Title: "We have to carry on". A participatory research project with young people enrolled on a supported internship program during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

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Abstract

Aim(s)

This participatory research project gathered the views of young people (YP) with an education, health and care plan (EHCP), enrolled in a supported internship programme (SIP) at a further education (FE) college.

Rationale

There is little published researched exploring the experience of FE for YP with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Furthermore, this group have had minimal opportunities to shape the research agenda through participatory involvement.

Methods

A participatory design involved four YP with SEND enrolled in a SIP, who acted as co-researchers and participants. Data gathering, chosen by co-researchers, comprised of photo-voice and interview techniques. The primary researcher assisted the co-researchers via facilitating sessions and analysing data using inductive thematic analysis.

Findings

Developing friendships, independence, work skills and travel skills were valued by co-researchers, although opportunities were limited by the Covid-19 lockdown. Co-researchers indicated specific inequalities and were critical of national policy.

Implications

SIPs are a positive experience for YP with SEND, widening opportunities for independence and social connections. Lockdown had a negative impact by limiting such opportunities.

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Limitations

This project draws on the views of a small sample of YP. Conducting the project remotely posed limitations on supporting YP with communication difficulties. Time limitations hampered opportunities to support co-researchers to develop their ideas for projects and to collaborate extensively in data analysis or discussion of the findings.

Conclusions.

Involving YP with SEND in the design of research enhances opportunities for YP to share views on what really matters to them and shape regular and policy planning.

(252 words)

Key words: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, supported internship programme , participatory research, Lockdown, Further education, Preparing for adulthood, photo-voice.

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Introduction

The SEND code of practice (Department for Education, 2015) states that local authorities must continue to fund educational provision for YP with an EHCP where this is needed to support them in preparing for adulthood (PfA). PfA meetings should include discussion of options such as supported internships (SIP). A SIP is an employability course designed for YP with an EHCP who are aged 16 to 25 (Department for Education, 2022).

SIPs are available at some FE colleges and the purpose of these programmes is to help prepare students for independence and employment. Whilst positive in their ethos, no published research to date explored student views and experiences related to these comparatively new forms of study programmes.

Despite recent reforms to post-16 education for YP with SEND, the transition out of education and into work remains a concern for this group. A relatively recent study

identified that only 6% of adults with a diagnosis of learning disabilities are employed in the United Kingdom (UK), (Hatton et al., 2016). Lack of employment can mean an absence of meaningful activity for YP with learning difficulties[1] after they leave school, which in turn, is associated with social isolation, mental health problems and negative health outcomes (Young-Southward et al., 2017). In their qualitative study, Young-Southward et al. (2017) concluded that many of the difficulties experienced by YP with learning difficulties after transition to adulthood were caused by the society's failure to include them, not by problems within the individuals. Given that the person-centred work and planning has been encouraged through national SEND legislation for almost a decade now (Department for Education, 2015; Fox, 2015), yet still not sufficient client voices have penetrated in the post 16 literature, it is vital that both educators and educational psychologists take and share wisdom from the views and experiences of students with SEND at post-16. This could contribute to deepening the understanding of the societal processes that lead to YP with SEND being denied opportunities to participate in employment and the wider community, in order to eventually remove these barriers (Goodley et al., 2003) and provide an enhanced inclusive societal environment. Furthermore, there is mounting evidence that the pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities in UK society (Banks, Fancourt, & Xu, 2021). The authors argue developing understanding of the short and longer term impacts of the pandemic helps shed light on what matters to YP in their education and PfA.

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[1] The term" learning difficulties" is preferred in this article as available research (e.g. Chapman, 2014; Chappell, Goodley, & Lawthom, 2001), suggest that adults with a diagnosis of learning disability prefer the term "learning difficulties" instead of "learning disability".

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Literature review

The literature informing this study was identified via an initial scoping review (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005) and developed via a hermeneutic literature review process[2] (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014). The review of the literature identified two themes pertinent to this article, presented briefly below.

Support for students with SEND at FE

There are a range of courses for students with SEND in FE. These include level 1 courses (at pre GCSE level) and employability courses. Some professionals raised concerns about the courses available to YP with SEND in FE, as they could isolate students from social connections, as well as lead to negative learning identities (Atkins, 2010; Cornish, 2017, 2018, 2019; Spenceley, 2012).

Student voice in research

To date, there is no published research which involved students on a SIP. By proxy, research containing the views of students with SEND in FE attending a range of course types identified that, relationships with peers were important to the YP (Bell, 2015; Hickey, 2016), alongside positive relationships with teachers (Lawson, 2018) . Lawson (2018) and Heslop (2018) view their findings through self-determination theory[3] (Deci & Ryan, 2000) lenses and argued that relatedness is an essential component of students' development.

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[2] The Hermeneutic Literature Review Process involves critical reading of articles gathered in an initial search, leading to further literature search in response. In this case, limitations of research gathered in initial search led to gathering further research on participatory approaches.
[3] Self-determination theory suggests that psychological development can occur when an individual's needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness are met (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Some research into FE for YP with SEND also suggested low student satisfaction with their courses (Atkins, 2010; Cornish, 2017). Furthermore, a common frustration shared by FE students was the lack of involvement in decision making and lack of choice in FE (Bell, 2015; Elson, 2011; Kaehne & Beyer, 2014; Lawson, 2018).

Rationale

Some of the literature on FE for YP with SEND has articulated professionals' perspectives without gathering students' voices (Spenceley, 2012; Wright, 2006) ; other researchers (Atkins, 2010; Cornish, 2017, 2018, 2019) did gather students' views, nonetheless they used research questions which are pre-determined by the researchers. Whilst these types of scientific exploration are accepted in the research community, they are criticised by disability-rights activists who have long argued it is vital for disabled people to be actively involved in shaping the research agenda so that its outcomes support their best interests (Charlton, 1998).

Research into FE for students with SEND rarely provides YP with opportunities to influence the systems they are part of, or the educators with practical ideas for ways forward, and this has been apparent throughout the literature identified above. On the other hand, the opportunity to take on (co-)researcher roles, has been found, in a number of studies, to be an empowering experience for both adults and YP labelled with LD or SEND (Burstein, Bryan, & Chao, 2005; Choma & Ochocka, 2005; Ollerton & Horsfall, 2013; Keyes & Brandon, 2012).

The study presented in this article addressed a dual aim: firstly, to contribute to the limited current scientific enquiry into FE – SEND arena; and secondly, to enhance the already recognised benefits of participatory research with vulnerable groups and to the body of participatory research with YP with SEND. In line with a participatory research design, the

co-researchers' input helped shape the primary research question (RQ1): What do YP want their teachers to know about their experience on a SIP during a pandemic?. The first author added a secondary research question: (RQ 2) What supports YP with SEND to share their views on what's important to them in their educational experience?, considered to inform designing future research within this area.

Methodology

Epistemological Position

The study adopted a critical and social constructionist stance, as it recognises the role of power in society and how it allows groups of people to be treated (Burr, 1995). It postulates that, in order to have a positive impact on people's lives, psychologists need to remain critical of systems and labels that might have negative impact and be mindful of using language and approaches that allow the possibility of positive change and respect individuals' choices (Corcoran, 2017). The authors' training and professional values align to this epistemological position.

Study Design

A participatory design was used to collect qualitative data, which informed the research questions. The first author facilitated the involvement of co-researchers in the study design by presenting the group with a range of options for sharing their views in an accessible presentation. Co-researchers chose photo-voice and interviews as methods for data gathering. A list of interview questions was generated by the co-researchers with support from their teacher and the first author, this led to a shift in the research question so that it addressed the YPs experience of their course in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

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Co-researchers[4]

Four students (two male and two female) aged 18-25 who were attending a SIP at an FE college in London took part in the project. They had a duel role as both co-researchers and participants (hereafter referred to as co-researchers) (as per Borrett & Rowley, 2020). Although the co-researchers belonged to a range of faiths and ethnicities, all were members of minority ethnic groups. The first author chose the pseudonyms Amina, Fatima, Mo and James to represent the diversity of the co-researchers. All had an EHCP due to learning difficulties and, in some cases, due to other disabilities (further details are excluded to protect anonymity).

Co-researchers were recruited via an information letter and introduction from the first author via video call given to all students on the SIP at a college.

Procedure

Both the presentations (provided as part of the planning session) and interviews took place in a private room via video conference and were recorded and transcribed by the first author. The first author created opportunities to clarify her interpretation of the data with co-researchers and to gain feedback on the project in weekly sessions, detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: Phases of data collection

Phase	Description
1	Initial interviews: the co-researchers answered questions posed by the first author (nb, these questions had been generated in the planning session by the co-researchers).

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[4] The term co-researcher is used as participants are treated as partners in the research process, involved in shaping the research agenda .

2	Summary check-in interviews: first author read co-researchers a summary of the main points co-reserchers shared in their initial interviews to ensure she understood what they intended to share.
3	Photo-voice: the YP took photos of areas they liked and disliked at college and created a presentation for their class to explain their choices of photographs (supported by college tutors). The first author attended and recorded the presentations via video call.
4	Themes feedback sessions: first author read proposed themes to co-researchers, who commented on and refined the themes.
5	Evaluation and feedback sessions. First author facilitated a group session to gain feedback on the project from the group.

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Data Analysis

To analyse data for RQ1, the first author carried out an inductive thematic analysis of the data (Clarke & Braun, 2013) gathered at phases 1,2 and 3 (see Table 1) and then shared the results of this analysis with the co-researchers (phase 4), who acted as consultants and advisers in this stage. The co-researchers' comments on the themes were taken into account to further refine the themes.

To analyse data for RQ2, the first author selected the data which looked specifically at co-researchers' feedback on the research process throughout phases 1,2,3,4 and 5. Additionally, she selected text containing examples of her own use of empathetic interviewing (Oakley, 2016) and the impact of this. She then carried out an inductive

thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2013) of the relevant data collected at phase 1,2,3,4 and 5 (nb, the co-researchers were not involved in this phase of data-analysis).

Ethics

The research was approved by Local Authority and university Ethics Committees. A number of steps were taken to ensure the YP could access the information given so that they could give informed consent. All paperwork (such as consent and debriefing forms) were easy-read, to accommodate the needs of YP with SEND, and were read aloud to the group by the first author (via video call). YP had additional time to review the information with their tutor at college (a familiar adult).

The participatory nature of the research gave each co-researcher choice about how they would like to share their views and which questions they would answer (see study design). For instance, co-researchers could choose an individual or group interview and opt out of any phase or activity. The first author provided information on the ethical use of photo-voice to the group before they took photos.

The number of sessions needed to complete the project and the demand on student's time posed an ethical difficulty in this project. The project was planned so that participation did not remove students from lessons or work experience opportunities, and it took place during additional pastoral time planned by college . The first author took the lead on some aspects (eg data analysis for RQ2 and write up) to limit demands on student's time, whilst acknowledging this step reduced the participatory nature of the study. The research took place remotely in line with the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions at the time.

Those students choosing not to participate took part in an alternative activity, to avoid any pressure on students to participate in the research. Co-researchers were informed that safeguarding concerns arising from information gathered would be shared with college or

local authority safeguarding agencies as appropriate. The first author communicated with the college tutor on a weekly basis throughout the study to monitor co-researchers' wellbeing. She also shared details of local youth forums with the co-researchers, should they wish to seek further opportunities to share their views.

Findings

RQ1: What do YP want their teachers to know about their experience on a SIP during a pandemic?

Eight master themes were generated from the inductive thematic analysis of the data, graphically represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: *Thematic Map with Master Themes Generated in Response to Research Question 1*
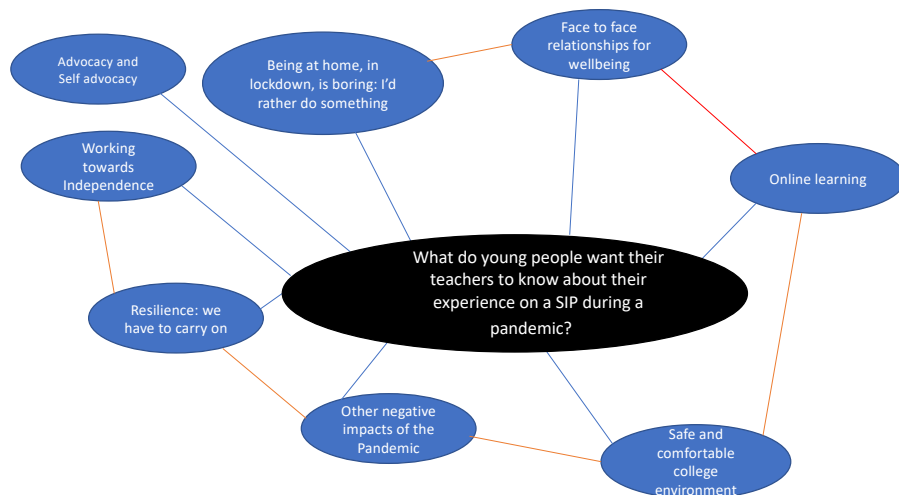
The following sections describe the master themes identified, with the language used reflecting, where possible, the co-researcher's own language and expressions.

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1: Working towards independence

This theme explored how co-researchers cherished the opportunity to develop independence on the SIP. Support from staff was valued, however co-researchers emphasised their independence, for example when asked about the role of job coaches, Amina shared "when you feel comfortable that's when they (job coach) leave you to it."

Practical experiences, such as independent travel to work placements seemed to have built confidence. Fatima shared how she travelled to work placement on her own and "it was a bit scary but I managed,". Some co-researchers emphasised a desire not to rely on others. All co-researchers stated their main goal was to get a job and had defined work preferences. The co-researchers spoke about the range of roles and responsibilities they had had on different work placements, suggesting they took pride in their work, as James shared, "[working] makes me feel proud".

2: Being at home, in lockdown, is boring: I'd rather do something

The co-researchers mentioned work placements being delayed or no longer possible due to Covid-19 restrictions; similarly, college-based and other leisure activities had been unavailable. Fatima shared that "(lockdown is) boring … I have to sit at home doing nothing all day" and other co-researchers made similar points. Boredom was linked to not seeing friends (see master theme 4), as Fatima clearly states: "not able to go college and not seeing your friends … it was boring".

3: Online learning

Co-researchers reported online learning replaced college-based learning during Covid-19 restrictions. They found that both their own sensory impairments and other learning difficulties made the sessions, such as video conference meetings, very tiring. For example, Mo shared that "online will be too hard, to like hear. And face to face its easy,".

Lack of a quiet space to take part in online sessions at home was a source of stress: "I always have someone in the background talking" (Amina). However, communication technology also offered some benefits, such as an opportunity to keep in touch with friends. For example:

> Penelope: (…) did you use Teams at all during the lockdown?
>
> Fatima: err, yeah to speak to (friend)

4: Face to face relationships for wellbeing

Co-researchers frequently expressed that in-person relationships with both friends and teachers were important to their mental health and wellbeing. For example, Amina shared, "generally in lockdowns you feel lonely, generally you don't have anybody to talk to like, in person (…) at college we speak to our friends or speak to teachers." Within this theme the subtheme *importance of friends at college and placements* was highlighted. Co-researchers mentioned being with friends as an aspect of college they enjoyed, as well as feelings of discomfort, when relationships are strained.

Work placements provided opportunities for the co-researchers to meet new people, building co-researchers' confidence, as Amina shared: "… you're meeting new people, you're making new friends, every single day (…) once you have that connection and that bond with someone then you overcome your nervousness".

Co-researchers' responses to interview questions also highlighted the *importance of relationships with staff at college*, suggesting these relationships were valued and staff provided practical and emotional support. James eloquently shared, for instance, that "I'll miss all my teachers when I leave college".

5: Safe and comfortable college environment

Co-researchers spoke about what made college a safe and comfortable place to be. The word "comfortable" reflects positive comments about the food and facilities as well as

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Commented [HB8]: Can we exemplify this via a quote (maybe from someone other than Amina)?

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negative attitudes to overcrowding. Co-researchers expressed that quiet spaces in college were important to them, for example Fatima explained: "We also have a quiet room to do our work."

6: Other negative impacts of the pandemic

The pandemic had impacted every aspect of the co-researchers' lives, causing them to miss college and resulting in changes within the college. However, they were also aware of the wider impacts of the pandemic and wanted to discuss these, as well as their own experience. Some co-researchers shared feelings of distress while others expressed anger at the government's response and support for vulnerable groups:

> They [nb government] always talk about the case rising and things like that but generally I don't think they even care about what the individuals really have to say about how they've been impacted due to the Covid-19. They only care about how the NHS is vulnerable. But we are vulnerable. (Amina)

Mistrust in the government was also expressed by James in his response to this subtheme: "They are not telling the truth.".

7: Advocacy and Self-Advocacy

Self-advocacy is generally defined as speaking up for one's self and one's rights as a person (Goodley, 2000). All of the co-researchers in this project were self-advocates as they spoke about what was important to them. Amina was particularly interested in raising awareness about her medical condition and had a strong sense of her rights. Amina's comments suggested that she was interested in being an advocate for others with disabilities, too.

8: Resilience: we have to carry on

Throughout their interviews, co-researchers expressed challenges and distress resulting from the pandemic but also a sense of hope and a drive to carry on. The theme of resilience ran throughout the co-researchers experience as they spoke about overcoming fears, taking on challenges or in just carrying on with work that is sometimes boring or online learning they

found difficult to engage with. Amina made this point elegantly when saying, "Sometimes it doesn't make sense to us but we have to carry on, life carries on." However, she also challenged the concept of resilience by asking: "How are we supposed to have resilience, in ourselves, when Covid-19 is just taking every luxury we ever had?".

Summary of findings in relation to RQ1

Co-researchers explored important aspects of their experiences, including building confidence through real world, practical experiences of work, travel and meeting new people on their SIP. However, these positive experiences were put in perspective during the lockdown. In this latter context, the theme of resilience penetrates all the interviews, with accounts of overcoming challenges on work placements and coping with the "boredom" and social isolation experienced during "lockdown". Furthermore, the co-researchers showed concern about the wider impact of the pandemic and government policy.

Next Steps and Feedback to the Course Leaders

The first author drafted a list of "changes we would like to see", based on her reading of the transcripts and her initial themes. The ideas for changes were then developed to include "plans we would like to make" in discussion with the co-researchers. The researcher came up with the idea of "planning a reunion" in response to the co-researchers' comments about the importance of their relationships with both peers and teachers at college. This idea was met with enthusiasm from the co-researchers.

RQ2: What supports YP with SEND to share their views on what's important to them in their educational experience?

Figure 2 summarises the three themes generated in relation to the second research question.

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Figure 2 *Thematic Map with Master Themes Generated in Response to Research Question 2*
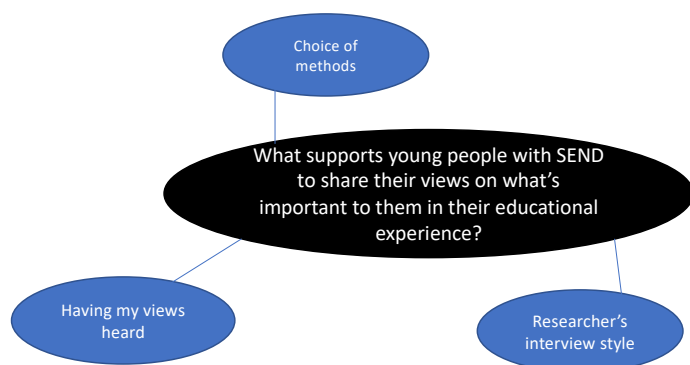
A degree of flexibility about the focus of the project seemed to allow the co-researchers to share what the most important issues for them were, as well as providing feedback on the course itself. For example, Amina reflected "sharing my ideas about how, how young individuals cope during the current pandemic that's going on," was something she enjoyed about taking part. This interest was shared by the group and reflected in the list of interview questions they generated, informing the research question.

In phase 4 of the data collection process, the first author presented the themes derived from phases 1 to 3 (see table 1). This gave co-researchers the opportunity to reflect on the emerging themes. Although originally planned to be a member checking process to validate themes, the first author took this as an opportunity for further development of ideas in some cases. Furthermore, non-verbal prompts and the space to continue to speak was helpful.

The first author used an empathic *interview style*, aiming for reciprocity (Oakley, 2016) to create a comfortable atmosphere for co-researchers to share their views. For example, she shared her personal experience of working from home in a discussion around online learning. Furthermore, it was not uncommon for the co-researchers to seek the advice or opinion of the first author which was shared when requested.

Overall, giving the co-researchers the *opportunity to choose methods* worked well as they fed back that they had enjoyed the photo-voice and interview methods, for example, "(I liked) taking pictures around the college" (Mo). It seemed that, *involving co-researchers* in generating interview questions and responding by adapting the research question, was positive and constructive for both the study and the co-researchers. The opportunity to re-visit themes and check summaries may have supported the YP in having the sense their *views were taken into account* and gave the researcher confidence she had represented the co-researchers' views.

Discussion

What do YP want their teachers to know about their experience on a SIP during a pandemic?

Overall, the SIP programme seems that it does not only develop practical work experience and skills for YP with SEND; an added benefit is the psychological effect of having opportunities for competency, autonomy and relatedness for them (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Furthermore, some of this study's findings suggested the development of social capital[5] was possible on work placements.

However, of high importance for curriculum development is that the online only curriculum (in place during national restrictions) did not provide the opportunities for developing social capital afforded by typical work placements. Furthermore, an online curriculum may also make learning in academic subjects more challenging for some YP with SEND. Differences in digital access (to appropriate hardware, software, reliable internet

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[5] Social capital refers to the people whom individuals have a social connection to and their ability to use these connections (Thatcher et al., 2015)

access, and a suitable study space) (Barber, 2021) may have the impact of exacerbating existing educational inequalities linked to differences in economic circumstances. This is of particular concern in an inner London local authority where child poverty and over-crowded housing are common (Elahi et al., 2016). The co-researchers in this study identified the importance of quiet space for learning at college which was not accessible to all during "lockdown" periods.

A theme around resilience represented the co-researchers' drive and determination to continue in the face of the adverse circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic and other challenges they faced during this time. Comments made by co-researchers on the theme of resilience mirrored features of the resilient therapy framework (Hart et al., 2007) such as the aspect of coping in the framework. Amina rightly questions the possibilities for resilience in the context of national lockdown when hobbies and activities she enjoys were not possible, making the "find time for your talents" in the "core self" section of the framework and "find time for your interests" in the "coping" section difficult. Aspects of belonging and coping mentioned in master theme 4 are also very limited in the "lockdown" context, when neither college nor placements could be accessed in person. This reflects previous qualitative findings regarding YP with SEND's experiences after leaving education (Young-Southward et al 2017) and other recent qualitative findings on how YP (aged 13 to 24) experienced the pandemic (McKinlay et al, 2022) .

Amina eloquently argued that groups already facing disadvantage, may be further disadvantaged by lockdown restrictions and research is beginning to demonstrate this trend (Amorim et al., 2020; Banks et al., 2021; Fancourt et al, 2020). Amina demonstrated what has been described as an inequalities imagination in the literature (Hart, Hall, & Henwood, 2003), which may have been influenced by her unique perspective as a person from a minority group, with SEND, who was also experiencing problems with digital access. It

> **Commented [U12]:** Is this where the research took place. If so, this needs to be mentioned in the method section, perhaps under the 'Partcipants' section.

follows that policy makers and helping professionals have something to learn from Amina, whose insights may support others to develop an inequalities imagination.

Implications

Implications for both SIPs and educational psychologists (EP) arise from the findings of this research.

Implications for the SIP

Within SIPs, opportunities for work experience placements seem to be a must for their success, as the co-researchers in this study eloquently expressed. Co-researchers also gave positive feedback about the support they received on the SIP. While some felt ready to move on from this supported context, others felt more anxious about the move. A way of maintaining some elements of support the course provided, such as support from a job-coach, after leaving the course, would continue to be helpful for some YP and should be incorporated in a future SIP, individualised, offer.

Some co-researchers were able to keep in touch via technology and were confident in their ability to maintain contact after the course ending. Other co-researchers would benefit from more support to maintain the social and emotional networks established at college after leaving. Staff should consider facilitating this through future events, such as reunion or alumni opportunities.

Students may have benefited from the additional opportunities to develop ICT as a result of the online curriculum. However, the online only curriculum obviously limited social opportunities therefore use of ICT alongside practical experiences and face to face interaction may be ideal for some students.

Last, this project has highlighted yet again the importance of adapting classroom and online learning resources to cater for students' sensory impairments. Failure to adapt learning

not only impacts access to learning, but may also have a negative psychological impact by reducing the YP's experience of autonomy and competence, as well as potentially affecting relatedness, as the YP may feel let down by the teachers or isolated from the group (Wilson, Conway, Martin, & Turner, 2020) . This strongly supports the notion that negative psychological impacts of disability are often avoidable with environmental adaptations (Reeve, 2004).

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Implications for educational psychologists

Implications for EPs are related to the extent to which the pandemic led to YP with SEND missing out on opportunities to learn skills, develop independence and access social support, and how fragile the balance between "reproduction" of inequalities in education and positive bridging is, for this group of people. So far research suggests that recovery from negative psychological impacts of the pandemic and lockdown often occurs when individuals' access to social networks can resume, but may be prolonged if isolation continues (Banks et al., 2021). YP with SEND who have completed their education during the lockdown period may be at high risk of social isolation, especially if they are unemployed (Young-Southward et al., 2017). Furthermore, lockdown periods presented a particular challenge for YP with SEND who are preparing for adulthood as these YP have missed opportunities to experience supported independence. If EP's are present at multi-disciplinary meetings (e.g., annual reviews) with YP, they may use this knowledge to advocate for the extension of provision post-19 for YP who desire this and would benefit.

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Probably a yet unresolved implication of this study and other ones which appeared since 2020 is that the professional and research world acknowledges now that we require a better understanding of the long term impact of lockdown measures and resulting missed social and educational experiences for YP with SEND, as general population studies may

mask the unique challenges facing this group. Participatory research, including photo-voice methods, may support researchers to understand the lived experiences of this group.

Limitations

This project involved a small yet diverse group of YP and therefore represents only the views of those involved. Furthermore, co-researchers differed considerably in volume and detail of contributions they shared and thus views of some gain more representation in this research than others.   Not all students on the course opted in and it may be that those who were more engaged with the course decided to participate.

Additionally, data analysis took an inductive approach to thematic analysis, with the aim of being more inclusive and representative. It could be argued that the inductive approach could be biased to the researcher's own interests and world view (Clarke & Braun, 2013). In this case the researcher was also experiencing negative impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, possibly influencing her interpretation of the co-researchers' words or selecting the views of like-minded co-researchers for emphasis. Whilst checks and changes were performed between the authors as well as with the co-researchers, it must be acknowledged that the findings are a co-construction influenced by all those involved in the study.

What supports YP with SEND to share their views on what's important to them in their educational experience?

> **Commented [HB15]:** Let's talk about this section, I am not sure it fits naturally here.

Some co-researchers identified they would have liked more time to take part in the project. The time for gathering the views of co-researchers and supporting them to further develop their ideas for projects was limited by the author's deadline for completion of the research. Time, as well as ethical issues (explored above) also limited the possibilities for greater involvement from co-researchers in analysis, discussion and dissemination of the findings.

The analysis conducted for RQ2 revealed that on some occasions the first author gave information quickly, and a co-researcher requested that she slows down to give them the opportunity to respond and clarify. At other times such feedback was not given by co-researchers, and there is a possibility that the first author might not have created enough space for the co-researchers' input. An in-person discussion, supported by graphic facilitation may have supported some co-researchers to contribute more.

Conclusion

The co-researchers' desire to be active, independent community members rather than be "stuck at home" was clear. Action is needed to ensure ongoing support for YP with SEND to take active roles in the community and to maintain the support networks and relationships they have developed at college which sustain resilience (Hart et al., 2007). This may also prevent some of the negative outcomes observed when individuals' psychological needs for relatedness, autonomy and competence are not met (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

The research took place in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, leading to reflections and understandings of what mattered most to the co-researchers, which might have been hidden under "normal" circumstances. Co-researchers valued the opportunity for their views, on government policy as well as their personal experience, to be heard. Future research might explore what experiences and opportunities had supported YP with a strength in self-advocacy, so that more YP with SEN might access these.

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