EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS LEAVING SCHOOL
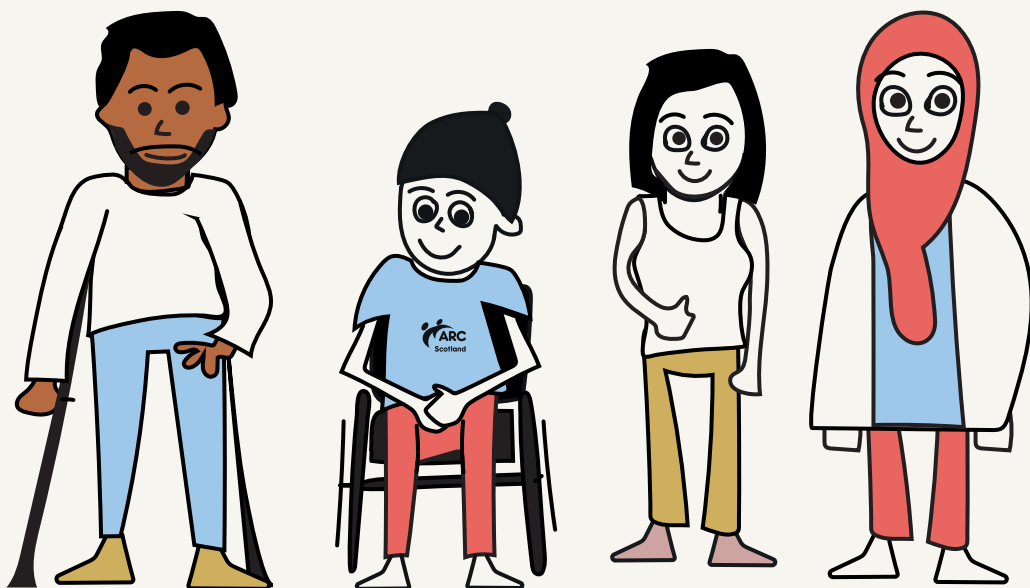
A SURVEY CONDUCTED BY YOUNG PEOPLE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

DIVErgent INfluencers: changing hearts and minds
Leading the way for other young disabled people in Scotland

'Everyone has a story worth telling and a song worth singing so let's give a voice to the people left in the wings'

Abbie Purvis, Divergent Influencer

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INTRODUCTION

"Divergent Influencers, who work with the Association for Real Change (ARC Scotland) promote the improvement of transitions to adulthood for young people with additional support needs (ASN). The support given to those with ASN as they reach adulthood is crucial to their life chances, as they transition from the education system to adult health and social care services and, more broadly, life as an adult."
– Fraser Allander Institute

ARC Scotland's Scottish Transitions Forum supported a group of young disabled leaders called the DIVErgent INfluencers (the DIs) to design and deliver a consultation with other young people about their experiences of transition to young adult life.

A total of 198 young people between the ages of 11 and 26 years with various additional needs completed an online survey. This was followed by more detailed face to face (Zoom) consultations with 12 survey respondents.

The consultation was undertaken to inform the design of a new digital application called **COMPASS**, which will provide information through transition to young people who need additional support and their families. It will also enable young people, parents, and carers to feed back their experiences to their local authority to help make support and services better for other people.

COMPASS is part of a trial programme to improve transitions called Principles into Practice that began in January 2021 in 10 local authority areas with support from ARC Scotland and the Scottish Government. You can find out more about the programme here: **www.pn2p.scot.**

The consultation aimed to:
capture the most important things that help young people have a positive transition identify where they were most unhappy, or felt

most supported identify what helped them be more independent as they moved into young adulthood.

Through their consultation, the DIs have brought to light important findings to better inform our understanding of how young people experience this crucial time in their lives.

This report will be of value to those taking part in the Principles into Practice trials, Scottish Transitions Forum members, the Scottish Government and others seeking to make much needed improvements to support for young people who require additional support and their families.

The consultation took place in December 2020 when COVID-19 lockdown restrictions were in place, including a period of school closures. Those who left school in summer 2020 were very likely to have experienced disruption in planning for their transition, a restricted range of post school options and increased social isolation and stress because of the onset of the pandemic. This was documented in ARC Scotland's report **Impact of COVID-19 on transition planning for young people with additional support needs: views of parents and carers, June 2020.**

Discussions are underway with the DIs about how they wish to present the findings in this report in an accessible way to a wider audience, including other young people.

CONSULTATION METHODS

The consultation had two elements: an online survey and face to face (Zoom) consultations.

Online survey

The online survey was specially designed by the DIs to be accessible for young people with diverse additional support needs. They developed the survey questions and created the graphics and colour scheme, which was coded through ADOBE Connect, an e-learning software platform.

An example of the online survey design is shown here:

Face to face consultations

Face to face (Zoom) consultations were conducted with 12 young people who took part in the survey. They had a range of differing additional support needs and were selected from the 198 survey respondents to provide a representative sample by a range of ages and additional support needs.

The face-to-face consultations were used to help young people explore their own stories of moving through transitions from age 14 onwards. This included happiness ratings for independence, communication from others and life in general across an age timeline. Examples of what worked and what could have been better were discussed.

These discussions were led by members of the DI group who received training in facilitation skills to ensure they could lead the exercises with little or no support from a co-facilitator. They were paid ARC Scotland's going rate for facilitation.

Other notes

The Appendix sets out the consultation's findings using Quality Improvement tools. This will be of value to those taking part in the trials of Principles into Practice to provide information and guidance to support their work. Information has been analysed using Pareto methods to explore which themes are most impactful for young people to improve their transitions experience.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. The path towards young adult life for young people with additional support needs fluctuated widely between periods of happiness and unhappiness. This transitions journey was impacted with a significant lowering in happiness ratings between the ages of 18 and 19.

2. Transition has an impact on young people's mental health and wellbeing. For many this had developed into stress and more severe anxiety as they grow into young adults.

3. Young people are not generally asked simple questions (e.g., what is your dream/goal? What is it you love to do?) and person-centred planning wasn't available to provide them with encouragement and inspiration to do what they would like to do.

4. Self-awareness and self-management of diagnosis and health conditions help young people to become more independent.

5. Taking more responsibility and control was rated highly by young people to help them become more independent. They indicated their experience of independence was related to their ability to manage social and personal barriers to inclusion, needing more confidence in social and everyday situations.

6. Availability of support was the most important thing to help young people become more independent. Support could be provided by a family member, professional or other person.

NEXT STEPS

ARC Scotland will use the findings in this report to:

1. Work alongside the DIVErgent INfluencers to present these findings in accessible ways to a wider audience.

2. Develop a digital application for young people who require additional support called 'COMPASS'. This will provide young people with the information they tell us they want and enable them to feedback their experiences to better inform how support and services should be improved. A prototype of COMPASS will be tested in January 2022 with a view to it being made available to all young people who need it in 2023.

3. Inform the content for the fourth edition of 'Principles of Good Transitions.' This will have a greater focus on providing the information that young people and their families tell us they need.

4. Support professionals who are responsible for planning and delivery of support for young people with additional needs to understand what matters most to them. This will be achieved primarily through the continual development of 'Principles into Practice', an improvement framework based on the 'Principles of Good Transitions' currently being trialled in 10 local authority areas.

5. Work in partnership with young people and their families to create new training and learning opportunities for professionals and people with lived experience, including young people in schools.

6. Inform our responses to ongoing national policy initiatives.

FINDINGS

Face to face consultations

The DIs selected 12 young people to take part in the face-to-face consultations. They took whiteboard notes during the sessions and saved screen shots of these for later analysis.

Young people were asked to chart their feelings of happiness against their age at different points in their past. They did this by drawing a line on a graph fluctuating between happiness and unhappiness in three different areas: independence, communication from others and their life in general. This helped young people taking part to tell their story visually and enabled the DIs to chat about what was going on for them along a timeline.

An example taken from a screen shot is below:
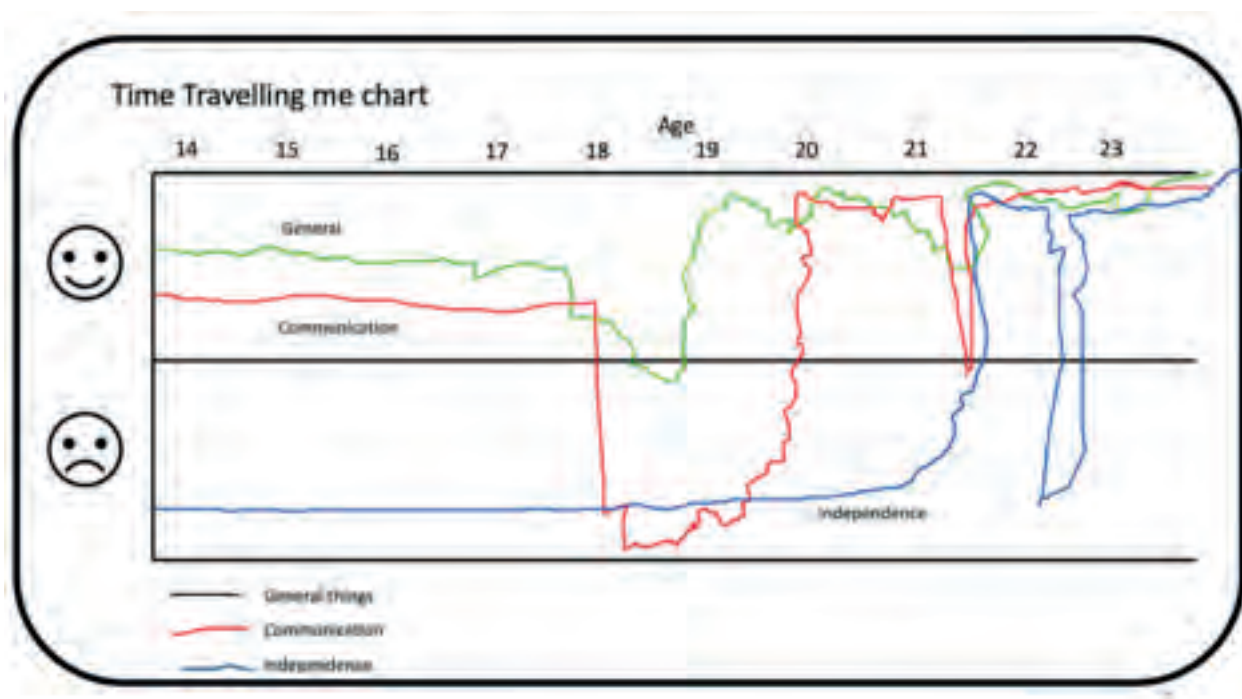
The data was aggregated using a measure along the happiness rating to arrive at an average. This, however, removes any extremes from the data. The chart below shows the aggregates and averages of the experiences of everyone who took part. See the Appendix for more details.

Happiness ratings of independence, communication and general life
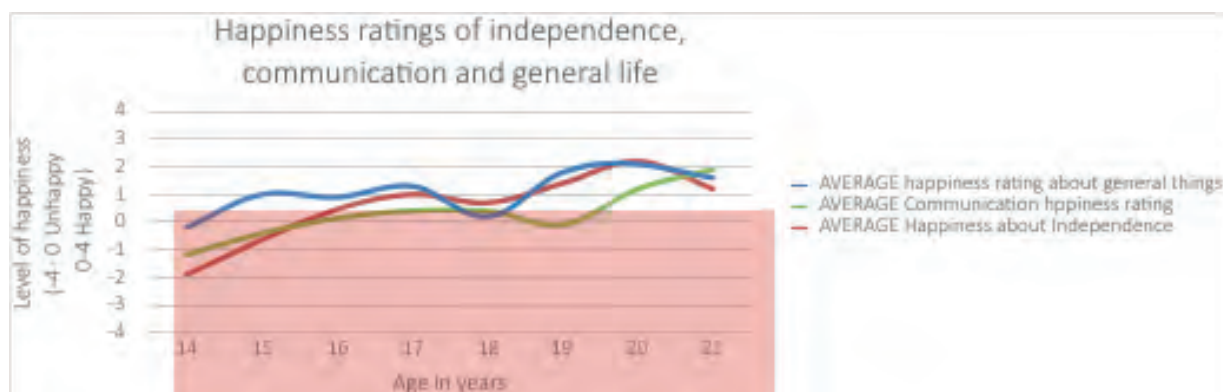
Combined averages for independence, communication and general life

While this data is drawn from a small number of young people (12) the findings show, for them, the path towards young adult life fluctuated between periods of happiness and unhappiness. However, the general trend was towards increasing levels of happiness as young people grow older.

However, this dip at age 18 – 19 needs further investigation as to what has impacted this. The growth in happiness, though positive, is still small.   Data over the age of 21 are not shown as only two respondents in the face-to-face consultations were in this age bracket, but they suggest the general trend to improvement continues. The biggest dip in these ratings was experienced by these young people around the age of 18.

The online survey responses provide information to suggest why this might be, along with what can help young people feel happier and better supported and to have a more positive transitions experience.

Online survey

The online consultation received 198 responses from young people aged 11 – 26 years old. The questions the DIs decided to ask in the survey were:

- What was the most important thing to help you be independent?
- What three things help you be more independent?
- What did not work when leaving school?
- What did help when leaving school?
- What is the one question you wished you were asked when you were leaving school?

The answers we received were used to identify key themes of what supported, hindered, or helped the young people move into young adult life. These themes were broken down into age ranges and combined for all young people. Not all respondents answered every question.

The information was further coded and analysed to explore the topics young people told us they would most like help with. This coding process took part in stages, with the co-facilitators coding them individually and then combining the coding to further refine it. Some comments have been coded under more than one theme.

Question - What three things help you be more independent?

64 respondents answered this question. The themes mentioned across all age ranges were availability of support, self-awareness and self-management, and taking more responsibility/control.

Theme	Total number of responses	Results 14 – 17 years of age	Results 18 – 20 years of age	Results 21 – 26 years of age
Availability of support	21	6	6	9
Self-awareness and self-management	11	4	4	3
Information and advice	4	0	0	3
More responsibility/taking control	13	6	3	4
Independent travel	6	0	5	1
Further/Higher education	2	0	0	2
Doing things	3	3	0	0
More choice	1	0	1	0
Don't know	3	0	3	0
Total	64	19	22	23

Availability of support was mentioned by 21 respondents.

This rates as the most significant thing to help young people be more independent.

There are strong indications respondents were looking for person-centred support from both professionals and others. They indicated a desire to find the "right person" or "real support". However, the kind of support mentioned by young people varied across age ranges:

6 young people aged 14 – 17 mentioned support in general terms such as having more support daily, help and support to overcome personal issues and support for work experience or workshops on getting a job.

6 respondents aged 18 – 20 mentioned the kind of support they require in more specific terms and the quality of support they wish to receive. Some mentioned having support them to help manage stressful situations or support for specific tasks like independent travel or tackling unemployment.

Others mentioned the lack of support or lack of quality support:

"Support for my mental illness as I'm still unable to leave the house meaning I can't get a job like a normal person. Mental health support is ridiculous in this country, and I am not offered the support I need."

"Quality advice. School did not identify my potential and tried to push me into courses below my level for their stats"

9 young people aged 21 – 25 were more specific about the support they require or where the support they were offered didn't work out for them:

"Help with work placement tailored to my specific difficulties. I dint [didnt] fit into being disabled but I have memory and organising problems and I'm accident prone. People don't understand as my difficulties are hidden. Even the people at Remploy had no understanding of my condition and how to help even though there's loads of information online. I did project search and the people there had disabilities and emotional difficulties, I was not at that level, and I felt humiliated to be there which embarrassed me because I felt sorry for them."

Other comments about support to help them be more independent included:

- Organisations being properly funded to help them
- Availability of counselling services
- 1 -1 support
- Worker mentoring
- Stronger support networks
- Financial advice and assistance
- Better awareness (most likely of their additional needs, though this is implied rather than stated outright) in further education
- Employment support
- Housing
- Availability of transport and awareness of their additional needs among providers.

Taking more responsibility/control was mentioned by 13 respondents.

Respondents from all age ranges spoke about needing more confidence in both social and everyday situations.

They indicated their experience of independence was related to their ability to manage social and personal barriers to inclusion. This was mentioned mostly by those in the 14 – 20 age range. Those who mentioned this theme rated self-awareness and self-management skills as being most helpful.

Independent travel was mentioned by 18 – 20 and 21 – 25-year-olds, while there was no mention of this in the 14 – 17 age range. 5 respondents aged 18 – 20 split their discussion between learning to drive, learning to manage bus travel and learning skills to be able to get on the bus. The ILF Transitions Fund was mentioned as an avenue for this. 1 respondent aged 20+ mentioned learning to drive as a primary route to independence.

Respondents in the 14 – 17 age range mentioned having more confidence generally and confidence in meeting people and social situations was important to their independence.

Some mentioned time management where they had competing home chores to do and were not given the time for college work. Others mention anxiety due to COVID and how hard they found it to cope not going anywhere.

Respondents in this age range also mentioned self-travel on planes, doing things for themselves, going places, and taking on new tasks like writing CVs, taking driving lessons and "stuff that all makes me more responsible".

Young people in the 18 – 20 age range mentioned more life-based skills such as "safe walking" (which we assume to mean feeling safe outside), "accessible tasks", feeling more confident, learning how to cook and look after their house, paying bills, basic life skills and managing finances.

This was the only age range category to mention they didn't know what helps them be more independent. One respondent mentioned COVID "destroying all plans".

Respondents in the 21 – 25 age range talked about having more confidence, having freedom to be themselves and from parental influence as being the most important things that helped them to be independent. This included getting to do things by themselves (for example handling their own finances), being trusted by people to do the right thing and taking on more responsibility because of it. Others mention setting their own goals to provide standards to judge their progress against.

Further and higher education and obtaining higher education certificates were viewed as useful to help independence and to get a job.

Respondents in this age range mentioned their need for meaningful, relevant, and 'real' information to support them to be more independent.

Self-awareness and self-management of diagnosis were mentioned by 11 respondents

Young people in the consultation wanted help to manage their own diagnosis or approach to managing barriers their diagnosis brought up for them. Independence was linked highly to young people managing their own diagnosis and medical barriers as they grew older.

Question – What was the most important thing to help you be independent?

66 Respondents replied to this question. The key themes arising most prominently for different age ranges of respondents are shown below. responsibility/control.

Theme	Number of respondents	Notes
Availability of advice and support	18	Most important for those aged 20+
Being listened to	16	Most important for 14 – 17-year-olds
Nothing. Uncertain about what might help	16	Mixed for all ages
Having a place to go to/future plans	8	Most important for 14–19-year-olds
Feeling in control and managing personal and social barriers to inclusion	8	Most important for those aged 20+
Total	66	

What follows are examples of responses young people gave under each key theme. Some comments are coded under two different themes.

Availability of advice and support (18 responses)

School careers advice
My parents being there to auppo [support me]
I have been left not knowing what to do next because I was given no information / guidance from school on leaving
Having support from family to achieve college education
My Mother helped me to choose a suitable course at college that I love. I needed to have 2 years out before starting college
Having support and a plan
Get proper support
My parents had to support me in my choices
Having someone to listen to me and support
People encouraging me to follow my dream by believing in me
I've had advice from my tennis coaches and parents
Havin people who are supportive of me, who believe in me
For them being supportive and for them to help and assist in getting me where i want to be even if that's them telling me about something like ILF or my world of work
Advocacy service
Good role models or a wise person in your corner

Having a place to go/future plans

Finding a college course
What job I want to apply for
Telling people I want to work in the games industry
What career I wish to pursue
Having a framework (structured plan) in place to discuss possible outlets to go into for a post-school life
Work experience
Work

Being listened to (16 responses)

I have found it helpful telling people that I want to keep my options open
Telling people, I want to be a boxer and having them motivate me in my choice
Just giving me advice about stuff and having fun
I want to leave school with qualifications
Telling people what I want to do when I move on
Getting help to make people listen
Telling people I want to work in the games industry
I only like music so people listing [listening] to what I want to do and supporting me
Somebody who listens to me makes feel better.
Telling people that I don't quite know what I want to do in life
Getting them to listen to me
Having someone to listen to me and support me
People encouraging me to follow my dream by believing in me.
Advocacy service
Good role models or a wise person in your corner (also mentioned in 'feeling in control)
Talking mats

Nothing. Uncertain about what might help (16 responses)

People don't care so I haven't told them what I want to do
Nothing to be honest. Needs were assessed by SW Adult Transitions
Nothing to be honest. Needs were assessed by SW Adult Transitions
I did not get transition due to staff changes and virus; I was nit help [wasn't helped] in school to make choices I got help at home with visual promos and information
Nothing
Nothing
I don't know

Nothing. Uncertain about what might help (16 responses)

Nobody has asked me yet
Don't know
I don't really understand this question but also, I don't know what I want to do in adult life right nie [now]
Not applicable- I don't know what I want to do
Nothing, I'm 22 and I still don't know what I want to do
I don't know because it has changed so much

Feeling in control and managing personal and social barriers to inclusion (8 responses)

The confidence and enthusiasm people give
That I need help and support to understand working environment
Going at my pace – connecting me to other young people
Don't dought [doubt] yourself stay positive work hard to what you want to do start from the bottom and work your way up
I have found the fact that I don't feel alone helpful
Being honest with myself
Good role models or a wise person in your corner
Admitting that change is difficult for me is probably the most helpful! It helps people understand that I can't move onto huge things so quickly if everything isn't perfectly and fluidly moving into place.

Question - What one question do you wish you were asked when you were leaving school?

61 respondents answered this. 8 young people discussed inspirational and encouraging things rather than providing a question. These were:

"You can do it and here's how advice needed for every student and more for us kids with disabilities because we have a lot more to take into consideration than healthy people I feel so under prepared and unable but my mum keeps pushing me on so I am still doing school work from home and hope to at least pass and I wish I had someone to help me more in every aspect of education because it's not fair to miss out on so much valuable teaching due to illness then be made catch up all by myself and that's been for the full six years of Academy as I have never had support really"

"I didn't know what I was doing when I left school. I could not have answered the question, but a full assessment of my strengths and difficulties and wishes should have been made. I was show [shoe] horned into a college course I had no understanding of. It had an enormous impact on my mental health and confidence. I felt like a failure."

"Be who you want to be and never stop until you do"

"Believe in your ability and seek help"

"I don't know about any question, but it would've been nice to be told how college works and how to apply rather than having to do it by myself"

"Understanding and support in making decisions with informed choices"

"Ask people to deal with me as a person has a right to live like other"

"Understanding and support in making decisions with informed choices"

Other respondents gave ideas for direct questions, which could be grouped into four clear themes:

- future dreams and fears
- career
- help
- subjects.

These are the ordinary questions any young person should be asked to help them plan for their future. The possibility that young people who require additional support are not being asked these questions is concerning and reveals a need for better communication from professionals that is perhaps less focussed on their additional needs and support requirements and an improvement in person-centred ways of working.

The following tables link to the responses received under each theme and are direct responses from the survey.

Future dreams/fears
What sort of art would you like to do?
What do I love doing?
What is your passion?
What are your dreams and hopes for your future?
What are you good at? (And not be put off doing it)
What scares you the most about leaving school?
What would you like to try next?

Future dreams/fears
Ask what my interests are
What do you love to do?
What do you enjoy doing?
What do you want to do?
What can we do to help you with the future?
How do I start planning my dream/goal?
What are you scared of from moving on from the structure of school life? (Getting to the root of the individuals' issues and worries to help them move on with ease)
Pretty basic, but what, do you want to do with my life?
How can we help you achieve your goal at this time as its likely to change

Career
What career would I like?
What careers are you planning to do?
What do you love doing? And how could that work as a career?
What have you excelled at, and what success have you had in a particular area? Let's try and get you employment in that area!
What is it I really want to do? Is the degree right to achieve that?
Why do you find yourself drawn to the job/role you want and what vital elements do you believe to be missing from you as you are now?
What kinds of classes or activities did you find enjoyable?" That way you have a further understanding of the things you like to do and turn work into play
What would you like to do when you leave school and how can we help?
What is the long-term career goal you're hoping to achieve?
What would you like to do if don't know as what they like doing as hobbies as that how I found out I liked caring for people and children

Help
How can we help?
Is this what your mind is set on?

Help
Are you happy?
Understanding and support in making decisions with informed choices
What are your strengths?
What support/help is needed along the way to help me achieve my goals?
How can we help you?
How can we help you in your next steps?" "Is there a path you wish to explore and what are worries you have about doing so?
What would you like to do when you leave school and how can we help?
What is really going to happen and how to stop it

Subjects
What subjects do you like?
How long have you been at college for and why?

Question - What did help when leaving school?

186 of respondents answered this question. Support, tackling social and personal barriers, accurate information and communication, and achievement and aspirations were mentioned by respondents across all age ranges.

Theme	Total number of responses	Results 14 – 17 years of age	Results 18 – 20 years of age	Results 21 – 26 years of age
Availability of support	56	21	248	11
Tackling social and personal barriers	40	14	15	11
Accurate information and communication	28	5	14	9
Trying things out	14	7	0	7
Friends and family	21	0	5	0
Achievement and aspirations	11	3	4	4

Theme	Total number of responses	Results 14 – 17 years of age	Results 18 – 20 years of age	Results 21 – 26 years of age
Nothing	5	0	5	0
Realness	4	0	0	4
Other	4	4	0	0
Impact on mental wellbeing	2	0	0	2
Doing something you love	1	1	0	0
Total	186	55	72	59

Young people of different ages described different things that helped them when leaving school.

Young people aged 14 – 17 mentioned having a person they know they can turn to, who listens and explains things to them, was most important. It didn't really matter what job role they had or if they were a parent or carer:

"Careers advisor that actually cares when I left [school] the careers advisor still phoned up to discuss college options".

Respondents aged 18 – 20 continued the theme where having a supportive relationship with a particular teacher, college student or careers advisor was valued. The values of the person were held to be important and described as *"compassionate, caring, supportive and knowledgeable"*.

Others in this age range valued having a transition to adult placement and having regular appointments with someone who could help.

Tackling personal and social barriers to inclusion

40 respondents across all age ranges mentioned coping mechanisms to deal with moving into young adulthood. These were intertwined with how they tackled both social and personal barriers to inclusion, and managed mental health issues.

Young people in the 14 – 17 age range talked mostly of techniques they use to help manage their own additional support needs and mental health issues. Some mentioned the value of having their own coping strategies when it came to leaving school.

These included exercises to manage stress and anxiety, such as deep breathing, or being *"confident and having enthusiasm"*. Others talked about just growing up, which included learning how to study, being prepared earlier and talking to people who cared about what troubles them.

Those aged 18 – 20 reflected on the importance of "knowing what is next and expected" as helpful, along with learning social skills and feeling safe. They discussed "information and experience of things" as an important element of helping them leave school with opportunities to test themselves by trying things out. Others said meeting new people and maintaining friendships helped them leave school with optimism.

Respondents aged 21+ talked more about having a change in mindset, such as "*having a trying attitude*", as well as knowing they are safe and supported, being given a chance to try out new things and experiences, a reduction in peer pressure and knowing how valuable their time is. Others discussed the value of other people knowing change can be difficult and helping them through it.

This group also valued having support from individual people, such as a personal mentor, key worker or a social worker who knew them. Respondents talked about their wider support network, including having the right friends and supportive family around them. Others also mentioned getting extra help with their exams and unofficial discussions with department heads at university.

Accurate information and communication

This was mentioned by all ages, but information requirements vary with age. The need for information seems to be greatest in the 18 – 20 age range (14 respondents).
Young people frequently expressed a desire for "real" information: "A lot of information out there but no one really talks about the real stuff you need to know like how college feels or why I need to get a student loan or what that feels like".
There appears to be a need to work alongside young people with additional support needs to produce information and communicate in a more meaningful, relevant, and "real" way for them.

5 respondents aged 14 – 17 told us they need information they can understand about life skills, such as instructions on what to do or "*[what to] expect with different activities*", "*what will happen if they get too sick to leave the house*" and coping with COVID.

This age group said they require information about leaving school, instead of just being told they are leaving without much notice.

14 respondents aged 18 – 20 said they needed clear information about college, such as course details, induction days, timetabling, meeting tutors before starting college and day placements. Some would like further education bodies to come to the school to talk about the courses they offer as they weren't sure what was available. Overall, there was a need for easy-to-understand guidance and plans tailored to the young person's comprehension.

9 respondents aged 21 – 25 years said they needed similar information, but with a focus on accurate and appropriate information and knowing their rights. They expressed a desire for increased communication between parents and educational bodies, and there is still a preference at this age for discussing information with someone with whom they were familiar and felt comfortable.

4 respondents aged 21 – 25 discussed people being "real" with them, setting real expectations and treating them like an adult. This included allowing them to take exams even though they might fail.

Friends and family

This aspect was not mentioned so much by those in the 14 – 17 age range, but overwhelmingly by those aged 18 onwards.

For 10 respondents aged 18 – 20 friends featured as much as family. There is one mention of a family becoming involved in dealing with disputes around exam results and advocating for the young people to overturn official decisions.

From 21 years of age, 11 respondents mentioned advice and guidance from parents as valuable. Friends are now mentioned as part of a larger support network or chosen family.

Other things that helped when leaving school

• Trying things out

This featured across the 14 – 17 and 21 – 25 age ranges.

A total of 7 respondents across age range 14 – 17 discuss visits to college and places they would like to go, mock interviews, taster courses and drawing up CVs, and learning new things about themselves.

This theme re-emerged with 7 respondents aged 21 – 25. They mentioned being given a chance to "t*ry things out and having new experiences*", with the most helpful being exploring more options and work experience. They also mention being given the space and opportunity to fail at things, knowing there will be other things to try.

• Impact on mental wellbeing

The added pressure young people with additional support needs face when leaving school and moving into young adult life was mentioned by 2 respondents in the online survey and 4 of the 12 young people in the face-to-face consultation. This can have a lasting impact into their young adult life. One young person said:

"*I have to be honest, nothing helped me, and I developed severe mental health problems, PTSD and anorexia, became vulnerable to abusive and negligent influences from my peers and teaching staff, and even after leaving school over 5 years ago, I still suffer trauma from it.*"

• Achievement, aspiration and doing things you love

All age ranges spoke of achievements as a positive thing helping them feel good about moving into young adult life. This included passing exams, getting into college, achieving personal tasks and goals, moving into a flat, having role models and looking for work.

For 10 respondents aged 18 – 20 friends featured as much as family. There is one mention of a family becoming involved in dealing with disputes around exam results and advocating for the young people to overturn official decisions.
From 21 years of age, 11 respondents mentioned advice and guidance from parents as valuable. Friends are now mentioned as part of a larger support network or chosen family.

• **Nothing**

5 respondents aged 18 – 20 said nothing helped them in leaving school. One said: "*it was all a waste of time*".

• **Other**

Other things mentioned included not having to fill out school leavers' forms that only stressed them out, their home life, a focus on benefits and how to access them, and having money.

Question - What didn't work when leaving school

The key themes found across all age ranges for young people with additional support needs were:

Theme	Result for 12 - 25 years old	Results for 12 - 17 year old	Results for 18 - 20 year old	Results for 21-25 years old
Funding	3	0	0	2
further and higher education	4	4	0	0
Work	9	9	0	0
Covid	10	1	9	0
Unplanned leaving	10	5	5	0
Bureaucracy and process	13	0	8	5
Lack of information	18	0	11	7
Lack of Choice	19	0	6	9
Impact On mental health	20	5	6	9
Lack of support	51	17	14	20
Personal and Social (Inclusion) barriers	53	17	13	23
Total	210	58	72	79

Lack of support, personal and social barriers to inclusion and impact on mental health identified across all age ranges.

• Personal and social barriers to inclusion

This theme was identified by 53 young people

Experiences of exclusion were made up of two considerations: personal and social barriers. Personal barriers included the impact managing their own diagnosis and additional needs had on their confidence. Social barriers included being excluded or disadvantaged in their communities, such as in education provision, and accessibility.

Environments linked to experiencing barriers to inclusion were mentioned. For example, using public transport. Some respondents discussed their anxiety about using public transport for the first time or its effect on their mental health (personal barriers to inclusion), while others discussed the lack of public transport options or accessibility issues (social barriers to inclusion).

Young people of different ages identified different personal and social barriers to inclusion. Themes are broken down by age range below.

In the age range 12 – 17, barriers focused on life skills such as leaving school, leaving home, waking up, growing up, getting up early, getting dressed managing change, keeping themselves safe and missing friends.

Young people aged 18 – 20 talked mostly about managing uncertainty, attending an accessible place, managing travel independently, managing exams, changes to their routines and accessing organisations.

For respondents aged 21 – 25, socialising with friends featured often, followed by "*finding a place in the adult world*", feeling unmotivated, not knowing what to do, understanding new people, lack of role models and managing meetings, plans and timetables.

There was a general low mood around being forgotten about, being unsure, and lacking motivation, ambition, and clarity of who they want to be in the world.

• Lack of support

51 young people identified this.

Young people recognised support might come from parents, family, friends, and professionals involved in the transition process. Overwhelmingly the support people received from their parents rated more prominently than support from professionals.

Young people of different ages mentioned different challenges and barriers to accessing the support they felt they needed.

Within the 12 – 17 age range, 17 young people commented mostly about lack of support from teachers, which could have been impacted greatly by COVID. Some respondents mentioned having very little support from school since March (2020) and teachers feeling "*distant and uncaring*". Others reported having nowhere to go and feeling "left in the dark". Others mentioned having very little support "out there" and other external resources being unavailable.

Those in the 18 – 20 age range mentioned teachers not supporting them, having no plan, or no help and follow up support. Others suggested the support for leaving school should have been phased over weeks, as people need more help initially or with specific tasks such as preparing a CV or helping them understand what they could do. Again, this could have been further impacted by COVID.

20 respondents in the 21 – 25 age range mentioned not enough support being available all round. They also spoke of the lack of planning and advice regarding employment, of no preparation, and no transitions help from school. Others mentioned no support for parents or vital support services not being in place.

There was a minor mention of social work and planning being a barrier to leaving school. Interestingly these thoughts echo those of the younger age ranges but should have been less impacted by COVID as they would have left school at least 2 years before the start of the pandemic.

• **Impact on mental health**

This was mentioned by 20 young people across all age ranges.

While the younger age range talked of anxiety and doubt, for some in the older age ranges this had developed into stress, more severe anxiety and a sense of pressure as the transition process continues into young adulthood. One young person mentioned feeling people "*harried and demeaned*" them for wanting a part time job that did not involve subjects that others wanted them to do.

Another said: "*I didn't know what I was doing when I left school. I could not have answered the question, but a full assessment of my strengths and difficulties and wishes should have been made. I was show [shoe] horned into a college course I had no understanding of. It had an enormous impact on my mental health and confidence. I felt like a failure.*"

These feelings are further impacted by a lack of support and trying to manage their own social and personal barriers to inclusion.

The reported impact on mental health changes from mild concerns to reported trauma as they get older.

Those in the 12 – 17 age range discussed the apprehension about what was to come, creating "*doubts in their head*".

Respondents aged 18 – 20 mostly talk about the stress, pressure and worries they have about living a life they choose.

Respondents aged 21 – 25 report "feeling lost" and lack of understanding.

'*Feeling lost*' is a term frequently related to poor mental health and was mentioned by 9 respondents in this age range who shared feelings of "being lost", "having no plan or motivation", "*feeling unsupported*", "*forgotten about and feeling they do not matte*r".

• **Lack of choice**

This was mentioned by 19 young people within the 18 – 25 age range

These young people described limited options and should be understood within the context of the other themes discussed.

Respondents in the age range 18 – 20 spoke of no, or only limited, choice for them to do anything but follow a course or option they had been given by a professional. Others mentioned being forced to stay in education when they desperately wanted to leave. Other choices were limited as no care service was offered after school, perhaps exacerbated by COVID restrictions.

Respondents aged 21 – 25 echoed these feelings but indicated it features more significantly for them. They talked about a lack of work experience or further education opportunities, with little choice of places to go to. Others discussed the lack of meaningful opportunities for work or the struggle they had in continuing education when they were not offered opportunities to achieve meaningful qualifications at school.

• Lack of information

18 young people mentioned this, describing a lack of information to enable them to make informed choices.

Young people aged 12 – 17 mentioned a lack of input mostly from further and higher education, ranging from no contact at all, to no help finding a course or support on how to start college.

Those in the 18 – 20 age range were unsure about what might be next, what to expect, or the options available to them. The majority mentioned having no careers guidance and others discussed the lack of information sharing about their additional needs between school and the further education establishment.

Respondents aged 21 – 25 spoke of the lack of accessible information online or elsewhere, no careers advice, little awareness of future choices and poor communication in general from professional channels.

Other things that didn't help when leaving school

• Work opportunities

9 young people between the ages of 12 and 17 mentioned the lack of work opportunities, including the lack of career support and jobs in their local community.

• Bureaucracy/process

Bureaucracy was mentioned mostly by those in the 18 – 20 age range, and to a lesser extent by those aged 21 – 25. Examples included waiting to find out exam results, complex application processes, estimated exam results and meetings. These complicated things for them and made them feel less confident. Others mentioned waiting to find out about funding for equipment, apps and subscriptions as frustrating. Some in the 21 – 25 age range felt UCAS was inaccessible and added pressure to leaving school, while others discuss the education system itself as a barrier.

• COVID

10 respondents mentioned lockdown restrictions as having disrupted their school leaving experience. Some reflected on the disappointment of having no official school leaving event, not saying goodbye, or the lack of 'closure' in leaving school as they did. The lack of access to care services and meaningful choices due to lockdown restrictions added to a sense of feeling "*lost and abandoned*".

• Unplanned leaving

Unplanned leaving was mentioned by 10 young people aged 12 – 20. It was not possible to identify if this was a result of COVID, or for other reasons. Those who mentioned unplanned leaving discussed having to leave school in S5 and a sudden transition being detrimental to mental health and relationships. One respondent mentioned being told "*48 hours before I left school that it would be my last day and no preparation to help me plan for my future*".

• Funding

2 young people in the 21 – 25 age range mentioned challenges with funding. These ranged from waiting to get funding from the local authority, to having financial worries or funding coming too late to allow them to take up opportunities.

One young person (age range 12 – 17) mentioned concerns over saving money and another (age range 18 – 20) over finding funding for the equipment they needed to reach their outcomes.

A QUALITY IMPROVEMENT FOCUS

> Pareto Analysis is a statistical technique in decision making used to select a limited number of tasks that produce significant overall effect.
>
> According to the Pareto Principle, in most cases 80% of outcomes for any given event are the result of 20% of the effort expended on that event. Identifying where that effort should best be applied therefore allows resources to be focused where they will generate the greatest benefit. This technique is also known as the "80/20 rule", or *the vital few and the trivial many*".

Pareto Analysis identified the following as the areas of focus that collectively are most likely to bring about transformational improvement in experiences and outcomes for young people with additional support needs making the transition to adulthood.

ARC Scotland and the DIVErgent INfluencers will now work with key partners (social work, schools, colleges, health) to promote the findings in this report and to provide guidance and support in ensuring they are implemented and embedded in practice at every level by those who support young people on their way to becoming young adults. The on-going trials of Principles into Practice provide a clear opportunity for us to do this.

- Support must be proportionate to age and stage. It should be proactive, person-centred (in its truest sense), trauma informed, and relationship based. Information and support should be directly related to young peoples' needs at any given stage, including their social and emotional needs, and take a holistic approach.

- There should be a focus on overcoming barriers to inclusion. These barriers may be young peoples' own (for example anxiety, lack of confidence, social skills) or society's (for example stigma, lack of awareness, low aspiration). At a personal level, it involves helping young people understand and overcome their own barriers to achieving their goals. More widely it requires challenging decisions preventing young people accessing opportunities and advocating for change.

- Young people must be heard and listened to. Support should embrace choice and challenge, be creative in seeking out possibilities and opportunities, and give young people a sense of control and optimism about their future. Advice should be informed by their goals and aspirations.

- Supporting confidence and mental health is crucial. This is essential throughout the transitions journey to prevent doubts and anxieties from escalating into entrenched and debilitating stress related illness. Responding proactively to concerns and worries is vital from age 14 into the twenties and beyond.

These findings reflect, build upon and complement Principles of Good Transitions 3.

The 7 Principles of Good Transitions are:

- Principle 1. Planning and decision making should be carried out in a person-centred way

- **Principle 2**. Support should be co-ordinated across all services
- **Principle 3**. Planning should start early and continue up to age 25
- **Principle 4**. Young people should get the support they need
- **Principle 5**. Young people, parents and carers must have access to the information they need
- **Principle 6**. Families and carers need support
- **Principle 7**. A continued focus on transitions across Scotland

Download Principles of Good Transitions 3 here:
https://scottishtransitions.org.uk/summary-download/

Find out how the findings from this report are being used to improve support for young people with additional needs here: **www.pn2p.scot/**

# APPENDIX – GRAPHS AND CHARTS

Online survey – Pareto charts

One most important thing

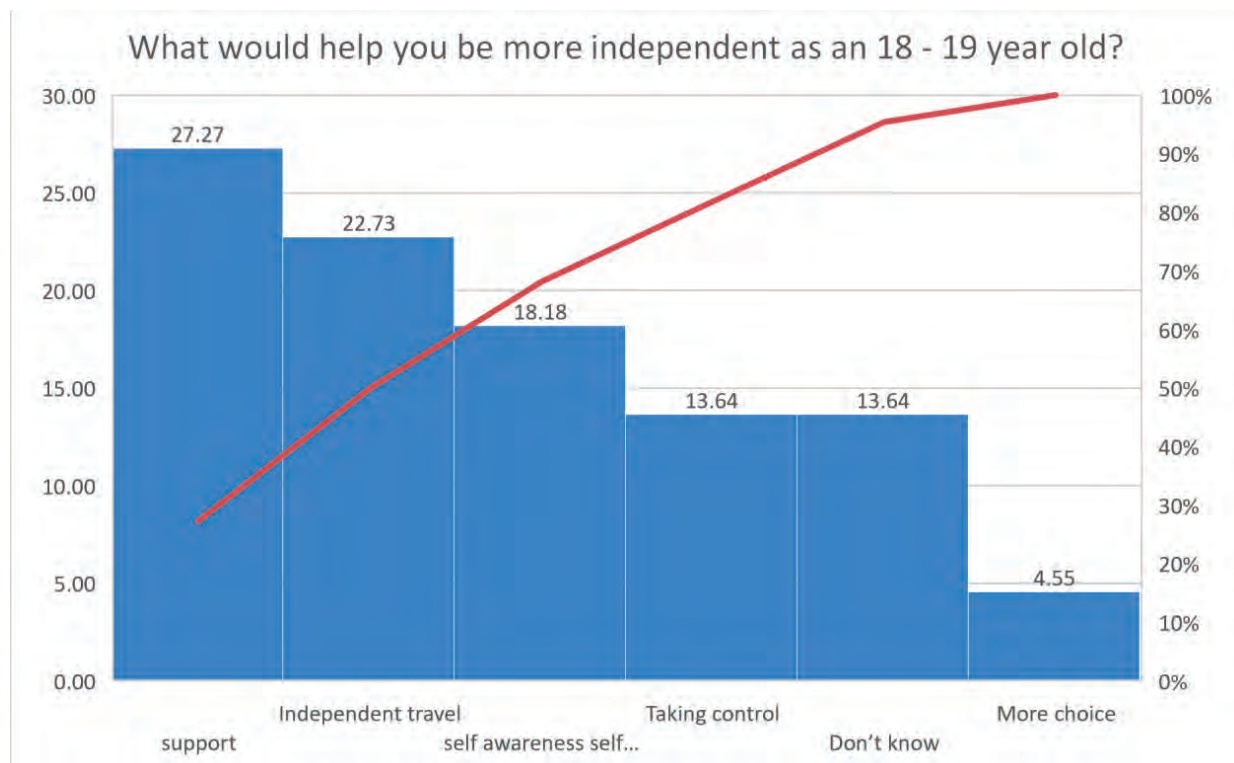| Theme	Results	%	Notes
Advice and support	18	27.7	Most important for 20+
Being listened to	16	24.24	Most important for 14-17
Nothing. Uncertain still	16	24.24	Mixed for all ages
Having a destination	8	12.12	Most important for 14–19 year-olds
Feeling in control and managing personal and social (inclusion) barriers	8	12.20	Most important for 20+
Total	66		

Online survey – Pareto charts
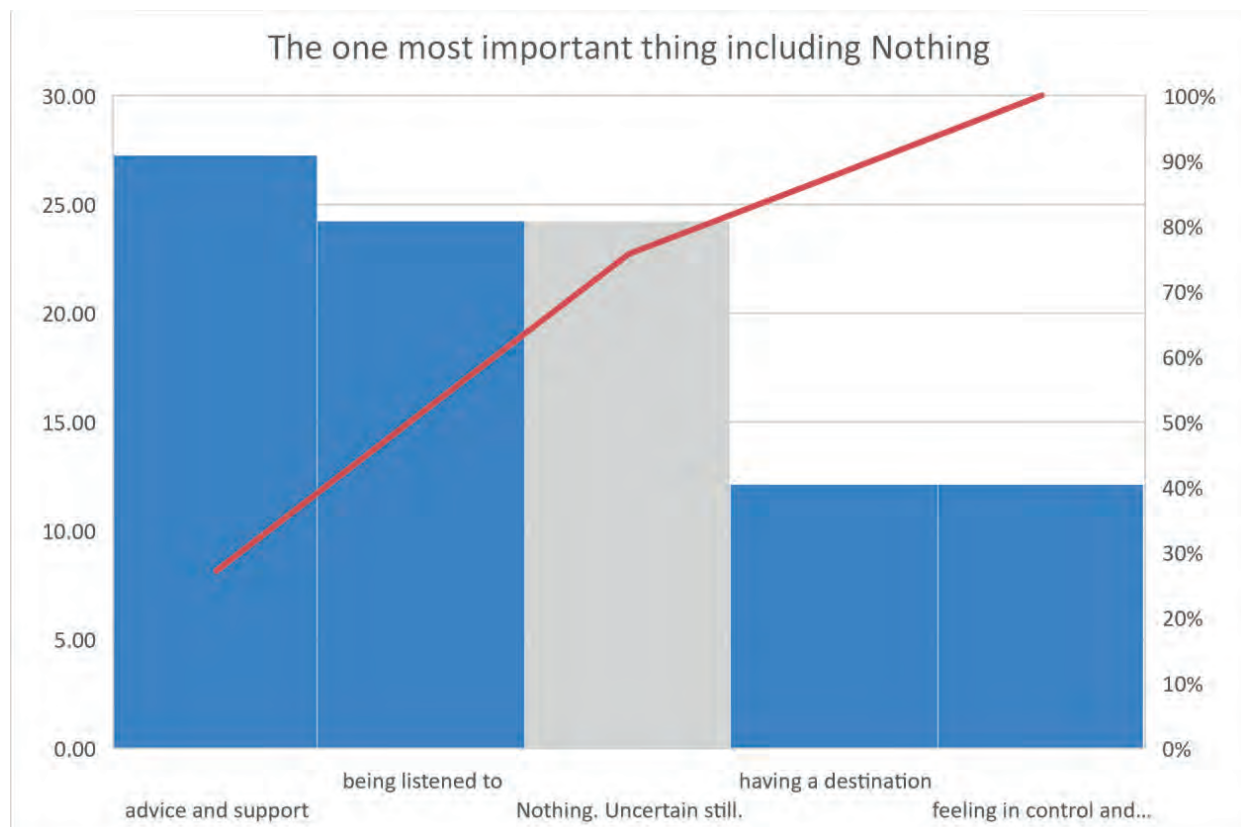
What helps you be most independent?

What would help you be more independent at 14 – 17 years of age?			
Theme	**Results**	**%**	**Notes**
Support	6	31.58	
Self-awareness/ self-management	4	21.05	
Taking control	6	31.58	
Doing things	3	15.79	
Total	19		
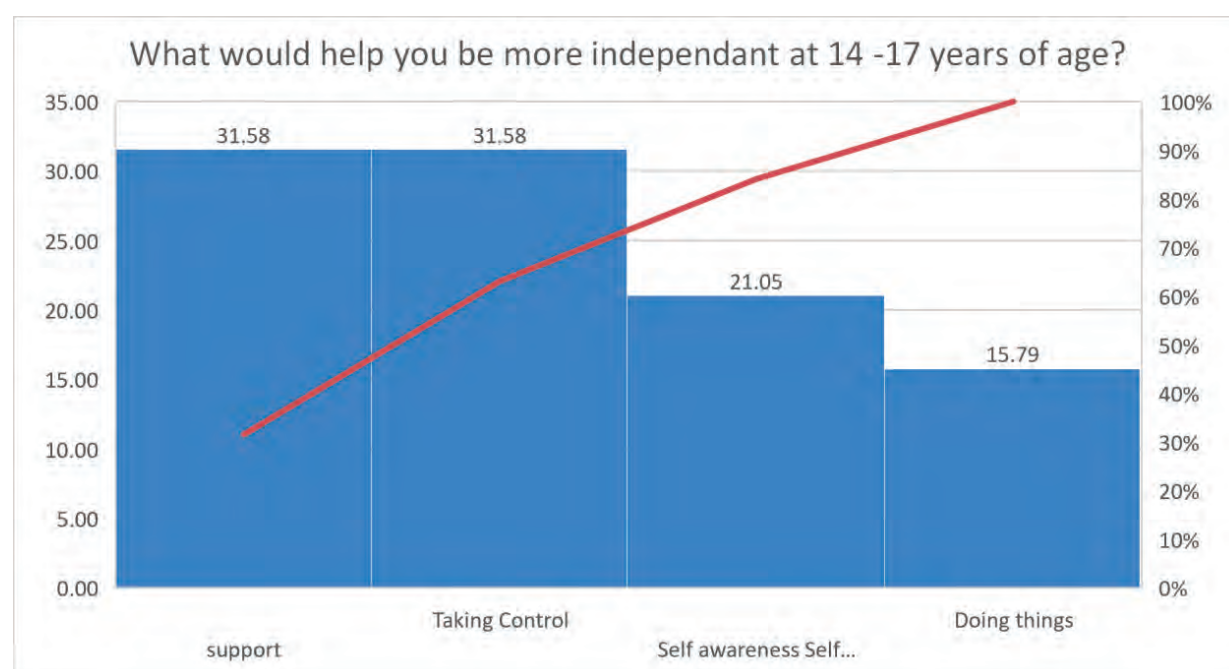
What would help you be more independent at 18 – 19 years of age?			
Theme	**Results**	**%**	**Notes**
Independent travel	5	22.73	
Support	6	27.27	
Self-awareness/ self-management	4	318.18	
Taking control	3	13.64	
More choice	1	4.55	
Don't know	3	13.64	
Total	22		

What would help you be more independent as an 18 - 19 year old?

What would help you be more independent at 20+?			
Theme	**Results**	**%**	**Notes**
Support	9	39.13	
Information and advice	4	17.39	
More responsibility	4	17.39	
Self-management skills	3	13.04	
Further/Higher education	2	8.70	
Independent travel	1	4.35	
Total	23		
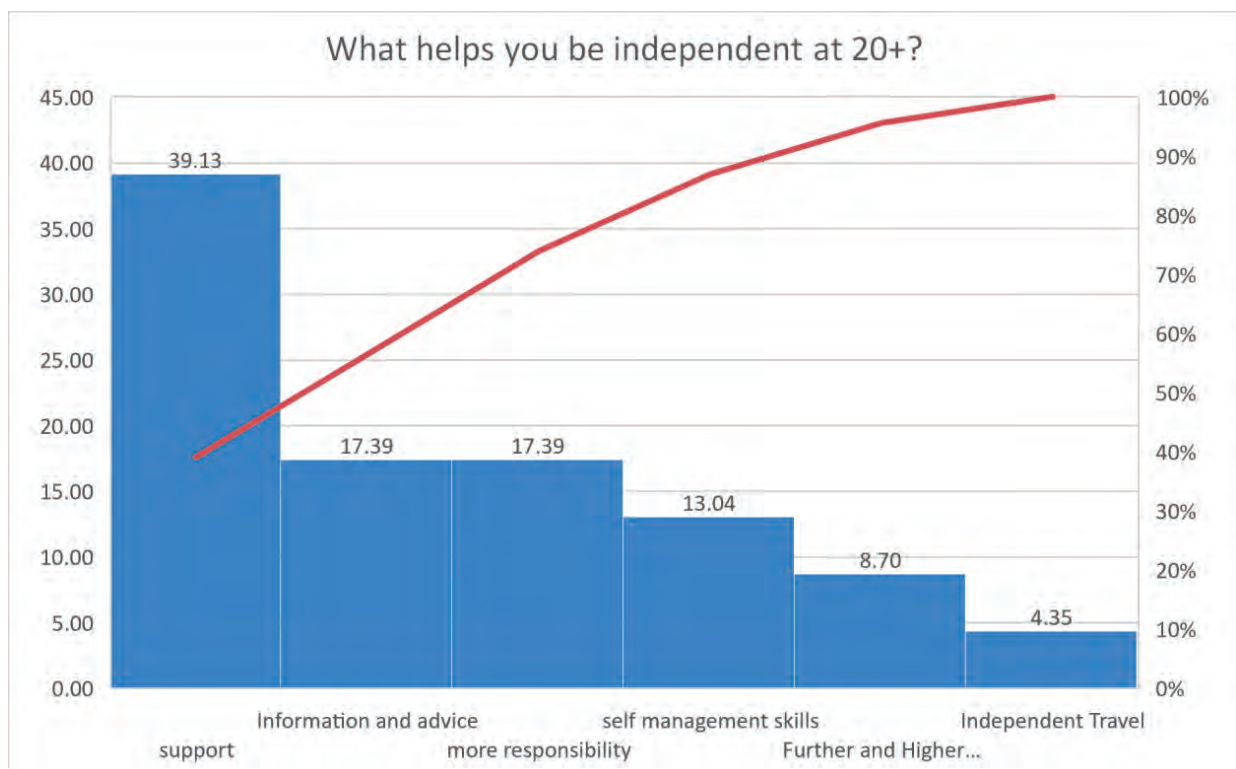
What helps young people in Scotland be more independent between 14 and 25?

Theme	Results	%	Notes
Support	21	31.81	
Self-awareness/ self-management	11	17.19	
Information and advice	4	6.25	
More responsibility/ taking control	13	20.31	
Independent travel	6	9.38	
Further/Higher education	2	3.13	
Doing things	3	4.69	
More choice	1	1.56	
Don't know	3	4.69	
Total	64		

What helps young people in Scotland be more independent between 14 and 25?
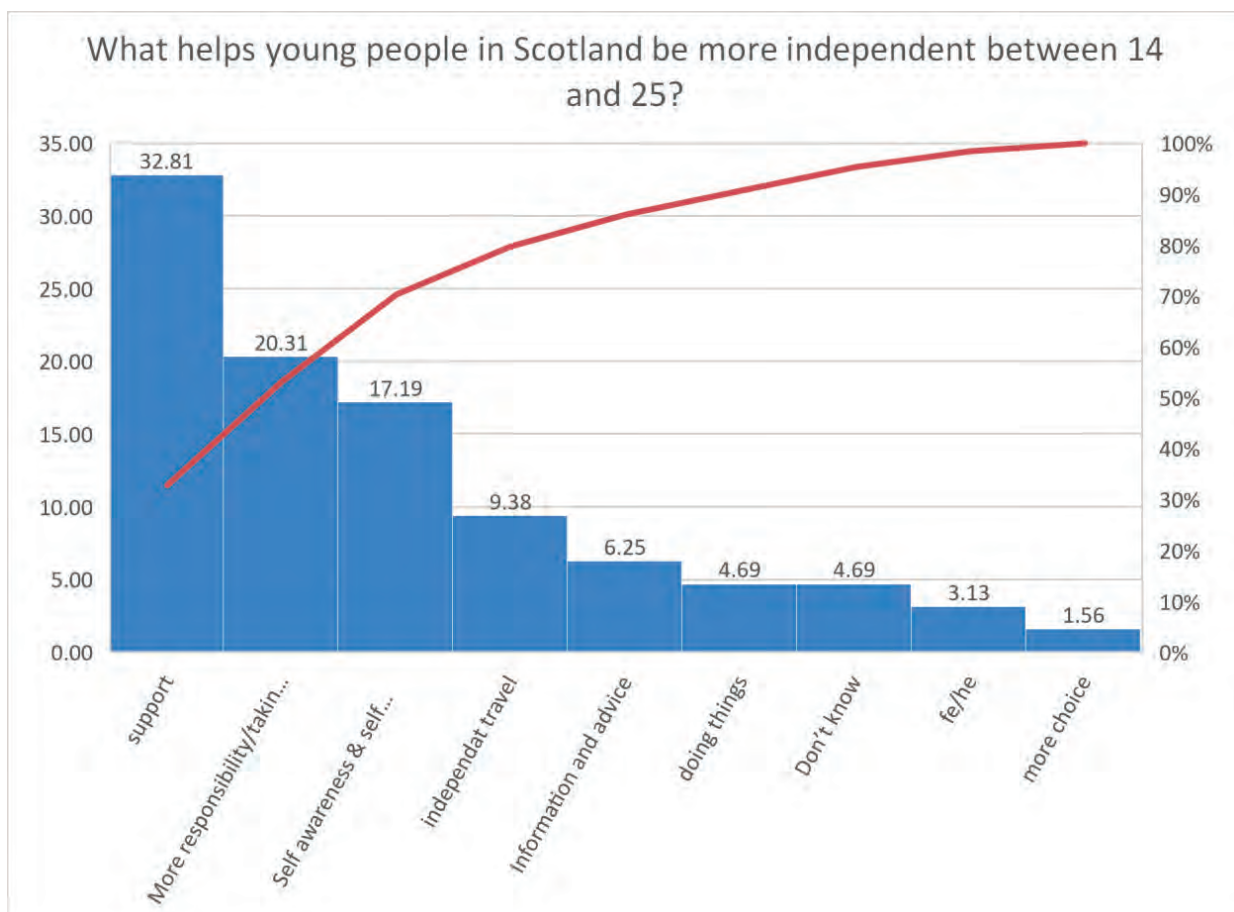
What helped you leave school?

Three things that helped you leaving school (age range 14 – 17)			
Theme	**Results**	**%**	**Notes**
Support	21	38.18	
Resilience/positive coping	14	25.45	
Trying things out	7	12.73	
Other	4	7.27	
Clear information	5	9.09	
Achieving	3	5.45	
Doing something you love	1	1.82	
Total	55		

Things that helped 14 - 17 year olds leave school
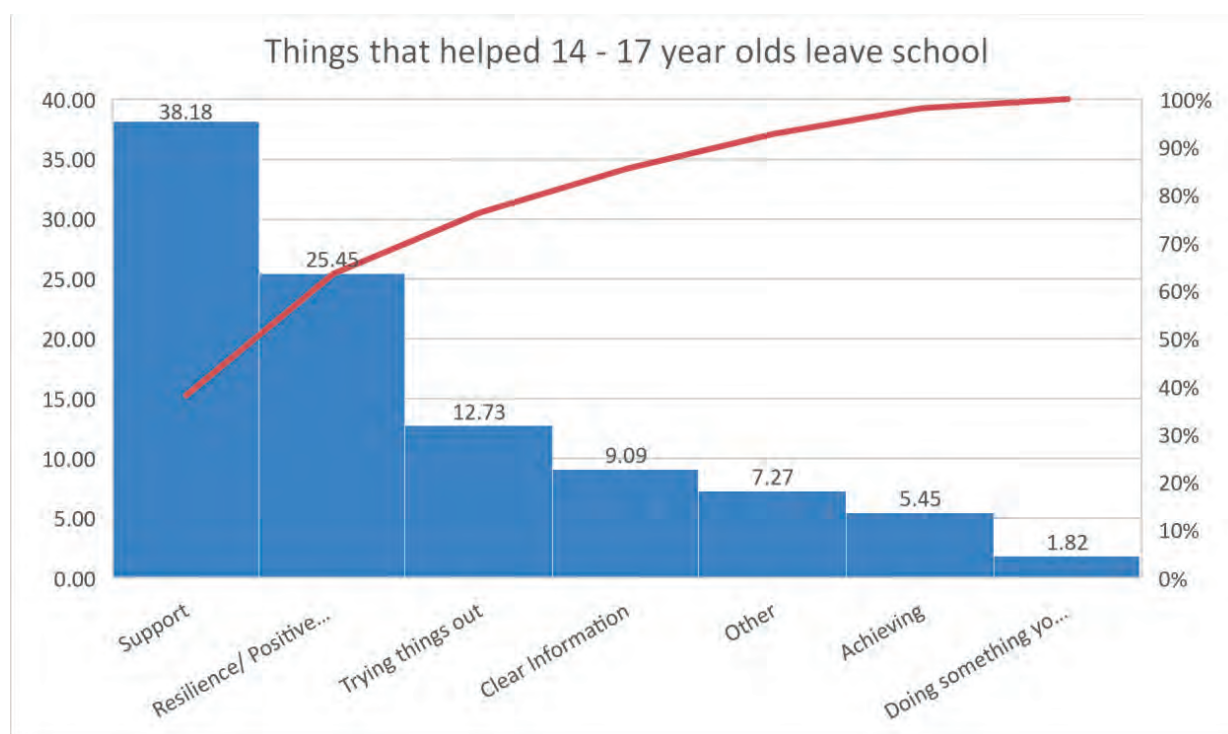
Three things that helped you leaving school (age range 18 – 20)			
Theme	Results	%	Notes
Achievement	4	5.56	
Nothing	5	6.94	
Friends and family	10	13.89	
Good information	14	19.44	
Tackling personal and social (inclusion) barriers]	15	20.83	
Support other	24	33.33	
Total	72		
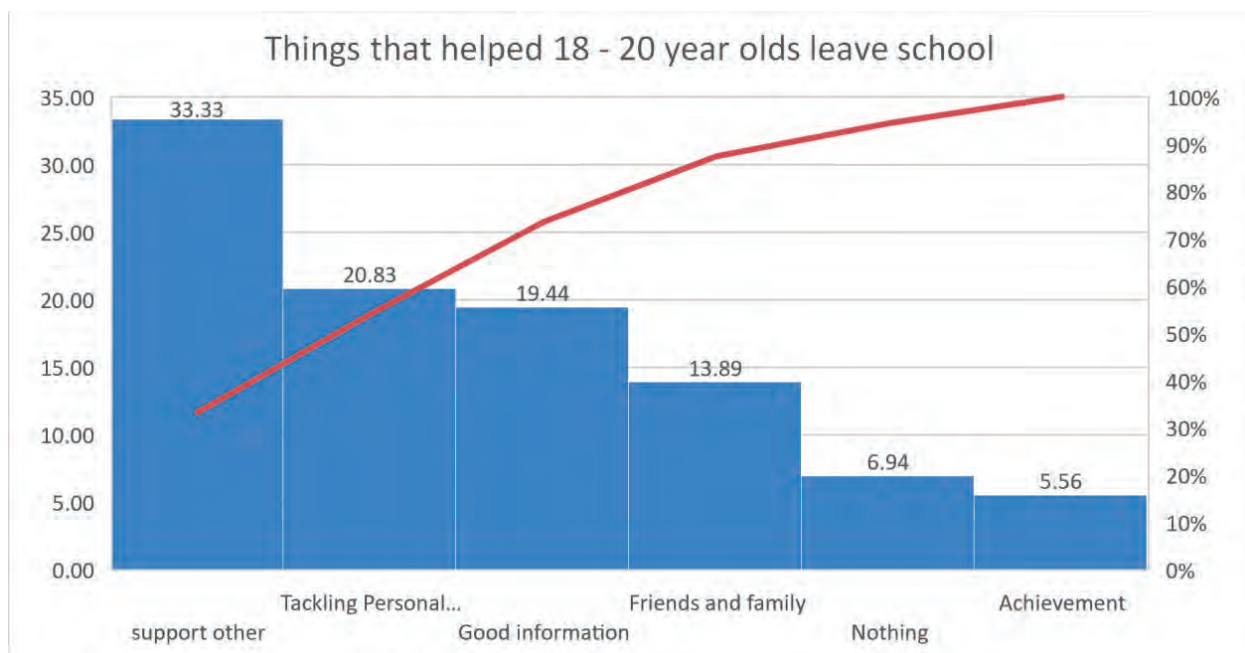
Three things that helped you leaving school (21+)			
Theme	**Results**	**%**	**Notes**
Support	22	37.29	
Tackling personal and social (inclusion) barriers	11	18.64	
Accurate and real information, advanced planning and communication	9	15.25	
Trying things out	7	11.86	
Realness	4	6.78	
Aspirations?	3	5.05	
Impact on mental wellbeing	2	3.39	
Achievement	1	1.69	
Total	59		

Things that helped 21+ year olds leave school
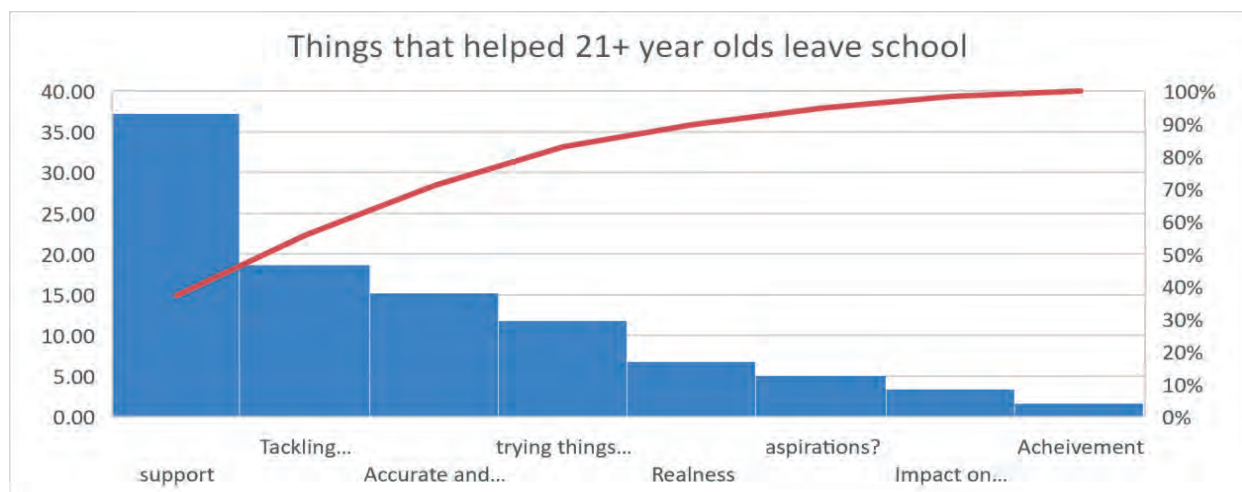
Things that help young people leave school 14 – 25

Theme	Results	%	Notes
Support	67	37.64	
Tackling social and personal barriers	47	26.40	
Accurate and real information and communication	14	7.87	
Trying things out	21	11.80	
Friends and family	10	5.62	
Achievement and aspirations	3	1.69	
Nothing	5	2.81	
Realness	4	225	
Other	4	2.25	
Impact on mental wellbeing	2	2.25	
Doing something you love	1	0.56	
Total	178		

Things that help young people leave school 14 - 25
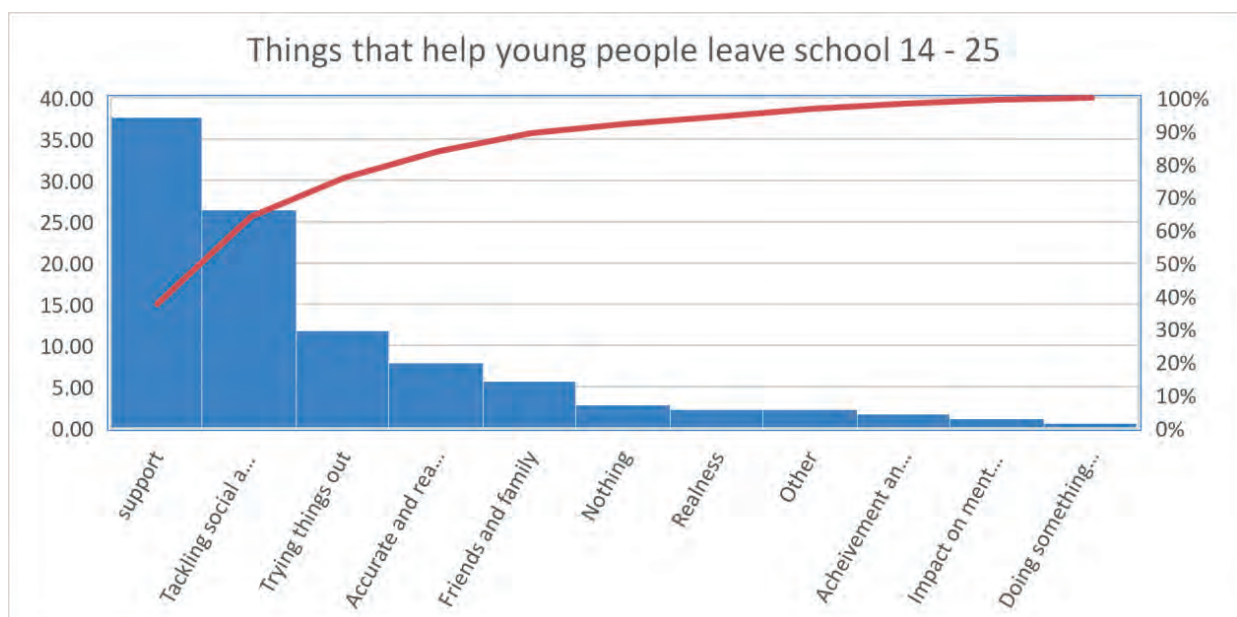
What didn't work when leaving school?

What didn't work when leaving school (12 – 17)?	Results	%	Notes
Further/Higher education	4	6.90	Mostly expressed by 16-year-olds
Personal and social (inclusion) barriers)	17	29.31	
Lack of support	17	29.31	Mostly felt by 17-year-olds compare with Graphs drawn
Work	9	15.52	
Covid	1	1.72	
Unplanned leaving	5	8.62	
Impact on mental health	5	8.62	
Total	58		
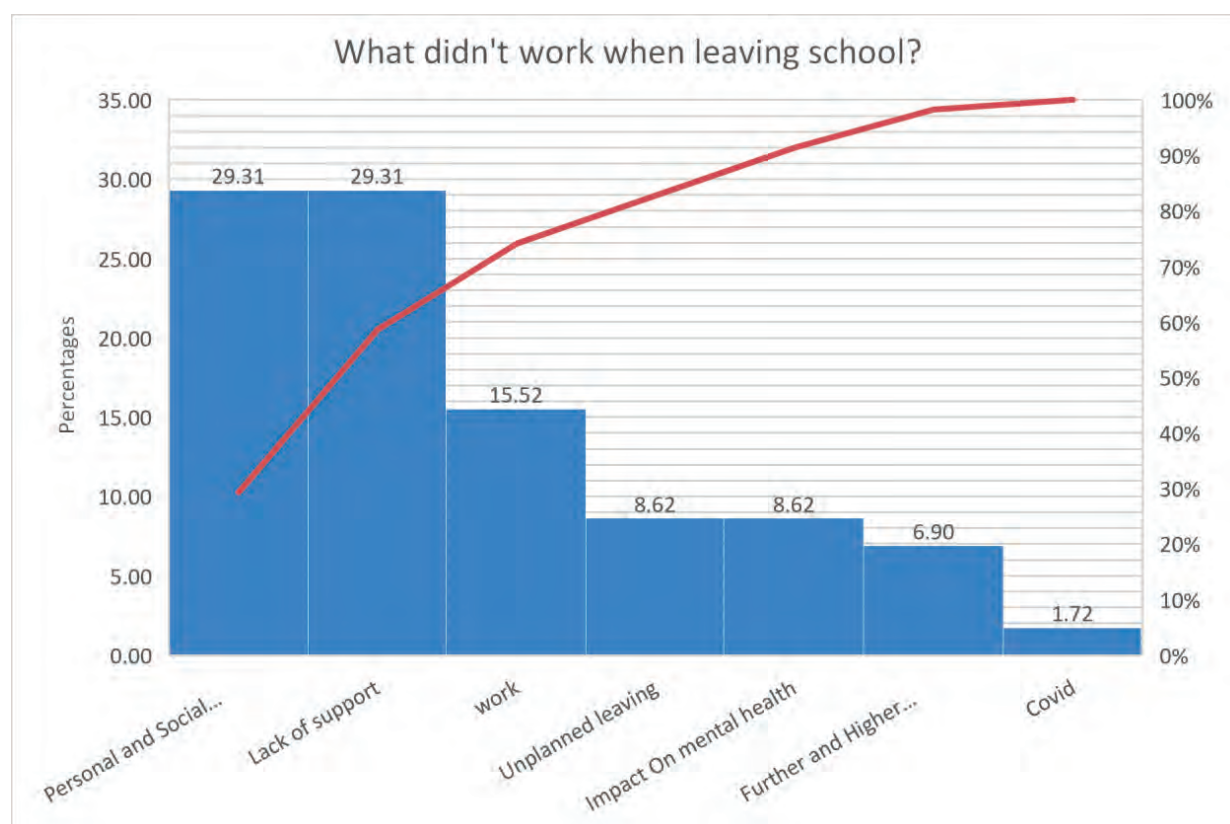
What did not work for you when leaving school (18 – 20 age range)?	Results	%	Notes
Lack of support	14	19.44	
Lack of information	11	15.28	
COVID	9	12.50	
Bureaucracy/process	8	11.11	
Lack of choice	6	8.33	
Personal and social (inclusion) barriers)	13	18.06	
Unplanned leaving	5	6.94	
Impact on mental wellbeing	6	8.33	
Total	72	N/A	

What did not work for you when leaving school (18 - 20 age range)
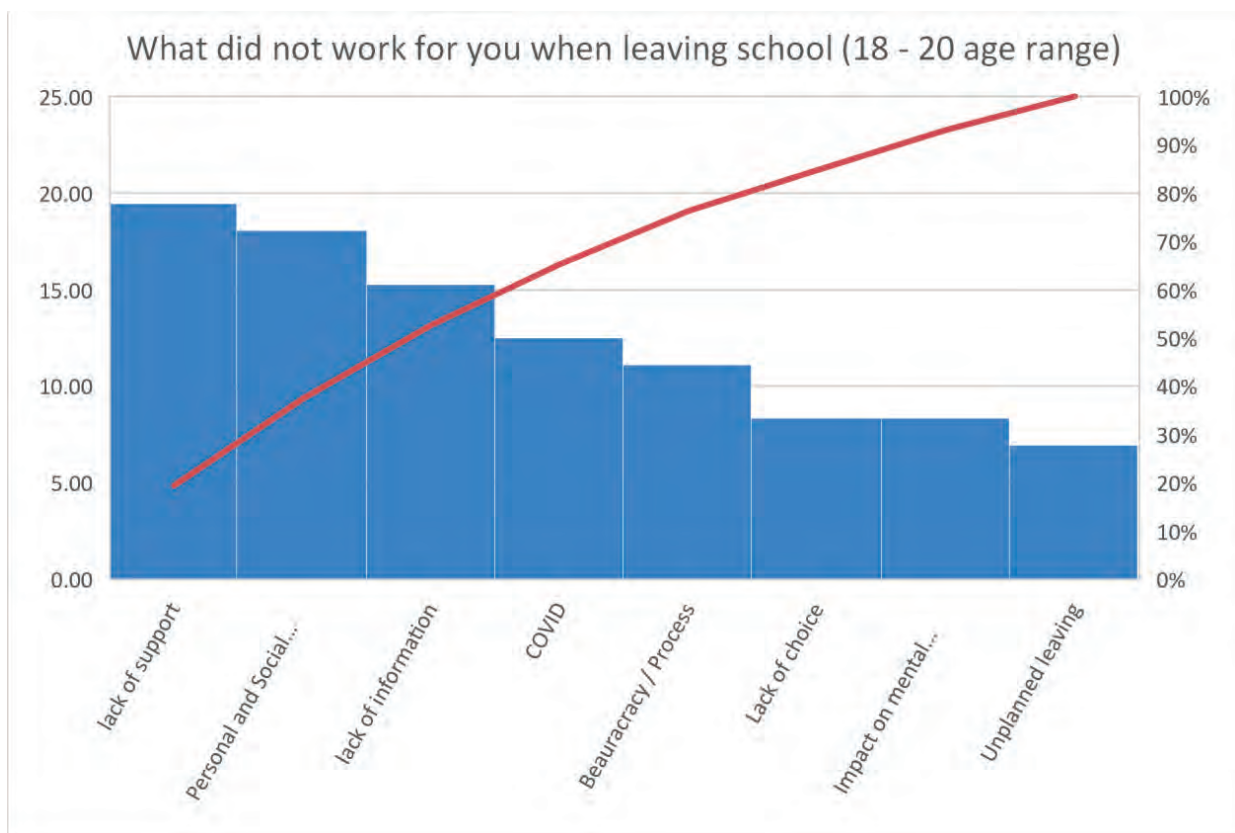
What did not work for you (21+)	Results	%	Notes
Lack of choice/opportunity	13	16.46	
Lack of support	20	25.32	
Lack of understanding/ feeling lost	9	11.39	
Funding	2	2.53	
Personal and social (inclusion) barriers	23	29.11	
No information	7	8.86	
Bureaucracy /process	5	6.33	
Total	79	N/A	

What did not work for you (21+)?
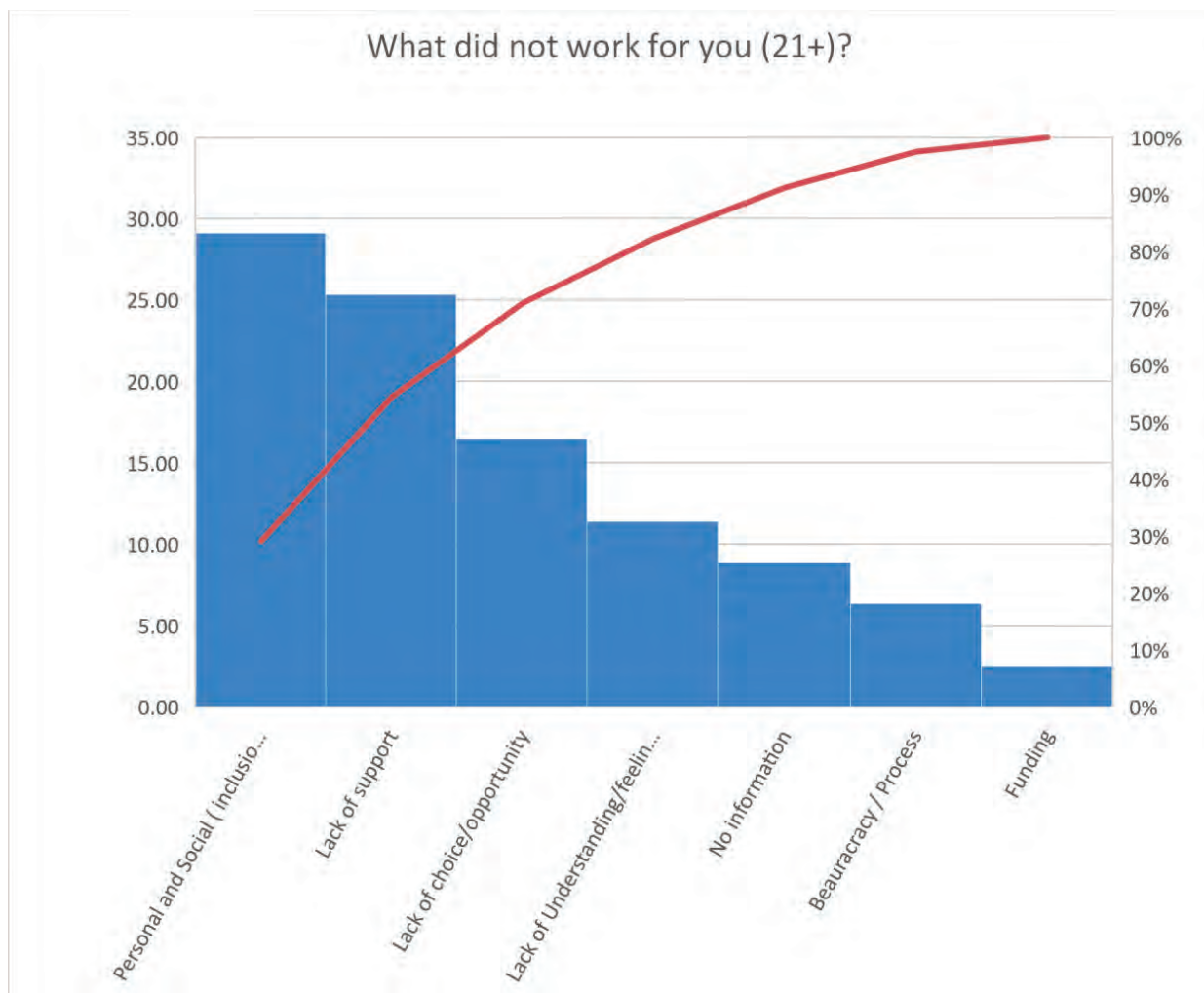
What didn't work for young people aged 14 – 25 leaving school?

Theme	Results	%	Notes
Further/Higher education	4	1.89	
Personal and social (inclusion) barriers	53	25.00	
Lack of support	51	24.06	
Work	9	4.25	
Covid	10	4.72	
Unplanned leaving	10	4.72	
Impact on mental health	20	9.93	
Lack of information	18	8.49	
Bureaucracy/process	13	6.13	
Lack of choice	19	8.96	
Funding	5	2.36	

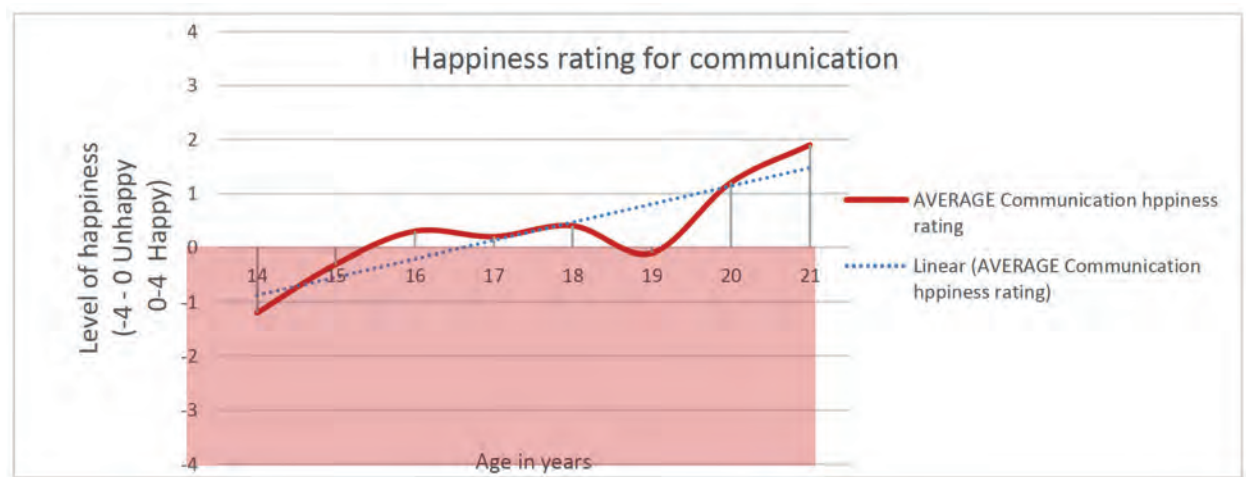What didn't work for young people aged 14 - 25 leaving school?
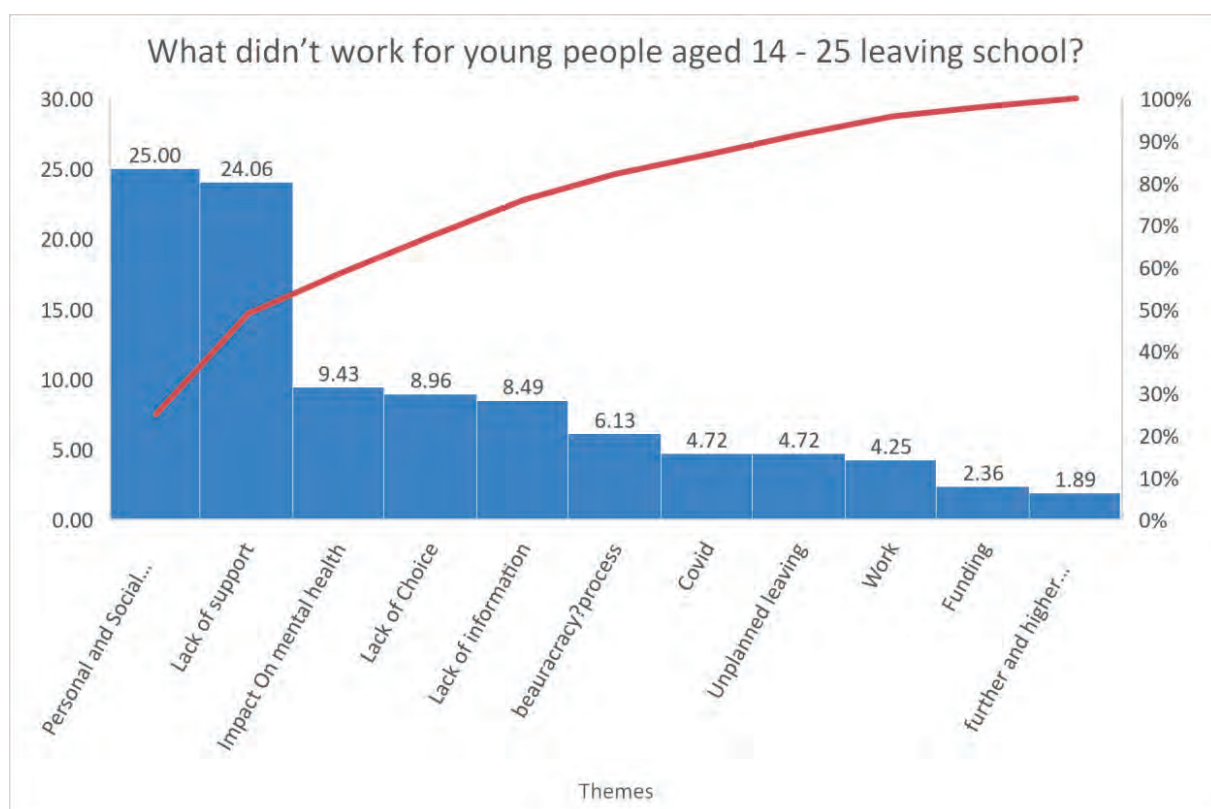
Face to face consultations – happiness ratings

Average happiness rating by age for general life

The graphs were aggregated using a measure along the happiness rating to arrive at an average. The charts are the aggregates and averages for the experiences of everyone who took part.
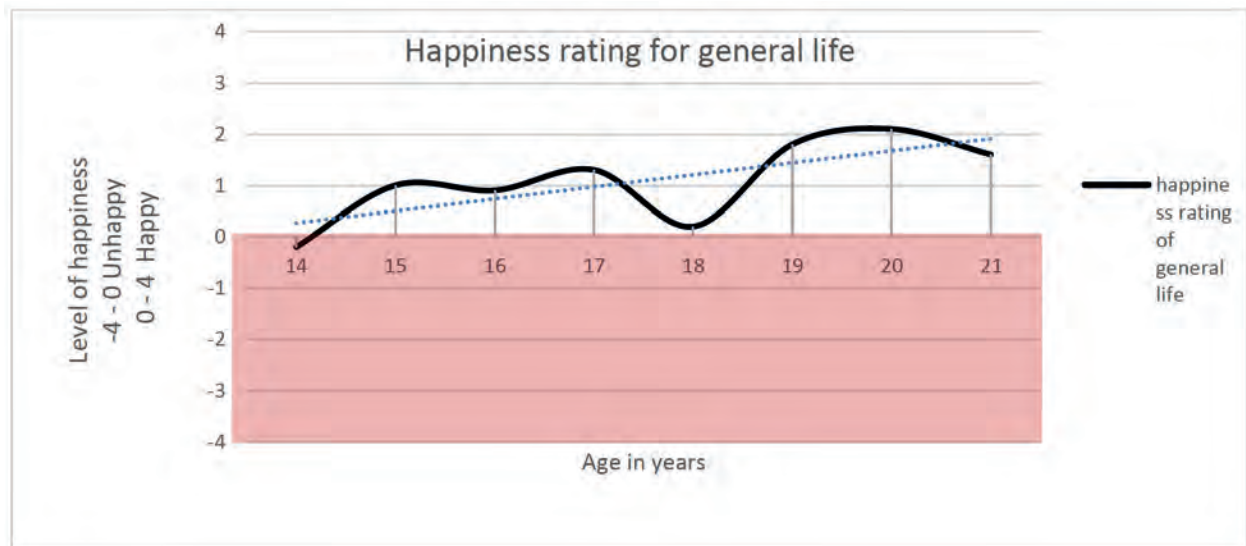
Average happiness rating by age for communication

Average happiness rating by age for independence

Happiness about independence

Level of happiness (-4 - 0 Unhappy 0-4 Happy)

Age in years

AVERAGE Happiness about Independence