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The Teens+ Approach to educating adults with ASN: A

Student, Parent & Practitioner Perspective

Reminder

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Acknowledgements

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Abstract

It is widely acknowledged that there are barriers facing students with ASN within continuing education. However, there is a clear gap in looking at an approach that is successful. Understanding the barriers is only one facet of the investigation. There is a need to look at an approach that helps them to overcome these. The purpose of this dissertation is to explore how Teens+ enables students with ASN to succeed in continuing education. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with both students and parents at the Edinburgh based organisation, Teens+. The interviews had differing layouts to meet the students' specific communication needs. This research produced several key findings: underlying factors such as care, compassion, teaching styles, focus on education, trust, communication and more, appeared to make the approach effective. It is with each of the factors in combination that the students and families were able to break through the barriers facing them. The main conclusion drawn from this research was that the current approach is providing individually tailored education programs to meet the needs of both the students and parents, through effective "total communication." In essence, total communication is giving people the encouragement to communicate in any way available, whether this is non-verbal, speech aids, visuals or written. Along with this, developing strong relationships allows their families to feel safe and respected in every way. This research argues for a larger scale study to be done on the Teens+ approach along with a comparative study with other services in the same field. It also considers the implementation issues that could occur if this approach was to be put in place on a wider scale.

1. Introduction

Since 2010 Scotland has seen a 153% increase in children with Additional Support Needs (ASN), which is beyond that which the government ever imagined (Education and Skills Committee, 2017). It can be assumed that the statistics for adults will similarly be rising. From many findings within literature, it is clear to see the participation rate in continuing education is low for certain groups (Field, 2009). Scotland's ambition statement for Adult education put forward as one of its ambitions that every adult in Scotland will have the right to access learning to meet their educational needs and aspirations (The Scottish Government, 2014). This statement applies to all students even those with ASN. The Scottish Government claims to promote lifelong learning as a way of promoting economic growth and social inclusion (Field, 2009). However, there still seems to be marked levels of inequality. When looking at previous reports and legislation much of the wording around ASN/ Special needs is in relation to children. Although much of the legislation can be transferred, there needs to be more incorporation of the needs of adults who are past the stage of compulsory schooling. There are a variety of formal and informal education centres in Scotland for students: colleges; universities; community-based learning; however, are these meeting the needs of all adults or just those able to take part in mainstream education? Or could it furthermore be down to approaches used within adult education that is causing those with ASN to steer clear?

Working as an Education Tutor for young adults with ASN, I see the day to day challenges put before these students. The approach that is employed in my practice at Teens+ every day is consistently showing a positive impact on their lives. In my role, I have regular contact with students, parents and the surrounding staff team. I have developed these relationships over my 4 years at the organisation and this has put me in an appropriate position to carry

out this research. It is important to highlight an approach that is promoting positive change and provide an understanding of why this is the case from the perspectives of the students and families. These are the most influential voices, as it is their education. Action research has been used here as this study is looking to contribute to new practices. This attempts to answer the following research question:

How does the Teens+ approach enable students with Additional Support Needs (ASN) to succeed within Continuing Education (CE)?

To help answer this question, the following sub-questions were taken up:

- What are some of the barriers facing students?

- How can the approach help the students to overcome these barriers?

- How can the approach be implemented in other contexts?

Critical Pedagogy and Critical Disability Theory (CDT) along with perspectives on Voice have been drawn on and provide a further basis and justification for this research project. A recent survey carried out over the UK has yielded some alarming results; 10% of those with a disability have said they had been bullied because of an individual's attitudes towards disability. The CDT framework seeks to change this attitude and inform individuals of the oppression taking place in our current systems. These perspectives are also used in relation to the findings as they highlight the significance and what this could mean for the future of educating adults with ASN.

1.1. Teens+

Teens+ is a traditional education project for young adults with complex additional needs based in Edinburgh. Teens+ is a registered charitable organisation registered as a support

service, however, is run as an education provision. It was founded twelve years ago. Its founder and CEO, Jane Ansell, set the service up in honour of her son and to support young people in similar situations. This was the foundation of her motivation and drive, as she recognised the inadequate, and lack of, services available to support her son to develop rather than stagnate. Jane looked for services that could provide continuing education in whatever way was needed and for however long it was needed. Through discussion with students, parents, social workers, and other professionals it is clear to see there is a constant struggle to find suitable placements that will support and educate these young adults and continue their development. This provides justification for this research. It is essential to find the services within adult education that promote the notion of lifelong learning and find out how they go about helping the students to succeed.

The organisational details including Teens+ mission and vision can be seen below (Teens+, n.d.). Following this there are the Teens+ values which lie at the heart of the organisation, these are made available internally to the staff.

Teens+ Mission:

To offer lifelong learning tailor-made for people with complex needs.

Teens+ Vision:

We envisage a world that realises potential through lifelong learning irrespective of ability.

The organisation is based on the underlying values;
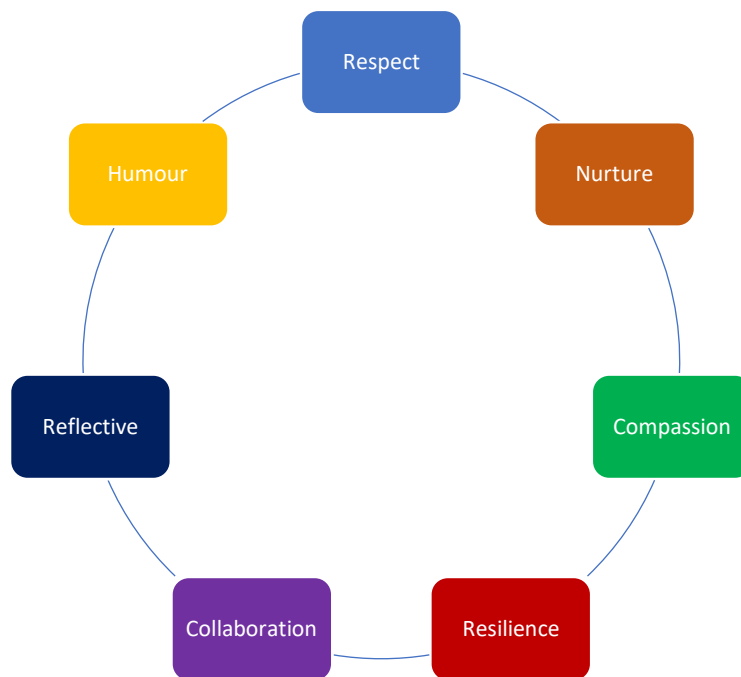
Respect: We believe that despite differences all people are deserving of dignity and respect.

Nurture: We believe every person has potential unique to them. This will be recognised, nurtured, and celebrated.

Compassion: We believe that everyone is deserving of compassion and we strive to create a caring and empathetic environment for all.

Resilience: We believe that with flexibility, confidence, and knowledge we can turn challenges into opportunities.

Collaboration: This is based on belief and trust and will lead to strong partnerships and teams. Communication through working together and actively listening will promote the success of all involved in the organisation.

Reflective: We believe that by reflecting on our professional practice, through honest evaluation and by sharing experiences we will continually improve and grow our services.

Humour: We believe that great things can be achieved in a friendly environment where we see happy faces, hear laughter, and have fun.

The Teens+ service provides a lifelong learning and transitional approach to education and is based across two facilities. One facility is aimed at young people who are not quite ready to take the next step in post-school education, work or to a new home. This program is expected to be 4 years to help the student continue their education and build the skills needed to help them take these next steps in life. The other facility is for students with complex communication needs and behaviours that tend to challenge the traditional services available and help them to achieve their full potential (Teens+, n.d.). This program is over a longer period of time.

Teens+ employs an education model consisting of Communication, Social skills, Literacy & Numeracy, Life Skills and Health & Wellbeing, however, a person-centred approach is applied creating a unique individual learning plan (ILP) for each student (see appendix 3). These plans are built with input from the student, parents, and a multi-disciplinary staff team (see appendix 2). Each student is transitioned into the project at whatever pace is suited to the individual, whether this is a month or a year. This is to mitigate the negative impacts that students have experienced when transitioning during the school and home life. This is likewise when the student is transitioning out to ease and make the process as smooth as possible. During the transition process, each student is allocated a Team Leader, Tutor, SLT (Speech & Language Therapist) and 2-3 project workers. When a student begins, the education team sits down with the student to find out more about them, such as their likes and dislikes. This is then incorporated into their transitional timetable to help ease the process. Teens+ not just provides the student with Continuing Education but provides

support to the families also whether this is through meeting or liaising with outside agencies to get the best possible life for their child.

In chapter 2 there is a literature review providing a basis for understanding adult education and ASN today, showing the gaps when looking at approaches. Chapter 3 provides a theoretical framework outlining the main influences within the study. Chapter 4 outlines the approach used in this research project and the process of data analysis. Chapter 5 will branch out into the findings with an in-depth review of the approach. Finally, it will be assessed as to how this can be implemented in the future along with any implications that could arise.

2. Literature Review

This literature review provides a background on ASN and adult education looking at where it once was and where it is currently. It is sad to say people with ASN only form one category of the underrepresented group of students. This review will focus on the problems facing those with ASN within continuing education; looking at problems with approaches and services in our society. The main scope of the review will be within the UK, however international research is used to provide a broader picture.

2.1. History of Adult education and Additional Support Needs (ASN)

ASN in adult education has come a long way since the end of the 18th century when people now under the term ASN were placed in asylums and classed as "mentally defective". Reiser (1992) pointed out that if people are continuously treated as invalids and unable to achieve, then without being given alternative routes of success they will believe in the intentions that others place on them. Through the 19th & 20th century small organisations grew seeking to educate these individuals and view them as human beings. Along with this so did policy and legislation. It is important to look at the changes to understand where our education system is currently today (Copeland, 1991).

In 1973 the Russell Report stated that adult education should be readily accessible to all who need it (Sutcliffe, 1990). This paved the way for the subsequent developmental work in adult education. Still, in 1985, young disabled people and their families reported the frequency of their needs being unmet; dissatisfied with the opportunities available (Clark & Hirst, 1989). Some worried that they would never achieve adult status due to these difficulties. UNESCO (1995) even reported that in some countries those with intellectual disabilities are considered uneducable.

With the rise of the disabled peoples' movement in the 1970s, there was a link to the implementation of disability studies as an academic discipline (Oliver & Barnes, 2010). This provided the opportunity to influence and educate the rest of society and open minds to the issues facing those with ASN. The term Special Educational Needs (SEN) in the 1980 Education (Scotland) Act was replaced with the wider term ASN (The Scottish Government, 2009). This now encompasses a much wider range of individuals. The tern ASN is defined as:

> *"in relation to a prescribed pre-school child, a child of school age or a young person receiving school education, provision (whether or not educational provision) which is additional to, or otherwise different from, the educational provision made generally for children or, as the case may be, young persons of the same age in schools (other than special schools) under the management of the education authority responsible for the school education of the child or young person, or in the case where there is no such authority, the education authority for the area to which the child or young person belongs"* (Education Scotland Act, 2009)

It was the Scottish Government's (2009) view that at some point every child and young person will experience/ need additional support at some point in their life. The adoption of this concept ASN moves away from the traditional response to difference and is now taking into account the broader social and economic factors which give rise to the need for support (Moscardini, 2013). The Education (Additional Support for Learning) Act (Scotland) was passed in 2004 and has since then been updated.

Currently in the UK, there are just over 70 specialist post-16 colleges that exist (Wang, 2009). This is alarming considering the number of adults with ASN is on the rise.

Statistics from the Scottish Commission for Learning Disability (SCLD) have shown that even up until 2005, 25% of disabled adults have no qualifications or marketable skills (SCLD, 2017). This is more than twice that for non-disabled adults. It was also highlighted in the SCLD (2017) report that there was a need for further and higher education qualifications among those with disabilities. Postsecondary educational attainment is important for a successful transition into adulthood as it is associated with better mental and physical health outcomes along with employment prospects (Wang, 2009). Therefore, if this percentage of adults with disabilities have no qualifications/ skills then the transition to adulthood is going to become even more complex and difficult. However, when looking at educational attainment it is important to consider how this is measured more specifically for those with complex ASN as academic qualifications may not be the focus for that young person.

Palikara et al (2009) were looking at young people with a history of specific language impairment and their thoughts surrounding their first year of post-16 education. They reported that many young adults experience problems when moving into their post-16 destination, most of these occurring in education. It is important to establish in what ways effective support can be provided and monitored to address the young people's needs. Each education authority has developed its own model of staged intervention along with its accompanying framework (Moscardini, 2013). The interventions/ approaches are not necessarily covering students' full learning requirements; it may just be a basic record of needs. This is not substantial enough to educate young adults well. For instance, one young adult with autism can be very different from another, each with different learning expectations. This is only thinking about autism. The umbrella term, ASN will encompass a much larger scale of unique individuals.

Moscardini (2013) analysed a report published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE, 2010) and found that education authorities are not always fully aware of the range of ASN amongst the young persons. This is a disservice to these young adults seeking to continue their education. It highlights a problem with this super-category ASN. How can educators be expected to deliver an effective approach if they don't even know the range of needs they will be teaching?

When you look at earlier literature as well as some current, you can see that there is little that looks at an all-encompassing approach. There is much more on teaching strategies (Lerner, 1997). Of course, these strategies are important and helpful in teaching practice, however, there is more need to find an overall approach that integrates more than just the strategies into its ethos.

In some ways, various countries, including Scotland, should be celebrated for their progression and movement in the field of ASN and adult education. Sadly, this is often overshadowed by the outcry from the students and their families for better and further provisions. Research does show that although adults with ASN have aspirations to engage within postsecondary education, there is a variety of factors hindering them such as: concerns about not being socially accepted; lack of previous qualifications; and lack of provisions in adult education institutions (Dillenburger, et al., 2016).

2.2. Current Barriers facing Adults with ASN

There is a substantial amount of literature surrounding the barriers facing individuals within education, more specifically those with ASN. In my professional experience, there are still too many children who have not been educated in an appropriate manner and therefore are insufficiently prepared for adulthood. Gauthier-Boudreault et al (2017) highlight the limited

post-school activities for young adults and the lack of meaningfulness of these opportunities.

Preece (1995) carried out a consumer review on disabled adults aged 20-50 to delve further into their previous education experiences. The consumers consisted of students with some form of disability and were looking at their thoughts regarding their educational experiences. The review found that barriers facing students were that of lack of prospects and staff attitudes. Students felt the constant need to convince people they were an equal (Preece, 1995). Along with this Denhart (2008) carried out a study involving college students labelled with learning disabilities (LD) and found similar barriers such as being misunderstood by teachers, being reluctant to request accommodations and having to work longer hours than non-labelled peers. Despite our ever-expanding knowledge of those with ASN, those who live with it still struggle for success.

Denharts (2008) review of literature also highlighted another major problem facing students with ASN across a variety of setting as well as education. It found that few studies actually seek the voice of those labelled with ASN. There are clear problems at the core of our policy and practice where these voices have gone missing and it is the non-labelled people debating the issues of those labelled. Students need to be provided with opportunities to have a say in what is ultimately their lives.

As well as the barriers taking place when students enter into an educational institution it is important to account for the shifts in attitudes that have been taking place in society over the years. When carrying out a study looking at transition experiences of those with disabilities, Piggott & Houghton (2007) noted that more and more society is expecting those with a disability to become economically active in order to fulfill their roles as responsible

citizens. This way of thinking needs to be backed with the approach, facilities & resources that will allow those with ASN to reach their full potential.

Although all the previous literature has given scope to the problem and the barriers facing these individuals. There is very little clarification about how we can overcome these. Each provides us with a very surface level perspective as to how we can improve educational settings and providing 1:1 specialist support (Denhart, 2008). This work is very good in theory but without a hands-on view of implementation and appraisal, we will never know what truly works.

2.3.   Inclusion: A myth or reality

The debate has moved from that of integration/ segregation to inclusion/ exclusion. For this study it is important to look at inclusion to provide further justification for the need to look at approach that work for those with ASN. One of the main principles behind inclusion is founded on that of human rights, which in this case emphasizes that segregation of any form is morally incorrect (Avramidis, et al., 2000). This is a more radical way to look at inclusion; it is not fair to say that segregation in any form is wrong, it is often the case that segregation specifically in education institutions can benefit those with ASN. Wang (2009) carried out a literature review looking at the issue of segregation vs inclusion and found the thought of attending class with people with similar disabilities enhances the student's confidence and self-esteem.

At one point the sole focus of inclusion was where an individual should be educated; within a special needs school or mainstream school (Oliver & Barnes, 2010). This was extremely narrow-minded but does give us some insight into how far adult education has come. Inclusion was introduced in the early 1990's to replace integration. This took place when

the Salamanca statement was published (1994) and produced findings that showed the lack of fulfillment with integration (Sarromaa Haustätter & Jahnukainen, 2014).

Adult education services have highlighted the need for wider curriculum opportunities. This, in turn, encompasses the need to look at the approach used when educating those with Additional needs (Preece, 1995). Many services have the desire to facilitate autonomy; but what if a person cannot be fully autonomous what opportunities and approaches would be put before them? When reviewing literature Preece (1995) highlighted that some services require a minimum of autonomy for attending. More services are needed that will allow these students the opportunity to develop this sense of autonomy.

When reviewing the current literature many studies carry out interviews with the families to look at the specific needs (Gauthier-Boudreault, et al., 2017). It is baffling as to why they would not interview the individual directly, considering it is regarding their existing provision or future. Many students/ young adults are still struggling with the existing provision of education. This prompts us to look at alternative educational establishments, for example, Teens+.

3. Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I will introduce the theoretical framework underpinning this study. The key theoretical stance taken in this research project is that of Critical Disability Theory (CDT) with influences from critical theory and critical pedagogy as they share common roots that intersect. Finally, I will be applying conceptual work in "voice" and showing justification for its application in this study of the Teens+ approach.

3.1. Critical Theory

Critical theory has provided the basis for social inquiry which has the aim of increasing human freedom and ending the domination of certain social groups over others. As educators, critical theory allows us to look for something beyond ourselves pushing through the barriers of discontent with the current systems and processes (Rogers & Horrocks, 2010). Critical theories of education have recognized the ever-transforming role of pedagogy towards forming a non-discriminatory and just community for vulnerable groups of students (Liasidou, 2015). It is concerned with how things might be and should be not just how things were (Bronner, 2011). This relates closely with the purpose of this study as it is looking at educational approaches when working with adults with ASN, thinking about how their learning process could be improved by using certain approaches and how this should be implemented across the board in adult education. Therefore, looking at how things might be.

3.2. Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy envisions creating an education community that will challenge the dominant discourses of mainstream institutions through liberation. It is challenging the rigidity and conformity that further education (FE) & higher education (HE) tend to offer, trying to transform education processes and relationships of the student and teacher

leaving authoritarian teaching behind. Critical Pedagogy wants us to open our minds and question the current structures in place and think: is this really what is best for the student? According to Wink (2011), there is no single practice or version of critical pedagogy; it is in some ways subjective to an individual perspective. In relation to the current study, it allows us to reflect on the relationship between teachers and students with ASN -- taking into account their oppression and exclusion within a variety of educational institutions. The way in which educational practitioners can do things differently needs to be analysed, liberating the students from their oppression. Freire (1996) did not only look at the wider picture, but also the educational approaches of teaching such as the "banking concept." He sought to involve the student in the process wholeheartedly and transform oppressive structures. This study will be addressing an educational approach which in most ways encompasses this form of pedagogical action. It is the hope that educators want more than to clock in and out every day. It is their action and reflection upon their world that will help to push forward education into the 21st century and adapt to the needs of the current society.

3.3.   Critical Disability Theory

My theoretical framework has emerged from putting CDT in conjunction with critical pedagogy. CDT is based in the emerging interdisciplinary field of disability studies. According to Erevelles (2000), disability is often excluded from analysis and more focus is placed upon ethnicity, gender and social class which has already been explored in great detail. CDT shifts this focus back. Friere's (1996) work in Pedagogy of the Oppressed resonates strongly within the CDT framework. CDT incorporates several elements; models of disability, rights, language, voice and diversity (Hosking, 2008). Evaluating these elements will allow us to see the ideology underpinning this study. CDT places disability as its central theme as a social construct (Hosking, 2008). This includes the social model of disability.

3.3.1. Social Model of Disability

Crow (1996) viewed the social model of disability as key to demolishing the traditional idea of impairment as personal tragedy and the oppressive nature that is created along with it. According to the UK charity, Scope, the social model of disability is defined as follows;

> *"disability is caused by the way society is organised, rather than by a persons impairment or difference. It looks at ways of removing barriers that restrict life choices for disabled people when barriers are removed, disabled people can be independent and equal in society, with choice and control over their own lives."*

(Scope, 2018)

This model was developed due to the medical model not accounting for an individual's personal experience of disability. Along with this, the medical model did not develop ways to make for a more inclusive society. Tomlinson (2014) used some effective language which I feel truly encompasses seeing disability through the lens of the medical model. He stated that "their incarceration in a segregated setting and their abysmal exploitation have been skilfully disguised and presented as a humanitarian approach to allegedly protect them from the dangers and the complexities of the social world" (p.152 cited in Liasidou, 2015). This perspective portrays the medical model as one resembling imprisonment. It is clear to see that the social model is progressive rather than reactionary which is essential when applying it to the current research project, in the sense that it allows us to look at effective educational practices and approaches that will aid those with ASN to overcome the barriers that they face in everyday life. This model has influenced much of UK disability policy and practice, however, has had less impact on education policy (Oliver & Barnes, 2010). There has been very little progression for the social model within the field of further education, although we have seen the removal of certain barriers. Even without a substantial amount

of previous applications, for this study it allows us to explore the issues facing those in education from a more person-centred approach. The social model has important implications for our education system. To challenge the discrimination against disabled people we must start in schools (Rieser, 2012). However, I feel it is just as important to look at adult education. Adults are the role models for the young and without their promotion and fight for change, nothing will happen. This model allows us to draw attention to the nature of society and how for so long ASN was viewed in terms of medical and psychological terms. In Britain, it has been the social model which has provided the structural analysis of disabled people's social exclusion (Shakespeare, 2006). In this study, it can provide us with the same analysis within continuing education and give us the opportunity to identify the barriers and look at how specific organisations are overcoming these to succeed. If inclusive education is going to be truly effective, as educators we must adopt a "social model" when thinking about disabled people. This means analysing the growing documentation of good practice and being aware of the barriers that prevent inclusion (Rieser, 2012). Over the past thirty years, the social model has been widely disputed (Oliver, 2013). It does need to be accounted for that the social model has been criticized for neglecting the potential pain of an individual (Gregson & Hillier, 2016). When this model was first introduced it was made clear that it was not an all-encompassing framework within which everything that happens to disabled people could be understood or explained.

In most respects, CDT and critical pedagogy often look at the large-scale social issues. This study will look to gain a much greater personal perspective building the approach from the bottom up. CDT provides us with the framework to see what is wrong with the current social situation and influence the factors to change it. In our society today, the current reality surrounding ASN still sadly includes prejudice and discrimination. Young adults aged

16-18 were shown to be two times more likely not to be in education, training or employment (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2017). To change this, we need to gain further perspectives from the students themselves and find out what is working for them and provide a realistic solution in implementing this within continuing education. Studies in the CDT field highlight the importance that disability should be a concern for adult education and adult educators for a variety of reasons such as the increasing number of students with disabilities enrolling in formal adult and higher education programs (Rocco et al, 2011). There have been few adult educators that situate research on disability in critical theory. Most see it as an unfortunate condition.

Regarding the present study, CDT incorporated with the social model of disability allows me to break down the barriers and gain a clearer perspective and understanding of what a successful approach means to the student and their parents and progress them towards their futures. This framework supports the use of their personal experiences coming straight from the individual. It is very easy to relate CDT with the Teens+ approach. Teens+ does incorporate the ideology of the social model of disability. It allows for the improvement of self-esteem of disabled people and building a positive sense of collective identity (Shakespeare, 2006). CDT allows for a reflexive approach to look at the current problem.

3.4. Voice

"Voice is a tool by which we make ourselves known, name our experience, and participate in decisions that affect our lives" (Cook-Sather, 2006). The need for voices of young people to be heard in relation to their experiences of education has been highlighted across the globe (Palikara, et al., 2009). When voice is mentioned within the field of education it is often the voice of teachers, tutors or lecturers that are being heard. It should be the opposite occurring as it is the student who can give a realistic view and opinion of the processes and

how they are being impacted. In previous cases, practitioners have a had a reluctance to listen to them. In the early 1990's the exclusion of student voices from conversation surrounding learning and teaching is clear, and it was not until the early 21st century that society began to see the wider encouragement of reflection, discussion, dialogue and action (Cook-Sather, 2006). The present study ensures that students' voices are not being dismissed as inappropriate responses of a people to impairment. It is important for the current research to highlight the importance of the disabled voice no matter what manner it is portrayed in. Within qualitative research, the preferred speech genre is still open dialogue, shared perspectives, self-disclosure and the free exchange of meaning and information (Maclure, 2009). We need to show the diversity of the individual's part in the research, and whatever way they voice their opinion should be valued.

Although the theories of voice in educational research are largely found in post-structuralist studies, there are key aspects that clearly influence this study's direction. CDT includes an element of looking at the voices of disability. It believes that if a person starts with a belief that disability is an inability then their voices will always be construed as a person's relation to that disability (Hosking, 2008). Alcoff (2009) stated that the practice of privileged persons speaking on behalf of less privileged persons has resulted in increasing or reinforcing the oppression of the group spoken for. This closely relates to those who apply the social model of disability. This suppressed community should be given a voice rather than having to be authenticated by those deemed more privileged. Taking the stance that one should only speak for one's self, comes with some difficulties, especially in the world of those with ASN. It is getting the balance between ensuring those with ASN have a say and a choice whilst still supporting and keeping them safe. It is our duty as practitioners to speak out against this oppression, however, this is a fine line as we need to be careful not to overstep having their

voice become ours. Some of the crucial discussions happening around voice are looking to both examine and challenge the processes that silence groups. This study hopes to achieve this by giving the students the opportunity to have an opinion on the subject at hand and input into their learning no matter how big or small. According to Mazzei (2009) as a society, we need to redefine what it means to hear and listen to speech and voice. It is often the case that silent voices have just as much to say. Research tends to show what is classed as a normative voice, students with ASN do not necessarily fall into this classification and we need to ensure that we can encompass the true diversity of their voices. Within this study, I want to show an educational approach which applies the student's voice as the norm.

Giving the student a voice is not unproblematic. However, it respects their right to participate in research about themselves (Palikara, et al., 2009). This study aims to give a voice back to the student, allowing them to have a say in whatever way is appropriate for them. Voice honours experience over theory as the underpinning of a person's understanding of an issue and the meaning they give to it. In this study, due to the student participants having ASN, I sought suitable methods for them to have a voice which was not necessarily the use of their actual voice. As both a researcher and practitioner I am motivated to make the participant's voice understood and heard, giving it meaning and presenting universal truths (Mazzei & Jackson, 2009). In society today, we should listen to the voices of those with ASN and allow them the chance to influence the world of education. A group of individuals, such as those with ASN, can often be stereotyped in ways that can often invalidate what they say (Hadfield & Haw, 2001). UK policy does emphasise that these young people should play an active role in the development of their own culture and their right to participate in decisions regarding their own future (Palikara, et al., 2009). These policies date back to 1989, however society still falls short of allowing this to happen.

This research approach is committed to working with the students in a collaborative manner to identify key aspects to their success and find what is working for them and why. Both CDT and theories of "voice" in research give us the theoretical underpinning to examine and discuss the pedagogical approaches being used and in turn look at how these approaches can succeed and be applied in other contexts and settings. Investigating the views of those with ASN can be a challenging task, even for professionals and educators trained to work with this group. Gaining valid responses requires an appropriate methodology and a level of familiarity and rapport to be established.

There is a growing recognition in work with young people with disabilities that researchers and policymakers need to consider the perceptions and opinions of the young people themselves (Durkin, et al., 2009). It is a worthwhile exploration, gaining their views regarding their educational experiences as these can form the basis for better understanding of the young person's developmental needs and therefore allows for appropriate provision to be devised and identify factors that may contribute to their better adjustment in adult life (Palikara, et al., 2009). Using CDT and perspectives on voice has really helped to provide further justification for the need to open up more extensive inquiry involving the student. Building on previous discussions and creating a further dialogue with one of societies oppressed groups. Inclusion in the discussion is essential for them. Moving forward with this study the theoretical framework allows for an explanation of the methodology used.

4. Methodology

The purpose of this study is to investigate how practice within Teens+ enables adults with ASN to succeed in CE whilst exploring some of the barriers to success. Furthermore, looking at what the approach can do to overcome these and finally looking at how this approach can be implemented within other contexts. The motivation for this research grew from observing the lack of opportunities within adult education for those with ASN. In my professional experience even when the students were provided with some form of program with FE, HE or community education, they did not necessarily succeed or even finish due to a wide variety of factors. There was a need to look at a specific approach and find out what makes it successful.

4.1. Design

Action Research was used as an approach for this study. Previous forms of Action Research have started with a specific problem that needs to be solved, in most cases, in the setting where the researcher is working (Cunningham, 1995). This project looked at educational practice and approaches with ASN students. This is in the hope to promote change within educational settings over a variety of contexts not just in the environment where the research was conducted. An action-reflection cycle was used which fell closely in line with Stringer's model (See fig. 1) of action research (Stringer, 2007). Look- Act- Think; gathering information, reflecting, and analysing student activity and planning, teaching, and evaluating.

Figure 1. Action Reflection Cycle

(Stringer, 2007)
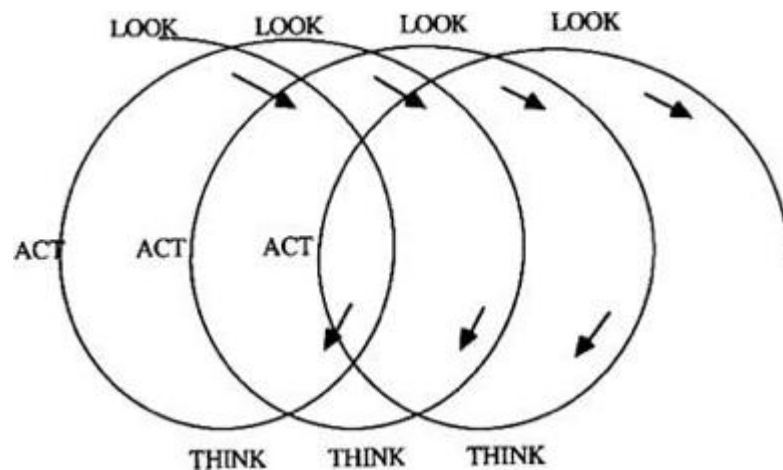
As this model is applied to this study, the stages materialise in the following ways:

Look: Carrying out interviews with parents and students to gain their insight and understanding of the approach and how this works for them.

Think: In relation to this study this aspect of the model is of most importance. Think about the relationships between the student and parent and incorporate practitioner reflection of the process. Reflecting on these shifting components and seeing the connections being made.

Act: Take the feedback and findings and integrate these with practice to make improvements where needed and make recommendations of how to implement this in other settings.

Action research was favoured as it allows not just to contribute to new practices but to provide new knowledge and ideas (McNiff, 2017). Qualitative analysis was used here to give a well-rounded and in-depth view of students with ASN and their participation in continuing education. It was favoured over a quantitative approach as it allows us to communicate on a more personal level. All research can only give a partial view of any person's reality,

however qualitative methods can provide us with a fuller reality of individual cases. This approach allows us to gain individualised responses from each participant even when covering similar topic areas. As well as gaining insight into the participants, it encourages reflective practice. In an academic world, we often become entangled with the processes involved in a more formal setting (McAteer, 2013). These alternate approaches and research designs should be employed more often especially when looking at individuals educated out with the mainstream formal settings as there is a need to develop and promote a positive learning environment for students to thrive. Critical theory strongly resonates with Action research in that it aims to help people liberate themselves from the constraints within the social structures in which they operate. Action research has been used in education extensively. The past 30 years have seen significant changes within education. There has been skepticism surrounding action research with arguments that more traditional approaches are "safer" (Ennals, 2009). These arguments stem from the need for academic recognition. An approach should not be chosen for the reason of being safe or that it colours inside the lines. As researchers, we should be challenging the current societal thought processes and paving the way for a change. Action research allows us to do just that.

4.2. Organisation

As described previously, the samples of students and parents used in this study were taken from an organisation called Teens+ (the setting for this Action Research). Teens+ is a transitional education project based in Edinburgh. It provides continuous learning for adults aged 17-30 with complex additional support needs. It believes in the philosophy that everyone is entitled to lifelong learning regardless of the challenges. Teens+ follows a holistic approach to education, bringing together communication and social skills, literacy

and numeracy, life skills and health & wellbeing. This model covers a comprehensive range

of the skills/ goals that students may work towards but does not take into account specific

educational practices and approaches used.

4.3. Timescale

This study was a yearlong process. In the early stages the literature was reviewed providing

a broad justification for this research which was needed to support the proposal and ethics

put forward. The fieldwork occurred part way through the study over a 3-week period. This

allowed for flexibility in parents' schedules and allowed for the appropriate preparation

time with the students. Project workers were informed in advance that the interviews

would be taking place.

4.4. Participants

Participants were recruited through Teens+ via email. The sample used for this study was

made up of 5 students and 5 parents. The criteria to take part in the study was the

following: the student has ASN; has attended Teens+ for a minimum of 2 years; and the

parents had to have a child attending Teens+. The 5 students and parents were chosen from

across the organisation, on a first come basis. The students all had varying degrees of ASN;

all students had autism spectrum disorder or a learning disability. Most of the students also

had other support needs such as being visually impaired, non-verbal, and learning

difficulties.

4.5. Ethics

University of Glasgow's School of Education ethics committee granted ethical approval for

this study to be carried out (see appendix 1). When gathering data all participants were

given an information sheet outlining the purpose of the research and the procedure through

which it was carried out (see appendix 2). A second information sheet was made for

students using visuals and short keyword sentences to allow them to understand (see appendix 3). Parents and students were then required to sign a consent form before taking part (see appendix 4). This research was classed as high risk due to the participant group. The research followed ethical guidelines and was appropriately risk assessed. Every precaution was taken to ensure the students were comfortable and had full awareness that they could stop at any point. The students individual needs relating to their conditions had to be taken into careful consideration. The students were told about the interview in advance to allow them processing time and decide if they were happy to participate. Disruptions to these students' daily timetables could cause anxiety and behaviours to arise, so preparation was key here. All research data collected was stored securely on a password-protected hard drive and in a locked cabinet.

As well as considering the institutional approval process, practitioner and researcher perspective also played a big role here. As I work alongside these students on a day to day basis in a tutor role, I had to be aware of the effects this relationship can have on the process. Working with these students over several years has given me the opportunity to develop an understanding of their capabilities.

4.6.   Method
Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with all 10 participants (5 parents, 5 students) and lasted between 30-45 minutes. The interviews were recorded on a phone application and via laptop to ensure good quality recordings for transcription.

Parents

The parent interviews were made up of the same set of questions for each. Many of the questions used were open-ended. Adopting the semi-structured interviews allows for the process to be more flexible and ask follow-up questions when these were needed. During the interview process, it was clear that the fact that I worked with Teens was bringing up things that wouldn't have necessarily arisen with another interviewer from outside the organisation. For instance, asking how their son/ daughter was getting on and about specific incidents that had occurred. I had some awareness going into the interview that this could be a possibility, so as much as possible continued to try and bring it back to the topic.

Students

The student interviews were changed according to the student participating to accommodate their communication needs and level of understanding. This allows for me to show the diversity in a set of students with ASN and the need to adapt approaches used within the research and give them an opportunity to speak. Two student interviews were given verbally, however, the others used a combination of visual aids, talking mats and writing to get as much insight into the students' experience as possible. The student interviews were carried out in Teens+ in Edinburgh, an environment where the students were comfortable and knew well. The parent interviews took place in their own homes to help accommodate their schedules. Colleagues were regularly consulted throughout the student interviews to gain further insight into the best interview approach to take. The data was gathered in this manner to track any changes in the educational practices and approaches used with students with ASN and look for an effective practice moving forward.

The student interviews proved harder to put together due to the different comprehension and ability levels of the students.

Practitioner Reflections

Reflection was carried out through the entire research process taking into account the students and their day to day routines at Teens+, the interview process and their educational goals and achievements as well as my own education practice at Teens+. Carrying out these reflections allowed me to work through the action-reflection cycle. This was an ongoing process to which there was no limitation. This allowed for thinking and action to be linked on a continual basis. Action research is reflexive as it aims to help individuals to investigate the reality in order to change it.

4.7. Data Analysis

The data was organised into interview transcripts and images. It was then analysed to find patterns regarding if and how the approach was influencing students' learning and the main factors for this. The parent and student feedback together with practitioner reflection allowed me to make judgements about the quality of our work practice and if it was providing an effective learning setting for the students to succeed. Rhizomatic analysis was used here to look at the relationships and the dynamic between the tutor, student, and parent, and how this influences their success in continuing education. Other forms of analysis seem to be exclusionary and did not fit in line with the inclusive values underlying this study.

Deleuze & Guattari (1987) describe a rhizome as any network of things brought into contact with one another. They provide a useful visualisation of ginger in comparison with a tree. A tree which starts at the roots building up to the branches and leaves shows a clear

hierarchical order. Whereas a piece of ginger has all parts connecting with others in a non-hierarchical structure. Even when these connections are damaged or broken they continue to spread from other parts. Rhizomatic analysis allows us to look at all parts of the narrative. It is moving away from the rigidity and structure of other forms of analysis such as coding and gives the opportunity to look at the complexities of the data. For this study it is essential to analyse the interaction as producing some form of difference, giving more meaning and depth to the interviews. There is an unlimited amount of directions in which the data can lead. Although rhizomatic analysis has not been widely used within qualitative research it can be seen to be an effective form in the field of education. Leander & Rowe (2006) were able to use this to look at classroom performance and Grellier (2013) applied a related mapping technique to assess spaces for learning. The fluidity of this form of analysis works well, it can be unique in whichever study it is presented in. This notion of being unique conveys to the students participating in this study and allows us to see their individualism. Even more specifically in those with ASN as each student has different support needs and along with that differing takes on the approach. It relates well to the theories of voice in the sense that there is no hierarchy involved, meaning that all voices are of equal importance. Although the rhizomatic approach has influenced, in large, the analysis of the data, coding has also been an influence in some ways. When initially analysing the data, the content was sorted into categories such as; approach, future, barriers, overcoming barriers, success, and limitations. This initial coding process allowed then for the connections to be made clear and relate more significantly to the rhizomatic approach.

5. Findings

This chapter will look at the findings through different subsections; in relation to the approach, overcoming the obstacles, implementation, looking to the future and researchers' reflections. The findings will be laid out in this way to answer the research question; how does Teens+ enable students with ASN to succeed within CE? With each of the students having differing levels of communication and comprehension, some could argue that there will be no valid connections. The purpose of this study is to give a voice to these students and give us the opportunity to gain a deeper insight into their thoughts and views. Rhizomatic mapping enabled me to look at the various factors such as the approach, barriers, success and the future and see how these all connected in some ways, both with the students and the parents. It is astonishing to see the never-ending connections that are created. These all relate back to the approach and help to build a picture of how Teens+ is enabling these students to succeed.

The current study found that most of the participants involved showed a strong improvement in their lives due to the approach provided by Teens+. It doesn't look at the normal societal boundaries and doesn't look at the effect that others can have on them. It is breaking down the wall that has previously been in place between them and mainstream society. Building on what the social model of disability has referenced, looking at ways of removing barriers that restrict life choices.

Excerpts from the interviews demonstrate the level impact this has had:

> **Parent 1:** Dad: *"Compared to other places that she has been this is 10/10. The other places have just let her down. "*
>
> Mum: *"she has definitely come on in leaps and bounds. It is a fantastic place and as long as JR needs it I will fight for it."*

This demonstrates, in a small way, the positive outcomes that the Teens+ approach is having on all the individuals associated.

It is important to look, before beginning, at how each of the participants view success, as this will help to show what overall goal the approach is working towards. As this study is looking at how the approach enables the student to succeed it is essential to define what someone views as success. Defining what success means to you is an important part of defining yourself as an individual. This helps to relate back to their thought process on the approach and whether it is successful for them. In society, each person has different expectations as at what point they would be successful. It was interesting to see the differing thought process between the parents and the students. When asked what success means to them;

> **Parent 3:** *…he is happy and still moving forward…that he is more confident…that he is able to communicate his needs and feelings.*
>
> **Parent 1:** *If she could live independently…*
>
> **Parent 4:** *If he is happy and relaxed….*
>
> **Student 2:** *A job and more money…*
>
> **Student 5:** *Learn to drive*
>
> **Student 1:** *Going to college.*

In comparison with mainstream society, the student view of success does fall in line with the thought process of most young adults in society today (Fearon, 2016). From my experience in this field, lower expectations are often expressed of those with ASN, however, these students have the right to choices in their lives and as mentioned previously, fight against

the practice of privileged people speaking on their behalf (Alcott, 2009). The Teens+

approach encourages them to look at themselves as an individual and not be defined

through their disability where in society they are defined by their disability and not by being

an individual. The students at Teens+ have higher expectations for themselves, which in turn

could be interpreted as an improvement in their self-worth and a move away from the

belief that disability is lack and inability, along with the feeling that they are unchosen and

despised (Hosking, 2008). Parents can also fall into this trap of lowering the expectations for

their children due to the pressures society places on them. The parents here are looking for

a more emotional sense of fulfillment for their child. It is evident in this chapter that Teens+

is clearly fighting for them to open their eyes to different approaches and broaden their

minds as to what the young adults can achieve.

5.1.   Approach

The key aspect of this study is to look at the approach and find out if and why it is allowing

the students to succeed within the field of continuing education. Figure 1 allows you to see

some of the key outcomes of the approach. It was clear from the data these were key

elements of where Teens+ focuses its approach toward the individual students.
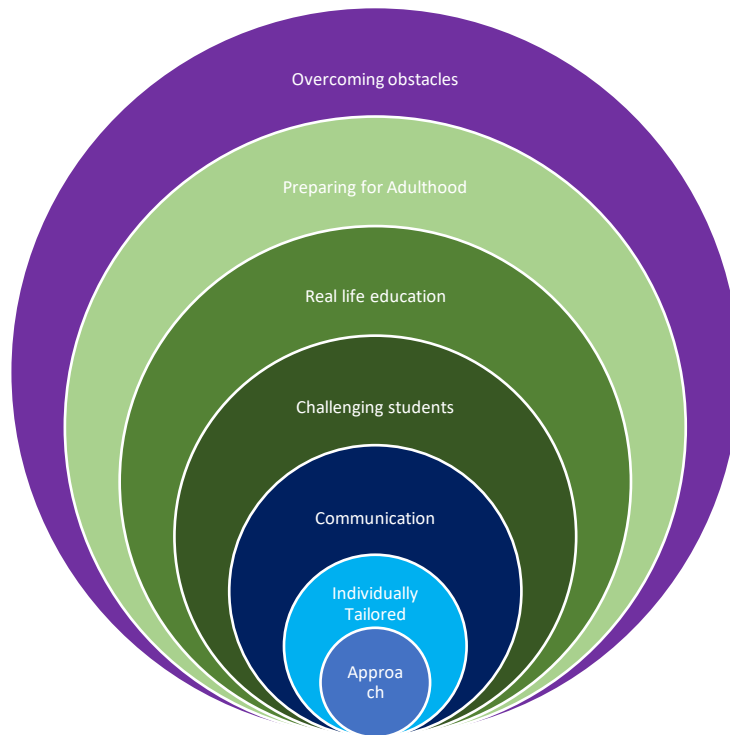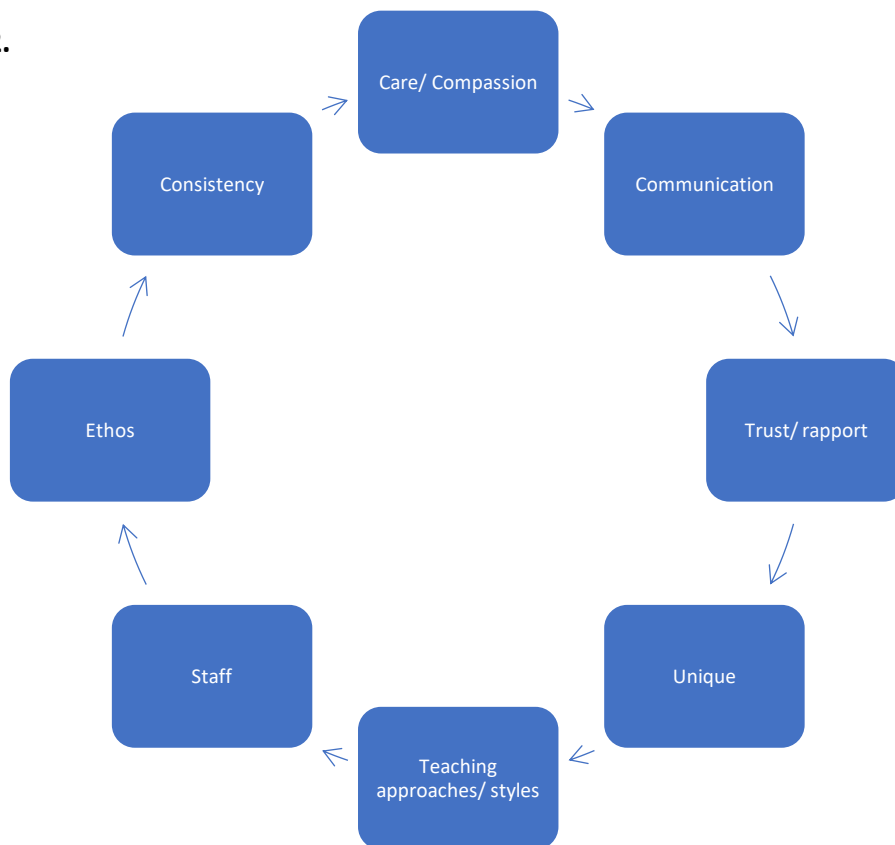
Figure 1.

Figure 2 is highlighting some of the key aspects that students and parents communicated as being the underlying factors behind the success of the approach.

Figure 2.

Providing these visualisations in figure 1 and 2 helpfully represents the findings as it provides a clear view of the approach itself before providing further in-depth interpretation. To achieve the outcomes in figure 1, all aspects within figure 2 need to be involved in the process. It is my interpretation that without these key aspects the approach would not be as effective and would be setting the student and family up for failure. Which provides further evidence as to why Teens+ is successful. I found it important to look at some of these aspects in a greater light and open up the thinking as to what each of these would mean for the students.

Communication seems to be a crucial part of the entire process and even more specifically when working with students with ASN. This could be seen running through each interview with the parents and students. Their need to communicate in their own way gives them the opportunity to build trust and rapport with the others around them which in turn filters into an individualised approach suitable for them. Even a simple yes or no answer as to whether they are enjoying their time at Teens+ helps to feed into how the Teens+ approach is successful. It does this by incorporating their opinions into the approach itself and allows them to see that their voice is valued. This relates back to the Teens+ values more specifically collaboration. Communication with the students, in whatever form they can process and communication with the families. Communication through inclusion. Incorporating them in the conversation, hearing what is happening is just as important as them voicing their opinions. The communication needs to be a 2-way dynamic process from both sides.

> **Parent 5:** *Although the conversation was between us and staff everything the staff said and did included him in it and I was really impressed with that.*

Even communication with a society who can at times be harsh and judgemental. This relates well to what was mentioned previously.

The notion of real-life education is also important to mention here. In mainstream society, we, as adults often take for granted the core skill/ tasks that were instilled in us from such a young age. Tasks such as setting the table, washing the dishes, shopping and road safety. It is these simple yet essential life skills that will allow the young person the chance to be an active participant in their own life. In my experience, education institutions often focus more towards the formal/ academic side of learning, but this is not necessarily functional for the individual and will be something they will never use again in their life. Real-life education is given the focus and attention that it should be through the Teens+ approach. It is clear to see the importance of these skills and learning that helps the student to function in the community to the best of their ability.

> **Parent 3:** *At Teens, it is much more about him in society and how he is going to function as an adult…*
> **Student 2:** *getting my confidence up on things like travelling home…*
> *Good for everyday life you know you can get skills and stuff.*

Nearly all participants provided some form of reply relating back to the focus on education. This really highlights the lack of continuing education provision for students with ASN out there. For those with ASN, there seems to be more often day services offered which will not give them the chance to progress. Most day service providers do not tend to offer an educational program to further the adults learning. This is what seemed to really stand Teens+ apart from other services such as statutory provision. All the student participants want to progress in their own way.

5.2. Overcoming the Obstacles

When looking at the barriers it is clear to see that what the parents and students mentioned did relate to previous studies mentioned earlier. Here I will show how the barriers that are facing these participants link back to the approach and show how the approach is helping them to overcome these. One of the main obstacles facing these young adults and families were their previous experiences with education. For the most part, there was some form of negativity that had stayed with them until now. In two of the students you can see the stigmatisation that previous institutions had placed on them. These stigmatisations will in turn have a knock-on effect, leading the students to not ask for extra accommodations to support their needs, to speak out, feel undervalued, and will in turn, not have the understanding of their ASN and the support they are entitled to. This will then affect their process of learning because no matter how effective the approach these negative associations will stay with them.

> **Student 1:** *When I went to Broxburn academy they said that ADHD was no such thing.*
>
> **Student 2:** *Quite stressful at times …I know once before they had an inspection there before on the care side they were letting the students roam around which they shouldn't have.*

You can see here some clear anxieties from the students. However, from further discussion, it is clear to see that this is slowly diminishing due to the current Teens+ approach.

> **Student 1:** *Well the staff are more understanding than other places. They understand that we all have problems.*
>
> **Student 2:** *Teens, they treat you like more of an adult.*

There is a clear level of trust and rapport that has been built up to allow the students to feel this way. This is built up by allowing the students and parents the opportunity to participate in their outcomes and achievements which are reviewed on a regular basis. It is clear from the language used by the students such as "understanding" that the Teens+ approach is

extremely transparent. It incorporates them into the process in any way possible which then

gains trust of the parents in caring for their child and allows students to feel safe and able to

be themselves. This relates back to Carl Rogers' (1979) person-centred approach. This

approach looks at a person's attitudes, behaviours and understanding and taps into this as a

resource. The foundations of the student-teacher relationship show a strong sense of

connectedness, working alongside each other to gain an understanding. Building on this

understanding allows us to see what tools would be useful when working with the students

and activities that would be better to incorporate to help motivate the student.

> **Parent 3:** *He can communicate his needs better and can say more and do more for himself and cope with his anxiety better than he could before…*

Much like the Social Model of disability way of thinking, another barrier facing the students

is society. Being out in the community and meeting new people is something that has

caused students to stall in the past. If an able-bodied person wants to hear the disabled

person's view they will, however if they don't want to hear the view they will simply reject

their perspective as an unhealthy response to their impairment (Hosking, 2008). Through

social media and approaches such as Teens+ there is the hope to educate society more

surrounding ASN and better ways to promote positive engagement. You can see through

responses that Teens+ is allowing the students to feel comfortable and proud of their

disability when out in the community.

> **Parent 1:** *We are talking the now, to take her out to the clubs but as part of her learning….*
>
> **Student 1:** *Yeah like getting out more like …I am looking at going to Newcastle or something.*

The Teens+ approach is making it evident to the students that they should not have to

change to fit all of societies norm and that society should change to fit them. Although this

does bring to the forefront a limitation of the Teens+ approach. That being said, when it comes time for the student to transition out of Teens+ they will still come up against these issues out in the community. For the moment there is the sense of safety and security with Teens+ to fall back on and support them through, however this will sadly not always be the case.

Another barrier which the approach is working with the students to overcome is building positive relationships. The students when coming into Teens+ start out knowing no one, however, it can be identified how this has changed over their time here. When asked what they enjoyed about their time a Teens+;

> **Student 3:** *I enjoy meeting my friends.*

> **Student 1:** *Seeing my friends because they are my friends.*

Building relationships is a very important part of the Teens+ approach and incorporates elements such as communication and trust/ rapport that have been mentioned previously. It incorporates aspects of their learning to help build peer relationships without involvement from staff. This highlights a student-led approach which allows them to build on skills needed for self-directed learning and a chance to be autonomous.

Having a 1:1 or 2:1 staff to student ratio seems to really help the students. It allows for each session to be individually tailored to the person without having to take into the account the varying needs of others around them. Like evidence in previous research, the students were not always forthcoming in asking for accommodations to be made to support their needs (Denhart, 2008). The 1:1 support helps them to overcome this and gives them further

opportunity to ask for help without fear of judgement. One parent mentioned the high

numbers of students to teacher that she had seen in previous education settings in the past:

> **Parent 2:** *I think back then there's like 33 in a class… any problems got ignored…it is impossible for the teacher to cope*
>
> **Student 1:** *We learn differently…1:1 because I prefer the space for learning.*

Students with ASN are too often overwhelmed when faced with a busy environment with

lots of people. This would mean their cries for help and support will go unnoticed. This

provides further evidence that 1:1 helps individuals with ASN overcome traditional barriers

and gives the educator the chance to have a real impact on an adult's life.

5.3.   Looking to the future

It is important to look at the data that is looking towards the students and their family's

future. This is where we can truly see how the approach in enabling the students to

succeed, as a success for most of the students, often lies in their future goals.
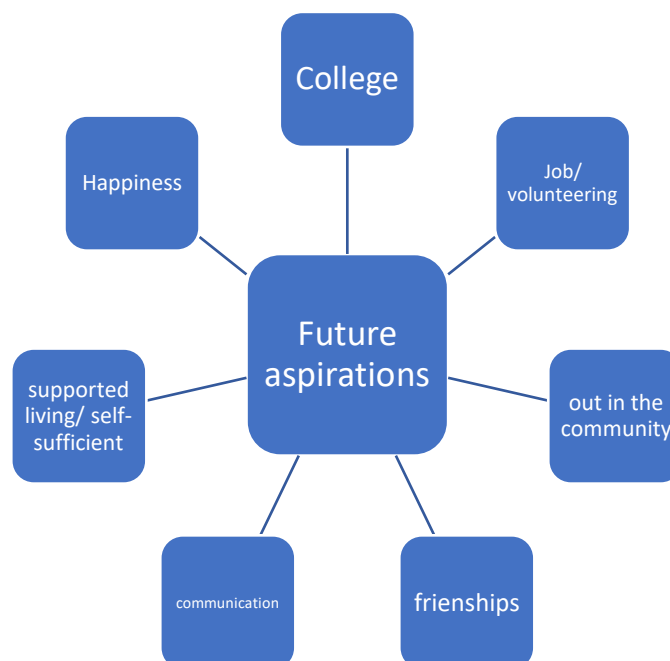
Figure 3

Figure 3 shows the achievements that have been identified by the students and families.

Through the Teens+ approach students are already achieving these outcomes which has in

turn has a positive effect on new students entering Teens+. New students now see evidence

from their peers that such outcomes can be achieved through being part of Teens+. There

are clearly strong connections here between future aspirations and what the approach is

providing.

> **Parent 3:** *What I would love is for him to become more sociable…. I know another student has been mentioned as someone he gets on well with.*
>
> **Student 4:** Talking mat about things I would like to do in the future**:**

This mat is looking at the student's options in terms of work and education for the future. It

is broken down into the student's opinion of whether this is something they would like to

do, not like or are not too sure about. This mat is completely the students and they can

change anything at any point or look at a specific card in further detail.

The talking mat may seem like a very concrete way of gaining insight/ perspectives from the

students, however each card holds its own significance and opens further lines of

communication. For instance, when noting that college/ university is somethings student 4

would like to do would then urge myself to delve further and find out why this interests

them and what they would like to do hear. It can take the conversation in various directions.

Finally, when looking back to earlier insights into what the students deem as a success, it

seems for the most part that this approach has provided the students with the knowledge and skills to have these ticked off and completed.

It is also important when looking to the future to consider the complexities of Teens+. From the data provided by the participants, they deem the approach a success, however it does have its limitations and blind spots. When reading back over the interviews the approach seems to filter into many aspects of the students and families lives but at what point does it become the students/ family's responsibilities and vice versa. There does not seem to be any guideline or boundary for this. One reason for this could be due to the rapid growth of the organisation and the students participating which in turn highlights this lack of structure. This approach is part of a continuing education service that runs from Monday-Thursday 9-4 Friday 9-1.30. This must bring with it some limits and I feel it would benefit the service to have these in place. The student's outcomes and goals that are in place each year and devised individually for each person and given a realistic view on achievement so do therefore not want to be overloaded. However, the more the approach filters into the personal lives and the more goals added, the less realistic the original outcomes are to meet. Another problem I encountered when interviewing students and parents was the understanding of when they would transition out.

> **Parent 2:** *Well when I first started looking at Teens it had 4 years on each service so as long as possible.*

There seems to be differing perspectives of how long the service/ approach would continue for. This would be important, if not essential, for Teens+ to look at earlier on in the process. It would connect with their long-term goals and outcome and give the students and their families more realistic expectations with an understanding that positive destinations will be sought.

5.4. Researchers reflections & experience

Being the only researcher for this project along with carrying out the research within my own organisation, the experience has opened my eyes and provided a bigger picture of the students and their families and how the Teens+ approach is working for them. This is very useful as a practitioner within the organisation as it will allow me to take this knowledge forward and enable adults with ASN to succeed wherever possible within continuing education.

The time in my most recent role has given me the opportunity to develop relationships and build the necessary trust that provides for an effective teacher-student relationship. Trust is crucial when working with students with ASN, more so due to the reason of needing to feel safe and allowing them to realise that no matter what behaviour or difficulties they may display these will never be held against them.

This experience has allowed me to see the importance that continued education has for these adults. It has also allowed me to see that all individuals with ASN have differing needs and are in need of an approach that can be individually tailored to them. It has opened my eyes to the lack of opportunities within research where those with ASN are able to give their opinion. Too often it is their families or other professionals around them giving opinions or experiences on their behalf. Giving these students a voice and a chance to be heard has become very evident during this research period. No matter how insignificant it may seem to others, they need to be heard.

As each of the participants have reflected on their experience and the approach used, I have reflected on my own involvement in the study. It is important to look at this from the perspectives of both roles; the researcher and educator. Prior to beginning this research my

main roles were to assess the students and put together an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) suited to them and provide 1:1 tutoring sessions throughout the week to meet the success criteria (on ILP). Of course, this is a crucial part of the approach, however, my time conducting this research has exposed how extremely personal this approach is for each and every student. It has uncovered a substantial amount of information and reflections that should be further incorporated to push the approach to be even more effective. For instance, using the talking mat with one of the participants to find out what helps him to learn best has highlighted other ways that could be incorporated to make learning sessions more productive for him. It is these small details which provides for an effective service and approach.

It was a pleasure to listen to both the students' and parents' thoughts and views. I feel this entire process has allowed me to build an even more solid relationship with them. It gave the students and their families the chance to see that there is someone fighting to really understand them and their children. Some participants stated after the interview process how answering these questions also made them think about things that they hadn't necessarily thought about before.

I was concerned that my previous knowledge of most of the students and their parents for some time before this process would be a limitation. In most ways, it was beneficial as I feel this relationship allowed them the freedom to open up about things in more detail. I do not feel that this would have been the case if they were meeting someone for the first time. As I have shown in my earlier findings, the importance of the rapport and trust is fundamental to this entire process and approach. As the interviews with the parents were carried out in their own home, it provided for a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere. The student

interviews were carried out in Teens+ which is an environment that they can be completely themselves, with no judgement or prying eyes.

This entire process has allowed me as an educator to develop more effective communication strategies with the students. It has pushed me to spend more time on this aspect as it is the central component of the learning process and towards their success. I now find myself taking more time to sit down and have conversations with the students in between sessions and this is when they tend to open up more and allow us to take heed of anything that comes up.

This research has also highlighted the need to gain better understanding of the long-term goals that each of the families have. This means that a scaffolding approach can be adopted in this sense, spanning over multiple years.

When looking at the findings there is a clear connection with previous literature looking at barriers facing students with ASN in continuing education today (Preece, 1995) (Denhart, 2008). However, this study takes the next step and is looking at an approach that can help to overcome the barriers. It is also evident how much this approach relates to the notions of "scaffolding" (Rogers & Horrocks, 2010). All the key aspects mentioned throughout the findings need to be in place before these students can have a chance to succeed. They all filter into each other in some ways and make the approach what it is.

5.5.   Recommendations

To successfully implement the Teens+ approach in other settings there is a need take into account the various factors that make it successful:

- The key elements of the approach would need to be brought together: communication, staffing ratios, building relationships, outcomes & goals, person-

centred approach and at the heart of it all the Teens+ values. This is represented in figures 1, 2 and 3 above. Implementation involves empowering other agencies to take these values and filter them through staff, students and families.

- A starter pack outlining the unique process, assessments and transitions needed for the students along with a starter pack for staff outlining training requirements, supervisions, reviews and appraisals.

- Take the appropriate time to build relationships with the students and families. Getting to know them is crucial to the Teens+ approach. Whilst developing this relationship provide necessary training to staff and build on the already developed skill set.

- Build on partnerships with outside agencies to develop transitions and develop next step programs for the students and families.

- To ensure the Teens+ approach is fully maintained as an organisation, Teens+, should keep lines of communication open to the agencies involved to help in anyway needed.

The implementation of this approach does have with it some limitations and implications. One of these being funding. Searching for funding in today's economic environment is becoming increasingly difficult due to cut backs in local councils, government and trusts within the adult education sector. Another limitation could be surrounding the students. As I have mentioned previously each young adult with ASN is unique, therefore requiring different methods and strategies. It is about the agency ensuring they are using the Teens+

approach effectively in finding appropriate strategies for that student as the methods

previously suggested may not always be able to be transferred.

6. Conclusion

The overall aim of this research was to look at a specific approach to educating adults with ASN and find out how this allowed them to succeed. The specific research objectives were within the context of Teens+, to:

- Identify the barriers facing the students with ASN.

- Evaluate if the approach can help the students to overcome these barriers.

- Explore how this can be implemented in other continuing education contexts.

This section will revisit the research objectives above, summarize the findings of this research project and offer conclusions based on these findings. Recommendations for future research will be discussed in terms of how to progress beyond this study as well as methodological considerations that need to be taken into account. The contribution of this research to ASN and adult education will also be clarified.

It can be concluded that without key elements of: communication; relationships; pushing through societal boundaries; trust & rapport; outcomes and goals, the Teens+ approach would not be effective. Through the lens of CDT and perspectives on voice it has been made evident the impact the Teens+ is having on the lives of those with ASN. In relation to the barriers facing the students it was identified that the main barriers were societal, previous education experiences, understanding of their ASN, meeting others and 1:1 specialist support. It was made apparent through applying the Teens+ approach that students have been able to break down and push through these barriers through effective communication, having their voices heard, transparency and promotion of positive relationships. The students will come up against new barriers throughout their lives, however during their time at Teens+, the approach will be implemented to provide the students with the skills and

knowledge to work through these. In reference to the final research objective which was looking at implementation, although this could be done there would be problems that may arise throughout as it is a context-dependent process. In my professional experience when implementing an approach in any setting you will come up against barriers. However, adopting the social model way of thinking fights to break down these walls and strive to reach the Teens+ approach fullest potential.

6.1. Methodological Considerations

An interesting question raised by these results is whether interviews produce valid results with this population. The students were able to give their own individual account of their educational experience at Teens+ in a way that is meaningful for them. This was facilitated by the experience of the researcher and the relationship that had been previously developed. The qualitative data allowed for a richer examination of the parents and young person's reflections and opinions on their experience at Teens+ and for building connections between the varying factors.

6.2. Further Research and Future Directions

Several findings from this study are worthy of further exploration. The students provided valuable insights and opinions about the service and how it is allowing them to succeed and meet their full potential within continuing education and their adult life. Future research should begin by looking at Teens+ on a larger scale and building a bigger data set. This will, in turn, give further validation to the approach. At this stage, it would then be useful to do a comparative study looking at other approaches and services for those with ASN in continuing education. It would be beneficial for educators in this field to explore and develop meaningful and sensitive ways of including the views of this group in decision making about their education and lives. This study has also highlighted the lack of provision

for the students after Teens+. This is something that needs to be tackled at a governmental level as they need to give the opportunity for these services to be developed, however, it is the students that need to, with the help of adult educators, raise this issue and make it heard. It would be my hope to see a wider variety of continuing education services and institutions in place. With the ethos of providing those with ASN a voice that is heard, giving them the opportunity to actively engage in their own life. Regarding my professional ambitions I hope to also continue actively engaging with the students hearing their experiences first hand and facilitate in any way possible to improve and promote their learning.

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Research Involving Human Subjects

Notification of Ethics Application Outcome – UG and PGT Applications

Application Details

Application Type: MSc Teaching Adults   Application Number: CSS/SOE/2017/041

Applicant's Name: Jennifer Forrest   Project Title: Adult Education & Addition Support Needs

(ASN): Reasons for Success

_____

Application Status

Approved – Pending Permissions (please see below)   X

Approved – No Permissions Required

Not approved – Minor Recommendations only (please see overleaf)

Not approved – Full Resubmission Required (please see overleaf)

Note: Start and End Dates of Approval will only be given when ethical approval has been granted and when all the relevant permissions have been received.

Start Date: 19/02/2018   End Date: 6/08/2018

_____

Permissions

Please find below the list of permissions that you MUST obtain and submit to the Ethics Administrator before commencing with data collection. You can either provide a scanned copy of the permission letters to: education-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk, or send a hard copy to: C. Paterson PGT Office St Andrew's Building 11 Eldon Street Glasgow G3 6NH

Permission required from:	Received in Admin Office:
Head teacher (permission to conduct research)	30/01

Recommendations (where Changes are Required)

- ***Where changes are required all applicants must respond*** in the relevant boxes to the recommendations of the Committee and return to the Ethics Office to explain the changes you have made to the application.

- (***If application is Rejected*** *a full new application must be submitted by returning to the Ethics Office. Where recommendations are provided, they should be responded to and this document provided as part of the new application.*

(Shaded areas will expand as text is added)

MAJOR RECOMMENDATION OF THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS	APPLICANT RESPONSE TO MAJOR

MINOR RECOMMENDATION OF THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS	APPLICANT RESPONSE TO MINOR
7.2: research methodology : Please provide a fuller description of the nature of the intervention in the Action research aspect of research	This has been completed in section 7.2 please see attached documents.
The Plain language statements are out of date since Kara Makara Fuller is now the ethics officer so details need to be changed from Margaret McCulloch to Kara MaKara Fuller	Forms amended.

REVIEWER COMMENTS COMMENTS (*OTHER THAN SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS*)	APPLICANT RESPONSE TO REVIEWER

Please retain this notification for future reference. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact the School of Education ethics administrative contact for UG and PGT Applications: education-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk
Underline of Notification.

Appendix 2: Teens+ Structure


```
                          Board of
                          Directors
                              |
                             CEO
                              |
                    ┌─────────┴─────────┐
                 TEENS+            Sleep Services
                    |
                 Senior
               Management
                    |
              TEENS+ Multi-
              Disciplinary
                  Team
      ┌───────────┬────────┴────────┬──────────────┐
  Education   Speech and      Team Leaders     Admin/IT/HR
              Language
      ┌───────────┬─────────────────┬──────────────┐
 Transitional  Befriending      Lifelong       Support Staff
  Education      Service        Education
      |                        ┌─────┴─────┐
 ILP's/Transition           ILP's      Next steps
    pathways
```
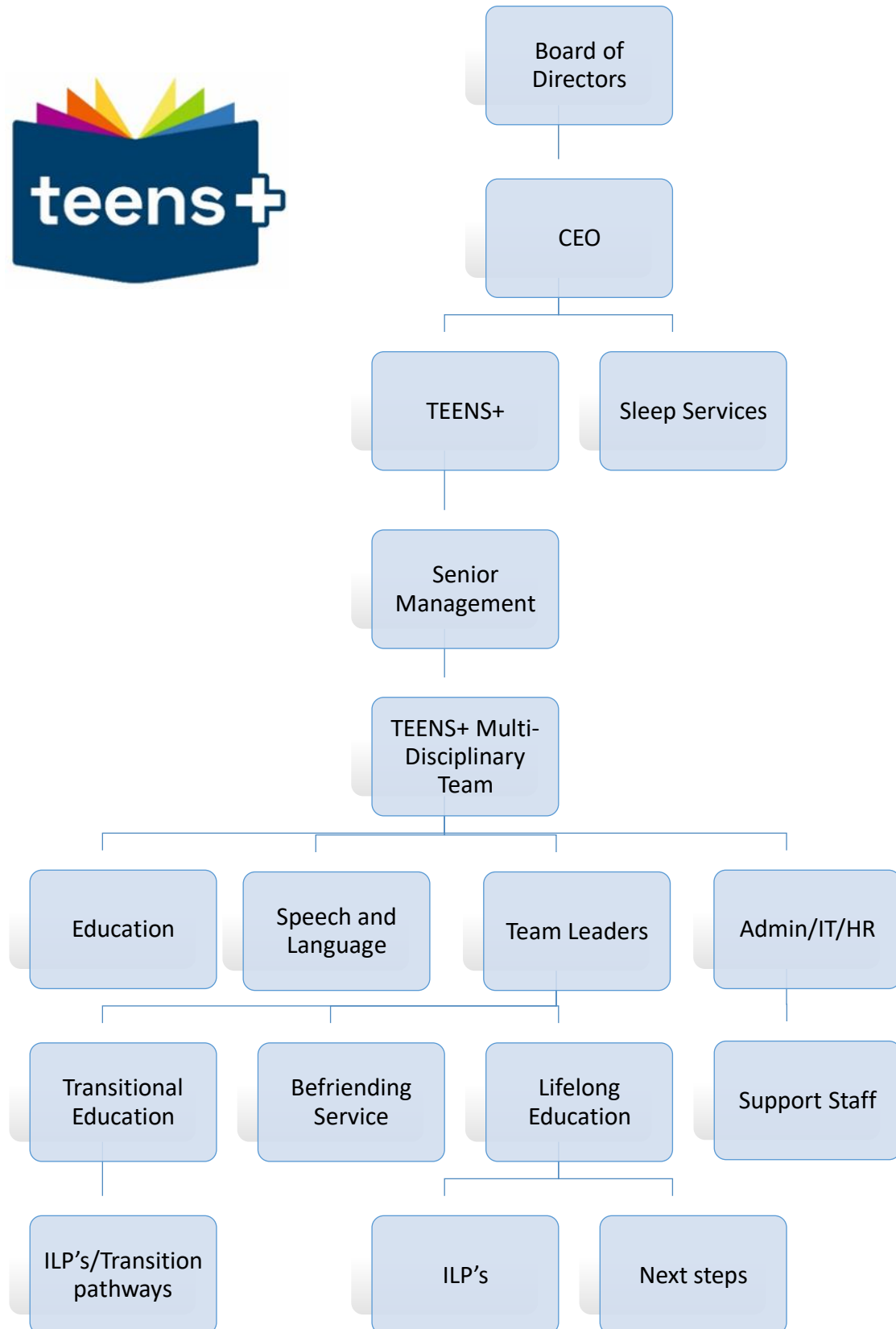
Appendix 3: Individual Learning Plan (ILP)

Individual Learning Plan – Student Name
TEENS+ 2018 – 2019

Baseline needs: Literacy – increase composition skills, comprehension skills; Numeracy – place value, multiplication & money
Communication – skills in social interaction, problem solving skills; Life skills – independence, health & wellbeing, safety

Communication Skills		
Targets	**Coursework**	**Success Criteria**
1. To increase ability to express opinion in an appropriate way.	a) Interviewing activities b) Group discussion c) Teaching Interaction group d) Talking Mats e) Friendship group f) Community activities g) Do you think question cards?	a) Able to engage in interviewing activities to express her own opinions and find out about others' opinions b) Contributed opinion appropriately during group discussion and teaching interaction group. c) Used talking mats framework to engage in a more in-depth conversation about meaningful topics. d) Able to discuss her thoughts on friendship and behaviour during friendship group with minimal support. e) Able to express her opinions appropriately while out in the community with minimal support. f) Able to express her thoughts in an assertive positive manner when negotiating with others, with support.
2. To increase emotional awareness in self and in others	a) Emotions pack b) Talkabout Cards c) Teaching Interaction group d) Friendship group e) Fun Deck pragmatics/feelings app f) Emotion Dice g) Reflection – Talking mats, comic strip, reflection sheets h) Talkabout board game	a) Able to identify how she and others would feel in hypothetical visual situations. b) Able to discuss emotions as part of a group activity with little support. c) Able to use the emotions dice to describe what makes her feel each emotion with no support. d) Able to reflect on how her behaviour makes others feel with little prompting. e) To participate in the Talkabout board game activity with peers, minimal support.
3. To improve listening, attention and memory	a) Listening – Talking Chair b) Auditory memory tasks (YouTube, Fun Deck Cards, Recall Tasks) c) Visual Memory tasks (faces, sequencing)	a) Able to recall verbal information and answer questions based on this. b) Able to watch a short video clip and recall the salient point and the names of characters without prompting. c) Able to recall visual information e.g. remembering faces or visual sequences with no prompting.

Communication Skills

Targets	Coursework	Success Criteria
4. Social Skills • Appropriate and inappropriate behaviour • Non-Verbal Skills • Pragmatic understanding • Problem solving and inferencing • Conversation skills • Group work	a) Teaching Interaction Group b) Conversation trees c) Conversation skills d) Interrogation dice e) Talkabout Board Game f) Reflection g) Fun Deck Pragmatics app h) Right way versus wrong way role play i) Silly versus Sensible cards. j) Social behaviour colour cards k) Story Recall (giving the gist of a story) l) 'Reading Between the Lines'	a) Able to demonstrate appropriate non-verbal communication (eye contact, posture etc.) with no prompting. b) Able to interact appropriately in a group setting (listening to others , appropriate turn taking, appropriate body language) with no support. c) Able to appropriately ask & answer conversation/discussion questions in a group setting with little support. d) Able to use appropriate conversation skills (keeping to a conversation topic, appropriate language/content, appropriate volume and intonation) with little support. e) Able to describe (written or verbal) the appropriate/inappropriate response in a social situation. f) Able to sum up the gist of a story with prompting . g) Able to make inferences about a piece of text with support . h) Able to demonstrate understanding of words with double meanings with prompting.

Education Skills

Targets	Coursework	Success Criteria
1. To increase understanding of written language and use of written language.	a) Comprehension • Verbal instruction • Reading short passage/ story • Community signs • Food labels/ recipes b) Writing formation: handwriting work sheets c) Creative writing block d) Book review	a) Able to take part in activities shown in coursework to increase comprehension with minimal prompting. b) Carries out formation activities to improve legibility with minimal prompting. c) Takes part in a creative writing incorporating all previously developed literacy skills with some support. d) One has worked through a book of her choice is able to write up a review with minimal prompting.
2. To increase understanding of how to use numbers and money.	a) Addition & subtraction: incorporating place value. b) Multiplication c) Problem solving (using word problems to apply skills a + b d) Adding up amounts of money e) Working out change given f) Running snack shop g) Value of items: ordering items according to cost	a) Able to carry out addition & subtraction H T U with carrying with minimal prompting. b) Builds confidence and finds tricks to support learning with timetables with minimal prompting. c) Able to complete word problems using numeracy skills with some support. d) Able to add up amounts of money up to £5 with minimal prompting e) Continues to run snack shop applying necessary skills with minimal prompting. f) Able to correctly order items from lowest to highest value with minimal prompting.
3. To increase the use of ITC to support learning.	a) Smartboard b) Computer c) Understanding the computer: • Navigation • Microsoft systems • Email	a) Makes use of smartboard to develop interactive learning with some support. b) Continues to use the computer & internet to support learning. c) Carries out a computer project to increase understanding of points listed in coursework with minimal prompting.

Personal Skills		
Targets	**Coursework**	**Success Criteria**
1. To take part in a volunteer placement.	a) Meet the employer b) Breakdown the job to show understanding. c) Appropriate Interacting with others d) Reflecting on the process: things that went well, things that were hard, actions for next time.	a) Carries out a meet and greet with the supervisor of voluntary placement with some support. b) Able to mind map and show what will be fully involved in the role with some support. c) Demonstrates appropriate interaction with volunteering with minimal prompting. d) Able to reflect on the process and come up with actions for next time with minimal prompting.
2. To increase awareness of health & well-being	a) Friendship group b) Health & well being project over the year: food, exercise, sleep, wellbeing, personal hygiene c) Women's Group d) Physical Fitness	a) Participates in friendship group with minimal prompting. b) Carries out a health and well being project over the year broken into blocks with some support. c) Participates in regular women's group sessions with minimal prompting. d) Take part in regular exercise sessions with minimal prompting.
3. To increase independence and sense of responsibility.	a) Taking responsibility for own items: • Meds • Diaries b) Problems & solutions: Best Scenarios c) Independent shopping trip d) Mentoring others in activity of choice e) Using crane appropriately f) Thinking about the future **Life skills:** a) Cooking: Collecting ingredients, storage, preparation, cooking b) Household tasks	a) Demonstrates ability to take responsibility for keeping items safe and taking them around with her during with minimal prompting. b) Identifies solutions to everyday problems with minimal prompting. c) Able to carry out shopping trip independently. d) Able to mentor students in a planned activity with minimal prompting. e) When out in the community uses cane appropriately & safely with no prompting. f) Able to have discussions around future options with some support. g) Able to cook a meal from start to finish following all steps with minimal prompting. h) Takes part in household tasks with minimal prompting.
4. To increase safety awareness.	a) Safety videos: Watch and identify the dangers (kitchen, road, strangers) b) Taking checklist when out on walk to increase awareness of surroundings. c) Internet safety	a) Watches videos with dangers and hazards and able to identify with minimal prompting. b) When out in the community able to look out for things that were previously discussed with some support. c) Has discussion around the dangers associated with internet with minimal prompting.

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