

# *Overview of Network Findings and New Insights from the Literature*

Leverhulme Final Symposium,  
19 January, 2015, Edinburgh  
Alan Roulstone & Sarah Woodin



The Leverhulme Trust



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

# The Network-Aims

The international network has aimed to explore the very urgent issue of the barriers to and often fractured pathways of disabled young people's access to paid employment. The network is made up of leading researchers and stakeholders in the field of disability, health and paid work.

# The Network-Expertise

The network is bringing together for the first time academics and NGO expertise from social policy, economics, labour market studies, psychology, rehabilitation, public health and health geographies using the latest academic, policy and experiential evidence in a way that maximises knowledge exchange between academia, government and disabled people's organisations.

# Network Membership

- Leeds University UK-Alan Roulstone & Sarah Woodin
- Durham University UK-Clare Bamba, Jon Warren
- Cornell University-Susanne Bruyere and colleagues
- Humboldt University-Lisa Pfahl and colleagues
- TNO, UA Netherlands -Edwin De Vos and colleagues
- Charles University Prague-Jan Siska and colleagues
  
- And associate members - see web site:
- <http://disability-transitions.leeds.ac.uk/>

# Network Activities: 2013 - 2015

- Development of a group
- Series of country seminars: UK, USA, NL, CZ
- Focus Groups / meetings with Disabled Young People, Country Project Visits
- Key NGO stakeholder Interviews
- Publications
- Policy and practice engagement
- Further work

# Overview of Research and Practice

Very wide range of activities and themes spanning: education and employment, inter / independent living, choices and decisions by young people and context.

Diversity of perspectives - many vantage points on the issues

Different levels of analysis - individual, local, national, international.

Project partners typically working on just one or two aspects.

# Agency

- Young people as actively forming their identities in relation to living independently and moving into work. Stories and their accounts of changing selves reflect this process.
- Importance of real rather than token choices in respect of what young disabled people want to do.
- Clear focus on individual aspirations in the pathways through systems of service provision evident in the USA, increasing individualisation / activation in welfare state services (UK and NL context) and trends in society more generally.

# Structure

- Impact of class, gender and poverty in disadvantaged communities facing precarious low paid employment and unemployment.
- Health and wellbeing are implicated, with poor communities experiencing considerably more ill health.
- Collapse of the youth employment market in the 80s and changes in the labour market not generally conducive for disabled people - greater work intensity, longer hours.

# Impact on disabled people

- Greater insecurity in work combined with decreased welfare state provision and greater conditionality.
- Some disabled people particularly disadvantaged by labour market changes - people with learning difficulties and people with mental health conditions.

# Focussed support for transition outcomes

USA academic research especially focussed on practical steps to support outcomes for young people - through school, training and employment.

Continued criticism of employer attitudes in all countries.

In European countries efforts to improve systems largely situated in third sector, not academia, and are single strand (e.g. supported living, inclusive education).

# Process

The way that young people receive assistance in transition is as important as what is received.

Family support important and generally recognised in the literature (universal focus on supportive families however).

USA: Working at state and local levels, methods and variables are tested for efficacy, focus on systems change. Evidence of more and less effective service models is made available to providers.

Developmental orientation.

# Segregation and Inclusion

- Segregated provision both pervasive and declining. Policies are more likely to emphasise inclusive education and employment but separate provision persists.
- Sheltered workshops subject to more stringent demands - restricted entrance, closure.
- In all countries less government subsidy is available for workshops and special provision more likely to be seen in terms of training rather than employment.

# Policy and Practice

- Significant disparities between policy and practice at different levels
- Increase in local / federal (rather than national) responsibilities
- Emphasis on formal rights for disabled people at international levels, but de-emphasised and austerity more evident at national and local levels.
- Most research connected to transition is carried out at local or national levels but international level still important for economic developments and mechanisms for redress.