take me?
- Where can I find out more?
- How can I be independent in FE?

This workshop can be combined with Workshop 2 – the 'Deciding what to do next' workshop – which covers making decisions on what to study next.

What is Further Education and where can it take me?

Aim

The aim of this unit is to help the young people understand what FE is and how it may be of interest and of use to them.

Activity 1: What is Further Education (FE)?

1. Ask the young people to explain what they think FE is.

2. Ask the participants to break into groups and to use their technology to look at the following page from Career Pilot which explains in more detail what FE is all about.: <https://www.careerpilot.org.uk/information/further-education-at-16/eleven-reasons-to-choose-an-fe-college-course>.

Ask them to pick out a key point they would like to highlight to the larger group.

3. Ask the young people if they are interested in going into FE, and if they know what they would like to study.

Activity 2: Video discussion

Play one of/both videos from Claire and Liam who share about their experience in Further Education.

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_mXAleyiT-A&feature=youtu.be Claire
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Elo_9qpxql&feature=youtu.be Liam

Discussion questions:

- Was there anything that surprised you?
- Was there anything that you disagreed with?
- Was there anything that inspired you?
- Was there anything that you would like to do in response to this / these videos?

Where can I find out more?

Aim

This unit aims to help the young people access information and knowledge to help them make informed choices.

Activity 1: Research your options

1. Ask the young people to think about how and where they might access information about moving into FE.

Prompts:

- Through their school
 - Through attending open days
 - Through a college website.
2. Get the young people to fact-find within a set timeframe, setting some questions – for example:
 - Find three colleges running their chosen course.
 - What modes of transport could they use to get to their chosen college?
 - How long does it take to get there?
 - How much does the course cost?
 - How long does the course last?
 - On what days does the course run?
 - What are the entry requirements for their chosen course?
 - What qualification will they receive on completion of the course?
 - Who might help them to apply for the course?
 - Who might help them when they take up the course?
 - Do they know anyone who has done this course before, and could they chat to them?
 - Is there any open day for the college that they could attend?

Some ideas to consider:

Web Searching

All colleges will have websites with information about the courses they offer, so doing a search is quick way to find out what's out there.

Web searches are the most obvious and modern-day way to access information. However, not all information online is true or accurate, so it's worth noting that reputable and reliable websites – for example from colleges, career advice services or organisations like RNIB, Guide Dogs and other vision impairment charities – are also a helpful resource.

Contacting colleges

One way to find out more specific information is to make direct contact with the college. Participants could be encouraged to draft an email to find out if there is an open day coming up.

Site visit

Participants could be encouraged to arrange a site visit to include a meeting with the Additional Support Needs Team.

Conclusion

These activities should help young people think about their next steps, gather data to make informed choices, and start to think about how FE can help them move towards their next goals.

You may find the following workshop – Workshop 4: Studying in Higher Education – useful, as some of the activities can be adapted to cover FE.

How can I be independent in FE?

Aim

The aim of this unit is to encourage the young people to think about how they might work independently in FE.

Activity 1: Video discussion

Play this three minute video of Siraj talking about his experiences in FE:

<https://www.rnib.org.uk/insight-online/must-watch-transition-stories>

Discussion questions:

- In what ways is Siraj able to work independently in FE?
- How do you think Siraj could be more independent?
- Is there anything else that struck you from this video?

Activity 2: Working independently

Explain to the young people that in FE they have an opportunity to become more independent, and to take more responsibility for their learning and for the adjustments that they need. Explain that this is a positive step as they get older and will give them useful skills for when they go onto their next setting, such as Higher Education or employment.

Prepare the following scenario cards, as handouts, in an accessible format to the young people.

For each scenario, ask them to think about how if they were the young person, how they might become more independent.

- What does the young person need to do?
- What do those supporting them need to do?

An example of a possible solution is provided in each case for the person running the session.

Scenario 1: Your teacher often gives out handouts to the class. As you need a larger font, she tends to provide yours on a large A3 sheet. You don't like this as you feel it draws attention to yourself.

Possible solution: You could ask the teacher to send the handout to you electronically so you can read it using your laptop, tablet or even print it out, having modified it into a format which suits you best.

Scenario 2: You have recently started at a new FE college, which is three miles away from your home. Your friends catch the bus to get there each day. You would like to travel with them but your Local Authority has provided a taxi instead.

Possible solution: You could talk to your college or QTVI and explain that you would prefer to travel independently. The local authority could provide mobility training for you to learn the bus route to ensure you are able to travel the journey, with, or without, your friends.

Scenario 3: You have a TA with you in some lessons. You are getting frustrated that one of your teachers is consistently asking questions about you, and your support needs, to the TA rather than to yourself.

Possible solution: Being able to explain your own support needs is a really important skill and being able to do so in a safe place like school or college is really important.

If you are confident approaching your teacher, you could mention to them after class that you would like the opportunity to talk to them directly about the support you need. If you are less confident, you could ask your form tutor/SENCo, or QTVI, to mention it to them.

Activity 3: Barriers to working independently

Ask the young people to get into smaller groups to discuss times that they have wanted to be more independent but have faced barriers.

- What were these barriers?
- Were they able to overcome them? How?

Bring the group back together and ask for them to feed back. Discuss their responses as a group.

Conclusion

Emphasise to the young people that FE provides new and positive opportunities for them to become more independent. Explain that part of being independent is knowing when to ask for help, and that it is important that they recognise that, at times, they will need to ask for help.

Workshop 4: Studying in Higher Education

Part 1: Evidence from the Longitudinal Transitions Study

Students with vision impairment often face significant challenges when making the transition into Higher Education. At an extreme, this has led to some students withdrawing from their courses and experiencing mental health difficulties.

Positively, the research also shows that the experiences of the student can be improved by advanced preparation. Therefore, this brief outline highlights main findings professionals should consider when supporting young people through the transition into Higher Education (HE).

The application process

- It is important the student declares as having vision impairment on the UCAS application form as this information acts as a trigger to learning support staff at each institution. The institution can then make adjustments during the application process, and discuss possible adjustments upon acceptance of an offer. Typically, this takes the form of a questionnaire which is sent to the applicant for completion.
- Attending Open Days is a valuable opportunity for all students, but is especially so for students with vision impairment. It provides the student with the opportunity to meet and talk with key staff; to get a sense of the environment, and gauge what mobility support they might require; and to visit accommodation to consider any adaptations they may require.

Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)

- The application process for DSA can take a long time and so it is important to apply as early as possible. Government statistics show a strong link between students with disabilities who access DSA and higher levels of achievement.
- During the DSA assessment of needs meeting, the student should have an opportunity to advocate for the type of equipment and human support they will need.

This can be difficult for someone who has never studied in HE before; therefore, it is important that the student is given the opportunity to learn in advance more about what it will be like.

This will help them to anticipate their needs. Also, it will help them to think about how different types of equipment and support could help them overcome barriers to learning and living independently in HE.

Initial transition into Higher Education

- Some of the best outcomes for students with vision impairment can be linked to advanced preparation between student and institution. The student should be encouraged to engage with their chosen institution as early as possible. For example, learning support staff will often contact the student prior to them arriving at the start of their course, to find out more about them and to enable adjustments to be put in place.

- Students who require mobility support to learn routes in their new place of study may benefit from arriving at their institution before the start of freshers' week, to start when it is quieter. This can also help the student feel more confident about getting involved with activities during freshers' week.

Managing support in Higher Education

- Assuming they have declared their disability, when students with vision impairment in HE start their course they will likely be invited to meet with learning support staff, who will put together a document detailing the type of adjustments required. It is important that the student sees this as a working document, and they should go back to learning support staff if anything needs changing.
- It is very important that the student understands that in HE they are treated as an adult and that it is their responsibility to raise any problems they face.

Self-advocacy

- One of the key enablers (or barriers) to young people in HE is their ability to self-advocate. This can include having the confidence to: articulate the adjustments they need; raise problems; and coordinate the support they receive.

Mobility and independent travel

- Mobility support provided by DSA is primarily for routes relating to learning, while mobility support for leisure is normally funded by their local social services. If the young person has a guide dog, they should notify Guide Dogs For The Blind as

early as possible to arrange mobility support with their dog.

- Many young people with vision impairment are unaware of types of assistance available for independent travel, such as free bus passes and rail assist. Using apps on mobile phones (eg Google Maps, National Rail) is an important enabler for students to get around independently.

Independent Living

- It is important that students with vision impairment take opportunities to view halls of residence, as what the institution might consider to be the most suitable accommodation may not necessarily align with what the student actually wants, or needs.
- Institutions should make adaptations to accommodation as part of their duty to make reasonable adjustments.

Socialising and extra-curricular activities

- One of the most important aspects of the HE experience is meeting other students and getting involved in activities which can help strengthen an individual's CV, ready for life after HE.
- Several young people benefited from receiving support to help them access activities, particularly at the start of their time in HE. This included being allocated a buddy for the first two weeks of lectures, being assigned a mentor, and having a sighted guide for freshers' fayres / fairs.

Transition from HE into employment

- Several young people found that by the time they finished HE, despite having achieved their degree qualifications, they had gained very limited work experience to be competitive in the labour market. Instead, several opted to take voluntary work after completing their degree, rather than applying for graduate roles.

Links to other workshops

This 'Studying in Higher Education' workshop may be linked with the following workshops:

- Workshop 1: What do we mean by 'transition'?
- Workshop 2: Deciding what to do next
- Workshop 6: Understanding your vision impairment
- Workshop 7: Technology and assistive tools
- Workshop 8: Self-advocacy
- Workshop 9: Getting around and living independently

Part 2: Studying in Higher Education workshop materials

The aim of this workshop is to help the young people to start preparing for the transition into Higher Education (HE). It contains the following units:

- Why Higher Education?
- Before you apply
- Making the most of open days
- Applying for Disabled Students' Allowance
- Preparing for the move
- Studying in Higher Education

When working through these activities on Higher Education, you and the young people taking part in the session may find it helpful to look at our comprehensive guidance designed for young people preparing to make the transition into higher education. This is available on the RNIB website: <https://www.rnib.org.uk/young-people/starting-university>

Why Higher Education?

Aim

This unit aims to provide an introduction to the HE workshop, whilst helping the young people to think about the options available to them, and their reasons for applying for HE.

Activity 1: Introductory video

Play the 'What is Higher Education?' video by Western Outreach Network to introduce the session: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q3e1vGQ0fOg>.

This four minute video gives a good overview of what HE involves.

Activity 2: Group discussion

Bring together the young people as a group and introduce the session by saying the objective is to help them think about whether HE is right for them.

Use the following questions as part of a group discussion

- Who in the group is considering going into Higher Education?
- Who is considering alternative options? What are these?
- What do you think the advantages of Higher Education are?
- What might some disadvantages be?
- How do you feel about the prospect of going into Higher Education?

When you are facilitating the discussion, you may want to draw on some of the following points:

- Is HE right for you? Ask yourself if this is something that you are passionate about?
 - Can you envision career opportunities? Will it help you meet your career aspirations and life goals?
- What might your options be?
 - Full-time/part-time study, foundation year, part time study linked with relevant work placement, study later in life, physical and online courses, studying in UK and abroad.
 - Alternatively: Further Education, work experience, apprenticeships, gap year.

- What are the benefits of a university education? Higher qualifications, student experience (especially if there is the chance to experience independent living), and transferrable skills and experience from study and student life.

Conclusion

Reiterate to the young people that whilst HE is a good option, it's not the only option. Remind them that there are other options, including taking a gap year or going straight into employment.

Before you apply

Aim

This unit aims to help the student navigate some important decisions they will need to make before applying for Higher Education, and to let them know about a resource that can help them with these decisions.

Activity 1: Video discussion

Introduce the session by playing one/several of these videos from Chris, Zara and Diarmaid, who share their experiences in HE.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xuyI3hJ57pY&feature=youtu.be> Chris
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYjigeb75ZU&feature=youtu.be> Zara
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgzEpFE_SxM&feature=youtu.be Diarmaid

Discussion questions:

- Was there anything that surprised you?
- Was there anything that you disagreed with?
- Was there anything that inspired you?
- Was there anything that you would like to do in response to this video?

Activity 2: Thinking ahead

Break the young people up into small groups and ask them to read through the Starting University guidance on the RNIB website: <https://www.rnib.org.uk/young-people/starting-university>. Ask the workshop participants to use the resource and internet resources to think through the following questions (discussing within their group if they like).

Which courses/institutions might you be interested in applying to? Consider the following:

1. What to study – Course

- Institution resources: library, teaching spaces, labs, etc.
- Course types and variations
- Entry requirements
- Institution reputation

2. Where to study – Location

- Distance from home
- Campus / town / city
- Local transport and services

3. Support – what support is on offer?

- Student support services
- Disability support services

4. Lifestyle – Where you will live?

- Accommodation
- Sports/clubs/societies

5. Finances

- Student loans
- Scholarships, bursaries, etc.
- Disabled Students' Allowance
- Benefits

Conclusion

Bring the group together and ask them each to name one action point they are going to take away from this unit when making a decision about which course to apply for.

Making the most of open days

Aim

This unit aims to help the young people prepare for going to an open day by thinking about some of the important questions they might want to investigate.

Activity 1: What are open days?

Ask the group to watch this YouTube video that has been prepared by Loughborough University, to provide an introduction to the purpose of an open day: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9Zie0txsRM>. It could be that there is a similar video for the local university in your area you could show instead.

Activity 2: Preparing for an open day

Tell the group that when they attend an open day they are likely to be presented with a busy programme of talks and activities, which can be a bit overwhelming at first. Explain that it is important to consider, ahead of the open day about what they would like to find out, including thinking about what questions they might want to ask in relation to their vision impairment.

Using the cards provided as prompts, ask the young people to discuss in small groups what they might find out from going to that talk or activity, and what questions they might want to investigate.

You may find the following prompts for discussion helpful:

1. Subject talks and drop-in sessions
 - Course content – are there likely to be any components that may pose particular barriers to accessibility (eg lab sessions)?
 - How is the course delivered – large lectures, small lectures, seminars?
 - How is the course assessed?
 - How is the course material presented?
2. Meet the disability service
 - What type of support do they offer for students with vision impairment?
 - What type of adjustments would they suggest will be needed for that particular course?
 - Any suggestions ahead of needs assessment meeting for Disabled Students' Allowance?
 - What arrangements will they offer if you have a guide dog?
3. Tour of the campus/university environment
 - How accessible is the environment – eg tactile pavements, clear signage?
 - How big is the campus/learning environment? This helps anticipate the amount of mobility support needed
 - What facilities are there on campus?

4. Tour of accommodation

- Accessibility of accommodation – eg kitchen and washing appliances
- Distance to campus from accommodation (considering options for all years of the course)
- Specific options available for students with disabilities (eg larger room, closer to campus)
- Able to move in early for mobility training/orientation?
- Proposed adjustments to ensure environment is accessible?

5. Tour of the library

- How accessible is the library catalogue?
- Is there assistive technology available on computers in the library?
- What support can be offered for students with vision impairment – eg digitalisation of texts?

6. Visit the student union

- Does it offer any specific support for students with disabilities?
- How will it ensure student groups are accessible to all?
- Do they have a disabled students representative for the union?
- What facilities are available within the union?

7. Explore the local area

- What are the transport links like?
- How easily accessible are the key services you might need – supermarket, doctors, dentist, pharmacy?



**Subject talks and
drop-in sessions**

**Explore the
local area**

**Meet the
disability service**

**Tour of
accommodation**

**Tour of the
library**

**Tour of the
campus/university
environment**

**Visit the
student union**

Conclusion

Conclude by emphasising to the young people the importance of attending open days. Ask them to state one area out of the above they will investigate when attending an open day.



Applying for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)

Aim

This unit aims to give the young people more information about Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) and to help them start to think about how they might use it.

Activity 1: What is DSA?

Ask the young people the following questions to ensure that everyone in the group understands what DSA is.

Introductory question:

Has anyone heard of DSA before? Who can tell me what it is?

Definition:

DSAs are allowances towards the extra course costs students can face as a direct result of their sight condition and/or other disabilities. DSAs enable you to study and have access to course materials on an equal basis to other students and they are paid on top of the standard student finance package.

Students could have a DSA to pay for:

- Items of specialist equipment – for example, screen readers, computer magnification software, Braille notetakers.
- Non-medical helper's allowance – for example, library support or the use of a reader during examinations.
- General allowance – which can cover things like enlarged examination papers and course materials.
- Travel costs – for additional travel costs related to a disability.

Information is available on the RNIB Starting University pages for how to apply for DSA in each country: <https://www.rnib.org.uk/young-people/starting-university>.

Activity 2: Getting the most out of a DSA

Tell the young people that in this activity they are going to be given two sets of information:

- Case studies of young people who have been in Higher Education;
- Examples of the type of support that can be funded by a DSA.

Tell the group that the idea of this activity is to identify the types of DSA-funded support that a student might benefit from.

The 'Starting University' resources will be helpful for this exercise: <https://www.rnib.org.uk/young-people/starting-university>

Examples of support available through DSA

Equipment

- Screen reader software
- Magnification software
- Laptop
- Dictaphone
- CCTV
- Braille notetaker
- Optical character recognition software and scanner
- Talking calculator

Non-medical support

- Sighted guide
- Mobility trainer
- Specialist notetaker
- Lab assistant
- Library assistant
- Proof-reader/text checker
- Reader (exams)
- Scribe (exams)
- Assistive technology trainer

“Specialist Support Professional for Students with Sensory Impairment – Vision Impairment (VI)”

Travel

- Taxi allowance

Example case studies

Philippa is going to be studying an English literature degree at university. She is registered as severely vision impaired and reads using either electronic material or braille. She uses a long cane to get around, but hopes to get a guide dog soon. Her course will involve a combination of lectures and seminars, and she will be assessed through both exams and coursework.

Mohammed is going to study a physics degree at university. He is registered as sight impaired and reads using magnification software or large print. He does not use any mobility aids, but finds it difficult getting around in new environments. His course will involve a combination of lectures, problem-based classes and laboratory work. He will be assessed through problem sheets and exams.

Leroy is going to study a psychology degree at university. He is registered as severely sight impaired and reads using either electronic material or braille. He has a guide dog and will receive mobility support through Guide Dogs. His course will primarily be delivered by lectures, which will contain a lot of visual content and also use of statistical software, which might not be accessible. He will be assessed primarily through exams.

Martha is going to study a history of art degree at university. She is registered as sight impaired and reads using magnification software or large print. After an initial tour around a new environment, she feels confident about getting around independently. Her course will be delivered in lectures and seminars. As a regular part of the course, she will be required to examine photographs of artwork to explore detail in the image. She will primarily be assessed through essays, but will have a small number of exams.

Activity 3: Planning your own support package

Ask the group to use the same structure as the case study examples to write a description of themselves, the type of course they are interested in studying and some of the access challenges that they anticipate having. Ask them to use the list as a guide, and draw upon their own personal experiences, and to write a list of the types of support that they think they could benefit from.

Conclusion

Emphasise the importance of DSA, and that statistics show that students with disabilities get better grades if they take advantage of the support. Explain that it is important to have thought through the type of support they would like to have through DSA before going to an assessment.

Preparing for the move

Aim

This unit aims to help the young person prepare for making the initial transition into Higher Education. The aim is to challenge the young person to take responsibility for what they need, but also to give direction for who they might need to speak to.

Activity: Checklist

Divide the young people into small groups. Ask them to use the Starting University guidance (<https://www.rnib.org.uk/young-people/starting-university>) to come up with a checklist of key actions that they are going to take, ready for making the transition into Higher Education.

This could include:

- Applying for DSA
- Making contact with the disability support office
- Seeing if they can arrange for mobility training before the academic year begins
- Researching technology options
- Investigating transport links to get home
- Looking at the different societies that they might be interested in joining

Preparing for the move – some top advice from young people who have made the transition into higher education

Prepare, prepare, prepare

1. Get in touch with disability support at your chosen institution
2. Get the Disabled Students' Allowance process started early, and take a look at the technology [and assistive tools] workshop in this resource before your assessment
3. Visit your possible choices of institution, familiarise yourself with the environment, organise a tour/mobility training
4. Take control and responsibility for your support, check out the self-advocacy workshop in this resource
5. Think about what you are going to need in place for living independently

Conclusion

Encourage the young people to keep referring to their checklist and to plan ahead of their transition into higher education. Remind them of the Starting University guidance and ensure that they know how to access it at: <https://www.rnib.org.uk/young-people/starting-university>.

Studying in Higher Education

Aim

This unit aims to help the young people prepare for some of the challenges they might encounter when in Higher Education, and, in particular, to encourage them to self-advocate for what they need.

Activity 1: Scenarios

With reference to the 'Starting University' guidance, <https://www.rnib.org.uk/young-people/starting-university>, ask the young people to discuss how they would respond to the following scenarios.

Scenario 1: The first term is about to begin, and you are soon going to have lectures. You are meant to have a sighted guide to help you get to and from these lectures, until you have finished your mobility training. The first lecture is tomorrow, and you still haven't had any communication about who will be providing this support and where you will meet them.

Possible response: Contact either the disability support office or the organisation responsible for providing this support as soon as possible.

Scenario 2: As part of your support agreement you should have access to the course notes ahead of lectures so that you can follow the slides on your laptop.

Most lecturers upload their notes onto the virtual learning environment; however, one lecturer is consistently failing to upload the notes on time, meaning that you are struggling to follow what is being said in lectures.

Possible response: Contact your disability support office, email the lecturer directly or speak with your tutor.

Scenario 3: You want to go around the freshers' fayre but are worried about how accessible it will be to find your way between the different stalls.

Possible response: Talk to your disability support office about getting a sighted guide, ask someone in your flat if you could go to the fair with them.

Scenario 4: You are concerned about how accessible your accommodation will be, and about being able to find your way around when it gets busy with everyone moving in.

Possible response: Speak to the disability support office or accommodation office and ask to be able to move into your accommodation early.

Study in Higher Education – some top advice from young people who have made the transition into Higher Education

1. Transitions and change are difficult for everyone, regardless of disabilities, you are not alone. Get involved, get stuck in, do not be afraid to be yourself or ask for help, be ready to try new things, to work hard, and to have fun.
2. Engage with the disability office at your institution throughout your whole time in Higher Education.
3. Self-advocate and be open and clear about the support you require from staff and fellow students. Introduce yourself to new tutors and lecturers. Be prepared to clarify or expand on messages from the disability support office or for the messages not to have reached staff.
4. Follow up if your DSA support or institution-provided support is not in place – reach out to your disability office for help.
5. Recognise that transitions occur throughout HE: new semesters, new modules, new tutors and lecturers, new rooms and locations, etc.
6. Access support while it is available. Speak to the careers office, connect with disability networks, get stuck in with extra-curricular activities.
7. YOU CAN DO IT!

Conclusion

End the unit by reminding the young people that there is often more than one way to approach a situation.

Workshop 5: Moving into employment

Part 1: Evidence from the Longitudinal Transitions Study

Transition into employment

The transition into paid employment opportunities can be particularly challenging for young people with vision impairment. Employment statistics show this population is at high risk of becoming NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) after leaving education. The research evidence has identified a number of ways in which young people with vision impairment can be better prepared. These include:

- Previous work experience.
- Well-developed skills for accessing information (including technology skills), mobility skills, self-advocacy skills and knowledge of appropriate resources.
- Knowledge of Access to Work and the range of support that it can fund.
- Receipt of appropriate careers advice.

Access to Work

Several of the participants in the study were unaware of Access to Work and the way in which it could be used to facilitate them in the workplace. This meant that they were discounting job opportunities that would have been difficult to access without a car, as they were unaware they could potentially have taxis funded, and were going unprepared to interviews to talk about the equipment and support that could be provided.

Self-advocacy

Self-advocacy skills are extremely important for the participants to be able to explain their vision impairment and how it affects them, the adjustments they require and the adjustments that they will be able to make. Prior work experience is an important enabler as it gives a young person an opportunity to both experience talking about the adjustments they require and to put these adjustments into practice. A barrier to several of the participants was knowing when best to declare their vision impairment, and how to go about this.

Careers guidance

Several participants felt restricted by not having a specific type of career in mind to focus on, and, on reflection, would have preferred to have more careers guidance.

Strategies

Better outcomes have been demonstrated for young people who have a range of strategies for accessing information, enabling them to be able to pick and choose according to the task they need to perform. Many of the participants identified situations where they would have benefited from low vision aids in the workplace, but they were unaware of how to access these once they had left school.

Work experience opportunities

More than half of the participants in the Longitudinal Transitions Study viewed undertaking a work experience placement whilst at school as a positive experience. The benefits of work

experience identified by the young people included:

- Experience of being in a working environment
- Helping them to form ideas of future careers
- Helping them to develop confidence and independence
- Boosting their CV

Less positive accounts came from young people who hadn't received much support in arranging their placement, and some who felt that the placement setting were not really prepared for supporting a young person with vision impairment.

Value of work experience

When reflecting back on how prepared they were for moving into paid employment, several young people highlighted how important it was that they had had previous opportunities to talk about their vision impairment to others.

The importance of being able to draw on prior experiences has been a consistent finding in the longitudinal study. The participants have highlighted how beneficial it has been to them to have had prior experience of: explaining the adjustments they need; explaining how their vision impairment affects them; and finding ways to address problems in the workplace.

Less positively, limited experience of work has been identified as a barrier to the young people. For example, several of the young people upon graduation from university (some with first class degrees) decided to seek voluntary work rather than paid employment,

due to what they perceived to be limitations to their CV. Since it is often more challenging for young people with vision impairment to find accessible paid work opportunities when growing up, it is important to facilitate as many opportunities as possible.

Further guidance

VICTAR (Vision Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research) has worked with Birmingham City Council to develop guidance for supporting young people with sensory impairment into work experience placements. This resource can be accessed on the VICTAR website: <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/victar/resources/index.aspx>

Links to other workshops

This 'Moving into employment' workshop may be linked with the following workshops:

- Workshop 1: What do we mean by 'transition'?
- Workshop 6: Understanding your vision impairment
- Workshop 7: Technology and assistive tools
- Workshop 8: Self-advocacy
- Workshop 9: Getting around and living independently

Part 2: Moving into employment workshop materials

Stepping into the world of work

Aim

The aim of this workshop is to help young people to think about the different types of work opportunities that they could engage in, depending on their stage in life. This could include paid work, voluntary work, work experience and apprenticeships. The workshop aims to help the young people consider how these different options can act as stepping stones to achieving their career aspirations.

Activity 1: What are my options?

Introduce the workshop by saying that in this session you will be focusing on work and employment. Explain that you are going to talk about the different types of work opportunities available, and how one type of opportunity might act as a stepping stone to the next. Ask the young people to give examples of ways they know of in which they could get experience of work, which they can put on their CV.

This could include:

- Paid employment
- Voluntary work
- Work experience
- Apprenticeships

Voluntary work and work experience

Explain to the young people that you are going to focus first on voluntary work and work experience. Play these two videos (video 1 is three minutes long and video 2 is a minute in duration) in which young people talk about their experiences of voluntary

work and work experience.

- Video 1: <https://youtu.be/oYveCzX4rI0>
- Video 2: <https://youtu.be/Dbqol8x20zo>

Discussion questions:

- How did the young people featured in the video benefit from doing voluntary work and work experience?
- Are there any other ways in which you think you might benefit from voluntary work, that is specific to your vision impairment?

Possible responses:

- Practise disclosure and self-advocacy skills
- Practise using technology in a work setting
- Apply mobility skills to get to and from work

Ask the young people if any of them have had work experience or voluntary work before, and if so, if they could tell the group what they did and how they have found it.

Play this five minute video of Molly talking about her early work experience: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kvm9BHoujDA&feature=youtu.be>

Ask the young people what they thought of the video:

- Can they relate to not thinking that there are options available to them because of their vision impairment?
- What do they think about Molly's experience?

Apprenticeships

Explain that another way of getting experience in the workplace might be through an apprenticeship. Play this three minute video from Careers Wales to provide an introduction to apprenticeships: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ssJKvBSstA>

Ask the group if any of them have thought about applying for an apprenticeship. Ask them what they think the benefits might be. What could the disadvantages be?

Advise the young people that there is more information available on apprenticeships, work experience and voluntary work available in 'Your Future, Your Choice: Bridging the Gap': <https://www.rnib.org.uk/young-people-school-life-and-planning-ahead-making-transition-school/transition-guide-bridging-gap>.

Activity 2: A vision for the future

Tell the young people they are going to have an opportunity to be creative and develop a vision board of what they would like to achieve in their career. Give the young people a choice of the format in which they would like to present their vision board, in the way that is most accessible to them.

For example:

- A large sheet of paper on which they can stick pictures and sticky notes.
- A large sheet of paper on which they can stick braille labels, for example using a braille embosser or Perkins Braille.
- Electronically, using MS Word or Paint.

Resources to consider:

- Sticky notes and thick marker pens
- Large sheets of paper and card
- Magazines and newspapers to find pictures/text
- Glue
- Braille embosser and computer/ Perkins Braille
- Devices for young people to access the internet to conduct research

Ask the young people to consider:

- What is the dream job they would aspire to do?
 - If they can't think of a specific job, what aspects of a job are important to them?
 - Do they want to work in an office or would they prefer to be outside?
 - Do they want to work with people or predominantly on their own?
- What qualifications, skills and experiences do they need to get that job?
- Where would they like to live and how will this be impacted by the type of job they want to do?

Encourage the young people to apply what they have covered in the previous activity – how might voluntary work and work experience help them to achieve their goals? What stepping stones might they need to take in order to reach this goal?

Conclusion

Conclude this unit by reminding the young people that there are many ways in which they can gain initial work opportunities and that these experiences will be really important to them for building up their CV.

The Four Rs: Your Rights, Employers' Rights, Your Responsibilities and Employers' Responsibilities

Aim

The aim of this workshop is for young people to understand their rights and responsibilities and those of an employer.

Activity 1: Yours and theirs

Working through the scenarios below, encourage the young people to discuss the possible outcomes.

Scenario 1 – Jo is registered blind and is an access technology user. Jo is applying for a job and has just been sent a paper application form in very small print.

STOP – Who is responsible for what?

Answer

Jo is responsible for letting the employer know she requires the document in an alternative format.

Under the terms of the Equality Act (or the Disability Discrimination Act, in Northern Ireland), the employer is responsible for providing the form in the appropriate format.

Scenario 2 – Jo has received the form in electronic format and has reached the section on disclosing disability.

STOP – Should Jo disclose her disability?

It is up to Jo to decide if she wishes to disclose her disability at this time. In this scenario, Jo decides to disclose that she is registered blind.

It would be the employer's responsibility to note any disclosure in order to make reasonable adjustments.

Discussion point – why would you disclose? Why would you not disclose? This will be covered in more detail in the disclosure workshop.

Scenario 3 – Jo is invited to interview and attends with Frank the guide dog. A member of the interview panel is allergic to animals.

STOP – Who is responsible here?

Jo is responsible for advising that she is bringing her guide dog.

It is the employer's responsibility to accommodate if Jo has disclosed that she is bringing her guide dog.

Scenario 4 – The panel member is able to take an antihistamine and the interview proceeds starting with a short test. Jo is asked to read a short passage and correct any grammatical errors. Jo is unable to access the test as there is no accessible software on the PC.

STOP – Whose responsibility is this?

Jo did disclose her disability on the application form but was not specific about access software.

The employer should have picked up that Jo may have required reasonable adjustments.

Discussion point – how could both Jo and the employer have helped this situation?

Scenario 5 – Jo has brought her laptop so is able to complete the grammatical test and now proceeds with the formal interview. One of the questions asks what adjustments Jo would require and how much that would cost. Jo explains she requires JAWS software and states how much it costs.

STOP – Who is responsible for paying for this?

Jo can advise what software she is aware of or currently uses.

Jo can apply for the software through Access to Work, although the employer may be responsible for funding it, depending on the size of the business.

Conclusion

Jo is offered the job; she contacts Access to Work within six weeks and the employer is able to claim back money for software. Jo makes an agreement to work from home two days a week, start later sometimes and use Access to Work taxis.

Scenario 6 – The panel ask Jo if she would require any other additional support to be able to do the job if offered the post. Jo uses public transport and the bus timetable is very limited. This would be an issue if Jo had to get to the office by 9am as advertised in the job description.

STOP – Will this prevent Jo from being offered the job?

Jo can ask for her hours to be flexible, to fit in with bus times, although the outcome will depend on whether working certain hours is essential to the needs of the business.

The employer is responsible for making reasonable adjustments.

Discussion point – could Access to Work pay for taxis? Could Jo work from home?

Activity 2: Employer, employee or both?

Provide the Four Rs handout to the group in an accessible format.

Read out the statements below asking the young people to shout out “employer”, “employee”, or “both”, after each statement.

1. Who is responsible for providing accessible software in the workplace?
2. Who is responsible for disclosing a disability?
3. Who has the right to ask for support?
4. Who has the right to ask about an employee’s disability?
5. Who is required to make reasonable adjustments?

Use the answers from these statements to debate and discuss the importance of rights and responsibilities.

The Four Rs Handout

- Your Rights
- Employers’ Rights
- Your Responsibilities
- Employers’ Responsibilities

Your Rights

You have the right to ask for support; this can be through all stages of recruitment, including application, interview, induction and continued employment.

As a vision-impaired person, you are protected by the Equality Act (or the DDA, in Northern Ireland).

Employers’ Rights

The employer has the right to ask questions about your disability and what support you may require. The employer cannot discriminate in any

way due to your disability, although they are within their right to risk-assess and facilitate a personal employment plan to ensure the right support is provided.

Your Responsibilities

You need to be open and let your potential employer know that you have a vision impairment; it is advisable to do this at the earliest point possible. Vision impaired people often worry about disclosing their disability at the application stage as they feel this may be seen as a negative. Most employers now have policies in place to ensure any personal information is not sent through to the shortlisting teams to ensure equal access to an interview. It is always important to research where you are applying to; it is always a good idea to look out for employers who are Disability Confident.

The Government’s Disability Confident scheme helps employers make the most of the opportunities provided by employing disabled people. It is voluntary and has been developed by both employers and representatives of disabled people.

Plan what you are going to say; ensure you are comfortable sharing information about your disability and you are aware of what your conditions are. You can contact your optometrist(s) or RNIB if you need more information about your sight condition.

Employers' Responsibilities

The employer should make any relevant adjustments you require. This can include:

- Adapting application forms
- Support through the processes of recruitment.

You can always ask for extra support if you feel this is required; most employers will be accommodating.

Be open, don't assume anything

It is very important to be open and honest about your vision impairment; sometimes we wrongly assume that people should know what relevant adjustments we require.

What is Access to Work?

Aim

The aim of this workshop is to introduce the young people to Access to Work, explore how Access to Work could help them, and how they can apply for the scheme.

Activity 1: What is Access to Work?

Introduce this activity by saying that in this session the group will be looking at one of the most important enablers that is available to people with disabilities in the workplace: Access to Work. Ask the group if anyone has heard of Access to Work, and if they can explain what it is.

The UK government describes it as:

"Access to Work is a publicly funded employment support programme that aims to help more disabled people start or stay in work. It can provide practical and financial support if you have a disability or long term physical or mental health condition."

Please note that Northern Ireland has its own Access to Work scheme. This is based on the same principles as those in England, Wales and Scotland. Further information is available on the NI Direct website.: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/access-work-practical-help-work>

Ask the young people to watch this 6.5 minute video which talks about Access to Work https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VyOuw2K_HpM

Ask the young people the following questions:

- How does Access to Work fit in with the employer's responsibilities to make reasonable adjustments?
- Who is eligible for Access to Work?
- What type of support can Access to Work provide?

Activity 2: Finding out more about Access to Work

The UK Government have produced two helpful guides on Access to Work – one aimed at the employee and one at the employer. Divide the group into two, allocate each group one of the guides, and ask them to research its content ready to report back to the whole group.

Guide for employees: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-work-factsheet/access-to-work-factsheet-for-customers>

Guide for employers: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-work-guide-for-employers/access-to-work-factsheet-for-employers>

Activity 3: How can Access to Work help me?

Introduce this activity by saying that you are going to be focusing on the ways in which Access to Work might help the young people access specific jobs.

Play this 2-minute video from Simon talking about how he uses Access to Work: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OgsFq7u2wsY>

Ask the young people to think about the type of jobs that they identified through their Vision Board as a starting point to identify a job description for the type of work that they might be interested in. Indeed.co.uk and Prospects.ac.uk are helpful sources of job descriptions.

It would be beneficial to also have pre-prepared some examples of local job descriptions for those who are having difficulty in thinking of a particular job.

Ask the young people to draw on what they have learned about Access to Work and the Four R's to provide a summary for a potential employer about how they think they could access that job. Tell the young people they can present this information in the way they prefer. For example, it could be a written summary (like an email) or they may prefer to give this summary verbally. Ask for volunteers to present back to the group.

Conclusion

Conclude the session by reminding the group what a fantastic resource Access to Work is and encouraging them to apply for Access to Work when they are in employment. On the next page we have produced an Access to Work handout which can be given to the young people in their preferred format to take away and refer to later.

What is Access to Work?

Access to Work is a Government scheme that supports people with disabilities to overcome barriers to employment. Access to Work can provide funding or support you in finding resources or technology that can support you.

Access to Work can come out to your workplace and carry out a workplace assessment; this assessment will give you the opportunity to share any concerns you may have.

Your employer must legally provide some support to you, and Access to Work will ask them to make some sort of a contribution.

Access to work can provide an entitlement to support letter for you to take to your interview; this letter will give your potential employer more information about the support you are entitled to.

You can find out more on this dedicated RNIB webpage: <https://www.rnib.org.uk/information-everyday-living-work-and-employment-practical-support/access-work-scheme>

Disclosing your disability

Aim

The aim of this workshop is to help the young people prepare for disclosing their vision impairment, including helping them think about:

- What to say
- When best to disclose
- What are benefits of disclosure

It would be beneficial to combine this unit with Workshop 6:

'Understanding your Vision Impairment'

You may find the following information helpful for introducing this session.

When you are applying for jobs you need to think about if and when you plan to tell your employer about your vision impairment. There aren't any rules about this and you don't have to tell an employer if you don't want to. It is up to you to decide at what point in applying for a job you choose to discuss it.

There are lots of benefits to talking to your employer about your vision impairment. It means that you have the opportunity to approach the issue in a positive way and allows you to reassure the employer that your vision impairment does not mean that you are unable to do the job properly.

There are many more reasons why talking to your employer about your vision impairment may be a good idea. It is only when you disclose your disability that you have rights under the Equality Act 2010 and that you become entitled to reasonable adjustments in the workplace.

If you decide that you want to talk about your vision impairment to a potential employer you can design your own disclosure strategy. This means you plan exactly how and when you want to discuss this and retain a focus on your own skills and abilities.

Activity 1: Why disclose

Play this two minute video developed by University of Warwick which discusses when and how to disclose a disability: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KtK9OF4Uvfe>

Ask the young people:

- Why do they think it is important to disclose?
- Why do they think people might be reluctant to disclose?

- The person on the video suggested disclosing a disability in a positive light. Can you think of any ideas how you might talk about your disability positively?

Encourage some discussion amongst the group, but remind the young people that it is only when they disclose as having a disability that they are protected by the Equality Act 2010.

Activity 2: Practice disclosing

Ask the young people to role play together, to practice disclosing their vision impairment to an employer, faced with the following scenarios.

As well as highlighting to the employer that they may face challenges, encourage the young people to come up with suggestions to the employer about what they could do to help the young person overcome these challenges:

Scenario 1: You have been invited to an interview and have received instructions to make your own way up to the company's office, which is in a shared space in a large tower block. You are concerned that you won't be able to find the office independently.

Scenario 2: You have been invited to an interview and have been informed that there will be a computer-based test as part of the interview process. To use a computer you require assistive technology and you usually have extra time for exams.

Scenario 3: You have received a job offer and have everything in place to start at the job in the next month. At this stage you have not disclosed your vision impairment, but you would like to arrange Access to Work.

Conclusion

Conclude the session by reminding the young people that disclosing their vision impairment is really important, to ensure that they are entitled to reasonable adjustments through the Equality Act.

Encourage the young people to continue to think of ways in which they can present their vision impairment in a positive way.

For example:

- Well-developed problem-solving skills as a result of overcoming barriers.
- Experience of working with and directing others, such as teaching assistants.

Workshop 6: Understanding your vision impairment

Part 1: Evidence from the Longitudinal Transitions Study

Vision and Eye Health

- The study has noted a lack of preparation for participants with progressive eye conditions. They can lack long-term strategies for future vision changes. While they may have received appropriate training to meet their current needs in their education, additional training may be required later. It is important the young person understands this and knows where to go for support in the future.
- A large proportion of the young people had been discharged from eye clinics. This has meant that they had limited opportunity as they got older to find out more about their vision impairment or access allied services such as low vision clinics. We have observed a lack of engagement with services such as low vision clinics, with very few participants knowing how they would go about setting up an appointment for a low vision assessment.
- Some of the participants are required to have regular check-ups for their sight conditions – and, in some cases, associated health difficulties – which could potentially be very complex to manage when looking for full-time employment. It is, therefore, important, when considering the impact a young person's vision impairment might have upon them during these challenging transition

years, that a broader perspective is taken of the consequences of that condition – beyond simply how it affects their vision.

Welfare benefits and registration

- The study has raised some concerns over the lack of engagement young people have with the principle of registration and the purpose and advantages of it, for example with disability related welfare benefits, such as Disabled Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payments.
- It is, therefore, important to ensure each young person understands registration and the welfare system and is prepared to take responsibility for this as he/she gets older.

Links to other workshops

This 'Understanding your vision impairment' workshop may be linked with the following workshops:

- Workshop 8: Self-advocacy

Part 2: 'Understanding your vision impairment' workshop materials

The aim of this workshop is to help the young people have a better understanding of their vision impairment and how to explain their vision and adjustment needs to others. It contains the following units:

- Know it, own it
- Don't bring problems, bring solutions
- I can, if you...
- Identity and assumptions

You may also like to incorporate individual units from the self-advocacy workshop.

Know it, own it

Aim

This unit aims to help participants understand their sight condition and explain it to others.

Activity 1: Your vision impairment

If working in a group, encourage participants to say their name, age and sight condition. If they are unsure, they can be encouraged to Google it but with the caveat around reliable sources. A reliable starting point would be: <https://www.rnib.org.uk/eye-health/eye-conditions> or <http://www.ssc.education.ed.ac.uk/resources/vi&multi/eyeconds/list.html>.

Individuals can also be encouraged to find out more and feedback to the teacher. Encourage discussion within the group or on a one-to-one basis to help develop the young people's understanding.

Activity 2: Explaining your vision impairment

Ask the participants to think about how they would explain their sight condition and how it affects them to an alien in an elevator. They would only have the time it takes to reach the top floor. Participants can be encouraged to role-play this. Alternatively, they could be pitching to The X-Factor judges, The Apprentice or creating a blog or vlog.

Play the following 5 minute video where a group of young people talk about disclosing their vision impairment: <https://vimeo.com/channels/futureinsight/181469433>

Ask the young people if they can relate to anything in particular said by the young people in this video.

Conclusion

Emphasise that it is really important to be able to explain your vision impairment to help others understand how best to ensure you don't come across any unnecessary obstacles. The young people may find it helpful to keep hold of any written support plans that they received during their time in education, and to make reference to these.

Don't bring problems, bring solutions

Aim

This unit aims to help participants consider how they might overcome some of the barriers they may face relating to their vision impairment.

Activity: Everyday scenarios

Encourage the young people to identify everyday activities they find difficult (as an example, this could be catching the train on their own). Ask them to explain the scenarios and what they feel the key barriers are. Get the group to work together, drawing on their own experiences, to think about ways these obstacles could be overcome (for example, using rail assistance).

It would be beneficial to pre-prepare some prompts, drawing on your knowledge of the young people attending the session.

Conclusion

Encourage the young people to be problem solvers. Remind them, however, that there will be times that they need to ask others for help, and that asking for help is a positive thing to do.

I can, if you...

Aim

This unit aims to help the young people find solutions to barriers others perceive.

Activity: Scenarios

Ask participants to find a solution to some everyday scenarios. We have provided some suggestions, but you may wish to develop your own set of scenarios that are tailored to the group.

Problem 1: You've been told you can't join in a game of football because you won't be able to see the ball.

Solution: A ball with a bell will help, or convert the game to touch rugby or goalball.

Problem 2: You've been told you can't read out loud when everyone is taking a turn in class to do it because the book is inaccessible.

Solution: Provide the book in preferred accessible format.

Problem 3: You've been told you can't travel into town on the train because you won't know where to get on and off.

Solution: Rail assistance can be booked. With some training and practice most people with a vision impairment can navigate repeat journeys.

Conclusion

Encourage the young people to be problem solvers. Remind them, however, there will be times that they need to ask others for help, and that asking for help is a positive thing to do.

Identity and assumptions

Aim

This unit aims to help the young people recognise that others (including themselves) can make assumptions about vision impairment.

Activity: Challenging assumptions

Hand out the scenario sheets along with the age brackets. Ask participants to discuss and agree what age brackets each person in the scenario falls into.

Tell the young people that all the people described were aged between 12 and 25 and have vision impairment. Does this surprise them?

Scenario cards

(Print out and cut along the dotted lines)

I have glaucoma but I don't let that get in the way of my gardening, which is one of my favourite hobbies.

I run three businesses and travel very independently across the UK and to the States.

The thing I miss most about losing my sight is not being able to drive anymore.

The first early signs of my sight loss were detected during my routine diabetic eye screening.

I am a married mother. I have had lots of jobs including working in a shop, an office and a hotel. I've also done part-time cleaning jobs and enjoy travelling.

I have loss of central vision and don't know what I'd do without Talking Books!

I live in supported accommodation and really enjoy it when my carers take me for coffee and cake. This helps me feel less lonely.

Conclusion

Remind the young people that it is easy for people to make incorrect assumptions about vision impairment. Emphasise that, while it is understandable that this can lead to frustration, it is important to be able to explain their vision impairment clearly to help overcome these false assumptions.

Age cards

12-25

26-55

56+

Workshop 7: Technology and assistive tools

Part 1: Evidence from the Longitudinal Transitions Study

It is essential to consider the range of approaches to accessing information which young people will need as they progress from school through to adulthood, and to think beyond immediate needs.

Technology

- It is important to provide opportunities for young people with vision impairment to find out about equipment and to experiment with the broad range of solutions available.

Use of mainstream equipment

- Mainstream technology can have benefits for young people with vision impairment due to built-in accessibility options and specialist apps. This technology can allow young people to access information using the same means as their sighted peers. However, this should be used in conjunction with other technology to ensure that young people have a wide range of strategies for accessing information.

Low vision aids (LVAs)

- It is important for young people with vision impairment to be properly assessed for LVAs and to think beyond immediate information-access needs of young people, to their needs moving into adulthood. For example, several participants in the study did not need LVAs in school but have

benefited from them in the workplace. A barrier has been for the young person not to know where to go to access LVAs once they had left school.

Braille

- The study has found that braille still has a significant role, even in the digital age, highlighting the importance of equipping young people with vision impairment with a range of skills. As they have left school and progressed into higher education and employment, many of the participants have benefited from electronic braille devices, which have proved a practical way in which the young person can readily work using braille.

Links to other workshops

This 'Technology and assistive tools' workshop may be linked with the following workshops:

- Workshop 3: Studying in Further Education
- Workshop 4: Studying in Higher Education
- Workshop 5: Moving into Employment
- Workshop 6: Understanding your vision impairment
- Workshop 8: Self-advocacy
- Workshop 9: Getting around and living independently

Part 2: Technology and assistive tools workshop materials

The aim of this workshop is to help the young people learn more about

the different options available for overcoming barriers to accessing information. The workshop contains the following units:

- Accessing information
- Using apps
- Voice assistants

For young people, familiarity with a wide range of technology, both mainstream and specialist, should be encouraged as early as possible.

They need to be able to understand what options there are to help with their own learning and ability to live independent lives. This will mean that at every transitional stage they are able to identify and explain which assistive technologies will be of use and are able to explain to others why this is the case.

It can be tempting to believe young people are extremely technologically adept; but this is often an oversimplification. Many young people having gaps in their knowledge around basic digital skills and knowledge of mainstream and specialist technologies. Familiarity and knowledge around what is available can be built up through informal group discussions, activities and workshops.

Accessing information

Aim

This unit aims to inform young people about technology and to help them think about what technology they might need in different settings, such as Further Education (FE), Higher Education (HE) or work. These activities also aim to build curiosity and give tools to find their own info on technology and other assistive tools.

This unit is designed to be delivered to a small group of young people who are preparing to leave compulsory education (for example, this may include those who are preparing to go to university or enter into employment).

Activity 1: Video discussion

Play this two minute video of Ben, which focuses on how Ben uses technology in lessons (film #3 on the webpage): <https://www.rnib.org.uk/services-we-offer-advice-professionals-education-professionals/technology-education>

Discussion questions

- How is Ben able to use technology to be independent in his learning?
- Do you use technology in this way?

Activity 2: Knowledge of technology

As an introduction, ask workshop participants what types of technology they currently use, to gauge their level of technology knowledge.

Activity 3: Options

Ask the young people to provide examples of how they might use different types of technology or other tools depending on the task. If needed, give a brief overview of mainstream and specialist technology, drawing on the information in the table on the next page.

Mainstream	Specialist
Tablets (eg iPads) which have built-in accessibility features such as screen magnification, screen readers, smart assistants and voice control.	Electronic Video Magnifiers (can be desktop or portable), which allow for the magnification of text or documents, with some having built-in text recognition and speech software to speak printed text.
Laptops/desktop computers (eg Windows, Mac) which can be made accessible with built-in magnification software or specialist screen reading/magnification software such as JAWS, ZoomText or Supernova. (Screen readers require knowledge of touch-typing to use effectively).	Devices with refreshable Braille displays (e.g. brailleNote, Polaris); braille displays for computers and tablets (e.g. Orbit Reader 20).
Home devices such as Google Home and Amazon Echo.	Smart glasses and head-mounted cameras which provide optical character recognition (e.g. OrCam).

Emphasise that, while they might prefer to use a particular method for accessing information, it is valuable to have a range of options available. Draw on examples depending on who is on the group, eg a student with severe vision impairment may prefer to use a laptop with a screen reader for everyday work, but they may find it easier to use paper/electronic braille when delivering a presentation, or in a meeting.

Activity 4: Using technology in your next setting

Work through these questions with the young people to help them think ahead to using technology in their next setting.

1. Ask the young people why technology might be important when transitioning to the next stage (eg higher education and work).

2. Ask the young people why they think it's important for people/staff at their new setting to know about the technology they will be using.
3. Direct the young people towards other sources of information regarding technology – emphasise the importance of learning new skills and keeping up to date with developments.

Conclusions

Emphasise that there is a huge range of tools available to help the young people to access information, and that it is important to be open to using a broad range of solutions.

Useful Resources

Vital Tech Website: <https://www.vitaltech.org.uk/>

RNIB Technology for Life Website: <https://www.rnib.org.uk/technology>

RNIB Technology for Life Email: tfl@rnib.org.uk

RNIB Sight Loss Advice Service: 0303 123 9999

AppleVis (website for vision impaired Apple users): <https://www.applevis.com>

Apple accessibility webpage <https://www.apple.com/uk/accessibility/>

Google accessibility webpage: <https://www.google.co.uk/accessibility>

Microsoft accessibility webpage: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/accessibility/>

YouTube (many useful videos about using accessible technology): <https://www.youtube.com/>

Using apps

This unit aims to introduce young people to using specialist apps to help them overcome challenges relating to their vision impairment.

For this unit, you will need to use 'Seeing AI': an app that can recognise objects, faces, currency etc. This software is useful and has huge potential; however, it isn't quite perfect yet!

These imperfections can be used to add an element of humour while still showing what the app can do.

Activity 1: Seeing AI

Encourage the young people to download the "Seeing AI" app by Microsoft, or provide devices with the app already installed. Briefly explain the purpose of the app and who made it.

Activity 2: Using the app

Explain that pictures can be taken with the camera or you can import a photo

from your device's library. Go through each mode in the app and demonstrate its purpose. The app will provide tutorials and descriptions for each mode. Allow participants to try it themselves if possible. You will notice the app doesn't always get it right (especially with facial recognition); this is a good opportunity to mention how the app learns over time and will always improve.

Activity 3: Using apps creatively

Discuss with the group how and when this app can help people with vision impairment. Ask the group if they have any other apps that they like to use, and to explain to the group what they use them for.

Conclusion

Encourage the young people to experiment using different apps to help them overcome some of the everyday barriers that they face in life.

Voice assistants

Aim

This unit aims to provide a fun activity to demonstrate the possible benefits of using voice assistance on accessible technology.

Activity 1: Voice assistants

Briefly discuss different voice assistants like Google, Siri and Alexa. Explain how they use speech recognition to listen to and answer your questions.

Activity 2: Asking questions

Encourage the young people to ask the same question to different voice assistants. This could be questions like:

- "When's the next train to Glasgow?"
- "Where am I?"
- "What is zero divided by zero?"
- "How do I get to London Euston?"
- "What is one mile in metres?"
- "Who invented peanut butter?"

This will allow a mix of practical upskilling and engagement.

Activity 3: VoiceOver/TalkBack relay race.

This activity is ideal for small groups. Split the young people into two or three groups with one device per group. This activity is useful for demonstrating and familiarising people with the use of VoiceOver (on iOS devices) or TalkBack (on Android devices) for entering text using the onscreen keyboard. Participants should have already been taught the basic VoiceOver/TalkBack gestures enough to navigate and open apps on their device.

The rules

1. The facilitator should first of all demonstrate how typing works on their device, demonstrating the various basic ways text entry can be done via a screen reader – from basic swiping and double-tapping to split-tapping and exploring by touch on the screen.
2. Participants should be told that they are going to race each other to enter their names using the onscreen keyboard. They should be instructed to write their name and create a new line before passing to the next person in their group to do the same. Use of the various ways of entering text should be encouraged.
3. Ask the participants to navigate to the Notes app (on iOS devices), or an equivalent app on their particular device, and then once everyone is ready the race can begin!
4. Once all participants have completed the task you can announce the winner. You may need to make some adjustments to ensure that the same number of names are entered by each group.
5. You could then move on to other ways you can enter text with tablet or smartphone devices, such as dictation, where the facilitator could demonstrate speaking their name for a faster way to enter text.

Workshop 8: Self-advocacy

Part 1: Evidence from the Longitudinal Transitions Study

Views of independence

- The young people display different attitudes towards independence.
- The research identified different typologies of approaches to solving problems:

Active – Internaliser

- Focused upon taking action
- Responsibility for the problem/ actions lies with self

Active – Externaliser

- Focused upon taking action
- Responsibility for the problem/ action lies with others

Passive – Internaliser

- Focused upon action by others
- Responsibility for the problem/ action lies with self

Passive – Externaliser

- Focused upon action by others
- Responsibility for the problem/ action lies with others

- It is, therefore, important to help young people with vision impairment to consider who should take responsibility when they are facing obstacles. This is particularly the case with those who tend to remain passive, who may not be confident in an environment where they are expected to take more responsibility, such as higher education or the workplace.
- Many of the young people spoke of their independence as something which they value and strive towards.

Self-advocacy

- A number of obstacles have been identified by the participants when developing their understanding of their vision impairment. Many were diagnosed at a young age, and often before they would have had the maturity to be able to understand the full extent of their eye condition. For those who no longer had the chance to meet with a medical professional in an eye clinic, this meant limited opportunity to ask further questions about their condition
- A stumbling block for several of the participants was the responsibility placed on them by others (eg HE providers and employers): firstly, to self-advocate for themselves; and, secondly, to take responsibility for their support
- Not all young people with vision impairment were prepared to self-advocate, including: explaining support needs; explaining adjustments; explaining their vision impairment; and advocating when things went wrong. Participants varied

in the amount of guidance they had received to self-advocate and how well prepared they felt to do so

Being equipped to self-advocate

The research study has identified a range of scenarios in which it is necessary for a young person with vision impairment to be able to self-advocate. These include:

- Making a case for self if they want something to change
- Explaining own support needs
- Contributing to discussions with staff/managers about own needs
- Choosing what to do when things don't go according to plan (strategies/solutions)
- Knowing where to go to find things out
- Explaining vision impairment to others

Links to other workshops

This 'Self-advocacy' workshop may be linked with the following workshops:

- Workshop 6: Understanding your vision impairment

Part 2: Self-advocacy workshop materials

The aim of this workshop is to help the young people think about the obstacles they may face in relation to their disability. This includes encouraging them to think of their own solutions to get around obstacles, and informing them of their legal rights and the resources which they may benefit from. It contains the following units:

- Know your needs
- Know your options
- Take control
- Self-advocacy scenarios

Know your needs

Aim

This unit aims to introduce the framework 'Know your needs, Know your rights, Take control'. It is designed to help the young people think about their own impairment, limitations and access needs BUT in relation to their aspirations.

Activity 1: Barriers

On post-its or using their assistive technology, ask the participants to write down some examples of situations where they would find it difficult if adjustments weren't put in place.

Examples:

- Reading books with standard print size
- Reading train boards

Activity 2: I can't > I can, if...

Ask if they can turn these into positive sentences. 'I can't', to 'I can, if...'

For example:

- 'I can't read normal books' to 'I can read, if books are provided in large print' or 'if I am given a book in an accessible electronic format'
- 'I can't read train boards' to 'I can read train boards, if I use my phone to take a photo and enlarge it' or 'if I use my phone to look at live train information online.'

Activity 3: I can't > I can, if... in your new setting

Ask the participants to think about what they want to move onto next (eg higher education, employment). Can they think of any possible barriers to overcome related to their vision impairment? What 'I can, if' solutions could allow them to overcome these?

Activity 4: Practice makes perfect

Ask the participants to think about the next transition they are going to make, and practise with a partner explaining their vision impairment, and the key adjustments they might need in that new setting, in under 60 seconds (drawing on their existing 'I can, if').

Conclusion

Remind the young people how important it is for them to raise any challenges that they are facing, and how beneficial it can be to provide creative solutions to those challenge – 'I can if...'

Know your options

Aim

This unit aims to help the young people understand their right to equal access, and where to go for support by considering RRR: Rights, Responsibilities and Resources.

This workshop introduces the UK Equality Act (2010). Please note that Northern Ireland has its own legislation known as 'Disability Discrimination Act'. Further information may be found on the RNIB website: <https://www.rnib.org.uk/information-everyday-living-your-rights/disability-discrimination-act-dda>

Activity 1: Introducing the Equality Act

Ask the participants if they have heard of the Equality Act, and ask if they know what their rights are under the act?



APPLY REVIEW
TAL REVIEW
SEEK CONTINUED SUPPORT

AN
SO IT!

INTERVIEW APPLY
DISCLOSURE
R + R + R + R
SELF-ADVOCACY
KNOW YOUR RIGHTS
DISABILITY VS 504
CONFIDENT

STORIES & VLOGS
How students to discuss their experiences

PLANNING
FAIL 2 Plan
Plan 2 Fail
Know your conditions

SCENARIOS
GROUPS // ANSWER & SHARE

EMPLOY SKILLS CONFIDENTIAL BE A PI IN REE

YOUR RIGHTS
Legislation
DDI + EDEI

EXPERIENCE AND APPLICATION TO TAKE POWER
EXEMPT ANSWER

WHAT IS ACCESS TO WORK?

TRAINING + Experience

EMPLOYEE RIGHTS + RESPONSIBILITIES

EVERY JOB DIFFERENT

Activity 2: True or False

Play a true/false game based around the Equality Act. This draws on various true or false statements about what rights/protections exist.

Statement 1. You are protected from discrimination due to your disability under the Equality Act (2010) in the workplace, when accessing housing, education, goods and services (eg shops, banks, cinemas, hospitals, council offices, leisure centres) and associations and private clubs (eg Scouts and Guides, private golf clubs and working men's clubs).

True. The Equality act also protects other 'protected characteristics' similarly to disability. These are: gender, age, gender reassignment, marital status, pregnancy/maternity leave, race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. This means you cannot be treated unfavourably because of any of these characteristics.

Statement 2: Taxi drivers and airports are allowed to charge extra for providing assistance services to disabled people.

False. Under the Equality Act, they have to provide these services. In fact, taxi drivers can face a fine of £1000 or lose their licence for failing to transport people with disabilities.

Statement 3. It is OK for a hotel to refuse a booking from a person with vision impairment, saying that the hotel is not suitable for people with vision impairment.

False. Providers of goods and services, like employers, have to make 'reasonable adjustments' to allow a disabled person to use their services.

If they don't do this, they must be able to show that their failure to do so is reasonable. For example, here, reasonable adjustments include providing information on audiotape as well as in writing or installing a ramp to allow wheelchair access to wheelchair users.

Statement 4. Landlords are responsible for making and paying for reasonable adjustments for a renter with disabilities, and they cannot evict someone because of their disability.

True. This includes things like changing the door-bell to a hearing-impaired friendly bell, or replacing furniture (eg an accessible bed). However, this doesn't include anything that would involve removing or altering a physical feature (such as installing a permanent wheelchair ramp, though a non-fixed one would be included). The tenant also has to prove that they're at a 'substantial disadvantage' compared to a non-disabled person, before the landlord has to make any adjustments.

Statement 5. A local authority wants to renovate a library. They have a duty to consider how this renovation would affect people with disabilities and other protected characteristics.

True. The Public Sector Equality Duty means a local authority has to consider how any new policies will affect people with protected characteristics, and it has to provide evidence it has done this.

Statement 6. A school can refuse admission to a child with a disability, if it doesn't feel it has the necessary adjustments in place.

False. Schools cannot deny a child admission because of their disability. If the student has an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan) then the school must comply with this; this may include hiring a learning support assistant or providing educational materials in alternative formats (eg large print, braille).

Statement 7. An employer can ask about disabilities at a job interview

True. However, only if:

There are necessary requirements of the job that cannot be met with reasonable adjustments (eg vision impairment for a job that has a vision requirement such as a driver)

It is finding out if someone needs help to take part in a selection test or interview (eg extra time for an aptitude test)

It is using 'positive action' to actively recruit a disabled person

Employers are breaking the law if they discriminate against a disabled person in the recruiting process. Other things employers cannot ask are if you are married, if you have or plan to have children, your date of birth (other than to ensure you're over 18), and questions about spent criminal convictions.

Statement 8. An employer cannot treat a disabled person more favourably over a non-disabled person, when hiring, if they both meet the job requirements.

False. Disabled people can legally be treated more favourably; however, they cannot be offered a job they are not qualified for, just because they are disabled.

Statement 9. At work, you see your friend, who has cerebral palsy, being bullied because of the way he speaks. You decide to raise this in a formal complaint and end up getting side-lined for a promotion by your boss and colleagues because of it.

You can complain about this under the Equality Act (2010).

True. What is happening here is called victimisation, where someone is treated unfairly because they've complained about discrimination or harassment. The Equality Act protects people against victimisation. This includes people who are associated with someone with a disability and people who complain on behalf of, or support the claim of, someone being discriminated against.

Activity 3: Match the definitions

Ask the young people to match the titles, definitions and examples. These are correctly matched in the table below, so you will need to find a way to present them in a jumbled-up manner (eg by printing an additional copy of this page on card and cutting the table into tiles).

Type of discrimination	Definition	Example
Direct discrimination	Treating someone with a protected characteristic less favourably than others.	Giving a promotion to a sighted person over a person with vision impairment, because the employer doesn't want the hassle of making reasonable adjustments for the person with vision impairment.
Indirect discrimination	Putting rules or arrangements in place that apply to everyone, but that put someone with a protected characteristic at an unfair disadvantage.	A local authority is holding consultation event about a new housing development in a building which is not wheelchair accessible, so wheelchair users cannot attend.
Harassment	Unwanted behaviour linked to a protected characteristic that violates someone's dignity or creates an offensive environment for them.	A man with Down's syndrome is visiting a pub with friends. The bar staff make derogatory and offensive comments about him, which upset and offend him.
Victimisation	Treating someone unfairly because they've complained about discrimination or harassment.	An employee makes a complaint of ableist harassment at work and is dismissed as a consequence.

Activity 4: Trusted adult

Encourage the participants to talk to a trusted support system for advice and options. Questions for discussion:

- Can you think of who your trusted adult would be? (parent/guardians, mentors, professional support workers, medical professionals)
- How would you go about starting this conversation?

Activity 5: Trusted adult role play

Thinking about their next possible setting (FE, HE, employment, etc.), ask the young people to discuss/role play this kind of conversation with a partner – they may already have an example they can discuss.

Conclusion

Finish by highlighting that: 'if you feel you are being restricted, or are unsure what support you need, or you need support and don't know how to access it, you can call the RNIB helpline: **0303 123 99 99**'. You may have local organisations that you wish to highlight to the workshop participants too.

References and extra information:

The Equality Act (2010): <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/15>

Equality and Human Rights Commission: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/disability-discrimination>

Citizens advice: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/law-and-courts/discrimination/discrimination-because-of-disability/what-counts-as-disability-discrimination/>,

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/law-and-courts/discrimination/what-are-the-different-types-of-discrimination/duty-to-make-reasonable-adjustments-for-disabled-people/>

GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/rights-disabled-person/the-equality-act-2010-and-un-convention>

Take control

Aim

This unit aims to facilitate a group discussion to help the participants develop self-confidence; to trust their own instincts and be equipped to take responsibility for their own support.

Activity 1: Discussion questions

1. Have you ever talked to your support system about taking control of aspects of your vision impairment?
 - Discuss examples of taking control, such as accessing and understanding your medical records (have you seen your own file before?), understanding registration, and knowing about any benefits you might be receiving.
2. How could you go about developing your understanding and talking over your own support plan (registration, welfare benefits and transfer of control from parents, considering cane/guide-dog use). Eg:
 - Reading your own post; getting it in accessible format
 - Negotiating independence with trusted adults
 - Knowing the benefits available to help with living/travelling independently.

Activity 2: A plan for taking control

Ask the young people to start developing a 'plan of action' for how they might take control of their vision impairment. This plan could include:

- Learning whether they are registered as having a vision impairment and knowing how to get evidence of this.
- Finding out about what welfare benefits they receive or are entitled to.
- Finding out where to go to access specialist services (e.g. low vision clinic, ophthalmologist, habilitation).

Draw on resources such as:

Bridging the Gap;

RNIB guidance on registration (<https://www.rnib.org.uk/eye-health/registering-your-sight-loss>);

and RNIB guidance on health, social and educational professionals (<https://www.rnib.org.uk/professionals>).

Make use of any young people who have already taken these steps, and ask them to share their experiences.

Conclusion

Emphasise to the young people that as they get older it is important to take more responsibility for their vision impairment, but encourage them by reminding them that there are lots of resources available to help them manage this.

Other resources to highlight:

Opportunities for connecting with others with vision impairment

Local community groups (prepare some examples beforehand)

Local societies

RNIB Connect

Other national organisations like VICTA and Look UK

Blind sports, eg connecting to running guide networks and blind sports teams

Social media groups (Do they know of any examples?)

Challenge: if it doesn't exist, start your own!

Go through some resilience-building resources available:

Accessing professional mental health services if necessary, particularly when processing emotional side of vision impairment

Accessing self-help: Mindfulness and mental wellbeing resources (eg Mind UK)

Self-advocacy scenarios

Aim

This unit aims to get the young people to work through real-life examples of vision impairment related obstacles and think about how they could be handled.

Activity: Scenarios

Questions to think about when working through these scenarios:

- Does this feel right? Is this discrimination?
- What do I need to get around this problem?
- Where can I go for support?
- Where do I go if my first-line support is not helpful?
- What should I do if I want to change a system that is problematic?

Scenario 1: Declan's internship

Declan gained a four month internship at Scottish parliament with the support of Inclusion Scotland, who organised the internship and mentored him through it. When he arrived, it became apparent that the support he needed, such as access to IT technology and Zoom software, had not been put in place. Because of the sensitive nature of the work, Declan was only supposed to use official devices (eg standard office computers) which were not accessible to him.

Discuss:

Does this sound like a breach of his rights?

What should Declan do about this in the first instance?

Declan raised the issue a number of times internally, but the case worker assigned to him failed to do their job. The workplace was flexible in letting Declan use his own devices where appropriate, but his productivity severely suffered. Declan then also found that because his access needs were not met, he was not as productive as his colleagues, and began being criticised by his supervisor.

Discuss:

Having tried to raise it internally, where could Declan go next to get the issue resolved?

Declan contacted Inclusion Scotland who had helped set up the internship, and it assisted him with contacting the Department for Work and Pensions to raise a formal complaint.

Discuss:

Can you think of other services that could help in this instance (for example, if not based in Scotland)? Other services could include RNIB or trade unions.

The complaint was raised formally and, after some time and much correspondence, Declan received an apology from the Scottish Parliament and was told the support worker who had failed to arrange his access requirements had been disciplined.

Declan had the option of raising the complaint higher; however, by this point he had secured a different job and did not want to continue such a stressful process.

Scenario 2: Jenny's problems with PIP

When moving from DLA (Disabled Living Allowance) to PIP (Personal Independence Payments), Jenny's application was rejected and she had to appeal. This was particularly difficult, as she was just entering the world of work for the first time and wanted to present to her employer as capable, confident and "as sighted as possible". Yet, at the same time she felt she had to prove to the DWP that she was "vulnerable, disabled, weak and incapable".

Discuss:

1. When dealing with the emotional strain that living with vision impairment can bring up, where can you go for support?
2. What would you need to do in Jenny's situation to get the support you need?

In Jenny's case, as it often does, it came down to perseverance. She needed to prove that she was entitled to support, and so needed to get a good grip on her own needs. She found having a good understanding and control over her own information was really important for this. She began to take control of her own medical records and negotiated, with her parents' support, to read her own letters and handle her own finances.

They did this in phases, and eventually she was an expert on her own needs, and in charge of all her own data.

Jenny found that sharing the experience with her friends and family helped emotionally. She also reached out to Citizen's Advice, and networks of vision impaired people who faced similar experiences, and found this was also very helpful. With a solid grasp on her own medical condition, as well as emotional support and practical advice, Jenny persevered through the appeal process and was eventually awarded her PIP entitlement.

Scenario 3: Rebecca's airport troubles

Rebecca uses Edinburgh Airport regularly; however, she had a string of bad experiences where the access support she needed had not been provided.

On one occasion, she was left on the plane for almost an hour after everyone else had disembarked, to the point where it was holding up the next flight.

Apparently, no one had been told about her, and when a support worker did come she was spoken down to and ignored in favour of a wheelchair user.

Discuss:

What could you do in this situation to prevent things like this happening again?

Rebecca made a formal complaint and received an apology from the airport. Though she knows she shouldn't have to go to these lengths, she now calls ahead of a flight to ensure that she is on the airport's list of people they need to provide access for, for each particular flight. She found that taking and remembering names and specific details aided in the complaints process and hopes that, with more people speaking out, procedures will improve over time.

Scenario 4: Alex's A-level barriers

Alex really enjoyed science at GCSE level, but was told by his teachers that he couldn't take this on to an A-level science qualification as they felt his access needs would make the course too hard and he'd fall behind.

Discuss:

1. Does this sound like a breach of Alex's rights to an education?
2. Who should Alex talk to about this?

Hearing that his teachers didn't believe in him really knocked his confidence. Alex talked about it with his parents, a mentor and his SENCO support worker. Though not all of them were as supportive as he'd hoped, his mentor was very encouraging. His mentor advised him to persist with the school and raise a complaint with the deputy headteacher, who offered a meeting with the science teacher to discuss his options. Alex was not feeling very confident and didn't want to go into the meeting alone but didn't want to trouble anyone. In the end, he asked his mentor for advice again. His mentor encouraged him to invite his parents and the SENCO contact and to focus on the reasons why he could do the course, rather than the barriers. They made a list together of pros and cons of doing the course, and his strengths and areas of need.

Discuss:

1. Do you have a mentor, or a trusted adult who believes in you and can encourage you when you don't feel supported elsewhere? If not, how might you go about finding one?
2. Can you think of any ways in which other people might persuade you against doing the things you would like to in your next setting because of your vision impairment? Help them see 'I can, if' instead of 'I can't'?

Alex attended the meeting, along with his support team, and made his case for enrolling on the A-level science course. He highlighted his previous good reports and strong year 10 results and talked them through the list he had made of reasons why he should be able to, with the right support, be successful on the course.

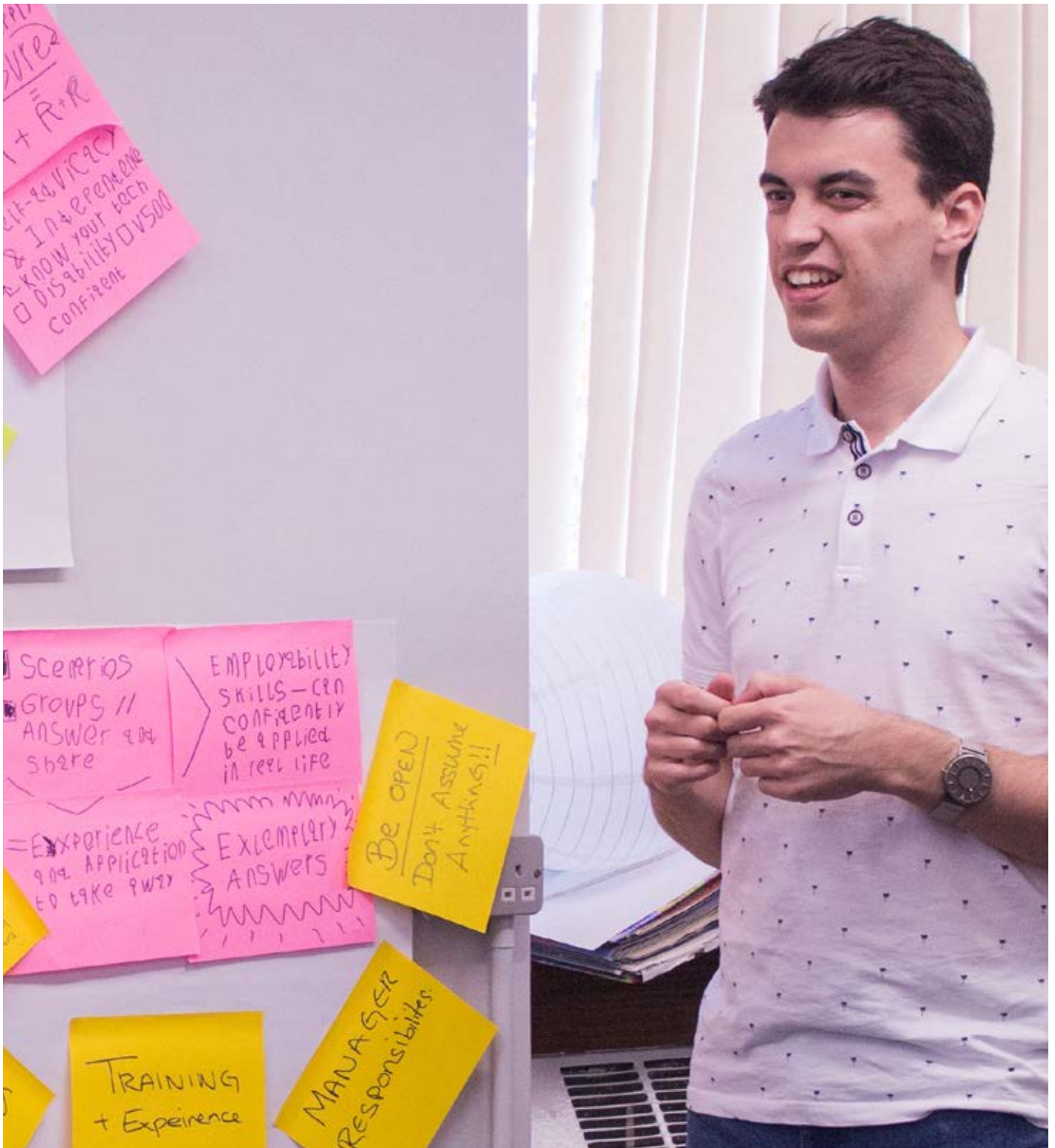
In the end, the deputy headteacher and science teacher agreed that support could be put in place to allow Alex to enrol on the course.

Discuss:

1. Had the headteacher not agreed, what could Alex have done to elevate the issue? (school board, local authority support services, seek assurances from exam board of reasonable adjustments)

Conclusion

Remind the young people there is no perfect way of addressing vision impairment related obstacles. However, what is important is that they do speak out where they are facing barriers, and where necessary draw on their trusted adult for support.



Workshop 9: Getting around and living independently

Part 1: Evidence from the Longitudinal Transitions Study

Barriers to getting around independently

- While the participants in the study generally felt able to get around independently in areas that were familiar to them, a large proportion have felt unprepared to navigate new areas or to travel on public transport. This was particularly identified in the participants' experiences in Higher Education (HE). The focus in mobility training appears to have been centred on learning to get around in specific settings rather than developing transferable broader skills, such as knowing what to do when lost and how to use a range of types of public transport.
- Despite identifying that they have challenges in getting around independently, some of the young people report never having had mobility support in school, or even knowing what it is. This means they are not aware of the option to request mobility support when moving to a new location.
- Family pressure can be a barrier to young people with vision impairment developing their mobility support as they may be cautious about allowing their son/daughter to practice mobility skills.

Potential enablers for getting around independently

- Passenger Assist is an important enabler for young people with vision impairment, to give the freedom of travelling around the country (by train). However, several of the participants left compulsory education without knowing that Passenger Assist existed (www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations_destinations/disabled_passengers.aspx).
- Young people with vision impairment are able to take advantage of mainstream technology to assist them in getting around independently. This includes GPS/maps on mobile phones and transportation apps.
- Several of the young people benefited from being matched with guide dogs which enabled them to learn routes more quickly and confidently. The young people were also less self-conscious than when using a cane. However it is important to understand that guide dog ownership does result in added responsibility, eg ensuring the dog's welfare.

Living independently

- While many of the participants felt that, in general, they were equipped to live independently, several of them identified specific areas which they anticipated being a challenge. Also, others shared that, at least at the time of interview, they did not believe they had the repertoire of skills required. In particular, we saw examples of

participants being limited in their mobility and independent living skills, such as not being able to use public transport or not being able to cook independently.

- When reflecting back on their educational experiences, some of the young people felt that they had not been fully prepared for living independently. Very few participants received independent living skills training if they were not in a specialist setting, indicating that these skills are often not being developed in mainstream environments.
- Some young people went to residential schools specifically to 'gain their independence', having not received support for developing independent living skills in a mainstream setting.

Links to other workshops

This 'Getting around and living independently' workshop may be linked with the following workshops:

- Workshop 7: Technology and assistive tools
- Workshop 8: Self-advocacy

Part 2: Getting around and living independently workshop materials

The aim of this workshop is to help the young people get more prepared for independent travel and for living independently. It contains the following units:

- Tools for getting around independently
- Resolving problems
- Using technology and other assistive tools
- Cool canes
- Budgeting

Tools for getting around independently

Aim

The aim of this unit is to help young people understand what is meant by habilitation, offer insight into what a children and young people habilitation specialist does, and give examples of the kinds of things habilitation can support.

Activity 1: Video discussion

Play this four minute 40 second video of young people with vision impairment talking about how they get around: <https://vimeo.com/channels/futureinsight/181181670>

Ask the young people if they can relate to anything in particular said by the young people in this video.

Activity 2: Habilitation – what is it, what does it do, how can it help?

The podcast is made up of three sections. There will be a silence break between each of the sections. The transcript will also help with timings (<https://audioboom.com/posts/7521550-habilitation-what-is-it-what-does-it-do-how-can-it-help>).

1. Start the exercise by asking the young people what they think habilitation means. This can either be done in a large group with answers shouted out, or the young people can be encouraged to work in pairs or small teams and discuss together.
2. When the young people have had time to chat, play the first section of the podcast which will give a definition.

Play Podcast

Once the audio finishes, ask the young people what they think. Were they correct? Were there any surprises? Did they learn anything new?

3. Now ask the young people what they think a children and young people's habilitation specialist might do. As before, this can be done in a full group or in pairs or small teams.

Play Podcast

Once the audio finishes, ask the young people what they think. Were they correct? Were there any surprises? Did they learn anything new?

4. Now ask the young people to consider how habilitation might be of use to them. As before, this can be done in a full group or in pairs or small teams.

Play Podcast

Once the audio finishes, ask the young people what they think. Were there any surprises? Did they learn anything new? Do they think they could benefit from habilitation services?

5. Young people can now be encouraged to find out more about habilitation services using the link: <https://habilitationviuk.org.uk>

Activity 3: Video discussion: independent travel abroad

Play this video of Callum talking about his placement year abroad from university www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZ104HNcdlo&feature=youtu.be.

Discussion questions:

- Was there anything that surprised you?
- Was there anything that you disagreed with?
- Was there anything that inspired you?
- Was there anything that you would like to do in response to this video?

Conclusion

Emphasise that it is really important to understand what support is available, how it can be of use and how to access it. Compile together information of local services that are available and ensure that the young people know how to access them.

Resolving problems

Aim

The aim of this unit is to let students think about how they would resolve a problem if they were faced with it, through some real-life scenarios. The purpose is to let them see there is always a way round a problem.

Activity: What would you do?

Have a series of cards with true stories that have happened to vision impaired people. One card will have the main body of the story but not the ending.

Scenario 1: Getting around in an unfamiliar environment

Roxy is staying in an unfamiliar environment, a hotel with many obstacles. Roxy's friend promises to get her at her door and walk down with her to breakfast. However, she sleeps in and Roxy is far too hungry to wait. What do you do?

Outcome:

"The corridors were narrow and easy, so I thought walking to the end of the hall, using my cane, was a good start. Remaining calm was key and I knew if I got lost, I could call my other friends. I did get lost and decided to text for help. Luckily, one of my friends walked down the hall and helped me down. It was a lucky streak but even if she had not been passing and I had no friends, it would not have been long before someone walked by. As scary as it seems, asking for assistance is surely less scary than being hungry and lost!"

Scenario 2:

Angus usually gets out five minutes before the bell rings at school to allow him to navigate freely, but English took up those five minutes and he had to find the wall and trail it to move to his next class.

There was a food cart next to the wall, forcing him out into the middle. Angus walked briskly to get back to the wall but in the process tripped and fell flat on his side. What would you do next?

Outcome:

Mortified, he leapt up, ignoring people offering him a hand and asking him if he was OK. He just wanted to forget it happened as he could hear other boys laughing at him. High school is a hard time, but remember, even sighted people fall. Don't worry about those who mock; having the confidence to get back up and thank those who helped is a great quality.

Using technology and other assistive tools

Aim

The aim of this unit is to help the young people think about how they might use technology to enable them to become more independent.

Activity 1: Learning from others

Start the exercise by playing this video of Jennie talking about her experiences of living independently: <https://www.rnib.org.uk/insight-online/must-watch-transition-stories>

- Jennie was able to get mobility support through Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) because she was studying in higher education. How else could you access mobility support if you aren't in higher education?
- Jennie demonstrated a range of technology solutions. Are these solutions that you have used in the past?

Activity 2: Making use of technology

Introduce some mobile/iPad apps such as 'Be My Eyes', 'SeeingAI', and 'Those Three Words'. Ask the young people if there are any apps that they use that they would like to talk about. Let the young people experiment using these apps in similar situations/settings as described in the stories – eg using SeeingAI to work out what flavour a tin of soup is.

Activity 3: Low tech solutions

Ask the young people if they use any other types of assistive tools to help them be more independent around the home. Introduce them to tools such as a Pen Friend, bump-ons and liquid level indicator for pouring drinks.

Conclusion

Technology offers exciting potential to overcome barriers and to become more independent. It is important to remember the broad range of technology available – sometimes low-tech solutions like low vision aids can be the best solutions. It's all about having options.

Cool canes

Aim

The aim of this unit is for the young people to learn about the different types of canes available and to challenge any negative perceptions that they might have about using canes.

Activity 1: This cane, that cane.

1. Ask the young people to discuss in smaller groups if they have ever used a cane before and how they feel about using a cane. Bring the group back together to feed back. Note their responses to be able to compare at the end of the session.
2. In pairs or small groups, ask the young people to discuss what they know about canes and try naming the different kinds. Ask the young people to talk about why there might be different kinds of canes.
3. Once the young people have had a chance to chat, ask them to share what was discussed. Below is some information that will aid conversation and help answer any questions.

If you have access to the varied canes, get everyone involved in feeling and trying them out, explaining what they are called and how they are used.

A summary of different types of canes

Symbol canes

Increase confidence when you're out and about with a symbol cane to highlight to other people that you have sight and/or hearing loss. These reflective, lightweight aluminium canes fold into either three or four sections, ideal for putting into your bag when not in use. Please note, symbol canes aren't to be used as a walking stick or support aid, or to detect obstacles on the ground, such as kerbs and steps.

Guide canes

Guide canes help you find obstacles before they find you! You hold a guide cane diagonally across your body and then use it to find obstacles in front of you such as kerbs or steps. We recommend getting advice from a professional, for example a mobility officer, before purchasing a guide cane.

Long canes

Long canes are rolled or tapped from side to side as you walk, to find your way and avoid obstacles. Specialist training is needed to use a long cane safely and effectively.

Adaptive Mobility Devices (AMDs)

Adaptive Mobility Devices (AMDs) can help children who have difficulty handling a conventional cane, or they can be used as a pre-cane. The frame provides some protection and is particularly useful as a drop-off detector and for those with balance issues. The devices are not designed to support the user's weight.

Activity 2: The Cane Explained

It is likely that the young people will have reservations and/or negative thoughts or stories around using or being seen to use a cane. Lots of young people do not like to be seen as different from their peers. Using these videos may help to show that they are not alone.

1. Choose a relevant or a few relevant videos to suit the audience. Play the video and encourage discussion afterwards.

Prompts:

- Ask the young people to list positive reasons for using a cane.
- Ask the young people to consider hurdles or barriers of using a cane.

Video links:

A. Do you know the difference between the four types of white cane? Watch six vision impaired people explain.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=69gDygNIP0c&feature=youtu.be>

B. The Cane Explained – People's Stories

<https://www.rnib.org.uk/rnibconnect/welfare-and-money/cane-explained-your-stories>

C. What does a red and white striped cane mean?

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p07wbl dz>

D. The Cane Debate

<https://www.rnib.org.uk/rnibconnect/how-i-see/cane-debate>

E. Cane Enable Campaign

<https://www.pocklington-trust.org.uk/caneenable/>

Download the handout here: – https://www.rnib.org.uk/sites/default/files/RE_180805%20How%20I%20See%20Marketing%20Kit%20Cane%20Explained-A4_v3.pdf

2. Ask the group again how they feel about using a cane, directing them to the habilitation section on the RNIB website for further advice and information.

Conclusions

It is recommended to get advice from a professional, for example, a mobility officer, before purchasing a guide cane. Specialist training is needed to use a long cane safely and effectively.

This activity may bring up some negative thoughts and feelings for young people. Further resources are available in the Emotional Support section at the end of this pack.

Budgeting

Aim

The aim of this unit is to encourage the young people to start thinking about how best to budget and manage their finances, and to think about overcoming some of the accessibility challenges they might face in doing that.

Activity 1: The Budgeting Challenge

In this game, the young people will take on a budgeting challenge where they will be asked to manage a budget over a period of 12 months. In this challenge they will have to make decisions on how to spend their budget in order to achieve:

- a minimum amount of savings
- a certain number of Well-Being Points

As supervisor of the challenge, you will also have a list of unexpected expenses and windfalls to distribute to them. The real challenge is for the young people to manage their money without sacrificing everything that's valuable to them.

Teacher's instructions

Banker's (teacher) MONTH-BY-MONTH Instructions For Budget Game – strictly confidential!

MONTH ONE: Player should create a budget, decide on their savings, and calculate their mental well-being points.

MONTH TWO: Player should create a budget, decide on their savings, and calculate their mental well-being points.

Player earns 5% interest on their savings.

MONTH THREE: Player should create a budget, decide on their savings, and calculate their mental well-being points.

Player earns 5% interest on their savings.

Player is fined £100 for disorderly behaviour.

MONTH FOUR: Player should create a budget, decide on their savings, and calculate their mental well-being points.

Player earns 5% interest on their savings.

Player receives a £20 birthday gift.

MONTH FIVE: Player should create a budget, decide on their savings, and calculate their mental well-being points.

Player earns 5% interest on their savings.

Player is charged £200 for uninsured accidental damage caused to neighbour's property. You take out a loan to cover the cost which will need to be paid back each month in four equal amounts with interest of 10%.

MONTH SIX: Player should create a budget, decide on their savings, and calculate their mental well-being points.

Player earns 5% interest on savings.

Player must pay 25% of their debt, plus £10 interest. (£70)

MONTH SEVEN: Player should create a budget, decide on their savings, and calculate their mental well-being points.

Player earns 5% interest on their savings.

Player must pay 25% of their debt, plus £10 interest. (£70)

MONTH EIGHT: Player should create a budget, decide on their savings, and calculate their mental well-being points.

Player earns 5% interest on their savings.

Player must pay 25% of their debt, plus £10 interest. (£70)

Banker's (teacher) MONTH-BY-MONTH Instructions For Budget Game – strictly confidential! (continued)

MONTH NINE: Player should create a budget, decide on their savings, and calculate their mental well-being points.

Player earns 5% interest on their savings.

Player must pay the final 25% of their debt, plus £10 interest. (£70)

MONTH TEN: Player should create a budget, decide on their savings, and calculate their mental well-being points.

Player earns 5% interest on their savings.

MONTH ELEVEN: Player should create a budget, decide on their savings, and calculate their mental well-being points.

Player earns 5% interest on their savings.

MONTH TWELVE: Player should create a budget, decide on their savings, and calculate their mental well-being points.

Player earns 5% interest on their savings.

Player receives £20 Christmas bonus.

Background FOR PARTICIPANTS

You have moved out of your parents' house and you have an income of £600 per month.

With that income, you have to pay for the following nine Budget Categories:

- 1) Savings
- 2) Rent + Heat + Electricity + Internet
- 3) Food
- 4) Pets
- 5) Mobile Phone + Service
- 6) Cinema + Concerts + Entertainment
- 7) Eating Out + Coffee Shops
- 8) Clothes
- 9) Miscellaneous Minor Emergencies

Each budget category has different rules that apply. Choose one of the three money options each month, keeping within your income of £600.

Each month the banker will give you new instructions.

#	Budget categories reference card	£££s
1. Savings Your choice		£40
		£60
		£80
2. Rent + Heat + Electricity + Internet (You are committing to a 6-month lease so can't change until month 7)	Shared flat in rough area; Stealing neighbour's unreliable Wi-Fi or using library for internet	£110
	Studio flat with limited Wi-Fi (no streaming)	£140
	1 bedroom flat, well heated with high speed internet	£170
3. Food (If you eat the cheapest food for more than two months in a row, you get ill and miss half your earnings the following month)	Cheapest food you can find – pasta, noodles, etc.	£80
	Fresh vegetables plus good protein (fish, chicken, tofu, etc.) for at least one meal a day	£120
	All your favourite meals and additional treats	£160
4. Pets	You buy a hamster that does absolutely nothing	£50
	You buy a very sinister looking cat from the internet	£60
	You have the pet that you've always wanted	£80
5. Clothes	One new item	£40
	Two new items	£60
	Three new items	£80
6. Mobile phone and service (You are committing to a 6-month lease so can't change until month 7)	Rubbish smart phone with limited data, call minutes and texts	£20
	Old edition smart phone with reasonable data etc.	£30
	Newest smart phone with reasonable data etc.	£40

#	Budget categories reference card	£££s
7.	Cinema, Concerts and Entertainment You earn Mental Well-Being points, where: £5 = 2 points; £10 = 4 points; £15 = 6 points	
	Borrow DVDs from library plus one film at cinema	£10
	Attend a music concert plus one film at cinema	£20
	Attend a music concert plus two films at cinema	£30
8.	Eating out and coffee shops You earn Mental Well-Being points where: £15 = 2 points; £25 = 4 points; £40 = 6 points	
	Two fast food meals each week	£30
	Two fast food meals, plus two restaurant meals each month	£50
	Two fast food meals, plus two restaurant meals each week	£80
9.	Miscellaneous Emergency Expenses You don't get to choose this.	
	Months 1, 4, 7, 10	£20
	Months 2, 5, 8, 11	£40
	Months 3, 6, 9, 12	£60

GOALS

Savings = £900 or more

Mental Well-Being points = 96 or more

Monthly budget sheet

Month		Costs	Income	Savings	Well-being points
Salary	£600				
1. Savings	a) 40				
	b) 60				
	c) 80				
2. Rent etc.	a) 110				
	b) 140				
	c) 170				
3. Food	a) 80				
	b) 120				
	c) 160				
4. Pets	a) 50				
	b) 60				
	c) 80				
5. Clothes	a) 40				
	b) 60				
	c) 80				
6. Mobile	a) 20				
	b) 30				
	c) 40				
7. Cinema etc	a) 10 (2)				
	b) 20 (4)				
	c) 30 (6)				
8. Eating out	a) 30 (4)				
	b) 50 (8)				
	c) 80 (12)				
9. Emergencies	a) 20				
	b) 40				
	c) 60				
Additional income / costs					
Total					

Activity 2: Accessible bills and banking

Divide the young people into two groups. Tell them that in this activity they are going to work in their groups to conduct some research, before then reporting back their findings to the whole group.

Group 1 will research into how to obtain accessible bills. A good starting point is this resource: <https://www.sightadvicefaq.org.uk/money-benefits/banking-bills-finance/bills-format> but they should also look on the websites of utility companies.

Group 2 will research into accessible banking. A good starting point is this resource: <https://www.rnib.org.uk/rnibconnect/welfare-and-money-accessible-banking-guide> but they should also look at what is available on the websites of the banks that they use.

To conclude the activity, ask the young people about their experiences of accessible bills and banking. Are there any companies they have had positive experiences about? How about negative experiences?

Conclusion

Conclude the session by reminding the young people that budgeting, banking and paying bills is a really important part of growing older.

Positively, banks and utility companies should offer accessible ways of accessing the information they might need, but this will often require them requesting this to be set up for their accounts.

Appendix

Transition Questionnaire

Getting young people to think about their needs and familiar with using information to plan ahead

Aim

The aim of this questionnaire is to get the young people to think about their needs, and to collate information that will be of use and support to them as they move forward.

Activity

1. Ask the young people to complete the questionnaire. This questionnaire activity aims to consolidate the material covered in the various workshops in this pack. It is designed to get the young people thinking about life beyond school and what they need to start preparing now.
2. Once completed, working in pairs, groups or alone, ask the young people to collate the answers/information.
3. Discuss as a group how the young people feel they have got on. Discuss how they might use the information they have collated and advise how they might fill in any gaps, including drawing on other workshops in this pack.

Transition Questionnaire

This questionnaire has been adapted from CIVISTA

Make sure you are familiar with the different topics covered in this questionnaire, but also think about what is important to you.

What do you want to find out about?

My Vision Impairment and My Daily Life

4. Do you know exactly what your vision impairment is called?
5. Could you describe to someone who does not know you, what effects your vision impairment has on how you see?
6. Do you know what your visual acuity is and how to describe what it means?
7. Do you know what print size you like to read e.g. N... and what coloured paper/ font that you like?
8. Can you describe what good contrast is in printed material?
9. What other strategies do you require in order for you to be independent in doing reading, writing and studying?
10. Do you know the details of the assistive technology that you have used in your most recent setting?
11. Have you researched technology online and made a note of the companies who provide it?
12. Do you know the names of other assistive technology that may be available in the workplace or in colleges and universities?
13. Do you know how to get a technology assessment for your next setting?

Transition Questionnaire (Continued)

Local Support

1. Do you know who you see at the Eye Clinic?
2. Do you know how to get an appointment at the Eye Clinic?
3. Do you know how often you are reviewed at the Eye Clinic?
4. Which optician do you use?
5. Do you have a copy of your glasses prescription or know how to obtain one?
6. Do you know the phone number of your local society for vision impaired people?
7. Do you know the phone number and web address for RNIB, Thomas Pocklington Trust, Guide Dogs and other useful organisations?
8. Do you know how they may be helpful to you?
9. Do you know that there are social workers for vision impaired people?
10. Do you know the benefits of registering as vision impaired and how to apply for them if you wish?
11. Do you know that you may be entitled to specialist technology at home, at work or during study?
12. Do you know what human support you may be able to access in your next setting?
13. Do you know who to contact to find out about these and other benefits that you may be entitled to? Do you have the phone number?
14. Do you know how to get an appointment with a Careers Officer after you leave school?
15. Do you know who to talk to about your vision impairment in your next setting?

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