



An ethnographic study of a Project SEARCH Supported Internship programme: a focus on social inclusion for learning disabled people

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Declaration

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Abstract

In England the employment data shows that only 4.8% of 'adults with a learning disability' are in paid employment compared to 86% of the general population. Referred to by the English Department for Work and Pensions as the disability employment gap, in 2013 the Department for Education introduced Supported Internships as a means to address this inequality. Defined as a structured work-based, educational programme for young learning-disabled adults, Supported Internships are designed to improve the life chances of young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) by supporting them into sustained paid employment. Whilst these programmes have seen growing implementation over the past twelve years, the existing research focusses primarily on employment outcomes, with limited investigation into the broader impacts of Supported Internships, such as social inclusion. Addressing this gap of research, this study focusses on the factors mediating social inclusion for six interns enrolled in a nine month (one academic year) Supported Internship programme located in a hospital. Employing an immersive ethnographic methodology, data for this study was gathered daily throughout the nine months of the Supported Internship; methods of data collection included, observation, reflective fieldnotes, interviews, and the gathering of artifacts and documents. Critically analysed through the lens of a biopsychosocial ecological systems theory which comprises five interconnected systems, analysis starts with the individual systems of disposition, demand and resource, and extends through to the outer socio-political system. Focussed on the factors mediating the interns' social inclusion, this research reveals the significance of the interns' self-motivation, support networks, public transport, the host business's organisational culture, and Supported Internship policy frameworks. The findings demonstrate that these internships deepen social inclusion through increased community participation and interpersonal relationships, while also highlighting challenges in maintaining these affirmations post-programme. This research challenges the Department for Education's singular focus on employment outcomes as a measure of success, advocating for more holistic evaluation criteria that recognises social inclusion dimensions.

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Glossary of terms

Annual Review: Yearly process of reviewing a child or young person's Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) to ensure it continues to meet the child or young person's needs.

Biopsychosocial Model: A framework that integrates biological, psychological, and social factors in understanding disability. Views disability as a complex interaction between health conditions, personal factors, and environmental/social contexts.

Breadth of Social Inclusion: The range and diversity of social contexts and environments in which an individual participates and maintains relationships, measured by the variety of relationship types and community activities.

Children and Families Act (2014): The principal piece of legislation governing SEN law in England.

Community Participation: Involvement in community activities and settings, including leisure, civic, productive, consumer, and cultural activities, which can occur in segregated, semi-segregated, or mainstream environments.

Department for Education (DfE): The UK government department responsible for children's services and education, including early years, schools, higher and further education policy, apprenticeships, and wider skills in England.

Depth of Social Inclusion: The quality and intensity of social connections and community involvement, measured by the level of reciprocity, emotional closeness, and active participation in relationships and activities.

Ecological Systems Theory: A developmental framework introduced by Bronfenbrenner that examines how nested environmental systems, from immediate relationships to broader cultural contexts, shape human development.

Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP): A legal document that describes a child or young person's special educational, health and social care needs, and outlines the support to meet those needs.

Equality Act 2010: A law that protects people in the UK from discrimination, harassment, and victimisation. It applies to the workplace, public services, businesses, transport, and clubs/associations. It protects people from discrimination based on nine protected characteristics including: 1) age, 2) disability, 3) gender reassignment, 4) marriage/civil partnership, 5) pregnancy/maternity, 6) race, 7) religion/belief, 8) sex 9) sexual orientation.

Grey Literature: Information produced outside of traditional publishing and distribution channels, often including reports, working papers, and government documents.

Interpersonal Relationships: Social connections between individuals that provide emotional, instrumental, or informational support, including relationships with family members, staff, friends, acquaintances, and intimate partners.

Local Authority (LA): The local government body responsible for providing services in a particular area, including education.

Local Offer: A comprehensive guide published by local authorities that outlines all available education, health, and social care services for children and young people with SEND in their area, detailing what support is available and how to access it.

Mainstream School: Refers to schools that are not special schools, including maintained schools and Academy schools that are not designated as special schools.

Medical Model of Disability: Framework that defines disability as a medical condition or physical/mental impairment within an individual that requires treatment or cure. Views disability primarily as a medical issue to be solved.

National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi): An organisation that promotes inclusion and equality for people who risk exclusion and need support to lead a full life.

PPCT Model: An ecological systems theory developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner that explains human development through four interrelated components: proximal processes (recurring interactions driving development), personal characteristics, environmental contexts (from immediate to broad societal settings), and temporal dimensions that affect development across time.

Project SEARCH: An international Transition-to-Work/Supported Internship Model. It is a one-year educational, workplace-based training programme operated full time, five days per week situated entirely within a business. Learning disabled and autistic participants gain real work experience through department rotations while receiving on-site support and job coaching, with the goal of securing competitive employment.

SEN Code of Practice 0-25 (2015): Produced by the Secretary of State for Education, it is statutory guidance for organisations that work with and support children and young people between the age of 0-25 with special educational needs and disabilities. It contains legal requirements as set out in the Children and Families Act (2014), the Equality Act (2010), and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations (2014).

Social Model of Disability: Framework that defines disability as created by societal barriers (physical, social, attitudinal) rather than by individual impairments. Views disability as a mismatch between a person's needs and their environment, emphasising the need to change society rather than the individual.

Social Inclusion: The interaction between two major life domains - interpersonal relationships and community participation - that enables individuals to develop meaningful connections, engage in community activities, and experience varying levels of support and participation in society.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND): A term used in England to describe children and young people who have learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than most children of the same age. SEND covers four broad areas of need including: 1) communication and interaction, 2) cognition and learning, 3) Social, emotional and mental health and 4) Sensory and/or physical needs.

Special Educational Provision (SEP): Educational or training provision that is additional to, or different from, that generally made for others of the same age in mainstream provision.

Special School: A school specifically organised to make special educational provision for SEND pupils, maintained by the Local Authority, an Academy school, or a non-maintained special school.

Supported Employment: A provision of support to people with disabilities to access and maintain paid employment in the open labour market.

Supported Internship: A structured study programme based primarily at an employer, originating in the USA (where similar programmes are called 'transition-to-work' or 'school-to-work' initiatives), designed to enable young people diagnosed with SEND to achieve sustainable paid employment through work placements and targeted skills development.

Abbreviations

ASCOF	Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework
BASE	British Association for Supported Employment
BERA	British Educational Research Association
CGR	Cooper Gibson Research
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service
DFE	Department for Education
DFN PS	David Forbes Nixon Project SEARCH
DoHSC	Department of Health and Social Care
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EHCP	Educational Health Care Plan
FE	Further Education
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
NAO	National Audit Office
NDTI	National Development Team for Inclusion
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
NHS	National Health Service
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PHE	Public Health England
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PS	Project SEARCH
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SI	Supported Internship
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organisation

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Introduction

Overview

The most recent international data on 'persons with learning disabilities' shows that despite improvements in educational attainment, their employment prospects remain behind their non-disabled peers (World Health Organisation, 2022, p.77). In England specifically, the employment data shows that only 4.8% of 'adults with a learning disability' are in paid employment compared to 86% of the general population, with the lowest reported figure of 1.1% in West Sussex in England (Department of Health and Social Care, 2023, p.1). Referred to by the English Department for Work and Pensions (2023) as the disability employment gap, this disparity persists despite evidence that employment increases learning-disabled people's income by 55 to 95 percent, whilst also enhancing their independence and self-esteem (National Audit Office, 2011). Based on the assumption that additional education and skill development would lead to improved employment outcomes, historically, attempts to address the disability employment gap have primarily relied on Further Education (FE) and day services. This educational pathway however has proven largely ineffective, with young learning-disabled people acquiring few qualifications and experiencing limited exposure to job opportunities during their college years (Beyer et al., 2014). Recent research further challenges this approach, suggesting that addressing structural barriers would be more effective in reducing the disability employment gap than equalising the educational levels between disabled and non-disabled people (Bryan et al., 2023). Extending beyond economic implications, the persistent lack of employment opportunities for young learning-disabled people fundamentally denies their access to the transformative aspects of work (Modini et al., 2016); for example, in relation to, pathways to personal autonomy, daily structure, and skill development (Warr, 2002). Moreover, work plays a crucial role in identity formation and social inclusion, as Gini (1990, p.707) articulates, 'the business of work is not simply to produce goods, but also to help produce people'.

The structural challenges which prevent young learning-disabled adults from entering the workforce are multifaceted, whilst some barriers stem from limited opportunities to gain work experience, others arise from employer perceptions and workplace practices (Department for Work and Pensions, 2024). For example, employer concerns about learning-disabled people's self-confidence, and assumptions regarding the level of support they may require (Paredes,

2018; Sankardas and Rajanahally, 2015). In response to these challenges and in order to address the disability employment gap, the English Department for Education (2013, p 102) introduced a structured work-based programme for young learning-disabled adults, known as ‘Supported Internships’. Originating in the United States of America (USA), these programmes have gained momentum in England, with the Department for Education (2022) setting a goal to increase annual student enrolment from 2,250 to 4,500 places by 2025. Combining hands-on workplace experience with educational support, the Supported Internship model requires that approximately 70% of participants' time is spent in a real work environment (HM Government, 2023). At their core, these internships aim to secure lasting, paid employment by developing practical skills through direct work placement learning aligned with participants’ abilities and career goals (Department for Work and Pensions, 2024). Designed for young people aged eighteen to twenty-five, at the time of conducting this research all those starting a Supported Internship required an active Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) (DfE and DoH, 2015). In 2023-24, when the data for this research was gathered, 4.8% of zero- to twenty-five-year-olds held an active EHCP (DfE, 2024). The purpose of an EHC plan being:

To make special educational provision to meet the special educational needs of the child or young person, to secure the best possible outcomes for them across education, health and social care and, as they get older, prepare them for adulthood (DfE and DoH, 2015, Section 9.2, p. 142).

This cited purpose places some emphasis on well-matched support that resources preparation for adulthood.

Despite the growing prominence of Supported Internships in England, the research landscape in this field encompasses a limited number of academic studies and grey literature, revealing knowledge gaps. Grey literature comprises materials produced outside traditional academic publishing channels, often lacking rigorous peer review (Schöpfel, 2010). In the context of Supported Internships, literature consists primarily of evaluative reports commissioned by the Department for Education, aimed at assessing programme effectiveness and outcomes. While these commissioned reports offer valuable insights into employment outcomes, retention rates, and cost-effectiveness metrics, they typically focus on quantitative outcomes and broad evaluations, overlooking critical qualitative dimensions. Specifically, they do not capture the social dynamics of workplace inclusion, the development of workplace relationships, the emotional journey of interns, and the day-to-day challenges and successes experienced by

participants. Understanding these dimensions would provide important insights into how to better design and implement internship programmes, enhance support mechanisms, and improve the overall experience for future interns. The Cooper Gibson Research (2020) study, to date the most comprehensive evaluation of Supported Internships in England, exemplifies this trend. Despite its extensive scope, which included telephone interviews with fifty participants (forty-two of whom were service providers), it did not include direct observations of Supported Internships or capture firsthand accounts from young participants. This approach, while informative on a macro system level and providing valuable insights from service providers, does not elucidate the day-to-day realities and personal experiences of the interns themselves for whom these programmes are designed.

International research on supported employment programmes, particularly the Project SEARCH model, demonstrates strong evidence for improving employment outcomes among individuals ‘with intellectual disabilities and/or autism’ (Davis, 2021, p.13). Studies predominantly emerge from the United States of America (USA), where randomised controlled trials (RCT) have shown success rates. Notable research includes Wehman et al.'s (2020) multi-site study demonstrating 73.4% employment success for programme participants versus 17% for control groups, and Christensen's (2015) RCT showing 90% competitive employment achievement with 87% retention after one year. Project SEARCH identified as the most extensively studied and replicated model, now implemented internationally including in England. However, practitioners in multiple countries face challenges in organising and implementing these work-based learning opportunities. Key barriers include limited placement opportunities, resource constraints, varying levels of stakeholder support, time pressures, and the need for specialised student support systems (Rooney-Kron and Dymond, 2021). Beyond these implementation challenges, while quantitative employment outcomes dominate the literature, there remains a gap in qualitative research examining participants' personal, social and community outcomes. This includes understanding how supported employment programmes may mediate both the depth and breadth of social inclusion across domains such as homelife, the community and sociopolitical engagement.

Academic research whilst limited to fifteen United Kingdom based studies in this field has made some contributions to understanding various aspects of Supported Internships including employer engagement, programme outcomes, and social inclusion. For example, Kaehne and

Beyer (2009) examined changes in employers' attitudes, illuminating how these programmes influence workplace perceptions of disabled people. Romualdez et al. (2020) reported on increases in interns' self-confidence, beginning to address the personal impacts of these internships. Beyer et al. (2010) investigated transitions to employment following a Supported Internship, providing data on job placement success rates. The employer perspective was explored in depth by Beyer and Robinson (2009), offering insights into the challenges and benefits experienced by those hosting interns. While these studies collectively describe the broader impacts and stakeholder experiences of Supported Internships, they leave a noticeable gap in understanding the interns' lived experiences within these programmes. A step towards addressing this gap was taken by Hanson et al's., (2021) small scale study into the social inclusion aspects of a Supported Internship. Their work highlighted the importance of Supported Internships as a vehicle for broadening and deepening interns' social inclusion and emphasised the need for more extensive research in this area. Social inclusion within employment is particularly critical for learning-disabled people, who often face barriers to workplace participation. Understanding how Supported Internships facilitate social inclusion is essential, as workplace relationships and belonging can impact both job retention and overall quality of life for learning-disabled employees (Tebog et al., 2024).

A pattern in the existing research from an international and national perspective reveals therefore two critical gaps: firstly, limited in-depth, qualitative studies focusing on the lived experiences of interns; and secondly, insufficient understanding of the processes that mediate social inclusion within Supported Internships. Contributing to these gaps, this thesis offers an ethnographic qualitative analysis of a Supported Internship which captures and amplifies the lived experiences of interns. By focusing on the mechanisms that mediate social inclusion in the workplace, the study builds on Hanson et al's., (2021) research by providing a more nuanced understanding of how an intern's social inclusion is fostered or constrained. Given that workplace social inclusion is important to achieving employment equity for learning-disabled people, as it impacts both their ability to maintain employment and their capacity to advocate for workplace accommodations and career advancement opportunities, this approach centralises the voices of a previously underrepresented group and examines factors that could enhance the effectiveness of Supported Internship programmes. By addressing these gaps, this study contributes to a more holistic understanding of Supported Internships, moving beyond the outcome-focused evaluations to examine the intricate experiences of participants.

Research aim, question and objectives

The aim of this research is to achieve a rich, detailed understanding of the ecological complexities of social inclusion within a Supported Internship programme situated in a mainstream, workplace environment. Framed as a research question this study seeks to understand:

How does the social ecology of a mainstream workplace environment mediate the social inclusion of learning-disabled interns within a Supported Internship programme?

Broken down further, this thesis has three primary research objectives as defined below.

1. From a social inclusion standpoint, describe in a rich and illustrative way a long running, supported internship programme delivered in a large public sector organisation.
2. Map changes to the depth and breadth of social inclusion as experienced by learning-disabled interns whilst they are engaged in a Supported Internship programme.
3. Using an ecological systems approach, understand the processes which mediate the depth and breadth of social inclusion as experienced by the interns.

By providing a rich and illustrative description of a long-running Supported Internship programme in a large public sector organisation, the first objective focusses on the nuances and complexities of social inclusion within the Supported Internship programme. This detailed portrayal establishes a foundation for understanding how Supported Internships can foster social inclusion in a mainstream workplace environment. The second objective focuses on mapping changes in the depth and breadth of social inclusion as experienced by learning-disabled interns during their participation in a Supported Internship programme. Using Simpican et al., (2015) conceptual framework, focussing on interpersonal relationships and community participation, this objective aims to provide a comprehensive and dynamic view of how social inclusion evolves throughout the internship. By capturing the perspectives of interns during their participation, this mapping offers insights into the trajectory of social inclusion within the programme. The third objective centres on the processes that mediate the depth and breadth of social inclusion for learning-disabled interns. Employing an ecological systems theory approach, this objective aims to uncover the complex interplay between interns and various environmental factors, such as workplace culture, peer relationships, and programme structure. By examining these interactions, the study identifies points of intervention and support that can enhance social inclusion outcomes for learning-disabled interns. This analysis

contributes to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that facilitate or hinder an intern's social inclusion whilst participating in a Supported Internship programme.

To answer the research question, this study deploys a qualitative, ethnographic approach to investigate the experiences of young people in a Supported Internship programme. An immersive ethnographic approach; is the basis for the research design. This methodology was chosen for its capacity to provide deep insights into the lived experiences of participants, aligning with the disability rights movement's emphasis on 'nothing about us without us' (Charlton, 1998, p.1) and reflecting the study's commitment to amplifying the voices of young learning-disabled people. To achieve this, I undertook a year-long immersion in a Supported Internship programme within a public hospital setting, researching five days a week from 9am to 4pm. In the year of study (September 2022-July 2023) there were six interns aged eighteen-to-nineteen with a diagnosis of SEND enrolled in the Supported Internship programme.

To capture the richness and complexity of the interns' experiences, particularly concerning social inclusion, the study employed a multi-faceted approach to data collection as is typical for ethnographic research. This diverse set of methods encompassed observations, conversations, walking interviews, and the documentation of interns' experiences through reflection forms integrated into the existing curriculum. These methods were designed to capture the explicit narratives shared by the interns and the contextual factors that shaped their experiences of social inclusion within the Supported Internship programme. The data gathered was subsequently organised and analysed using NVivo software, following Braun and Clarke's (2021) inductive thematic analysis approach. This method of analysis scaffolded the reflexive work needed to ensure that identified themes and key findings were authentic to the participants' own accounts of their lived experiences.

Throughout the research process, I maintained a constant awareness of my own subjectivity, recognising the influence of personal values on data collection and interpretation. This reflexive stance was crucial in enhancing the trustworthiness and authenticity of the study and supported the process of ensuring the interns' perspectives remained at the forefront of the research. This approach was also central to underpinning the ethical dimensions of this research, and as such permeated every aspect of the research from initial design to the dissemination of findings.

The experiences garnered through this research have shaped my identity as an educator and researcher indelibly, moulding me into an interpreter of meanings and perspectives. This thesis bears the imprints of my experiences, interests, values, while also being marked by the narratives of the research participants. The interweaving of these elements has resulted in a deep understanding of a Supported Internship programme for young people on the SEND register, which also serves as a testament to the power of qualitative, ethnographic research in illuminating the lived experiences of marginalised groups.

Disaggregating key terms: SEND, disability and learning disability

Throughout this study, the term SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) is consistently used. In England a child or young person has Special Educational Needs (SEN) if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her (DfE and DoH, 2015, Section xiv). The SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) provides the following definition of SEN:

A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she:

- has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or
- has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions (DfE and DoH, 2015, Section xiv).

This definition encompasses a group of learners aged zero to twenty-five who require special educational provision due to their learning difficulties or disabilities (DfE and DoH, 2015, Section 6.34). The term ‘SEND’ is particularly relevant to this study because all the interns who participated are students in education enrolled at a special school. Thus, the term SEND effectively captures both the nature of the educational Supported Internship programme and the specific needs of its participants within the contemporary policy context.

Regarding the ‘D’ of SEND, the SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 years deploys the definition of disability constructed by the United Kingdom (UK) Equality Act 2010 which is:

A physical or mental impairment which has a long-term and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities (DfE and DoH, 2015, Section xviii; Equality Act, 2010, Section 6.1).

That said, the SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 years (DfE and DoH, 2015) conceptually disaggregates special educational needs (SEN) from disability (D). Pointing out that whilst there is a ‘significant overlap between disabled children and young people and those with SEN’ (DfE and DoH, 2015, Section xviii), the Code explains that not all disabled children and young people also have SEN and vice versa. In contrast, the UK Equality Act 2010 (Section 6.1) maintains the consistently broader definition of disability, encompassing both physical and mental impairments. This discrepancy in terminology between English and UK legislation underscores divergences in the way that disability and learning difficulty are named and conceptualised in policy.

Acknowledging this complexity, this study employs the term SEND when referring to Supported Internships because the term SEND operates within England's policy framework. While all young people who participated in this study have been identified as having both Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, the term disability is predominantly used throughout this thesis. This choice reflects how terminology changes across different contexts in England - the term SEN only applying to educational contexts including early education, school and colleges, whilst the term disability is used in Higher Education and employment contexts. Thus, in this thesis the term SEND is used when referring to the educational context of a Supported Internship, and the term disability is used when discussing aspects of transition from formal education into adulthood. Hence, from a legislative standpoint and for the purpose of this study, particularly in discussing the post-education phase for individuals diagnosed with SEND, the term ‘disability’ is used.

In this study, the term 'learning disability' is also used to refer to the specific subgroup of disabled people who experience marginalisation, particularly in the context of employment (DoHSC, 2021). This term is preferred and self-identified by all participants in the study and is explicitly mentioned in their EHCPs. In England, 'learning disabilities' is a widely accepted and commonly used term, employed by healthcare and social care professionals (Emerson and Hatton, 2014). It has been consistently used in official documents published by the Department of Health and Social Care (formerly the Department of Health), such as the ‘Transforming Care for People with Learning Disabilities - Next Steps’ (DoH, 2015) and ‘The Government's

Mandate to NHS England for 2018-19' (DoHSC, 2018). Despite the increasing global acceptance of the term 'intellectual disabilities', in the literature on disability and employment, this thesis adopts the term 'learning disabilities' to align with the English context and the preferences of the study participants. The DoH (2015, p.14) defines a learning disability as 'a significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information, to learn new skills (impaired intelligence), with a reduced ability to cope independently (impaired social functioning), which started before adulthood'.

The framing and language used in this study are influenced by the British social model of disability and by the biopsychosocial model. In contrast with the British social model of disability, the medical model, which has traditionally dominated disability discourse, conceptualises disability as an individual pathology, viewing it as synonymous with impairment. It focuses on biological conditions and their associated limitations, emphasising medical interventions and rehabilitation as the primary means of addressing disability (Shakespeare, 2006). In contrast, the social model, developed through disabled people's activism and scholarship, posits that disability results from the interaction between individuals with impairments and societal barriers, rather than being an inevitable consequence of impairment (Oliver, 1996). This focus on disability over impairment has been described as liberating for disabled people, by shifting analysis away from impairment and towards the environment, disabled people have been 'able to understand that they weren't at fault: society was. They didn't need to change: society needed to change. They didn't have to be sorry for themselves: they could be angry' (Shakespeare and Watson, 2002, p.5). Reflecting the principles of the British social model (Oliver, 1996), this research employs the term 'learning-disabled people' rather than pathologising language which locates disability as *within* an individual - such as the term 'people *with* learning disabilities'.

The use of the term 'learning disabled people' throughout this study serves therefore to underscore the social and political dimensions of disability, aligning with the perspective that individuals are disabled by society's failure to accommodate diverse needs and abilities. Criticisms of the British social model point however to the obfuscation of the individual and their lived experiences (Hughes and Patterson, 1997). Thus, whilst the social model informs the language used; the study more broadly adopts a biopsychosocial stance. The biopsychosocial model, originally proposed by Engel (1977), offers an integrative approach that synthesises medical, social, and psychological dimensions to provide a comprehensive

framework for understanding the multifaceted nature of disability experiences. By bridging the gap between the medical and social models of disability, this approach acknowledges both the biological realities of impairments and the significant role of environmental and social factors. The biopsychosocial model enables a more nuanced understanding of how individual impairments interact with personal circumstances and societal barriers, offering valuable insights into disability experiences in various contexts, particularly work and employment (Wade and Halligan, 2017). This integrated approach is particularly relevant when examining the complex factors that influence social inclusion outcomes for learning-disabled people.

Thesis outline

Chapter 1 explores the global policy context surrounding social inclusion, with a focus on key international agreements like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2015). This landmark treaty delineates the rights of disabled people and advocates for their full and effective participation and inclusion in society. The chapter then includes an analysis of how social inclusion has been conceptualised, and explains and defends the selection of Simplican et al, (2015) as the conceptual framework for this study. This justification will claim the particular fit of this framework with the study's interest in understanding changes to the breadth and depth of social inclusion in the context of a Supported Internship. Additionally, the chapter reviews the employment landscape for learning-disabled people (e.g., DHSC, 2023; ONS, 2024), including a focus on the multifaceted impact of employment (Meek et al., 2019; Robertson, et al., 2019). Subsequently, this extends to an analysis of Supported Internships as a bridge from education into employment for learning-disabled people (DWP, 2024; Frontier Economics, 2022). Drawing on the work of Hanson et al., (2017), this includes a focus on the existing research into Supported Internships as a vehicle for social inclusion.

Chapter 2 describes and justifies the theoretical foundation for this study by examining the Ecological Systems Theory and its role in understanding systems that mediate social inclusion. The chapter traces the development of this theory, starting with Bronfenbrenner's work (1977; 1988; 1999) and its later expansion by Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006). It then considers how Ecological Systems Theory has been adapted by scholars in the field of disability and social inclusion, and reviews the contribution made by Simplican et al. (2015) in this context. All of this foregrounds the introduction of one of this study's original contributions which is a newly synthesised conceptual framework which brings together key concepts from

Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) Person, Process, Context Time (PPCT) Model and Simplican et al. (2015) Ecological Pathways (EP) model to create a PPCT-EP model. This tailored approach aims to provide a more precise understanding of the study's unique context and objectives.

Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology, focusing on ethnography and its methods, while emphasising the importance of amplifying the voices of learning-disabled people. The chapter begins by explaining the philosophical foundations that guide this research. It then justifies the choice of ethnography as the research strategy, highlighting its ability to authentically represent the experiences and perspectives of young learning-disabled people. A key aspect of this chapter is the discussion of various participatory methods used in the study. It emphasises the ethical considerations involved in employing these methods, with a focus on strategies to reduce power imbalances inherent in the research process. This approach ensures that the voices and experiences of learning-disabled people are centralised throughout the study.

Chapter 4 describes and defends the method of analysis deployed in the study. It justifies the selection of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2021) and peer debriefing with the learning-disabled participants. These analytical choices are employed to ensure the interns' lived experiences are accurately represented and thus enhance the trustworthiness and authenticity of the research findings.

Chapter 5 presents the research findings. It is imperative to note that this section is distinct and intentionally set apart from the broader research and theoretical framework, highlighting its significance in prioritising the authentic voices of the learning-disabled interns. Following the analytical process reported in Chapter 4, five major themes were identified in the data:

1. *Engagement within the work community:* This theme contains data illustrating the various ways interns interacted and participated in their workplace environments during their placements. The data shows different levels of involvement, from initial workplace encounters to more active participation in work activities and social interactions.
2. *Expansion of Interpersonal and Professional Networks:* This theme encompasses data showing the development of interns' relationships within the workplace, including

interactions with both disabled and non-disabled colleagues. The data demonstrates the range and nature of relationships formed during the internship period.

3. *Interpersonal Support in the Workplace*: This theme contains data highlighting the various support structures experienced by interns, including evidence of both formal support mechanisms and informal assistance from colleagues. The data reveals the different ways support was provided and received within the work environment.
4. *Intern Development*: This theme presents data showing changes in interns' capabilities and behaviours across professional, personal, and physical domains during their placement period. The data illustrates various aspects of growth and adaptation observed throughout the internship.
5. *Sustainability*: This theme contains data relating to post-internship experiences and structural aspects of the Supported Internship programme. The data reveals both opportunities and challenges in maintaining the progress achieved during the internship period, as well as systemic factors affecting the programme's implementation.

Chapter 6 presents a critical discussion of how the social ecology of a mainstream workplace environment mediates the social inclusion of learning-disabled interns within a Supported Internship programme. Through the lens of the PPCT-EP (Person, Process, Context, Time - Ecological Pathways theory), the chapter examines the complex interplay of five interconnected systems that shape social inclusion outcomes: the person (including interns' individual characteristics and capacities), interpersonal (covering support networks of job coaches, tutors, mentors, peers and family), organisational (analysing the Supported Internship and hospital structures), community (particularly transport accessibility), and socio-political (examining legislation, policies and systemic barriers). Through this multi-layered analysis, the chapter reveals how social inclusion requires addressing barriers and enabling factors across all ecological systems simultaneously. It concludes by examining the chronosystem dimension beyond the internship period, highlighting challenges in sustaining social inclusion. The chapter demonstrates that while Supported Internships can mediate social inclusion during the programme, maintaining these developments faces complex challenges that require a more integrated, sustained approach to supporting young learning-disabled people in their journey toward employment and social inclusion.

Chapter 7 represents the culmination of this ethnographic study examining the social inclusion of learning-disabled interns in a Supported Internship programme. The chapter synthesises how

the research achieved its objectives of mapping interns' social inclusion and the processes that mediate it through an ecological systems approach. It proposes the PPCT-EP (Person, Process, Context, Time - Ecological Pathways) framework as a tool for understanding how multiple, interacting social systems mediate social inclusion, while challenging the Department for Education's singular focus on employment outcome as a success measure for Supported Internships. The chapter provides practical recommendations across individual, interpersonal, organisational, community and sociopolitical systems to enhance programme design and social inclusion. The study recognises certain delimitations in its scope: specifically, that it focused primarily on the interns' perspectives while not including views from other key groups like parents and employers, and that it only examined social inclusion during the Supported Internship programme rather than following up on outcomes after the programme ended. Looking ahead, the research suggests several future directions including expanded ethnographic studies, longitudinal research tracking post-programme outcomes and comparative UK-US studies. This conclusion defends the study's claims to contribution with a particular focus on advances to a theoretical understanding and practical implementation of Supported Internships while identifying critical areas for future research.

Chapter 1: Exploring Social Inclusion and Employment Opportunities through Supported Internships for learning-disabled people: A Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review critically examines the concept of social inclusion, focusing on its implications for learning-disabled people in education and employment in the particular context of Supported Internships. The increasing prominence of social inclusion as a concept and an aspiration in international and national policy frameworks (e.g., United Nations (UN), 2006, 2016; Department for Education (DfE), 2010) provides the broader context for this examination, which then narrows to analyse and define social inclusion specifically in relation to learning-disabled people. Through scrutiny of various scholarly definitions (e.g., Wong and Solomon, 2002; Hall, 2009) and their practical applications, this study adopts Simplican et al.'s (2015) social inclusion conceptual framework, which emphasises the breadth and depth of interpersonal relationships and community participation. While acknowledging social inclusion's multifaceted nature, this review of the literature concentrates specifically on education and employment domains, justified by the persistently low employment rates for learning-disabled people (Department of Health and Social Care (DoHSC), 2023) and their consequent impacts on social isolation, health, and quality of life (Mahar et al., 2014). A central focus of this chapter is the emergence of Supported Internships in the UK as a bridge between education and employment for young people on the SEND register holding an Education, Health and Care Plan (HM Government, 2023), with the review critically assessing available literature on these programmes and noting the predominance of grey literature (e.g., CGR, 2020) and the scarcity of academic studies (e.g., Hanson et al., 2017), raising important questions about the current evidence base supporting these programmes. Particular attention is given to the Project SEARCH Supported Internship model, which, since its introduction from the USA to the UK (Purvis et al., 2021), has become the largest provider of Supported Internships in England. The chapter concludes by evaluating key gaps in knowledge about Supported Internships' effectiveness and implementation, thereby establishing the rationale for this study's ethnographic approach.

Approach to the literature review

This review adopts a narrative approach. This means that it is structured thematically to address the complex landscape of social inclusion, employment, and Supported Internships. A narrative literature review has been deployed to this study because it is a comprehensive

research method that involves gathering, critiquing, and synthesising a wide range of sources about a topic or research question (Sukhera, 2022). This approach offers a qualitative, interpretive synthesis of existing knowledge, providing a broad overview of the current state of understanding in field of Supported Internships. Given the recent introduction of Supported Internships in the UK in 2013 and the gaps in English-situated academic research, this approach allowed for greater flexibility in exploring conceptual linkages to the research aim and objectives. The narrative approach enabled the incorporation of diverse sources, including international literature, particularly from the USA where Project SEARCH and Supported Internships originated. The primary search utilised the University of Derby's online database. Initial key terms included 'social inclusion', 'employment', 'Supported Internships', 'SEND', 'disability', and 'learning disability'. These were later expanded into more complex phrases and Boolean search constructs such as ('Supported Internship' OR 'Project SEARCH') AND ('social inclusion' OR 'employment outcomes'), ('learning disability' OR 'intellectual disability') AND ('employment support' OR 'vocational training'), and ('SEND' OR 'special educational needs') AND ('transition to work' OR 'employment preparation'). The selection process involved critical evaluation based on relevance and prominence of researchers. Notable inclusions were from scholars such as Beyer, Codina, Hanson, Meys, and Robinson. To provide context on the limited research available, it is worth noting that between 2013 and 2024, only 15 peer-reviewed academic papers specifically focused on Supported Internships in England. To ensure a comprehensive review, the search encompassed various sources, including published reports, peer-reviewed journal articles, doctoral theses, UK Parliament debates, guidelines and policy documents, and international literature (limited to English-language publications). Recognising the scarcity of academic research, the review also incorporated grey literature from organisations including the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion, MENCAP, National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi), SENSE, and Cooper Gibson Research. By synthesising academic and grey literature sources, this narrative review navigates the challenges of an emerging field, providing insights into Supported Internships while identifying knowledge gaps and avenues for this study and future research.

Social Inclusion and disability in international policy

This section explores how the concept of social inclusion has been conceptualised and how it has evolved in the field of disability research. Topics reviewed include international policy frameworks, ethical foundations and arguments by academics for social inclusion, complexities

in defining and implementing social inclusion, and the evolution of the concept. In reviewing the social inclusion literature at a global level, it is evident that social inclusion has become a prevalent concept in international and national policy objectives, particularly concerning services and care for disabled people (Meininger, 2010; 2013). At a global level, social inclusion is embedded in international policy and human rights frameworks. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), drafted in 2006 and with 194 country signatories, articulates the ethical imperative of social inclusion (United Nations, 2006). The convention's purpose, as outlined in Article 1, is to:

Promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity (UN, 2006, p.6).

The general principles in Article 3 further emphasise 'full and effective participation and inclusion in society' and 'equality of opportunity'. These principles are reinforced in specific areas such as education (Article 24) and employment (Article 27), which assert the rights of persons with disabilities to education, work and employment 'on an equal basis with others' (UN, 2006, Article 27). This commitment to social inclusion is also prevalent in the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals Agenda, which envisions social, economic, and political inclusion for all (UN, 2015; 2016). The UN (2016, p. 20) defines social inclusion as:

The process of improving the terms of participation in society for people who are disadvantaged on the basis of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status, through enhanced opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights. Thus, social inclusion is both a process and a goal (UN, 2016, p. 20).

The advocacy for social inclusion can also be observed in the texts of international policies and proclamations. These sources often focus on achieving greater equity for individuals at risk of exclusion due to various factors such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, economic status, and disability (e.g., Officer and Groce, 2009; Scior, 2011; UN, 2016; Charity Commission, 2019). In these literatures, it is noticeable that the pursuit of social inclusion extends beyond policy objectives, as it is connected to broader societal goals, including the eradication of social exclusion, prevention of abuse, and reduction of poverty and unemployment rates. Having examined the global policy perspective on social inclusion, the next section will analyse the framing of social inclusion within the disability literature more

widely. This will provide insight into how academics have conceptualised and debated the concept within the disability research literature.

The framing of social inclusion as a human right appears to provide an ethical foundation in much of the literature. Analysing this assemblage of literature reveals several recurring arguments supporting the importance of social inclusion, all centring on improving the lives of disabled people (e.g. Amado et al., 2013; Beadle-Brown, 2016). Prevalent in the literature are calls for recognising social inclusion as a key factor in enhancing the quality of life for disabled people. For example, numerous authors (e.g., Amado et al., 2013; Van Asselt-Goverts et al., 2015; Beadle-Brown, 2016; Gauthier-Boudreault et al., 2019) posit that social inclusion confers benefits, framed in terms of enhanced well-being, happiness, and health. This perspective is supported by empirical evidence, as shown in Forrester-Jones' (2006) study demonstrating the positive influence of social inclusion on the quality of life for learning-disabled people. Evolving in the literature are conceptualisations of social inclusion that emphasise its significance, as evidenced by its inclusion as a key domain in widely adopted models of quality of life for disabled people, such as Schalock's model (Schalock, 2004; Buntinx and Schalock, 2010). Further focus on human rights is observable in the grounding of social inclusion within the expressed desires of disabled people themselves. The literature contains multiple studies indicating that disabled people often aspire to experience greater social inclusion, expressing a desire to engage in community activities and develop friendships (e.g., Amado et al., 2013; McConkey, 2007; McConkey and Collins, 2010). Debates within the literature include discussions on the ethical implications of these aspirations. For instance, Meininger (2010) highlights the desire of many disabled people to be counted and to participate in their immediate vicinity and wider society, providing an ethical foundation for the pursuit of social inclusion grounded in the lived experiences and expressed wishes of those it aims to benefit. This focus on the aspirations and preferences of disabled people reinforces the tenet that social inclusion is about improving their lives and respecting their autonomy and agency. By examining these recurrent themes, it can be observed how researchers and policymakers are constructing ethical arguments for social inclusion based on quality-of-life improvements and the expressed wishes of disabled individuals themselves, operating within a broader human rights framework that recognises social inclusion as a fundamental entitlement.

While international policy, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – UNCRPD (2006), broadly defines social inclusion as full equality for disabled

people, the literature offers some further debate and deconstruction. Prevalent in the literature are critiques of the policy context with calls for more nuanced understandings of social inclusion that account for intersecting factors such as age, gender, race, and socioeconomic status (Maher et al., 2023; Bollard, 2009; Hall, 2009). Evolving in the literature are conceptualisations of social inclusion that challenge homogeneous views of disability. For example, Sherwin (2010) posits that experiences of social exclusion and social inclusion vary based on multiple, intersecting identities, while Martin and Cobigo (2011) argue for more precise definitions to guide practical applications. The literature contains an imbalance, with social exclusion receiving more extensive coverage than social inclusion (Simplican et al., 2015; Corazza and Dyer, 2017). This disparity has led to debates within the literature about how best to define and measure social inclusion. Debates live in the literature include the challenge of reconciling academic concepts with practical implementation. Nilholm and Goransson (2017) argue that the inherent ambiguity of inclusion complicates its application in real-world contexts. Similarly, Cobigo and Stuart (2010) call for more unified policies to bridge the gap between theory and practice. The literature tends to place emphasis on the need for further research to address these conceptual challenges. Scholars such as Simplican et al., (2015) advocate for studies that explore how intersectionality impacts experiences of inclusion and exclusion. Others, like Corazza and Dyer (2017), stress the importance of investigating effective strategies for translating theoretical concepts into practical interventions. This analysis of the literature reveals a field grappling with complexity and ambiguity. It suggests that future policy might benefit from interdisciplinary approaches to developing more comprehensive and practicable definitions of social inclusion, potentially leading to more effective policies and practices to improve the lives of disabled people.

Analysis of the academic and policy literature reveals continued efforts to conceptualise and advance social inclusion for disabled people. Scholars have worked extensively to define and refine the concept, expanding its scope and emphasising its importance in policy and practice. For example, Simplican et al. (2015) developed a comprehensive ecological framework for understanding social inclusion, while Bredewold and Van der Weele (2023) examined how policy implementations navigate tensions between idealistic goals and practical constraints in community settings. Despite these conceptual advancements, an implementation gap persists between theoretical frameworks and practical realities, highlighting the challenges in translating social inclusion policies into effective practice. This implementation gap can be attributed to several factors, including the complexity of operationalising social inclusion in

diverse contexts, as well as broader societal attitudes and structural barriers. An additional challenge in social inclusion research is the potential conflation of narrow specifications of social inclusion with questioning the broad ideal of equality for disabled people. This has led to a deadlock in some areas of social inclusion policy, as conceptual discussions about the term are hindered by fears of being perceived as opposed to full equality (Bredewold and Van der Weele, 2023; Clegg and Lansdall-Welfare, 2010; Clegg et al., 2007). The journey described in this analysis exposes a complex and evolving landscape of social inclusion research and practice. It highlights a tension between broad ideals and specific implementations, emphasising the need for nuanced, context-sensitive approaches. This historical perspective is relevant to the current study as it underscores the importance of bridging the gap between theory and practice, and the need for research that can inform more effective implementation strategies. Moreover, it suggests that future work in this field should aim to navigate the delicate balance between advancing specific, actionable definitions of social inclusion while maintaining a commitment to the overarching goal of equality previously defined (UN, 2006) and improved quality of life for disabled people.

Building upon the broad conceptualisation of social inclusion as a human right (UN, 2006) and ethical imperative, it is crucial to examine how this ideal is translated into practical implementations. The policy arena reveals a complex landscape of definitions and frameworks that attempt to operationalise social inclusion for learning-disabled people, highlighting the challenges and nuances involved in realising full equality in practice. The narrow sense of social inclusion, focusing on its practical manifestations, extends beyond the realm of disability literature and draws insights from various fields. For instance, within the sphere of mental health, Wong and Solomon (2002) argue that mere physical presence is insufficient as a criterion for social inclusion. They emphasise core elements centred around fostering a sense of community belonging and cultivating interpersonal relationships. Their multidimensional framework of 'social integration' encompasses physical inclusion (engagement in activities beyond the home environment and utilisation of community services), social inclusion (interactions with community members and receipt of culturally normative social support), and psychological inclusion (sense of belonging within the community).

Defining of social inclusion

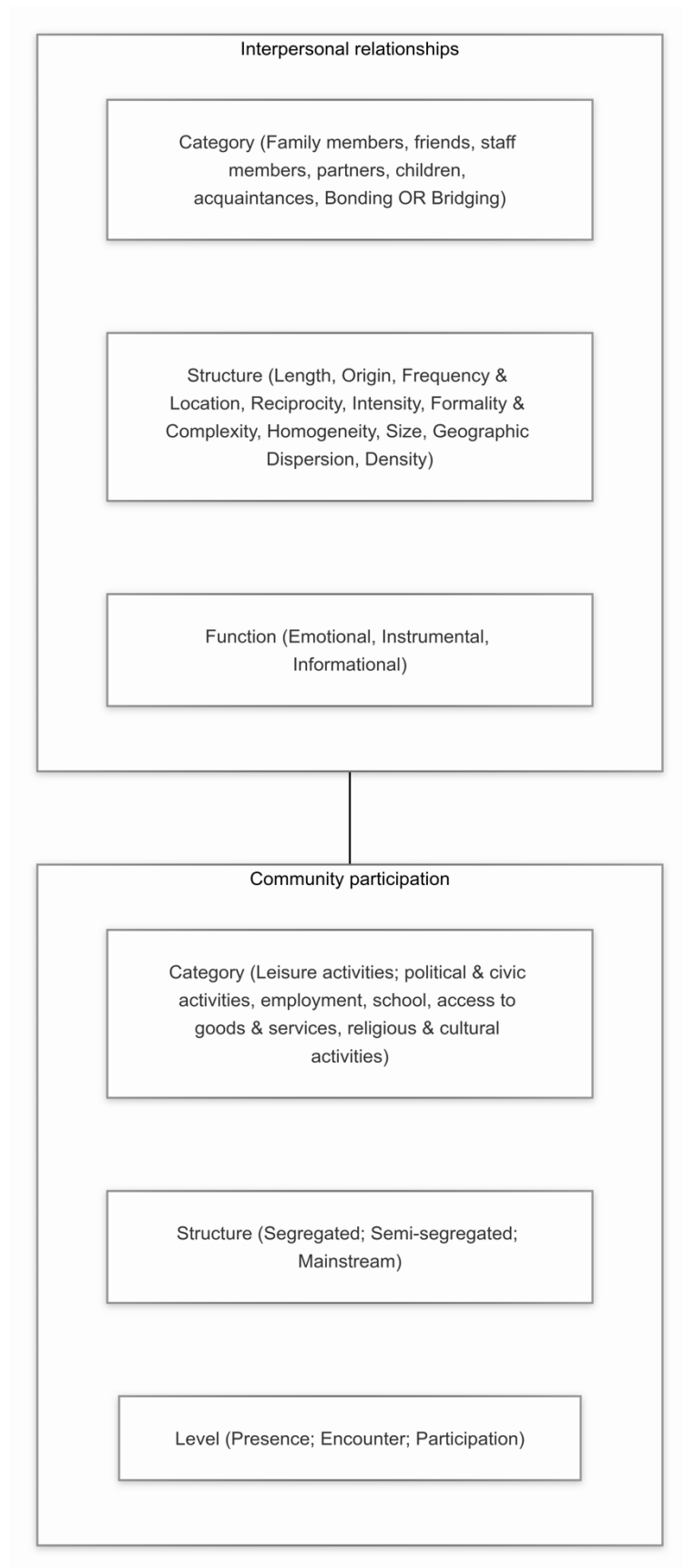
This section reviews the academic literatures definition of social inclusion, in the specific context of disabilities, Hall (2009) defines social inclusion across six distinct dimensions: (1)

recognition and acceptance as an individual beyond disability; (2) cultivation of personal relationships; (3) active engagement in recreational, leisure, and social activities; (4) access to suitable living accommodations; (5) attainment of meaningful employment; and (6) establishment of adequate informal and formal support systems. This multifaceted approach underscores the complexity of social inclusion in practice, highlighting the interconnected nature of various life domains and the need for holistic interventions to promote inclusion. Cobigo et al., (2012) offer an alternative perspective that emphasises the interplay between individual and environmental attributes. Their conceptualisation of social inclusion in practice involves: (1) complex interactions between personal characteristics and environmental factors; (2) access to public resources and services; (3) engagement in esteemed and anticipated societal roles based on age, gender, and cultural attributes; (4) recognition as proficient and trustworthy in enacting social functions; and (5) participation in reciprocal social networks. This ecological approach highlights the importance of considering both individual factors and societal structures in fostering inclusive environments. The diversity of these conceptualisations reflects the ongoing debate and lack of consensus regarding the precise definition and operationalisation of social inclusion. This variability in understanding contributes to the challenges in implementing effective inclusive practices and may inadvertently perpetuate instances of social exclusion for disabled people (Nilholm and Goransson, 2017). The absence of a unified framework complicates efforts to measure, evaluate, and compare social inclusion initiatives across different contexts and populations.

To summarise, the literature reveals a multifaceted understanding of social inclusion, highlighting two main conceptualisations: a broad interpretation emphasising full equality for disabled people as a fundamental principle (UN, 2006), and a more practical, operational definition that addresses the challenges of implementing this equality in real-world settings (Simplican et al., 2015). This review has critically analysed these perspectives, examining how social inclusion has evolved from its initial conception as a human right to its more complex, context-specific applications in practice, consistently aimed at enhancing the lives of disabled people. However, the persistent ambiguity in definitions suggests that exploring a conceptualisation of social inclusion may offer a more effective approach, which will be examined in the following section.

Conceptualising Social Inclusion for Learning-Disabled People: An Analysis of Simplican et al., (2015) Framework

Making a significant contribution to debate and data in the area of conceptualising social inclusion for learning disabled people, Simplican et al., (2016) have drawn on a wide range of definitions to propose a comprehensive model (e.g., Clement and Bigby, 2009; Forrester-Jones et al., 2006; Cobigo et al., 2012; Hall, 2009; McConkey, 2009; Power, 2013a). This framework (Figure 1) has the potential to offer a more comprehensive understanding of social inclusion, which could contribute to the betterment of life for disabled people by providing a clearer framework for what social inclusion looks like in practice. A key strength of Simplican et al., (2015) framework is its focus on both the breadth and depth of social inclusion, offering a nuanced approach to understanding an individual's social experiences and community engagement.



*Figure 1 Summary of the conceptual framework for social inclusion proposed by Simpican et al. (2015).
(Derived from Simpican et al., 2015)*

The framework offered by Simplican et al., (2015, p. 18) (Figure 1) attempts to draw together definitions offered in the literature about social inclusion which in practical terms are defined as ‘the interaction between two major life domains: interpersonal relationships and community participation’. Each of the two domains comprises three components. The interpersonal relationships domain encompasses the components of category, structure, and function. In this domain, breadth pertains to the category component, which examines the types of individuals comprising a person's social network. Simplican et al., (2015) identify a wide range of relationships such as family members, friends, support staff, partners, children, and acquaintances. The depth of interpersonal relationships in Simplican et al., (2015) framework is captured by the structure and function components. The structure component explores the formation of relationships, considering factors such as duration, reciprocity, contact frequency, and location. The function component, as described by Simplican et al., (2015), pertains to the nature of social support offered within these relationships, whether emotional, instrumental, or informational. This detailed analysis of relationship functions highlights the diverse roles that interpersonal connections play in an individual's life and their contribution to social inclusion.

In parallel with the interpersonal relationship domain structure presented in Figure 1 Simplican et al., (2015) present the community participation domain, which consists of the components of category, structure, and level. In this domain, breadth is represented by the category component, which identifies various types of community activities and the settings in which interpersonal relationships unfold. Simplican et al., (2015) provide a comprehensive mapping of the domains in which an individual participates within their social environment, including homelife, leisure activities, political and civic activities, religious and cultural activities, and education and employment. These categories, as noted by Simplican et al. (2015), can occur in both public and private settings, providing a holistic view of how individuals participate in different facets of community life.

The depth of community participation in the Simplican et al., (2015) framework is captured by the structure and level components. The structure component examines the environments where activities occur, ranging from segregated to mainstream settings. The level component is conceptualised by Simplican et al., (2015) drawing upon the work from Clement and Bigby, (2009) and Verdonschot et al., (2009), which analyses an individual's depth of engagement within the community, spanning from physical presence to full, active participation. This granular analysis of involvement levels allows for a nuanced understanding of the quality and

depth of community participation, recognising that physical presence alone does not necessarily equate to meaningful inclusion. Simplican et al., (2015) framework incorporates Wiesel and Bigby's (2016) concept of 'encounter', which recognises the value of brief, positive interactions between disabled people and the broader community in fostering a sense of belonging and recognition. Furthermore, the framework acknowledges that social inclusion does not always require complete participation, especially when transforming exclusionary spaces into welcoming ones (Wiesel and Bigby, 2016). This nuanced approach in Simplican et al.'s (2015) framework appears to avoid assuming that full engagement in mainstream settings is the ideal form of community participation for all individuals.

In summary, this section has explored the conceptualisation of social inclusion proposed by Simplican et al. (2015) and has considered its contribution as a more comprehensive and nuanced account of social inclusion. This framework synthesises previous literature on social inclusion definitions and integrates broad equality principles with specific aspects of inclusion. Its alignment with international policy frameworks, such as those outlined by the UN (2006), enhances its relevance and applicability. The framework's dual focus on the breadth and depth of social inclusion across interpersonal relationships and community participation offers a nuanced approach to understanding social inclusion. The framework proposed by Simplican et al., (2015) serves as a primary reference point, this review has also engaged with key primary sources that have contributed to the evolution of social inclusion concepts over time. These include works by Clement and Bigby (2009), Forrester-Jones et al. (2006), Cobigo et al. (2012), Hall (2009), McConkey (2009), and Power (2013a).

The review has attempted to situate the framework proposed by Simplican et al. (2015) in a broader historical account of social inclusion as a concept. This comprehensive analysis of the integrated framework and its elements provides a foundation for understanding social inclusion across various life domains, including home, leisure, religion, education, and employment. The study focuses on education and employment due to the low workforce participation rates among learning-disabled adults globally (UN, 2015). For instance, one of the most comprehensive USA surveys by Siperstein et al. (2013) found that the unemployment rate for learning-disabled adults is more than twice that of non-disabled people. Only 44% of learning-disabled adults are employed, compared to 83% of non-disabled adults. This disparity results in limited social inclusion experiences for learning-disabled adults in these areas, warranting further investigation. Consequently, the subsequent section of this literature review examines

workplace social inclusion in greater depth, exploring how the current employment landscape in England for learning-disabled adults impacts their social inclusion.

Social inclusion in the workplace: The learning disability employment landscape

In England, data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2024) indicates that the employment rate for disabled people was 54.2%, an increase from 52.7% in the previous year. While this figure shows some improvement, it remains lower than the employment rate for non-disabled people, which stands at 82.0% (ONS, 2024). The employment gap for learning-disabled adults is more pronounced. In England, the Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (DoHSC, 2023) estimated that 4.8% of learning-disabled adults who are registered with adult services were in paid employment in 2022/23. It should also be noted that employment rates amongst learning-disabled adults can vary according to region. For example, the East Midlands of England reported an employment participation rate of 3%, which was below the national average (DoHSC, 2023). Variations in the rate of learning-disabled adults in paid employment can also be seen within a region; for example, within the East Midlands of England, Leicester reported an employment rate of 7.7%, whereas Derby reported an employment rate of 1.7% (DoHSC, 2023). Such regional variations are likely associated with local economic conditions, available support services and employment initiatives for this population (Hatton, 2018).

These figures, derived from the ASCOF report, are widely regarded as the most accurate source for employment data (Forder et al., 2016); however, some limitations are observable. The DoHSC (2023) ASCOF report statistics, while respected, are produced by national bodies as aggregates of Local Authority reported outcomes. The challenge being that each Local Authority operates varying parameters for whom it counts as a young person with a learning disability ‘known to their services’ (DoHSC, 2023, p.2) to be in employment. This diversity in interpretation and recording practices introduces a degree of inconsistency into the aggregated data. The lack of standardisation in defining and measuring who is ‘known to services’ can lead to discrepancies in reported figures, potentially obscuring the employment situation for learning-disabled adults. The report's focus on individuals ‘known to services’ may exclude learning-disabled adults who are not in contact with social services or who have not been formally assessed, potentially leading to an underestimation of the total population and affecting the accuracy of employment rate calculations. Despite these limitations, the DoHSC (2023) ASCOF figures provide a valuable, albeit imperfect, insight into the employment

situation for learning-disabled adults and provide evidence of a significant employment gap. These statistics contrast the reported aspirations of learning-disabled people of the working age, with an estimated 60% expressing a desire for employment (Emerson et al., 2005). The discrepancy between learning-disabled people who are in work and those who aspire to work has persisted over an extended period (Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC), 2018), thus highlighting the entrenched nature of this issue. Among learning-disabled people who secure employment, the quality and extent of the employment requires analysis. Public Health England (PHE) (2020) reports that 68.3% of employed learning-disabled adults work for less than sixteen hours per week, thus limiting their potential to experience social inclusion (as defined in Figure 1); for example, such as deep workplace community participation and interpersonal relationships.

Despite advancements in educational outcomes for learning-disabled young people over the past few decades (NAO, 2024; Scanlon, 2013), their employment outcomes continue to lag behind those of their non-learning-disabled peers (OECD, 2010; WHO, 2011, 2022). This disparity points to a critical disjuncture between educational achievement and successful transition into the workforce. The challenges faced by this group in securing and maintaining employment are multifaceted and persistent, as elucidated in the 'Fulfilling Potential - Next Steps' report (DWP, 2013). This report highlights several key barriers, including negative employer attitudes, lack of workplace accommodations, and difficulties in employers accessing appropriate training and education. These findings are corroborated by subsequent studies. For instance, Moore et al. (2016) found that the lack of employment prospects and insufficient awareness of opportunities and aspirations are factors contributing to the low employment outcomes experienced by young learning-disabled people. This issue is part of a broader, complex employment landscape for disabled individuals across age groups. Interestingly, while employment rates for disabled individuals over 50 are rising, those for disabled people under 50 are declining alongside their non-disabled peers (ONS, 2024). Furthermore, disabled people face disproportionate rates of discrimination in job applications, with a five-fold higher rate of job and interview rejections attributed to their disability (ONS, 2024). They are also underrepresented in apprenticeships (ONS, 2015), further limiting their pathways to employment and experiences of social inclusion in this domain. The information provided by ONS (2024) is however primarily focused on reporting data rather than root cause analysis, and issues relating to intersectionality are not explored – for example, how factors like gender, race, or specific types of disability might compound employment challenges. Based on the

available literature, it is also unclear whether the report examines regional variations in employment challenges for disabled people. In response to the persistent employment challenges, the UK Government has set a target of integrating an additional one million disabled people into the workforce by 2027 (House of Lords, 2021). However, the National Audit Office (NAO) (2019) reports that the observed growth in the number of disabled people in employment cannot be directly attributed to any specific government policy. Instead, it posits that this increase is more likely 'to be due to more people already in work reporting a disability rather than more disabled people who were out of work, moving into work' (NAO, 2019, p.1).

These literatures paint a complex picture of the employment landscape for learning-disabled people. It highlights the persistent challenges in workforce inclusion, the multifaceted nature of employment barriers, and the limitations of current data and policy approaches. Moreover, it raises questions about the efficacy of existing initiatives aimed at promoting the employment of disabled people. The literature suggests a need for more comprehensive, intersectional approaches to address these complex barriers and improve employment outcomes for this population.

The impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Prevalent in the literature is the theme of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education and employment. In educational settings, Ashworth et al. (2024) documented how nationwide lockdowns in England necessitated school closures and transitions to remote learning, fundamentally altered the educational landscape. These changes affected academic instruction and limited opportunities for interpersonal relationships and community participation, both of which have been proposed as central facets of social inclusion. Byrne and Alghrani (2023) noted that for students identified as having SENDs, the shift to online learning disrupted established support systems and interventions, extending beyond formal educational support to include peer relationships, extracurricular activities, and community-based learning experiences. Drawing on the model proposed by Simplican et al. (2015), these losses could lead to reduction and impoverishment within both the interpersonal relationships and community participation domains of social inclusion. Edwards and Bunn (2022) highlighted how young people identified with SEND lost opportunities for supported independence and social skill development during lockdowns, as well as reduced access to work experience placements and community-based learning, thus impacting their experiences of social inclusion. While much of the literature focuses on challenges, it is important to note that some

impacts, post-pandemic, have yielded positive outcomes for disabled people. Mačikene (2023) reported that changes to hybrid working arrangements have contributed to improved experiences and employment outcomes for this group. These changes have been associated with raised productivity, increased prosperity and a happier and healthier workforce. Mačikene's (2023) research suggests that the pandemic has, in some ways, 'decommissioned normal' for disabled people, challenging pre-existing norms that were not always beneficial for this group. While this research does not directly address educational interventions, it can contribute to understanding how changes in institutional practices during periods of disruption may impact social inclusion for young people with SEND, particularly in the transition from education to employment.

The impact of the pandemic extends beyond education, affecting employment prospects for disabled people. Building upon the educational context, research has also focused on these employment-related challenges. For instance, the Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2022) revealed persistently lower employment rates for disabled people compared to pre-pandemic levels, highlighting the long-term consequences of the pandemic on this population's workforce participation. This trend aligns with findings from Banks et al., (2021) and Fisher et al., (2022), who noted the pandemic's amplification of existing inequalities in employment and well-being for this population. Young disabled people were particularly affected, with many forced to defer work placements and experiences (Amor et al., 2021; Fisher et al., 2022; Edwards, and Bunn, 2022). The pre-pandemic Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) data (2021) showed that disabled people holding degrees were no more prepared to secure employment than non-disabled people with GCSE-level qualifications. The limitations on interpersonal relationships, community participation, and employment opportunities likely contributed to the increased social isolation (McKinlay et al., 2022).

To summarise, Learning-disabled adults in England face significant employment challenges, with only 4.8% engaged in paid work (DoHSC, 2023), despite 60% expressing a desire for employment (Emerson et al., 2005). Multiple barriers, including employer attitudes, lack of workplace accommodations, and limited access to training (DWP, 2024), contribute to both low employment rates and poor job quality, with 68.3% working less than 16 hours weekly (PHE, 2020). These limitations restrict workplace community participation and interpersonal relationships, key components of social inclusion (Simplican et al., 2015). While the COVID-19 pandemic intensified these challenges through disrupted support systems and increased

isolation (McKinlay et al., 2022), some positive developments identified, such as improved hybrid working arrangements (Mačikene, 2023). The following section examines how these employment challenges impact social isolation and loneliness in this population.

The Relationship Between Employment, Social Isolation and Loneliness

The literature provides evidence of a correlation between low employment rates and social isolation for disabled people, with studies demonstrating that limited employment opportunities contribute to feelings of loneliness and a lack of meaningful activity (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005; Waddell and Burton, 2006; Lysaght et al., 2017). For disabled people, this is further compounded by restricted social networks (e.g. Emerson and Hatton, 2008; Pestana, 2011; Gilmore and Cuskelly, 2014; Scior and Werner, 2015). There is evidence that learning-disabled people often have limited social networks, predominantly comprising of support staff and co-residents (McKvilly et al., 2006; Dusseljee et al., 2011; Mason et al., 2013). Emerson and Hatton's (2008) estimates that 34% of learning-disabled adults maintain contact with friends no more than once annually, indicating limited regular social interaction outside of formal, paid care relationships. This information underscores a critical issue: the social inclusion of learning-disabled people, in terms of interpersonal relationships, lacks depth and breadth across a range of social connections with the low employment participation rates compounding this.

An examination of grey literature on social inclusion for learning-disabled people provides relevant data that builds upon the aforementioned academic research. A report from the disability charity Mencap (2019) indicates that learning-disabled people are seven times more likely to experience loneliness compared to non-disabled people. This figure highlights the disproportionate impact of social isolation on this population. Similarly, research conducted by Sense (2017) reveals that over half of disabled people experience loneliness, with 77% among those aged 18-34. These statistics corroborate the academic research and provide a more detailed picture of the prevalence and severity of loneliness across different age groups within the disabled population. The higher rate of loneliness among younger disabled individuals is noteworthy, suggesting that social isolation may be acute during a life stage typically associated with increased social interaction and relationship formation. These findings raise concerns about social isolation in the disabled community and point to barriers in social interaction, for young adults. Nevertheless, the research has limitations, including its reliance

on self-reported data and potential lack of representation across a diverse disabled population. Analysis of these studies points to several areas requiring further investigation, such as the impact of employment status on loneliness, potential long-term health consequences, and the effectiveness of current support systems. While the reputation of the charities lends credibility to the findings, further research could provide more comprehensive insights into this complex issue with suggested strategies aimed at reducing loneliness.

When assembled, these academic and grey literatures demonstrate the importance of interpersonal relationships for learning-disabled people, revealing intersections between social inclusion, personal well-being, and human rights. Building on these intersections, researchers report the desire of learning-disabled people for diverse social networks, including friendships and romantic partnerships (Rushbrooke et al., 2014), with these wishes finding legal recognition in Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights (1950) which protects the right to private and family life, home, and personal correspondence. Supporting the importance of these rights, extensive research has linked the formation and maintenance of interpersonal relationships to the development of self-esteem, subjective well-being, and quality of life (Butinx and Schalock, 2010; Cameron and Granger, 2019; Erol and Orth, 2013; Harris and Orth, 2020; Luciano and Orth, 2017; Murray et al., 2013; Wagner et al., 2015; Zorzi and Strods, 2020). These social connections have particular significance for self-esteem development, as recent scholarly discourse reveals a reciprocal relationship between the two factors, operating as a feedback loop where positive social relationships enhance self-esteem, which in turn facilitates the development of deeper social connections (Cameron and Granger, 2019; Harris and Orth, 2020). Despite these established insights about relationship dynamics, research to date has focused primarily on general populations, with few studies specifically addressing the unique experiences and needs of learning-disabled people.

The literature highlights that the consequences of social isolation and loneliness extend to negative physical and mental health conditions (Heslop et al., 2013; Ho, 2016). Reports from the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP) (2020) suggest that social isolation and loneliness are associated with increased risk of premature mortality and elevated probability of developing various health conditions. Specifically, CDCP (2020) note social isolation is linked to a 50% increased risk of dementia, 29% increased risk of heart disease, and 32% increased risk of stroke. Research has also demonstrated associations between broad and deep interpersonal relationships and improved physical and mental health indicators, as well as

reduced risk for various health conditions (Gilmore and Cuskelly, 2014; Ho, 2016; Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010; Valtorta et al., 2016; Hojjat et al., 2017). Studies have reported a disparity in life expectancy between mild or moderate learning-disabled people and the general population. Data from University of Bristol (2019) shows that mild or moderate learning-disabled people have a life expectancy which is approximately 20 years lower than the general population. This gap exists despite individuals who use learning disability services being less likely to engage in common health risk behaviours such as smoking, alcohol consumption, or drug misuse (University of Bristol, 2019). This paradox suggests that other factors, including social isolation, contribute to this mortality gap. Some evidence indicates that social isolation may be a factor in premature deaths, with studies suggesting that many of these deaths could have been prevented (Heslop et al., 2013). The correlation between low self-concept and depression (Wiest et al, 1998) further compounds these mental health challenges, potentially contributing to the observed health disparities. Therefore, it is reasonable to postulate that learning-disabled people who experience deeper and broader social inclusion are less likely to face isolation, potentially leading to enhanced life expectancy and quality of life, conversely, impoverished social inclusion may directly contribute to diminished longevity and well-being. Building upon these insights, the following section evaluates the literature concerning the benefits of employment, exploring how gainful work may address some of these challenges and improve overall well-being.

The multifaceted benefits of employment

At a society and individual level, the National Audit Office (NAO) (2011) posits that equipping young disabled people with independence and employability skills could reduce public lifetime support costs by approximately one million pounds per individual. Moreover, employment can enhance the income of learning-disabled people by 55 to 95 percent, contributing to improved independence and self-esteem (NAO, 2011). On a macroeconomic scale, the think tank, Centre for Social Justice (2017) estimates that a five-percentage point increase in the disability employment rate could result in a £23 billion boost to the UK's Gross Domestic Product and the government would receive an additional £6billion in tax revenue by 2030. Albeit the projection's precision over a 13-year timeframe raises questions about its reliability, given the inherent uncertainties in long-term economic modelling. Furthermore, the direct causality implied between disability employment and macroeconomic outcomes oversimplifies complex labour market dynamics.

The literature considers the broader benefits of employment beyond the fiscal. At the heart of these benefits lies the concept of social inclusion, as Van Asselt et al. (2015, p. 38) emphasise that 'an opportunity to occupy valued social roles is important for disabled adults to experience positive identities and become known and accepted as valued citizens in their community'. This perspective underscores employment's crucial role in fostering community integration, a view further reinforced by Cobigo et al. (2012), who posit that the workplace serves as a vital arena for community participation, directly contributing to individual well-being. Building on this foundation, Overmars-Marx et al. (2014) argue that work enables disabled people to become active, contributing members of society. Simpson (2015) specifically found that workplace participation created opportunities for developing social connections and mutual understanding with colleagues, which fostered an authentic sense of belonging within the workplace community. Hanson et al. (2021) expand this concept, describing work as a platform for deeper and broader social inclusion facilitating reciprocal interactions (where disabled employees both give and receive support and expertise, moving beyond one-directional helping relationships that can reinforce power imbalances) and the development of valued social status within broader networks that extend beyond the workplace itself - including participation in community cultural events, local advocacy groups, and socio-political movements through connections made at work.

Closely intertwined with these social expansions are the intrapersonal impacts of work, as employment provides structure to people's lives and offers opportunities for personal control, playing a crucial role in self-determination and self-efficacy. Warr (2002) and Gini (1998) highlight work's significance in fostering personal growth and skill acquisition, with Gini (1998, p. 714) aptly observing that 'the business of work is not simply to produce goods, but also to help produce people', encapsulating the transformative power of employment in shaping individual identity. These social and personal developmental aspects give rise to psychological and emotional well-being benefits, as documented by Forrester-Jones et al. (2006), NICE (2015), and Modini et al. (2016), have found associations between participation in employment and intrapersonal developments to self-esteem, confidence, mental well-being, and independence. Johnson et al. (2009) further this understanding by highlighting employment's positive impact on decision-making capacity, underscoring its role in personal empowerment. For young learning-disabled people, the impact of employment is particularly profound, not only signifying societal acceptance but also enhancing self-worth, as noted by Lindstrom et al.

(2010) and Robinson et al. (2018), reinforcing the idea that employment provides personal validation and inclusion.

The cumulative effect of employment's economic, social, and personal benefits contributes to an enhanced quality of life for disabled people. This improved quality of life manifests in various ways, as noted by numerous researchers (e.g., Schalock, 2004; Kober and Eggleton, 2005; Miller and Dishon, 2006; Johnson et al., 2012; Mahar et al., 2014). While employment offers benefits, it is important to recognise that work is not the only path to meaning and connection for disabled people. Other resources, such as familial ties, peer support, community involvement, religious engagement, and hobbies, can also lead to a sense of purpose and social inclusion (Hall, 2004, 2005; Butcher and Wilton, 2008; Gustavsson et al., 2021; Hale et al., 2021). The experience of social inclusion likely varies based on personal preferences and needs, highlighting the importance of individual choice (Cummins and Lau, 2003; Hammel et al., 2008). Despite these diverse pathways to inclusion, paid employment remains a consistent desire for disabled people, with over 60% expressing interest in work (Emerson, 2005). This persistent aspiration underscores the need for continued research into employment as a potential route for disabled people to experience social inclusion in this domain.

To summarise, the literature demonstrates clear benefits of employment for learning-disabled people across economic, social, and personal domains. Economically, employment increases individual income and reduces public support costs (National Audit Office, 2011), while socially, it promotes inclusion and community participation (Van Asselt et al., 2015; Cobigo et al., 2012). Employment also supports personal development through enhanced self-esteem, confidence, and independence (Forrester-Jones et al., 2006; NICE, 2015; Modini et al., 2016), with particular significance for young learning-disabled people (Lindstrom et al., 2010; Robinson et al., 2018). While acknowledging that employment is not the sole path to fulfilment, the consistent desire for paid work among this population (CEC, 2018) necessitates examining the barriers they face during workforce transition, which the next section will address.

Barriers disabled people encounter transitioning into employment

Prevalent in the literature is a pervasive and ongoing debate about the barriers disabled people face transitioning from education into employment. Among the reported barriers are employer concerns that the employment of disabled people will be risky. Paredes (2018) reports concern about lower productivity, expensive equipment requirements, increased supervision and safety costs, employee retention issues, and acceptance by other employees. Such apprehensions

further entrench barriers to the inclusion of disabled people in the workforce (Sankardas and Rajanahally, 2015; Paredes, 2018). However, a growing body of evidence can counter these concerns. Studies by Holwerda (2013), Paredes (2018), Akkerman et al. (2016), Kocman and Weber, and Rochette et al. (2021) suggest that with appropriate training and candidate selection, productivity among disabled employees can be maintained. This research positions disabled workers as assets who demonstrate stability, loyalty, and competence, while positively impacting overall employee job satisfaction.

Building on this evidence, training initiatives focusing on promoting diversity in the workforce have been identified as effective solutions for dispelling myths surrounding disabled employees (Ogilvie et al., 2017; Northeast LEP, 2018a, 2018b). However, some employers continue to display less interest in hiring disabled job applicants, showing the continuing prevalence of the belief that these individuals are underproductive and undeserving of employment (Scior and Werner, 2015; Ameri et al., 2018). The presence of these assumptions among employers is further corroborated by SCOPE (2018), who found nearly a third of surveyed employers believed disabled people are less productive than their non-disabled counterparts. Such beliefs likely contribute to the disparity in employment rates between learning-disabled people and the general population (Dixon et al., 2018). The persistence of these negative attitudes is further evidenced by data from the Equality Advisory Support Service, which reports that employment-related discriminatory inquiries about disability account for 62% of such queries (Stevens, 2019). These attitudes function as a barrier to the social inclusion of disabled people in the workplace and can be perceived as a form of discrimination rooted in an unwelcoming corporate culture (Dixon et al., 2018). Moreover, the literature highlights how stigmatisation and discrimination impact detrimentally on learning-disabled people, as they may internalise these negative perceptions. This internalisation can impact intrapersonally, resulting in self-stigma, heightened psychological distress, and diminished quality of life (Ali et al., 2015; Pelleboer-Gunnink et al., 2019). In response to these persistent challenges, the literature emphasises the importance of further training and awareness initiatives for employers and employees. These efforts aim to challenge the dominant discourses that construct disabled people as dependents, instead highlighting their potential to transition from being receivers of services to sharers of assets within the workforce (Holwerda, 2013; Paredes, 2018; Ofsted, 2024). By addressing both the practical concerns of

employers and the broader societal attitudes, such initiatives seek to create a more inclusive and equitable employment landscape for disabled people.

Supported employment and Supported Internships

The literature on supported employment reveals a growing body of research exploring its potential to include learning-disabled and autistic individuals into the workforce (e.g. Beyer and Robinson, 2009; Beyer and Kaehne, 2008; Ivok et al., 2011). Supported employment, is a service provision model aimed at facilitating employment opportunities for disabled people (BASE, 2020). Unlike traditional employment models that require individuals to complete pre-vocational training before entering the workforce, the supported employment model, characterised by its 'place and train' methodology, emphasises on-the-job training and guidance (Wehman, 1982; Beyer et al., 2010; Hanson, et al., 2017), involving vocational profiling and job finding activities (Vigna et al., 2024). While recognised by the UK government as a 'well-evidenced, personalised approach' to establishing sustainable employment opportunities for disabled people (HM Government, 2011, p.5), a critical examination of the literature reveals several areas requiring further research.

Since 2010, the UK has introduced Supported Internships, a facet of supported employment, as a way to address the high numbers of young individuals on the SEND register who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) (Audit Commission, 2010). These programmes, as described by the government, are yearlong, unpaid initiatives designed to enhance the employability of young people aged 18 to 25 who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) (HM Government, 2023; DWP, 2024). However, concerns have been raised about the accessibility and impact of these internships due to their relative scarcity. The Institute for Public Policy Research (2019, p. 10) observes the 'low and variable uptake of supported internships across the country', a finding echoed by other studies (House of Commons Education Committee, 2019; Hanson et al., 2017). This scarcity is illustrated by the Local Offer for Derbyshire, which lists only two Supported Internships – Project SEARCH Derby and Project SEARCH Chesterfield (Derby City Council, 2023), both within a healthcare setting and with a limited capacity of 12 interns per year. All of this demonstrates that scarcity and variability are important issues to address. Compounding this issue is the absence of a clear funding mechanism for extending the reach of Supported Internships to young people who have been identified as having SENDs, but do not have an EHCP (DfE, 2016), which presents a

barrier to their inclusivity. Consequently, these limitations raise important questions about the equity of access to supported employment opportunities and the extent to which current practices ensure all learning-disabled people can experience social inclusion in the workplace.

These limitations are further compounded when considering the status of Sis compared to other options. The lack of equal recognition, funding, and impact on the number of young people applying to Supported Internships and the employers hosting placement opportunities (Whitehurst and Davies, 2012; Allott and Hicks, 2016) may hinder their effectiveness in promoting sustainable employment outcomes. Recent government initiatives to bolster Supported Internships, such as the £18 million funding allocation over three years to double Supported Internship programmes by 2025 (House of Commons, 2022; DfE, 2022; 2023) and the NHS's commitment to hosting Supported Internships (DoHSC, 2021; NHS, 2021), demonstrate a growing recognition of the need to support transitioning to employment for learning-disabled people. The long-term impact of these initiatives on the capacity and effectiveness of Supported Internships remains unresearched, despite their potential significance. The DfE (2022) report growth in the number of Supported Internships from 216 in 2013/14 to 2,499 in 2020/2. The expansion of these programmes highlights their growing influence on employment and social inclusion opportunities for individuals diagnosed with SEND. This trend emphasises the importance of research to explore the multifaceted impact of these initiatives.

While the UK has seen growth in Supported Internships, a broader trend emerges in the international literature on employment programmes for disabled people. The majority of this research, particularly from the USA (where similar programmes are often referred to as 'transition-to-work' or 'school-to-work' initiatives rather than Supported Internships), emphasises quantitative employment outcomes. For instance, Christensen's (2015) randomised control trial (RCT) reveals that 90% of interns obtained competitive employment, and 87% maintained their positions after a year. Similarly, a multi-site RCT by Wehman et al., (2020) found 73.4% of interns secured competitive employment at or above minimum wage within a year of graduation, compared to 17% in the control group. Whilst these findings point towards the potential of Supported Internships to facilitate transition and retention into employment for learning-disabled people, their focus on singular measurable outcomes cannot account for how and why these outcomes occur, or how and why employment experiences might deepen or broaden social inclusion for learning disabled young people. The emphasis on quantitative

employment outcomes, though providing important insights, coexists with a significant gap in understanding the qualitative aspects of Supported Internships. This gap is particularly noticeable when considering self-perception, social inclusion and life quality.

The majority of research on Supported Internships originates from the United States (US), where studies have predominantly focused on Project SEARCH, a well-established and well-funded curricular model (detailed further in the Project SEARCH Supported Internship curricula model section). This focus is evident in several key studies: McFarland et al. (2017) examined post-programme employment outcomes across multiple Project SEARCH sites, while Muller and VanGilder (2014) investigated the model's effectiveness in hospital-based settings. Christensen (2015) analysed the programme's impact on skill development and job readiness, and Wehman et al. (2020) evaluated long-term employment retention rates among Project SEARCH graduates. In contrast, as noted by Hanson et al. (2017), research on Supported Internships in England is still in its early stages, highlighting a significant gap in understanding the effectiveness and challenges of these programmes within the specific context of the British education and employment landscape. This limited UK-based research may hamper the development of evidence-based policies and practices tailored to the unique needs and circumstances of different countries and regions.

The research landscape on Supported Internships in the United Kingdom primarily consists of grey literature and evaluation studies focused on measurable outcomes. The Cooper Gibson Research reports (CGR) (2013, 2020), commissioned by the Department for Education, provide valuable insights into programme implementation and employment outcomes. The 2020 CGR report, drawing on 50 interviews across 42 Supported Internships, offers important perspectives from providers and stakeholders on programme delivery and effectiveness. However, while the CGR reports effectively address their commissioned objectives regarding programme implementation and employment outcomes, there remain important areas for further investigation. The 2020 study's methodology, which focussed on provider and stakeholder perspectives through telephone interviews, leaves space for research that explores the lived experiences of interns themselves. Building on the foundation laid by the CGR reports, there is an opportunity to examine broader impacts beyond employment metrics, including social inclusion and intrapersonal development. By centering the voices of interns in both research design and execution, this study aims to complement existing literature by

providing rich, experiential accounts of how Supported Internship programmes mediate personal and professional development from the perspective of their primary beneficiaries.

The Department for Education (2022, p. 5) defines success in Supported Internships primarily through the lens of 'sustained and paid employment' outcomes. While employment represents a crucial measure of programme effectiveness, there is scope to expand this framework to encompass the multidimensional nature of interns' development. International policies, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), advocate for a comprehensive approach that encompasses social inclusion, health outcomes, and the addressing of broader inequalities for disabled people. This study aims to explore these additional dimensions of impact within Supported Internships, complementing existing employment metrics with insights into participants' broader development throughout their journey. Drawing on Simplican et al.'s (2015) conceptual framework of social inclusion, this research examines the evolution of interns' interpersonal relationships, community participation, and perceived quality of life. By investigating these aspects alongside employment outcomes, this study seeks to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how Supported Internships influence participants' lives across multiple domains. This expanded perspective offers the potential to enrich the understanding of programme impacts beyond employment metrics, align evaluation frameworks with international policy objectives regarding disability rights and inclusion, and provide insights into the developmental journey of interns throughout their participation, ultimately informing future programme development through a more holistic understanding of success.

The existing Supported Internship research landscape in the UK includes studies on social return on investment (e.g., Beyer, 2007; Kilsby and Beyer, 2010; Social Value Lab, 2013; Centre for Social Justice, 2017). For example, Social Value Lab (2013) examined the holistic value generated by a Supported Internship in North Lanarkshire. The research found a social return on investment (SROI) ratio of £3.96 for every £1 invested. This SROI was distributed among various stakeholders, including graduates, students, parents/carers, the NHS (as the employer), the Scottish Government, local authorities, and colleges. Notably, this calculation excluded the financial benefits accrued by graduates who secured employment and their families, and thus the calculation for the SROI could be at a higher value. Whilst SROI studies are a valuable methodology for analysing the efficacy of Supported Internships from a fiscal

perspective SROI's do not shed light on the long-term impacts and sustainability of Supported Internships.

An observable gap in the current UK literature is the limited exploration of the social inclusion implications of Supported Internships. Whilst some studies (e.g., Allott and Hicks, 2016; Hanson et al., 2021) have touched upon this aspect, there remains a lacuna in understanding the possible influence of supported internships on the breadth and depth of social inclusion for disabled people. As Hanson et al., (2021) observe, there is a need for more research on this area. This gap is concerning given the potential of Supported Internships to foster a sense of belonging, as described by Allott and Hicks (2016) and to provide opportunities for meaningful engagement and reciprocal relationships between disabled and non-disabled people. The concept of belonging, referring to feeling valued, appreciated, and unified with a community, location, or structure, is relevant to Supported Internships. However, the current literature does not explore how these programmes might cultivate this sense of belonging among participants. As Relph (2001) and Tuan (1974) highlight, the significance of a sense of place in fostering belonging is crucial yet appears understudied in the context of Supported Internships. This gap in understanding social inclusion is problematic given the potential for Supported Internships to address broader societal issues related to the marginalisation of learning-disabled people. The lack of research in this area limits the ability to fully comprehend and leverage the potential of Supported Internships as an initiative for promoting social inclusion and challenging societal prejudices against learning-disabled people.

To summarise this section, the literature on supported employment and internships for disabled people demonstrates growth in publications, yet reveals gaps (Beyer and Kaehne, 2008; Ivok et al., 2011). Despite being established as a national programme in 2010, UK Supported Internships still lack comprehensive evaluation to determine their effectiveness in reducing unemployment among learning-disabled people (House of Commons Education Committee, 2019; DWP, 2024). The predominance of research from the US (for example, Christensen, 2015; Wehman et al., 2020) highlights the need for more UK-based studies. UK evidence consists largely of grey literature and evaluation studies that exclude the voices of interns themselves (e.g., CGR, 2020). Beyond this methodological limitation, recent government evaluations have adopted a singular focus on employment outcomes (e.g., Department for Education, 2022), overlooking aspects of interns' development such as social inclusion, health outcomes, and overall quality of life - elements emphasised in UN (2006; 2015) international

policies. Supported Internships' relationship to social inclusion remains largely unexplored in UK literature, with few studies addressing this aspect (Allott and Hicks, 2016; Hanson et al., 2021). To address these research gaps and understand the potential of Supported Internships, broader investigation is needed. The subsequent section therefore examines how Supported Internship staff contribute to mediating interpersonal relationships and promoting inclusion while supporting social skill development, demonstrating the connection between employment outcomes and social inclusion.

The role of supported internship staff in mediating social inclusion

This section explores the evidence base related to support staff in Supported Internships and their role in mediating social inclusion for disabled interns. This literature is particularly relevant as it examines how support staff function as key actors within interpersonal systems that can facilitate or hinder social inclusion outcomes for disabled interns. It begins by outlining the types of support staff typically involved in these programmes, including job coaches, tutors, and work placement mentors (Bajorek et al., 2016; Meys et al., 2020). The review then explores the multifaceted responsibilities of these staff members, focusing on how they may mediate interns' social inclusion in the workplace (Hanson et al., 2017; Romualdez et al., 2020). While the existing research primarily emphasises employment outcomes, this section will highlight emerging evidence suggesting a complex relationship between support provision and social inclusion (Bigby and Wiesel, 2015). It will also address potential unintended consequences of intermediary support and identify gaps in current understanding, particularly regarding the specific processes through which support staff mediate social inclusion for learning-disabled interns.

The extant literature on Supported Internships underscores the significance of formal support staff in facilitating employment outcomes for learning-disabled people (Bajorek et al., 2016; Meys et al., 2020; Wright et al., 2015; Purvis et al., 2012; Bigby and Wiesel, 2015; Romualdez et al., 2020). These support staff typically comprise tutors, job coaches, and work placement mentors. Tutors are primarily responsible for delivering curriculum content in a classroom setting, focusing on developing employability skills. Job coaches offer on-site assistance, helping interns navigate placements and adapt to the workplace environment. Their role is multifaceted, extending beyond vocational support to include aspects such as employer liaison, support plan development, goal setting, and task management (Andrew and Rose, 2010; Hanson et al., 2017; Meys et al., 2020). Work placement mentors, often experienced employees

within the host organisation, guide interns through their day-to-day tasks, complementing the support provided by tutors and job coaches (Wright et al., 2015; Purvis et al., 2012). This tripartite support system aims to create a comprehensive framework for intern success, yet the specific impact of each role on social inclusion outcomes remains an area requiring further investigation.

While the existing research primarily emphasises employment outcomes, emerging evidence suggests a complex relationship between support provision and social inclusion (Bigby and Wiesel, 2015; Romualdez et al., 2020). This complexity is exemplified in Hanson et al., (2017) small-scale study, which revealed that a comprehensive approach by support staff incorporating personalised plans, workplace instruction, and ongoing assessments, promoted the social inclusion of interns. Their findings imply that trained personnel providing mentoring or individual job coaching might help address concerns about staff potentially impacting social inclusion, though this interpretation warrants further empirical investigation. The potential for unintended consequences in support provision adds another layer of complexity to the role of support staff. Some researchers, such as Hagner and Cooney (2003) and Bigby and Wiesel (2015), have raised concerns that job coaches and mentors may inadvertently influence acceptance and contribute to the stigmatisation of disabled employees. This paradoxical possibility underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of the processes through which support staff mediate interns' independence and social inclusion.

Organisations such as Preparing for Adulthood (2012; 2013) and MENCAP (2018) highlighting potential responsibilities in areas such as supporting intern well-being and fostering interpersonal relationships. These sources suggest that job coaches mediate interns' social inclusion, helping them to navigate workplace challenges. However, the lack of empirical research in this area points to a need for further investigation to substantiate these assertions, which should in turn also offer deeper understandings and interpretations about the job coach role in relation to the mediation of social inclusion. The role of Supported Internship Tutors represents a largely unexplored area that could yield valuable insights into the holistic support of interns. This study has the potential to cast new light on the way that internship staff mediate social inclusion.

Project SEARCH curricula model

This section examines the literature on Project SEARCH (PS), a specific and prevalent curriculum model for Supported Internship programmes. Project SEARCH originated in the US and has expanded to over 600 sites across 46 states. It has also extended into 10 countries, including Canada, Australia, India, and the UK (Daston et al., 2012; Frontier Economics, 2022; Müller et al., 2018). The UK implementation advanced when the charitable foundation, David Forbes Nixon (DFN) secured franchise rights, resulting in the establishment of over 100 sites nationwide (DFN Project SEARCH, 2021; O'Bryan et al., 2014). There is evidence that over 70% of Project SEARCH graduates move into competitive employment, with 60% achieving full-time permanent positions (Burress and Paniski, 2020; Christensen et al., 2014). A review in the UK conducted by the National Development Team for Inclusion (2016) concluded that the Project Search model achieved greater impact than conventional school-based employment support (such as work experience placements and classroom-based employability skills training) in terms of employment rates following the programme, average earnings, and job retention. These empirical findings align with the UK government's (2021) recognition of Project SEARCH as a model of good practice within the national learning disability strategy, 'preparing for adulthood' (Daston et al., 2012; Müller et al., 2018).

In reviewing the key UK and USA literature (e.g., Kaehne, 2014; Muller et al., 2018) the reported success of the Project SEARCH curricula model of Supported Internships has been attributed to several factors, including immersive practical experience in authentic work settings, collaborative partnerships among stakeholders, and ongoing on-site support (Rutkowski et al., 2006; Alkali, 2021). The programme's structure incorporates elements such as employer-driven frameworks, complete inclusion within host organisations, and systematic staff training (Kaehne, 2014; DfE, 2013; National Grid, 2017; CEC, 2017a, 2018; Preparing for Adulthood, 2018; Muller et al, 2018; DFN Project SEARCH, 2022a), contrasting other Supported Internship models where some components of learning take place within an education setting (CGR, 2020). Similar to the broader Supported Internship literature detailed in the previous section, there is a paucity of comprehensive, peer-reviewed research, particularly in contexts outside of the USA. This scarcity of rigorous academic scrutiny is evident in the UK context, where the model has been implemented across various business sectors (DFN Project SEARCH, 2022a). The predominance of US-based research raises questions about the model's applicability and effectiveness in diverse national contexts with differing educational systems, labour markets, and disability policies (Daston et al., 2012;

Müller et al., 2018). A substantial portion of available information consists of internal reports, evaluations, and promotional materials produced by the organisation itself (e.g., DFN Project SEARCH, 2021; DFN Project SEARCH, 2022a). This evidence base could be enriched through a detailed ethnographic study of Project SEARCH's implementation within the UK context, providing insights into how the model operates within local educational frameworks and employment settings. Such research would complement existing quantitative outcomes data and evaluative studies by illuminating the day-to-day practices, adaptations, and experiences that shape the programme's delivery and effectiveness.

The focus on quantitative outcomes about Project SEARCH Supported Internships, such as employment rates and job placements (e.g., Christensen et al., 2014; Kaehne, 2016; Burrell and Paniski, 2020; Frontier Economics, 2022), has cast important light on the potential effectiveness of these programmes. However, there remains value in extending inquiry beyond employment metrics to examine the relationship between Supported Internships and social inclusion. This is particularly salient given that social inclusion emerges in the literature as an indicator of quality of life for learning disabled people (Schalock et al., 2010). Rich accounts of impacts on social inclusion and their mediation can inform programme design and policy discourse, contributing to broader consideration of human rights and human flourishing dimensions of supported employment. This is especially relevant given disabled people's expressed aspirations for employment participation, which signals the importance of amplifying interns' voices within accounts of their lived experience. Consequently, there is a lack of empirical evidence regarding how participation in Project SEARCH programmes affects individuals' social inclusion as theorised by Simplican et al., (2015) including depth and breadth of interpersonal relationships, and community participation as well as further holistic evaluative measures such as personal and development.

A critical gap in the literature is the absence of research foregrounding the perspectives and experiences of young people diagnosed with SEND who participate in Project SEARCH programmes. The existing literature predominantly reflects the viewpoints of employers, programme administrators, and policymakers (Allott and Hicks, 2016), neglecting the crucial insights that disabled interns could provide regarding the programme's impact and areas for improvement. The literature also identifies systemic challenges that may affect the long-term success of Project SEARCH graduates. These include the potential saturation of host businesses in hiring graduate interns (Allott and Hicks, 2016), perceptions about SEND

capabilities (Purvis et al., 2012; CGR, 2020), challenges in accessing funding sources (CGR, 2020), and a scarcity of entry-level positions within organisations offering supported internships (CGR, 2013, 2020). The requirement for minimum level 2 qualifications for many entry-level roles presents an additional barrier, potentially excluding candidates who have demonstrated suitability during internships but lack formal credentials (Ameri et al., 2018; Papworth Trust, 2018).

Chapter Summary

Globally social inclusion is embedded in international policy and human rights frameworks, such as the UN (2006) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which explicitly recognises the right of disabled people to full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (Article 3) and emphasises their right to work and employment in an inclusive labour market (Article 27). However, when it comes to understanding the extent to which disabled people experience social inclusion, Simplican et al. (2015) offer a model that is structurally nuanced and unique. Their framework conceptualises social inclusion as 'the interaction between two major life domains: interpersonal relationships and community participation' (Simplican et al., 2015, p. 18). This structure offers valuable guidance for examining the practical manifestations of social inclusion in research, particularly within the field of Supported Internships and employment, because it provides a framework to identify, measure, and evaluate both the depth and breadth of an individual's social inclusion across different life domains.

When assembled, there are the signs that the literature constructs social inclusion as a proxy for quality of life for disabled and learning-disabled people. For example, there are accounts of the relationship between participation in employment, mental health, and physical health. The health implications for disabled people who are not in employment are significant and multifaceted. Research indicates that unemployment is associated with poorer physical and mental health among this population. Emerson et al. (2012) found that unemployed disabled adults reported lower levels of general health and higher rates of mental health problems compared to those in employment. Furthermore, Jahoda et al. (2009) noted that unemployment can lead to increased social isolation, which is associated with adverse health outcomes. Employment has been shown to enhance feelings of belonging, social connectedness, and community integration, contributing significantly to overall wellbeing and life satisfaction.

Despite the potential benefits of employment for health and social inclusion, DoHSC (2021) data indicates persistently low employment rates among learning-disabled people in the UK. Supported internships, notably the Project SEARCH model, have emerged as a solution for employment (and hence wellbeing) disparities. Research by Christensen et al. (2015) and Wehman et al. (2020) suggests these initiatives offer benefits beyond employment, potentially expanding support networks and addressing social isolation. However, a critical analysis of current literature reveals significant gaps in understanding how supported employment relates to social inclusion and broader human benefits.

The literature exhibits several key limitations. First, there is a notable absence of research centred on the lived experiences of young disabled people, with only three UK-based qualitative studies published between 2013-2024 incorporating their direct perspectives. Second, studies examining the processes mediating social inclusion in Supported Internships are absent, limiting understanding about how to improve these programmes. The literature lacks nuanced descriptions of changes to the breadth and depth of social inclusion for participants in Supported Internship programmes, and rarely employs Simplican et al.'s (2015) framework despite its unique capacity to evaluate these dimensions. Furthermore, explanatory accounts of what mediates changes to social inclusion during Supported Internship programmes - such as specific practices, affordances, and relationships - are notably absent. In the particular context of Supported Internships, there is a striking lack of accounts that amplify the voices of programme participants and report these accounts in their vernacular.

These gaps in the literature indicate a pressing need for research that could inform programme designers, practitioners, and policy makers about the more holistic benefits of Supported Internships, potentially shifting the discourse toward a human rights and human flourishing direction. Such research would be particularly valuable in providing comprehensive, geographically focused studies on Supported Internships that centralise the voices of learning-disabled people while examining the specific mechanisms that facilitate social inclusion.

Chapter 2: Synthesising Ecological Systems Theories: Bronfenbrenner and Simplican

Introduction

This chapter presents a critical examination of the theoretical framework that forms the foundation of this study. It deploys ecological systems theory to theorise the potential factors mediating social inclusion for learning-disabled people who are participating in a Supported Internship programme. The chapter begins with a critical account of the evolution of Ecological Systems Theory, with particular reference to the work of Bronfenbrenner who has been a key influence on this study. This exploration demonstrates how the theory has been adapted to better capture the complex and dynamic nature of human development. Following this, the chapter offers an analysis of how theorists, specifically Simplican et al. (2015), have adapted and deployed ecological systems theory to the field of disability and social inclusion. The chapter then proposes a model that synthesises Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (2006) most recent theoretical work (The PPCT model) with those of Simplican et al. (2015) (The EP model). This integration results in the development of the PPCT-EP model tailored to considering biological, psychological, and social factors in understanding the social inclusion development of learning-disabled people. The chapter concludes by summarising this theoretical framework, which informs the study's design, research questions, and methodology. This framework provides a lens through which to interpret, understand and report the study's key findings and implications, particularly as this relate to the relationship between Supported Internships and Social Inclusion.

The evolution of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory

A critical assemblage of the literature focussed on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory reveals that it evolved over three phases, expanding from an ecological to a bioecological theory. Phase One (1973–1979) of ecological systems theory culminated in the publication of 'The Ecology of Human Development' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Phase Two (1980–1993) modified the theory, with increased attention paid to the individual, and the passing of time in the ecosystem. In Phase Three (1993–2006), proximal processes were defined and placed at the heart of bioecological theory to take account of the influence of biological characteristics and environmental contexts in the ecosystem, from 1998, the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model was constructed to represent the theory, since it was considered to represent

comprehensively, the multiplicity of factors operating across systems to influence human development.

Phases in the evolution of the theory are now explored in more detail, in part to prepare for the proposal of a further adaption of the model to consideration of social inclusion and disability. In Phase One of Bronfenbrenner's (1974, 1975, 1976, 1977a, 1978, 1979b) ecological systems theory, which he initially termed an ecological approach, or model of human development, Bronfenbrenner used the terms 'system', 'environment', and 'context' interchangeably to describe the settings that influence human development. The focus was describing the characteristics and influences of different contextual systems (e.g. economic) on human development (Bronfenbrenner and Evans, 2000). This phase was motivated by Bronfenbrenner's (1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977c, 1979a, 1979b) critique of the limitations of contemporary psychological research, particularly laboratory-based studies conducted in unfamiliar settings with unknown researchers, as well as the demand from policymakers for research relevant to children, adolescents, and families.

Bronfenbrenner (1975, 1976, 1977a, 1979b) argued that laboratory research omitted consideration of the context (environment) where development was taking place and focused solely on the organism (the person), assuming environments as static and unrelated to any system of values. He emphasised the necessity of considering more than just the researcher and subject and urged more attention to the developmental processes involved in attaining outcomes, and the environments which were shaping these processes (Bronfenbrenner 1973, 1974, 1976, 1977a, 1977c, 1978, 1979a, 1979b). This early theoretical presentation of the theory provides a grounding for understanding disability as socially constructed and situated because it emphasises how developmental outcomes are shaped by environmental contexts and systems rather than being solely determined by individual characteristics. Bronfenbrenner (1979b) concluded that advancing the scientific understanding of human development required investigating intrapsychic (thoughts and feelings) and interpersonal (relationships) processes in the actual environments where people live. To address this, Bronfenbrenner (1976, 1977b, 1977c, 1978, 1979b) conceptualised the environment as a topological arrangement of four interconnected systems: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem (Figure 2).

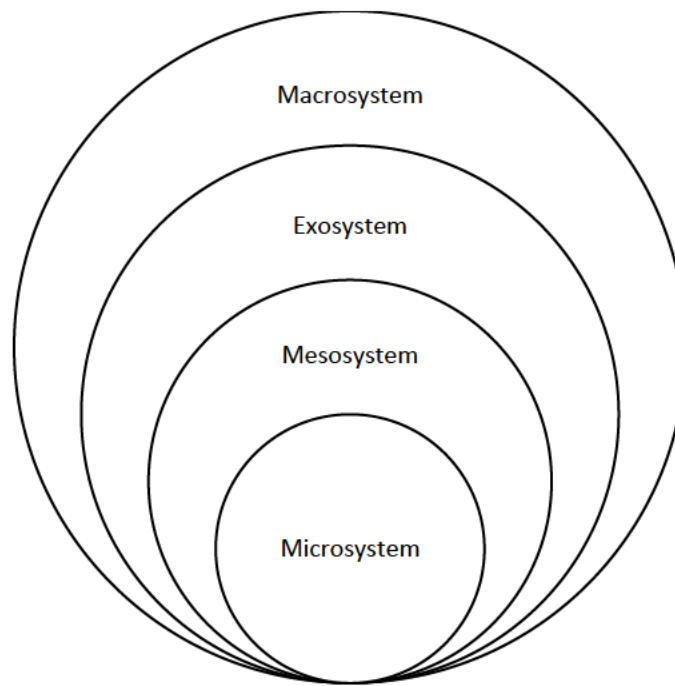


Figure 2: Phase One of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory (Derived from Bronfenbrenner 1978)

Figure 2 summarises the systems model proposed by Bronfenbrenner. The innermost system, the microsystem pertains to the settings a person directly interacts with, such as home, school, or workplace (Bronfenbrenner, 1974, 1976, 1977c, 1978, 1979b; Quickfall, 2021). The mesosystem represents the interrelations among these microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1976, 1977b, 1977c, 1978, 1979b), such as the interaction with a Supported Internship Job Coach and a student's parent. The exosystem encompasses settings that indirectly mediate the developing person, such as a parent's workplace (Bronfenbrenner, 1974, 1976, 1977b, 1977c, 1978, 1979b). Finally, the macrosystem refers to the overarching institutional systems of a culture or subculture, including economic, social, educational, legal, and political systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1976, 1977b, 1978, 1979b) or that which Harkone (2007, p. 12) refers to as a 'societal blueprint for a particular culture, subculture or broader social context'. Here Harkone (2007) is describing the distal environmental factors that indirectly mediate human development, as a person moves towards the outer systems the ways in which these systems shape their human development may become less visible to than those which appear closer at hand (Klag et al., 2021). For example, applying the model to this study and its focus on disability and employment, the distal environment factors that indirectly mediate human development could be seen through the lens of national policies which affect the removal of barriers. Whilst these policies may seem far removed from an individual's immediate situation, they impact the systems which a person has direct contact with. For instance, a national policy mandating equal employment opportunities for disabled people could influence a local

government initiative, which in turn, could lead to changes in the workplace environment, such as reasonable adjustments that promote inclusive hiring practices.

Phase One also introduced the concept of ecological transitions (Bronfenbrenner 1976, 1977b, 1977c, 1978, 1979b), which refers to the normative changes in roles and environments that occur throughout a person's life. These transitions represent moments of change and adaptation within a person's ecological system. An example is the transition from education to employment for young disabled people. This transition exemplifies what Bronfenbrenner (1979b, p. 33) calls the 'mutual accommodation' between a person and their setting (microsystem). In other words, it is not just the individual adapting to new circumstances, but also the environment adjusting to accommodate the individual. To study these ecological transitions effectively, Bronfenbrenner (1977b, 1977c, 1978, 1979b) suggests using a pre-post design. This approach allows researchers to observe changes over time, capturing the dynamics of the transition process. Importantly, these studies should take place in real situations and natural settings, acknowledging the complex interactions between different systems in a person's life and the reciprocal relationships between people and their environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979b). Given these requirements, ethnography emerges as a particularly suitable methodology for studying ecological transitions and thus is used for this study as detailed in Chapter 3 because it allows for the sustained, immersive observation necessary to capture both individual and environmental changes during transitions.

Phase One of the theory Bronfenbrenner (1976, 1977c, 1978) proposed the systemic and interdependent nature of environments (systems), the importance of considering developmental processes and modes of interaction among people (Bronfenbrenner 1973, 1976, 1977a, 1977b, 1977c, 1978), and the environment that orients the developing person's actions and interactions (Bronfenbrenner 1976, 1977b, 1978). For example, consider a young person with a physical disability transitioning from education to employment. This ecological transition involves shifts across multiple systems: from classroom to workplace interactions (microsystem), school-family to work-family dynamics (mesosystem), educational to employment policies (exosystem), and student to employee roles (macrosystem). The individual adapts by developing new skills and workplace norms, while the workplace may prepare or evolve accommodations. The 'field' influencing this transition includes the person's perceptions of workplace accessibility, societal attitudes towards disability in professional settings, and available support systems. These perceptions shape their approach to job searching, colleague

interactions, and navigation of workplace challenges. This transition exemplifies the mutual accommodation between person and environment across various ecological systems.

During Phase Two in the development of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1980-1993) (Figure 3), two new systems were introduced: the individual system and the chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1983, 1986a, 1986b, 1988, 1989). The individual system represents the person, and their intrapersonal substance nested within the ecological systems. In a dynamic way, the individual interacts with and influences their surroundings, whilst also being shaped by them (Bronfenbrenner, 1983). The chronosystem represents time as a developmental dimension, encompassing normative and non-normative life events (Bronfenbrenner, 1989); normative events include expected developmental transitions, such as a child with autism starting school and adjusting to different educational environments, while non-normative events are unexpected occurrences, such as the onset of disability following an accident resulting in paralysis. The addition of the individual system and chronosystem acknowledged individual characteristics and temporality as factors in human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986a). By recognising the individual system, Bronfenbrenner was concerned to acknowledge how personal characteristics influence development, particularly through 'developmentally instigative characteristics' - personal attributes that influence responses from other people (Bronfenbrenner, 1989, p.13) and the bidirectional dynamic of person and environment. For example, a disabled intern's problem-solving skills might prompt colleagues to seek their input on workplace challenges, leading to new collaborative patterns and opportunities. The chronosystem provides a mechanism for describing how changes over time impact each of the other systems. For example:

- *microsystem* - for example, changes in workplace accommodations for an intern with a disability;
- *mesosystem* - for example, evolving relationships between the Supported Internship programme and the host company;
- *exosystem* - for example, shifts in disability employment policies;
- *macrosystem* - for example, changing societal attitudes towards disability inclusion

(Bronfenbrenner, 1986a, 1989).

The chronosystem also encompasses how these systemic changes interact with the individual's own developmental course (Bronfenbrenner, 1988), such as an intern's growing self-advocacy skills over the course of a Supported Internship. Bronfenbrenner revised his conceptualisation

of existing ecological environments to integrate these new perspectives (Bronfenbrenner, 1986b, 1989). This theoretical expansion provided researchers with a framework for understanding human development, enabling the exploration of complex interactions between personal attributes, environmental factors, and temporal influences across all system levels (Bronfenbrenner and Crouter, 1983).

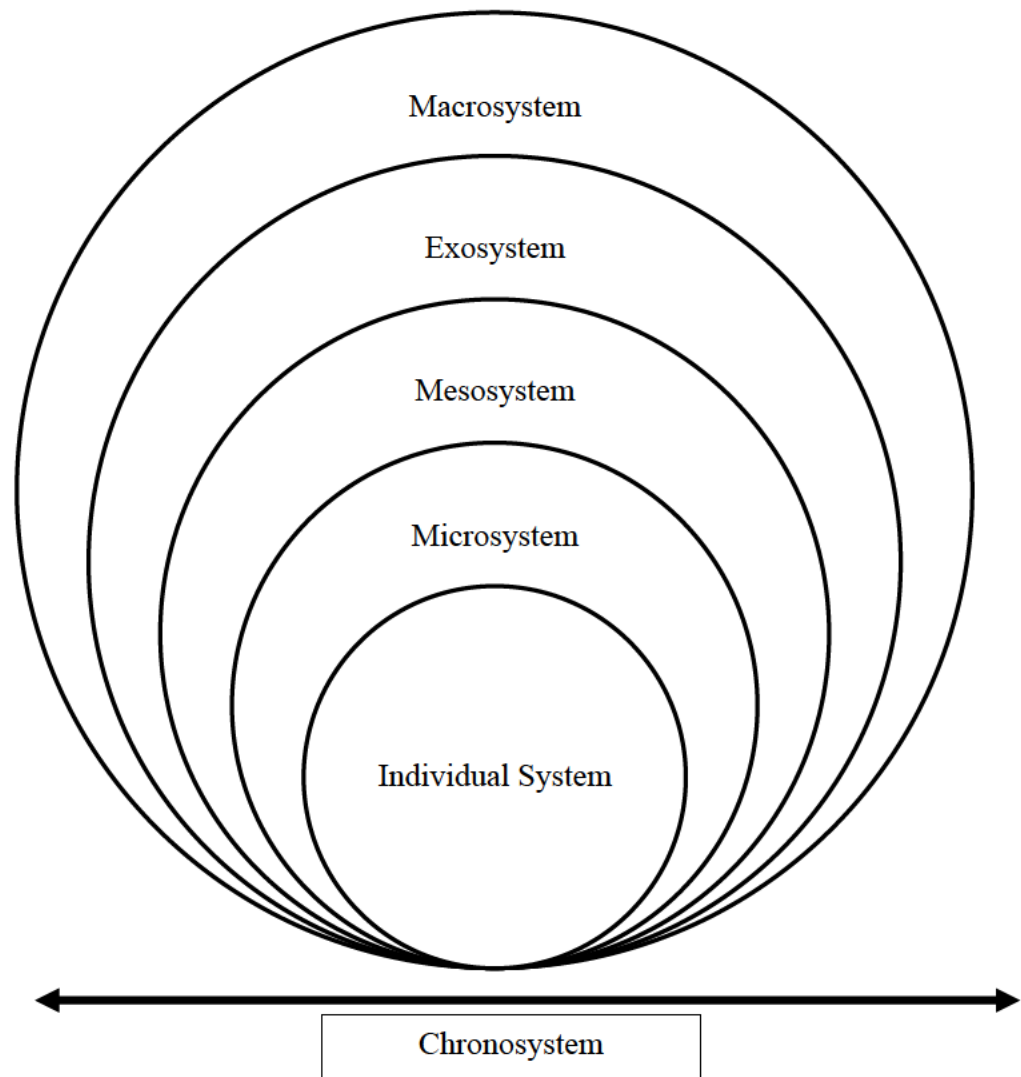


Figure 3 Phase Two of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Derived from Bronfenbrenner, 1999)

Phase Three, the final phase, brought a paradigm shift in the expansion of an ecological system to a bioecological system (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, 1995b, 1999, 2000, 2001; Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1993, 1994; Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998, 2006). This phase elucidated the interplay between individual characteristics, contextual systems, both spatial and temporal, and their influence on 'proximal processes', defined as recurring interactions between an individual and their immediate environment that become progressively more complex over time

(Bronfenbrenner and Evans, 2000, p. 6963–6964). Bronfenbrenner defined the bioecological model as 'an evolving theoretical system for the scientific study of human development over time' (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006, p. 793). The renaming of the theory from 'ecological' to 'bioecological' reflected Bronfenbrenner's increased emphasis on the role of the person in mediating their own development. This shift underscored the importance of considering biological factors (i.e., genetic makeup, neurological development, and physical health conditions).

The Phase Three model (Figure 4) posits that four interrelated components (process, person, context, and time - PPCT) mediate developmental outcomes simultaneously (Bronfenbrenner, 1999; Hayes et al., 2017; Tudge and Rosa, 2013). For example, in relation to this study, as interns engage in increasingly complex data entry tasks (**P**rocess), their adaptive technology proficiency and motivation (**P**erson) interact with the workplace accommodations and mentorship available (**C**ontext) over the course of the internship (**T**ime) to influence their job skill development (developmental outcome). The intern who is highly motivated, adept at using screen-reading software, and placed in a supportive work environment with patient mentors and appropriate accommodations is likely to develop stronger data entry skills over time compared to an intern lacking these personal and contextual advantages, even if they are given similar tasks. The interconnectedness of these factors, termed 'synergism' by Bronfenbrenner (1999, p.10), accentuates the cumulative effects of simultaneous interaction on developmental outcomes (Navarro et al., 2022). This synergism is evident in how these factors work together, creating dynamic feedback loops that can enhance or hinder human development over time.

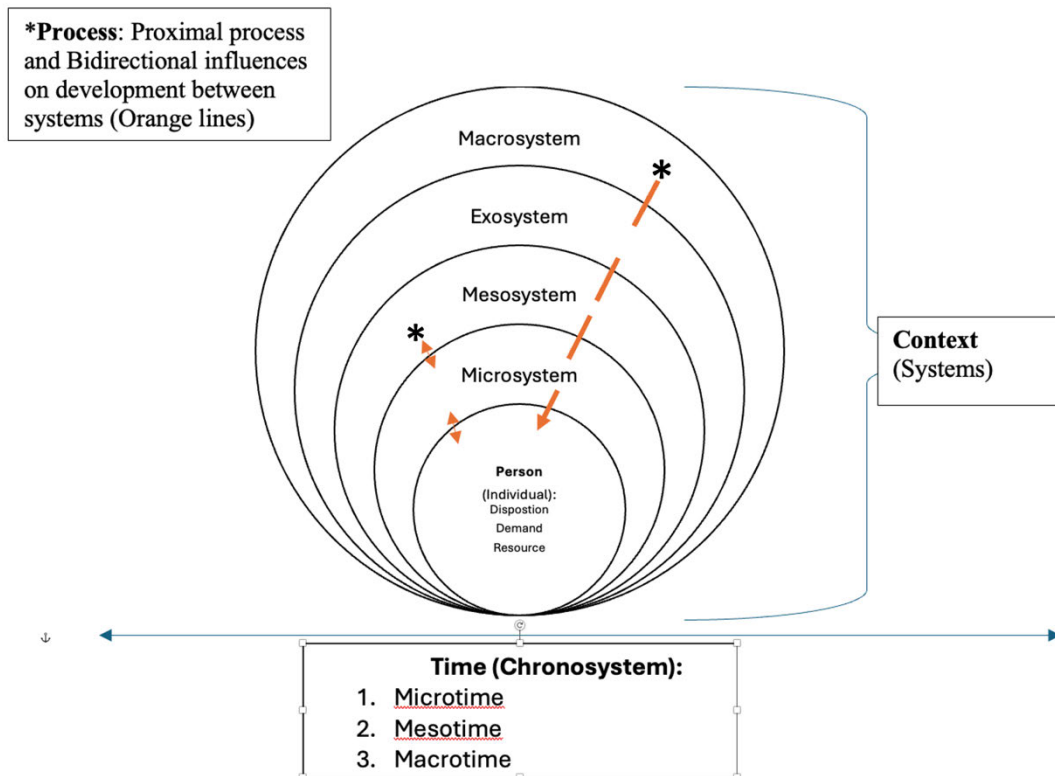


Figure 4 Phase Three: Bioecological Systems Theory (Derived from Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006)

Proximal processes, shown by orange arrows in Figure 4, drive development through increasingly complex interactions between individuals and their environment. As Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1993, p. 317) explained, these processes involve ‘progressively more complex reciprocal interactions between an active evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate environment’. Consider an autistic person in a supported employment programme. Their daily workplace interactions demonstrate proximal processes in action as they progress from basic greetings to complex work discussions. Through immediate feedback from coworkers, they adapt their communication style, perhaps initially using visual aids before developing more independent communication skills. This evolution exemplifies how proximal processes must occur regularly over extended periods, become increasingly complex, and involve bidirectional feedback to effectively enhance development; in this case, fostering improved social communication and workplace inclusion.

The person component in Figure 4 (formerly named the individual system during Phase Two: Figure 3) encompasses three types of characteristics that shape an individual's identity: disposition (or force), demand, and resource (Bronfenbrenner, 1995b; Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998, 2006). Disposition characteristics, such as curiosity, initiation, responsiveness, and the ability to defer gratification, are considered likely to influence developmental outcomes, either generatively or disruptively (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998, 2006). Demand characteristics, like temperament, appearance, age, gender, and ethnicity, invite or discourage reactions from people's responses, often due to cultural expectations (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006; Costa et al., 2023). Resource characteristics, including experiences, knowledge, skills, and access to developmentally helpful activities, mediate an individual's ability to engage effectively in proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998, 2006; Costa et al., 2023).

As highlighted previously, throughout Bronfenbrenner's (1977; 1995b) development of the theory, context (Systems) was a central tenet (Navarro et al., 2022). The context component relates to the different types of environments that mediate and are influenced by the individual, including the microsystem (direct interaction), mesosystem (interrelations among microsystems), exosystem (indirect influence), and macrosystem (broader cultural and societal systems) (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, 1999; Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998, 2006). The theory can be viewed as resisting individuated models of human development which tend to overlook the complexity of context and relationships, thereby impeding a comprehensive understanding of human development. This stance resonates with prevalent trends in social psychology. Subsequently, there emerges a perceptible shift in Bronfenbrenner's perspective, where he later recognised the problems associated with overlooking an individuals' psychological and biological aspects. As noted earlier, this evolution led to the conception of bidirectionality (illustrated in Figure 4 with double ended arrows), which encapsulates the bidirectional influence between the individual and their environment. For example, consider a deaf student in a mainstream school. The microsystem includes direct interactions with teachers, interpreters, and peers. The mesosystem might involve the interplay between home and school, such as parents advocating for accommodations. The exosystem could include school board decisions about funding for support services, indirectly affecting the student. The macrosystem encompasses societal attitudes towards deafness and educational policies. Bidirectionality is evident as the student's needs influence these systems (e.g., prompting policy changes), while

simultaneously, these systems shape the student's experiences and development. This explanation can be interpreted as a rejection of dualistic paradigms characterising human development as a product of either nature or nurture. Instead, Bronfenbrenner advocates for a nuanced and intricate framing of human development, one that encompasses multifaceted interactions among biological, psychological, social, cultural, and political dimensions. This holistic approach, akin to the biopsychosocial model (see Introduction), acknowledges the complexity inherent in phenomena such as disability, wherein impairment, psychology, and environment intersect in intricate ways. All of this has implications for the study, since where the word 'mediate' is used, it must be acknowledged that the intern is a mediating factor in social inclusion. Their intrapersonal substance (both body and mind) is implicated in the processes that nourish or impoverish their own social inclusion, the social inclusion of others, and the social inclusiveness of their environment.

With reference to the time (T) component of PPCT, Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) distinguished three types of time: microtime (continuity or discontinuity of ongoing episodes of proximal processes), mesotime (frequency of these processes over days and weeks), and macrotime (changing expectations, social norms, historical events, and culture across generations). The emphasis on time highlights the importance of longitudinal studies and situating research within the individual's environment, as exemplified by ethnographic approaches in the field of education (Navarrareo et al., 2022; Stringberg & Johnson, 2022). These studies demonstrate how different time scales shape developmental outcomes, from daily teacher-student interactions to generational changes in educational practices. The implications for this study are the need for multi-temporal data collection and the importance of considering historical and cultural contexts when interpreting social inclusion.

To summarise, Bronfenbrenner and Morris, (2006) ecological systems theory, evolved into the bioecological model of human development. It offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the interacting factors influencing human development. This theory progressed through three distinct phases, each refining the previous one to improve its comprehensiveness in capturing the complexity of human development. The initial phase introduced the concept of interconnected environmental systems: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979b), representing different levels of environmental influence from immediate interactions to broader societal contexts. Recognising the limitations

of this initial model, the second phase incorporated the individual system as an active participant in their development and introduced the chronosystem to account for the role of time (Bronfenbrenner, 1986a, 1989), thereby addressing the dynamic nature of development. Building on these foundations, the final phase introduced the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) framework (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998), emphasising proximal processes (Process - P) as primary drivers of development while considering individual characteristics (Person - P), environmental systems (Context - C), and temporal factors (Time - T). This PPCT model highlights the synergistic interactions between these components in shaping developmental outcomes (Navarro et al., 2022), providing a nuanced understanding of human development. Key concepts such as ecological transitions (Bronfenbrenner, 1979b) and bidirectionality (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006) further underscore the dynamic nature of human development, emphasising that development is socially situated. Consequently, the theory rejects simplistic nature-versus-nurture explanations, instead advocating for a sophisticated understanding of how biological, psychological, and environmental factors interact (Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994). While Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory was designed as a broad framework for human development, its comprehensiveness and holism make it particularly valuable when applied to specific contexts. In recognition of this value, this study adopts Phase Three of Bronfenbrenner's theory, specifically the PPCT model (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998, 2006), while drawing on valuable insights from earlier phases to provide a comprehensive theoretical foundation. The PPCT framework has been selected as the primary conceptual framework because it offers several distinct advantages: its emphasis on proximal processes provides a theoretical lens for examining how interactions between individuals and their environment shape developmental outcomes in the specific context of Supported Internships; its integration of personal characteristics allows for careful consideration of how individual differences influence these developmental processes; its contextual dimension enables analysis across multiple ecological levels, from immediate settings to broader societal influences, which is crucial for understanding the complex landscape of disability support and social inclusion; and its time dimension permits examination of both immediate and long-term changes in developmental outcomes, particularly relevant when studying the trajectory of social inclusion through Supported Internships. The next section examines how this theory has been adapted and applied to disability studies and social inclusion, particularly exploring how the conceptual fit between PPCT and the research objectives is strengthened when these concepts are considered alongside the application of Ecological Systems Theory within these fields, offering insights into how this model can enhance the understanding of disability in

diverse contexts such as Supported Internships and inform strategies across a range of ecological systems for improving the lives of disabled people.

Ecological pathways and social inclusion for learning disabled people

Ecological systems theory has been deployed by theorists in the field of disability and social inclusion. This section examines the ecological pathways model developed by Simplican et al. (2015, p. 18) for understanding factors to and from social inclusion for people with 'intellectual and developmental disabilities'. The ecological pathways model shares structural concepts with Bronfenbrenner's and Morris' (2006) ecological systems theory, in so much as it comprises of a nested ecological model, it develops its own distinct ecological framework focused specifically on social inclusion for learning-disabled people. Simplican et al. (2015) propose a framework (Figure 5) which conceptualises: individual, interpersonal, organisational, community, and sociopolitical pathways. It should be noted that Simplican et al. (2015) do not directly reference or cite Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model in their work. Instead, they draw upon researchers who deployed his theories (Overmars-Marx et al., 2014; Verdonschot et al., 2009). Consequently, it is not possible to determine the extent to which Simplican et al.'s (2015) work may have been influenced by Bronfenbrenner's model. The ecological pathways model describes the dynamic and multidirectional routes through which different ecological levels interact to influence social inclusion outcomes, representing how changes and influences flow between and across different ecological systems. Henceforth, this model will be referred to as the 'ecological pathways model.' The model shares key similarities with Bronfenbrenner's and Morris' (2006) PPCT model (Figure 4): both recognise that human development is influenced by proximal and distal factors across concentrically organised systems, acknowledge intrapersonal, biological, metaphysical and individual factors, and emphasise that impoverishing impacts in one system are likely to perpetuate across other systems. Both frameworks also assume bidirectional influence, where individuals actively contribute to and change their systems rather than being passive recipients. However, the ecological pathways model (Figure 5) is distinct in its explicit conceptualisation of pathways as mechanisms of change between systems, its specific focus on social inclusion, and its suggestion that social inclusion broadens when individuals actively participate in increasingly distal social spaces (such as organisational and sociopolitical systems). Furthermore, it proposes that social inclusion is enriched when bridges form between systems, enabling participation in broader zones of human activity, with depth characterised by structurally

complex relationships (formal, long-lasting, and reciprocal) across these pathways. This ecological conceptualisation recognises how substance within one system influences another, the bidirectional nature of this influence, and the active role of the individual within this dynamic. The model demonstrates how various systemic, socioecological levels interact to influence social inclusion, recognising both enabling and disabling factors across these systems while offering a tool to measure relationships between social inclusion, ecological conditions, and outcomes. The following section explores each of these system pathways in Simplican et al.'s (2015) model, examining their unique characteristics and contributions to social inclusion.

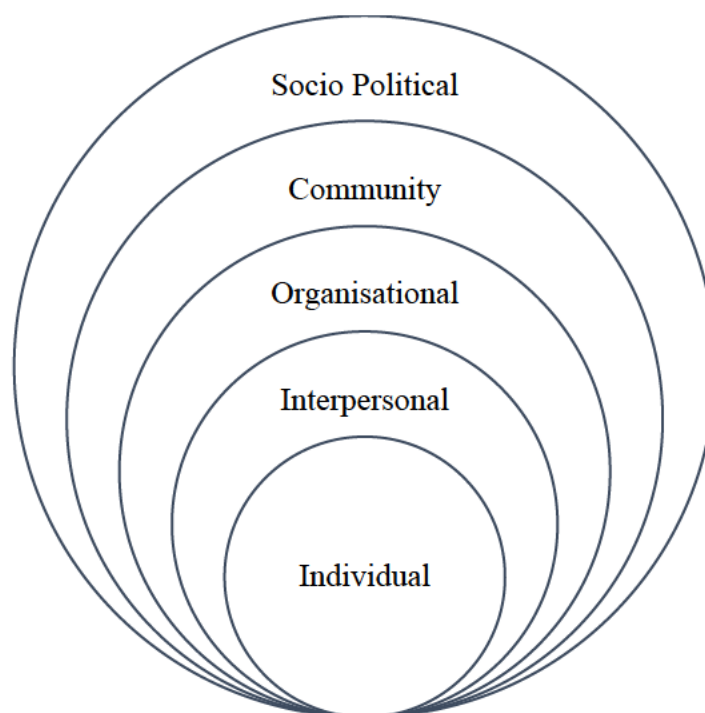


Figure 5 The Ecological Pathways Model (Derived from Simplican et al. 2015)

The individual system pathway focuses on personal attributes such as a learning-disabled person's level of functioning, self-motivation, confidence, and goal-setting abilities (Figure 5). Similar to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) ecological systems theory, this model employs concentric circles to represent increasingly distal influences on human development, though with systems specifically tailored to social inclusion. In Figure 5, the interpersonal system is

concentrically adjacent to the individual system. It places greater emphasis on a person's immediate relationships, compared to Bronfenbrenner's and Morris's (2006) microsystem (Figure 4). This system draws upon Clement and Bigby (2009) and Hermesen et al. (2014) and encompasses interactions with staff, family members, and peers. The decision to separate this from the individual system and name it explicitly as 'interpersonal' underscores the role of close relationships in enabling or disabling pathways to social inclusion for disabled people. This reflects a nuanced understanding of the social nature of inclusion and the importance of support networks. It is important to consider how this system might overlap with or be influenced by the organisational and community systems, since in a PPCT model of human development, these systems are assumed to interact.

The 'organisational' system pathway indicated by the third concentric circle (Figure 5), examines the influence of organisational structures and practices. Drawing from Bigby et al. (2012) and Dodevska and Vassos (2013), Simplican et al., (2015) consider factors such as organisational culture, mission statements, and staff training opportunities. In the context of Supported Internships, this organisational system pathway could encompass both the structure of the internship programme itself and the host business. For instance, the Supported Internship Programme that is the site for this study, includes organisational artefacts which include its mission statement, inclusion policies, training provided to job coaches, processes for matching interns with placements, and communication mechanisms between the programme, interns, and host businesses. Concurrently, organisational elements within the host's system include workplace policies on reasonable accommodations, diversity initiatives, staff training on working with disabled colleagues, and the physical layout and accessibility of the work environment. This organisational focus is relevant in Supported Internships, where the material of the organisational system has been shown to be a building pathway for inclusive outcomes and opportunities (e.g., Lysaght et al., 2012; Wehman et al., 2018). For example, how job tasks are allocated and adapted for the intern, the level of support provided by colleagues, opportunities for the intern to participate in team activities, and the extent to which their input is valued in the organisation. Moreover, the model proposed by Simplican et al. (2015) considers the interaction between this organisational system pathway and other distal systems such as community (Figure 5). As Cobigo et al. (2012) note, organisations operate within larger societal frameworks, leading to interplay between organisational practices and wider factors such as policy, cultural norms, and economic conditions. In Supported Internships, this interplay might manifest in how national disability employment policies influence a host

business's practices, how local community attitudes shape an organisation's culture, or how economic conditions affect resource allocation for accommodations. Through observing the materials of the organisational system (policies, practices, attitudes), and their interactions with other system pathways (individual, interpersonal, community, sociopolitical), researchers can identify, and understand the complex pathways shaping interns' experience of social inclusion within the ecology of a Supported Internship programme.

The community system within Simplican et al. (2015) ecological pathways model (Figure 5) bears conceptual similarities to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) mesosystem, while expanding this perspective to encompass an array of environmental factors. While Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (2006) PPCT framework effectively captures the dynamic interactions between an individual and their environment across time, Simplican et al.'s (2015) community system pathways specifically operationalises and foregrounds the concrete environmental barriers and facilitators to social inclusion, providing practitioners with more actionable insights for intervention. Drawing upon the empirical work of McConkey and Collins (2010a), this community system within Figure 5 integrates elements such as residential arrangements, accessibility of services, and community attitudes, offering a perspective on the interplay between broader community pathways and social inclusion processes. This approach considers pathways beyond the immediate environment to examine the wider social milieu, acknowledging the various ways community factors influence social inclusion experiences. In the context of Supported Internships, this community system pathway becomes relevant. For example, a disabled intern participating in a Supported Internship programme at a local business experience the community system through several factors. The availability and accessibility of public transportation (a physical pathway) affect the intern's ability to commute to their workplace. Local employer attitudes towards hiring and accommodating disabled people influence the range of internship opportunities available. By examining these contextual elements, Simplican et al. (2015) model allows researchers and practitioners to consider the various challenges and opportunities faced by disabled interns, that can inform strategies for building pathways to social inclusion in Supported Internship programmes.

The socio-political system within Simplican et al., (2015) ecological pathways model (Figure 5) draws upon the social inclusion work of Quinn and Doyle (2012) and Vanhala (2011) to offer a nuanced examination of the specific ways in which legislative frameworks, policy structures, and societal attitudes impact social inclusion pathways for disabled people. It shares

some conceptual lineage with Bronfenbrenner's (1989) macrosystem however, this conceptualisation allows for a more targeted analysis of how macro-level factors influence inclusion experiences across various contexts. In the specific context of Supported Internships, for instance, the framework enables researchers to examine these socio-political structures and their enabling or disabling effects on interns. For example, researchers investigate how disability employment legislation, societal attitudes towards workplace inclusion, or broader economic policies shape the pathways and challenges faced by interns in Supported Internships. This approach facilitates a deep understanding of how systemic factors at the socio-political level interact with and influence the experiences of people participating in Supported Internships, potentially informing more effective policy development and implementation strategies aimed at fostering inclusive work environments.

Simplican et al. (2015) ecological pathways model, while sharing conceptual similarities with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979, 1986, 1994), provides conceptual tools which can be applied to an ecologically positioned study of how restricted relationships and opportunities for participation in one system, perpetuate restrictions in another and vice versa. This specialised focus results in both strengths and limitations when compared to Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (2006) Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model. Whilst Bronfenbrenner and Morris' (2006) PPCT theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding human development across various ecological levels, Simplican et al. (2015) model narrows its scope to the development of social inclusion. Simplican et al. (2015) delineate five distinct yet interconnected system pathways (individual, interpersonal, organisational, community, and socio-political), compared to Bronfenbrenner's six systems (individual, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem). The ecological pathways approach uniquely emphasises how social inclusion develops through interconnected routes between these systems, allowing researchers to trace how barriers or opportunities in one system can create cascading effects across others - an aspect that adds value when studying how social inclusion perpetuates across different contexts. This allows researchers to examine the multifaceted nature of social inclusion from the individual level to the broader societal context, with a specific emphasis on disability-related aspects. For instance, where Bronfenbrenner's (1979) microsystem might broadly consider immediate environments, Simplican et al. (2015) interpersonal system pathway specifically focuses on relationships that influence social inclusion. Similarly, Simplican et al (2015) organisational system explicitly addresses workplace accommodations and inclusive policies, aspects that

might be less prominent in Bronfenbrenner's and Morris (2006) more general conceptualisation of environmental contexts. However, Simplican et al. (2015) model does not explicitly address the proximal processes that Bronfenbrenner (1998) identified as crucial mechanisms for human development. Furthermore, unlike Bronfenbrenner's chronosystem (1986), Simplican et al.'s (2015) does not include a time dimension, because it is largely focussed on pathways. Additionally, while Simplican et al.'s (2015) includes an individual system, it does not fully capture the depth of Bronfenbrenner's Person component (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006), which emphasises the role of personal characteristics in shaping development and experiences. Despite these differences, Simplican et al. (2015) model offers valuable insights through its specific focus on social inclusion, its clear structure of social-ecological system pathways, and its direct applicability to contexts such as Supported Internships. It provides a more focused lens for examining the specific challenges and opportunities related to social inclusion for disabled people across various environmental pathway contexts, albeit without featuring some of the broader developmental perspectives captured in Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (2006) work.

To summarise, Simplican et al.'s (2015) ecological pathways model (Figure 5) provides a more specific framework for understanding the pathways that enabled or disabled social inclusion within an ecology, compared to Bronfenbrenner's (1977) broader focus on human development. This specificity appears in its social-ecological system names: individual, interpersonal, organisational, community, and socio-political pathways. While valuable for studying Supported Internships, the model does not include key elements from Bronfenbrenner and Morris' (2006) bioecological theory: proximal processes (e.g., daily interactions between intern and their mentor), a chronosystem for understanding development over time and deeper analysis of personal characteristics. The benefit of incorporating these bioecological elements would enable a more comprehensive understanding of how social inclusion develops through dynamic interactions between individuals and their environment over time. Thus, in the next section, to draw together the social inclusion focus of Simplican et al.'s (2015) work with the bioecological insights of Bronfenbrenner and Morris' (2006) theory, a synthesis is proposed.

Synthesising Bronfenbrenner and Simplican: Process, Person, Context, Time (PPCT) - Ecological Pathways (EP) synthesised model

The proposed new synthesis of Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) and Simplican (2015) is conceptually summarised in Figure 6. It can be noted that the synthesis assembles the bioecological model and its process-person-context-time assemblage (PPCT) (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006) and the Ecological Pathways Model (EP) (Simplican et al., (2015)). The rationale for the synthesis is that combined, these ecological models can provide a framework for explaining changes to the depth and breadth of social inclusion, and for understanding the factors mediating this change across a set of interacting systems, in the complex social phenomenon of a Supported Internship.

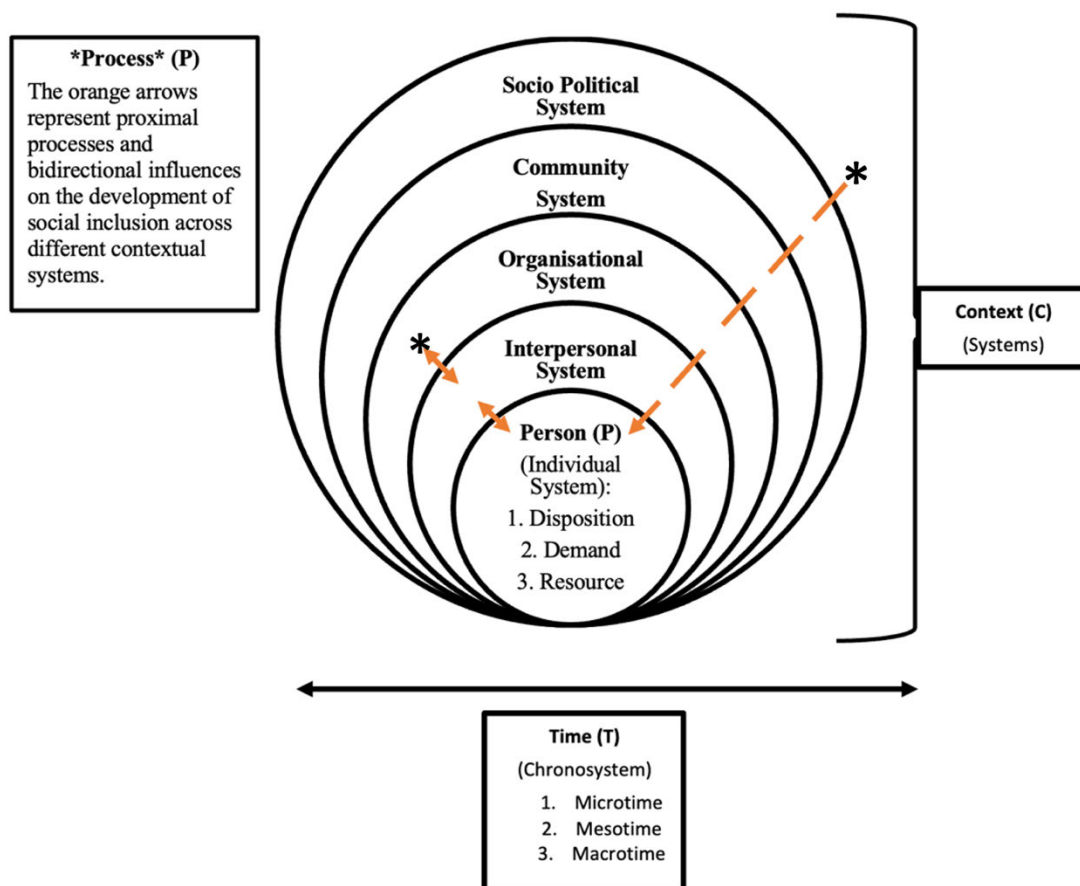


Figure 6 Process, Person, Context, Time (PPCT) - Ecological Pathways (EP) synthesised model

The Person component, situated at the core of Figure 6, draws from Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (2006) conceptualisation, focusing on the individual's disposition, demand, and resource characteristics within a biopsychosocial ecological lens. This perspective, as defined in the Introduction Chapter (Section: Disaggregating Key Terms), establishes that biological,

psychological, and social factors are interconnected in shaping an individual's development of social inclusion. The framework builds upon Bronfenbrenner's (1994) later work, which recognised biological factors in human development, while the biopsychosocial dimension extends his bioecological model through deeper consideration of psychological and social elements. This integration addresses a gap identified in Simplican et al.'s (2015) ecological pathways model (Figure 5), which overlooked the intrapersonal dimension – the physical and metaphysical aspects of the individual and the recognition that social inclusion may be mediated by bodily factors (such as impairment) and personality characteristics (such as self-determination). The PPCT-EP (Figure 6) synthesis incorporates these intrapersonal elements, enabling examination of how individual differences, including cognitive abilities, personality traits, and personal experiences, interact with environmental factors to influence social inclusion outcomes. This aligns with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) position that individual characteristics shape how a person interacts with and experiences their environment, while in the context of Supported Internships, this component provides an analytical framework for understanding how an intern's disability, cognitive capabilities, personality traits (such as sociability or resilience), and prior experiences with inclusion influence their interactions within the internship environment and subsequent social inclusion outcomes. The ecological pathways dimension adds explanatory power to Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (2006) PPCT model by identifying factors that create or block pathways while explaining the mechanisms through which these factors operate, resulting in a theoretical framework that combines multiple approaches to understand how individual characteristics interact with environmental factors in shaping social inclusion outcomes.

The Process component, represented by the arrows in Figure 6, builds upon Bronfenbrenner's (1998) conception of human development as a product of progressively more complex reciprocal interactions between a person and their immediate environment. This framework incorporates Bronfenbrenner's (1994) emphasis on proximal processes as drivers of development, considering both their form and power as shaped by the characteristics of the developing person, the environment, and the nature of the developmental outcomes under consideration. In the context of this study, the examination of proximal processes involves analysing the nature and quality (depth) of interactions between interns and their various microsystems, including job coaches, tutors, family members, and fellow interns. This approach aligns with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) emphasis on the importance of studying

development in context and over time. For example, in a Supported Internship setting, this component would focus on the daily interactions between the intern and their colleagues, the nature of support provided by job coaches, and how these interactions evolve over the course of the internship. It would examine how these processes contribute to the intern's sense of belonging, skill development, and overall social inclusion within the workplace.

The Context (C) component of the synthesised PPCT-EP framework adapts Simplican et al.'s (2015) conceptualisation of ecological systems, which is tailored to disability and social inclusion research. As depicted in Figure 6, these systems provide a layered context for examining the multifaceted nature of social inclusion for disabled people. The Interpersonal system, analogous to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) microsystem, encompasses the immediate relationships and interactions an individual experiences. In the Supported Internship context, this could include relationships with placement mentors, job coaches, tutors and family members. As discussed earlier in this chapter, these immediate interactions play a crucial role in shaping the intern's experience of inclusion. The Organisational system considers the structures, policies, and cultures of institutions that directly impact a person's experiences. In the context of Supported Internships, this would include both the internship programme itself and the host organisation. This system examines how organisational policies on inclusion, workplace accommodations, and staff training influence the intern's opportunities for social inclusion. The Community system, as outlined in the previous discussion of Simplican et al.'s (2015) model, examines broader local contexts and resources that influence inclusion opportunities. This could include local employer attitudes, community support services, and transportation infrastructure that affect the intern's ability to participate fully in the internship and broader community life. The Socio-political system accounts for the overarching societal attitudes, policies, and cultural norms that shape the landscape of inclusion. This system, as described earlier in this chapter, considers how national disability policies, societal attitudes towards disability, and broader economic conditions influence the opportunities available to interns and the overall context in which Supported Internships operate.

The Time (T) component, represented by the double ended arrow at the bottom of Figure 6, incorporates Bronfenbrenner's (2006) concept of the chronosystem. This temporal dimension considers microtime (the continuity or discontinuity within ongoing episodes of proximal processes), mesotime (the periodicity of these episodes across broader time intervals), and

macrotime (the changing expectations and events in the larger society, both within and across generations). This temporal perspective enables an analysis of how the timing of the internship relative to the intern's life course and broader societal contexts influences inclusion outcomes. It aligns with Bronfenbrenner's (1986) emphasis on the importance of considering both ontogenetic time (individual development) and historical time in understanding human development. In the context of Supported Internships, this component could consider how the timing of the internship in the intern's life (e.g., immediately after school or after a period of unemployment) might influence their experience. It would also examine how changes in disability rights legislation, evolving societal attitudes towards inclusion, and economic trends over time might affect the experiences of different cohorts of interns.

To summarise, this synthesised PPCT-EP theoretical framework (Figure 6) provides a multifaceted approach to examining the factors mediating social inclusion. By integrating components from Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (2006) bioecological model and Simplican et al.'s (2015) ecological model of social inclusion, while incorporating a biopsychosocial perspective, it offers an approach to studying the interplay of individual, environmental, and temporal factors in shaping social inclusion outcomes for disabled people. The framework posits that outcomes are influenced by the complex interaction of individual characteristics, environmental factors across multiple ecological levels, and temporal contexts. This theoretical contribution facilitates the understanding of factors that broaden and deepen social inclusion and has implications for disability and social inclusion research, policy development, and interventions. By offering a more comprehensive view of social inclusion that incorporates PPCT (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006), this framework encourages researchers and practitioners to consider multilevel approaches to understanding and promoting inclusion, recognising the complexity of individuals' experiences and the various factors that influence their opportunities for inclusion. It is important to note that this theoretical construct is open to further empirical testing and expansion, particularly in relation to the contextual (systems) component. Akin to Bronfenbrenner (1977) at the start of his work on ecological systems theory, this framework holds the potential for adaption across varied contexts and research domains, which could facilitate continued refinement of understanding social inclusion processes.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has traced the evolution of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory across three phases, examined its adaptation by Simplican et al. (2015), and presented a

synthesised Person, Process, Context, Time- Ecological Pathways (PPCT-EP) approach. This new PPCT-EP framework integrates the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model of Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) with Simplican et al. (2015) Ecological Pathways (EP) model disability and social inclusion adaptations. By incorporating Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) emphasis on proximal processes (P), the active role of the person (P) and the dimension of time (T) (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998), alongside Simplican et al.'s (2015) social ecological contextual (C) systems, this framework offers a nuanced lens for examining the complex, multifaceted nature of social inclusion for disabled people engaged in Supported Internships. The synthesis, infused with a biopsychosocial perspective (Engel, 1977; Wade and Halligan, 2017), yields a theoretical framework that acknowledges the dynamic interplay of biological, psychological, and social factors across multiple ecological systems. This approach not only guides the research design and methodology but also holds promise for developing more nuanced, multi-level interventions to foster social inclusion. The following chapter will discuss the methodology employed in this study, detailing how the methods were selected to gather data from each system identified in this theoretical framework, and how the theory informs the overall research approach (Tudge et al., 2009).

Chapter 3: Methodology: Centralising the Voices of Learning-Disabled Interns through Ethnography

Introduction

This study employs an ethnographic approach (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019) grounded in an interpretivist research philosophy (Creswell and Poth, 2018) to explore the social inclusion experiences of learning-disabled young people participating in a hospital-based Supported Internship programme. The choice of ethnography aligns with my axiological values of centralising the voices of disabled people and the research aim of understanding changes in the depth and breadth of interns' social inclusion during the internship, allowing for rich, nuanced insights into the lived experiences of the participants. Central to this investigation is an inductive, qualitative research strategy, informed by the synthesised ecological systems framework drawing from the works of Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) and Simplican et al. (2015) (Figure 6: Chapter 2) for examining the complex interplay of systems mediating social inclusion. To capture this multifaceted reality, an array of data collection methods was employed, including field notes, observations, interviews, and analysis of documents and artefacts, each chosen for its ability to illuminate different aspects of the interns' experiences. The sample, consisting of six interns diagnosed with SEND, offers a focused yet diverse perspective on the internship experience, while my reflexive exploration of positionality acknowledges the potential impact of my role, particularly when working with people often categorised as 'vulnerable' (Berger, 2015). To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, strategies such as prolonged engagement and member checking were implemented (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), reflecting a commitment to rigorous and authentic research. This methodological approach is underpinned by a strong ethical framework (BERA, 2018), ensuring that the study not only generates knowledge but also respects and empowers its participants, aligning with principles of socially just research (Nind, 2014). By integrating these various elements - from the philosophical underpinnings to the practical methods of data collection- this study aims to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of social inclusion in a Supported Internship, setting the stage for a detailed exploration of the study's analytical process and its findings in subsequent chapters.

Ethnography

Ethnography, a qualitative research approach originating in anthropology, was selected for this study because of its capacity to centralise the voices of learning-disabled people and understand their social inclusion experiences. This methodological choice emerged from axiological foundations centered on ethical research and social justice principles (Atkins and Duckworth, 2019), supported by ontological and epistemological considerations. The ontological position embraced a subjectivist viewpoint, recognising social phenomena as continuously constructed through human interaction (Saunders et al., 2019; Burr, 2015), while the epistemological approach valued deep, contextual understanding of lived experiences. This qualitative methodology's focus on describing and interpreting the lived experiences of specific groups (Gobo, 2011; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019) provided a framework to illuminate and amplify marginalised voices. Through sustained field immersion and established interpretive ethnographic approaches (Creswell and Poth, 2018), the methodology enabled investigation of how ecological systems interact to mediate learning-disabled people's experiences of social inclusion within a supported internship programme. This approach, grounded in socially just research practices and ethical guidelines (BERA, 2018; 2024), generated rich, qualitative data about daily lives and experiences in mainstream workplace environments. The subsequent sections detail the specific methodological components of long-term immersion and thick description, which were instrumental in understanding and representing young learning-disabled people's experiences through an ecological lens.

Long term immersion

Long-term immersion is widely regarded as a defining methodological component of ethnography (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019; Roedel, 2023). This prolonged embeddedness within the research context is deemed important to unveil intricate ecological and chronosystems that shape human experiences and development over time, as postulated by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. By immersing oneself for extended periods, ethnographers can transcend superficial observations and cultivate an emic perspective (Adler, 1975; Spradley, 1979), viewing phenomena such as social inclusion through the lens of participants. The ethnographic tradition historically championed immersions spanning months or even years, with seminal studies exemplifying the depth attainable through such protracted engagement (Tavory, 2016; Rastogi, 2019). Notable ethnographers, including Damico's (1990) 14-month and Ellis's (1986) 9-year study, foreground the merits of extended temporal investments for authentically apprehending participants' lived realities. This

imperative for prolonged immersion is salient when researching marginalised populations such as young disabled people who have historically experienced exclusion and disempowerment (Hasbrouck, 2024).

Contemporary ethnographic practices have shifted towards compressed timelines, motivated by pragmatic factors including financial constraints and the availability of audio-visual technologies (Hammersley, 2006; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019). This trend has precipitated 'rapid ethnography' approaches that condense fieldwork into weeks or months through focused observations and deductive frameworks, for example as seen in the work of Millen (2000), Pink (2004, 2012), and Pink and Morgan (2013). However, whilst efficient, these abbreviated immersions are vulnerable to criticisms of superficiality, intrusiveness, and participant fatigue (Knoblauch, 2005; Pink and Morgan, 2013), rendering them unsuitable for research with marginalised groups. Therefore, in this study, which researches social inclusion amongst young learning-disabled people, a commitment to long-term immersion was warranted. In practice this commitment was enacted over an academic year (9 months, 5 days per week, 8am-4pm) of sustained engagement within a Supported Internship to authentically capture the nuances of these individuals' lived experiences. This extended duration facilitating trust-building, rapport establishment, and the creation of a conducive environment for amplifying marginalised voices (Fetterman, 1989; Ghodsee, 2016; BERA, 2018; 2024). Whereas truncated, intense immersions risk exacerbating historical marginalisation, contravening the study's axiological commitment to empowering and centralising disabled participants voices.

Thick description

Thick description remains a fundamental element of ethnographic research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019) and is a central tenet of this study. Coined by Ryle (1949) and gaining prominence through the influential ethnography of Geertz (1958), the term thick description involves detailed accounts of field experiences, explicating the intricate patterns of cultural and social relationships (Holloway, 1997). Whereas 'thin description' represents a superficial and shallow grasp of the subject under study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Wolcott, 1995; Holloway, 1997), thick descriptions can convey complex cultural narratives and immerse the reader in the ethnographic journey (Geertz, 1973). Expanding further upon Geertz's (1973) work, Denzin (1989), describes thick description as:

More than record[ing] what a person is doing. It goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience. It establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard (Denzin, 1989, p. 83).

Ethnographic research, when employing thick description as elucidated by Geertz (1973), aims to provide a rich, multifaceted portrayal of participants' lived experiences. This approach, as Hammersley and Atkinson (2019) note, integrates quoted speech, detailed text descriptions, and first-person accounts to authentically capture the nuances of social phenomena. In the context of this study, the methodology extends beyond traditional thick description by incorporating photographic elements, a decision aligned with Pink's (2013) advocacy for visual documentation in ethnography. These images, while not part of the formal research methods (see section 'Methods of Research: Unstructured and Structured' for more information), were included post-data collection at the interns' request, reflecting a participatory approach akin to that described by Wang and Burris (1997). The strategic use of visuals serves to augment, rather than replace, the written narrative (Harper, 2002; Prosser and Schwartz, 1998), providing readers with a tangible representation of the research environment and bridging the gap between textual analysis and lived realities (Rose, 2016). This methodological choice not only enhances the reader's comprehension of the Supported Internship context but also supports the study's ecological validity, a concept Bronfenbrenner (1977) emphasises as crucial in understanding complex social systems. By presenting findings with minimal researcher interpretation in a dedicated presentation of findings chapter (Chapter 5), followed by analysis through the lens of synthesised Person, Process, Context, Systems-Ecological Pathways (PPCT-EP) Theory within the discussion chapter (Chapter 6), the study maintains fidelity to the interpretivist paradigm (Schwandt, 2001). This approach ensures that the intricate interplay of contextual factors is fully captured and conveyed, allowing readers to evaluate the transferability of findings to other settings and situations, thereby enriching the ethnographic tradition where thick description remains paramount in illuminating how individuals interpret their own and their peers' experiences.

To summarise, ethnographic research design has evolved from anthropologists spending years living amongst their participants in a native environment to, more recently, ethnographies comprising shorter periods of immersion closer to a researcher's home (Hasbrouck, 2024).

Albeit a constant factor throughout ethnography is it takes place within a naturalistic setting including prolonged engagement and a thick description of participants (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019). Therefore, it is a flexible, deep research inquiry surrounding personal observation, interaction, thick description and a range of methods (Nelson et al., 2013; Berger and Lorenz, 2015); more information about the methods employed in this research is presented in section 'Methods of research: unstructured and structured'. These methodological factors are important in upholding the axiological values of the study and meeting the aim and objectives that authentically enable a deep understanding of social inclusion and the ecological systems that mediate it within a Supported Internship.

Positioning the Ethnographic Researcher

Positionality, as Savin-Baden and Major (2013) define it, encompasses the researcher's social location, personal experiences, and theoretical stance, all of which shape their approach and understanding of the research. This multifaceted concept includes factors such as gender, race, class, age, educational background, and, crucially in this study, disability status. Intrinsically linked to positionality is the practice of reflexivity, a continuous process of critical self-evaluation that examines how the researcher's background, assumptions, and behaviours impact the research (Berger, 2015). In the context of this study, reflexivity is an essential tool for maintaining ethical integrity and methodological rigour, guiding interactions with participants, data interpretation, and the ultimate production of knowledge. Central to understanding my positionality is the concept of the insider-outsider continuum, a framework that challenges the binary view of researchers as either complete insiders or outsiders. Hellawell (2006) and Woods (2019) propose a more nuanced understanding, suggesting that researchers can simultaneously embody aspects of both insider and outsider status, with their position fluctuating along a fluid spectrum depending on various contextual factors. Insider researchers, as defined by Dwyer and Buckle (2009), are those who share key characteristics, experiences, or group membership with the research participants. They often benefit from easier access to the research field, a deeper understanding of the group's culture and language, and the ability to blend in more seamlessly with the research setting. Conversely, outsider researchers are those who do not share these commonalities and approach the research context from an external perspective. Whilst they may face challenges in gaining access and building rapport, outsider researchers can often bring fresh perspectives and notice aspects that insiders might take for granted.

In relation to this study, my own position on the insider-outsider is constantly changing. Starting this research as a twenty-two-year-old, non-disabled British male pursuing a doctorate, I embody both insider and outsider characteristics in relation to the learning-disabled interns participating in the Supported Internship. My background with a master's degree in education who trained as a primary school teacher specialising in SEND and my experience in the Widening Access department at the University of Derby provided me with some insider knowledge of educational systems and inclusion practices. My familiarity with Education Health Care Plans and various accommodations used in educational settings, also offered a degree of insider perspective on the support structures that may be in place for the interns. However, my limited personal experience with learning-disabled people and lack of previous exposure to Supported Internships positioned me primarily as an outsider in this research context. I have never navigated having a disability in an educational or workplace setting, nor have I experienced the unique dynamics of a Supported Internship firsthand. This lack of lived experience created a gap between my perspective and that of the interns, maintaining a substantial aspect of outsider status. However, as the interns are aged between eighteen and nineteen, my own age proximity to the interns situated us within a similar age bracket. This generational similarity facilitated a degree of age-related perspectives and experiences. For example, we shared similar cultural references, technological familiarity, and generational concerns about entering the workforce. Yet, this shared generational experience did not negate the outsider aspect of my non-disabled status.

Navigating the flux and flow of my insider-outsider status presented both opportunities and challenges for this research. As Bucerius (2013) notes, occupying a space between insider and outsider can allow researchers to benefit from aspects of both positions. For example, my partial insider status facilitated rapport-building and provided contextual understanding, whilst my outsider perspective offered fresh insights and the ability to notice aspects that might be taken for granted by complete insiders. Recognising the fluid nature of the insider-outsider continuum, I implemented various strategies to navigate this dynamic throughout the research process. Guided by a commitment to reflexivity, these strategies involved a continuous process of self-awareness and critical self-evaluation. This reflexive approach led me to adopt participatory methods, which aligned with my goal of critically examining my role in the research process. For instance, as explained further in the section 'Ethical Considerations When Researching Alongside Young Disabled People', I implemented techniques that enabled interns to choose which research approaches they felt most comfortable with, such as walking

interviews. This decision, grounded in the principles of participatory research (Atkins and Duckworth, 2019), was a strategy aimed at mitigating some of the power imbalances inherent in my outsider status through the creation of opportunities for interns to actively shape the research process. The use of accessible language and avoidance of jargon has been another crucial aspect of managing the insider-outsider dynamic. This approach, guided by principles of inclusive research which epitomises the transformation away from research *on* people, to research *with* them (Nind, 2014), acknowledged my outsider status in terms of disability experience whilst striving to create an inclusive research environment. Similarly, flexible scheduling and ongoing consent processes (Renold et al., 2008) recognised participants' diverse needs and respected their autonomy to set boundaries and control their involvement. This approach supported navigating the flux of my insider-outsider positionality. Another strategy I employed to disrupt power imbalances and foster a more equitable research environment was the conscious choice of attire during fieldwork. Recognising that clothing can serve as a visual marker of status and authority, I deliberately adopted a semi-casual dress code throughout the research process. This approach was informed by Goffman's (1959) concept of impression management and the understanding that a researcher's appearance can influence participant comfort and openness. By eschewing the formal attire typically associated with academic or professional settings, I aimed to create a more relaxed and approachable atmosphere, reducing perceived social distance between myself and the interns. For instance, I opted for casual trousers or jeans paired with plain, comfortable shirts, avoiding clothing that might be perceived as overly formal or officious. This sartorial choice helped to minimise the visible markers of my role as a researcher and aligned more closely with the typical attire of the interns and their workplace environments. The semi-casual dress serving as a visual reminder to myself about my positionality and as a non-verbal cue that I was there to learn from and with the interns, rather than to evaluate or judge their experiences.

Throughout the ethnographic fieldwork, I strived to maintain a balance between fostering familiarity within the Supported Internship setting and acknowledging my outsider status. This approach allowed me to leverage the potential benefits of both positions, engaging in shadowing experiences where I followed interns through their daily routines to observing and understanding their experiences more deeply whilst maintaining an awareness of my outsider perspective. The practice of reflexive fieldnotes (detailed further in 'Reflective Fieldnotes' section) was instrumental in this process. After each fieldwork session within the Supported

Internship, I dedicated time to critically examining my assumptions, biases, and emotional responses, questioning my interpretations, and considering how my positionality might have been influencing my observations. This aligns with Pillow's (2003) concept of reflexivity of discomfort which encourages a critical engagement with the complexities and contradictions of positionality. For example, I reflected on how my non-disabled status influenced my perception of the challenges faced by interns in their workplace settings, or how my educational background shaped my understanding of the support structures in place for the Supported Internship. This ongoing reflexive practice led to several key insights and adjustments in my research approach. For instance, I became more attuned to the subtle ways in which my presence as a non-disabled researcher impacted the behaviour of interns and their workplace supervisors. This awareness prompted me to develop strategies for minimising this impact, such as spending extended periods in the research setting to normalise my presence and engaging in informal conversations to build rapport and trust. Moreover, the reflexive process highlighted the importance of continuously negotiating my role within the research setting. Whilst my age similarity to the interns might facilitate certain types of interactions, I remained mindful of the power dynamics inherent in my position as a researcher and the potential for interns to view me as an authority figure. To address this, I adopted a collaborative approach to the research process, regularly seeking feedback from interns on my interpretations (explained further in Chapter 4: Ethnographic Data Analysis as An Iterative Process) and involving them in decision-making processes where appropriate. Such as involving interns in selecting interview locations or reviewing and providing feedback on preliminary themes identified in the data. This helped to balance the insider-outsider dynamic and enhance the validity and authenticity of the research findings.

To summarise this section, in addressing my positionality as a 22-year-old (at the time of data collection), non-disabled British male doctoral researcher studying learning-disabled interns in a Supported Internship programme, I navigated the complexities of my insider-outsider status through a series of deliberate actions, guided by Hellawell's (2006) concept of the insider-outsider continuum. Recognising both insider elements (educational background in SEND, age proximity to interns) and outsider aspects (non-disabled status, lack of personal experience with disabilities), I implemented participatory research methods, as advocated by Atkins and Duckworth (2019). This approach helped mitigate potential biases and power imbalances in the research process. Aligning with Nind's (2014) principles of inclusive research, I adopted techniques like walking interviews which as an approach were chosen by the interns

themselves. To further bridge the gap between myself and participants, I adopted a semi-casual dress code during fieldwork, a strategy informed by Goffman's (1959) concept of impression management. This sartorial choice complemented my broader efforts to balance familiarity and outsider perspective during ethnographic observations, where I engaged in shadowing experiences to closely observe interns' daily routines. Central to my approach was the practice of rigorous reflexive journaling after each fieldwork session, a process aligned with Berger's (2015) emphasis on continuous critical self-evaluation, which led to the development of strategies to minimise the impact of my presence and build trust with participants. This reflexive practice, informed by Pillow's (2003) concept of reflexivity of discomfort, guided my continuous negotiation of roles within the research setting, culminating in a collaborative approach that actively sought feedback from interns and involved them in decision-making processes where appropriate. By implementing flexible scheduling and ongoing consent processes, as suggested by Renold et al. (2008), I strived to respect the diverse needs and autonomy of participants, ultimately enhancing the authenticity and validity of the research findings through a nuanced engagement with the complexities of my insider-outsider positionality, as described by Dwyer and Buckle (2009). These methodological choices and reflexive practices not only shaped the research process but also enhanced the study's trustworthiness, a topic which will be explored in greater depth in the following section.

Enhancing trustworthiness in qualitative and ethnographic research

Establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research, particularly in ethnographic studies exploring the intricacies of social inclusion phenomena, is paramount to ensuring the credibility and value of the findings. This concept of trustworthiness, as elucidated by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and further explored by ethnographers Hammersley and Atkinson (2019), encompasses the degree of confidence in the data, interpretations, and methodologies employed to uphold the quality and rigour of a study. Merton (2014) underscores the fundamental imperative for researchers to justify their decisions pertaining to trustworthiness, as it constitutes the bedrock of all scholarly inquiry. The unique challenges inherent in ethnographic research, such as potential researcher bias, the complexity of social contexts, and the imperative to accurately represent participants' perspectives, necessitates a robust approach to establishing trustworthiness. Addressing these challenges is crucial for producing research that meets academic standards and can inform policy and practice in the realm of social inclusion.

In response, this study deploys a range of strategies to achieve trustworthiness. By integrating rigorous methods (detailed in 'Methods' section), axiological ethics (elaborated upon in 'Ethical Considerations When Researching Alongside Young Disabled People' section), and quality indicators, the research aims to ensure transferability and authenticity (Coe et al., 2021; Merton, 2014; Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2003). Authenticity in ethnographic research refers to the genuine representation of participants' lived experiences and cultural meanings, which is particularly crucial as it ensures that the research captures and honors the authentic voices and perspectives of the communities being studied. This approach seeks to represent participants' perspectives and experiences while acknowledging the inherent complexities of ethnographic inquiry, because the researcher must navigate multiple layers of social meaning, power dynamics, and cultural interpretations while maintaining scientific rigor. Central to the establishment of trustworthiness in this ethnographic study is the concept of inference quality, an alternative quality indicator to validity as proposed by Teddlie and Tashakkori (2003) and further developed by Hammersley and Atkinson (2019). Inference quality comprises of two critical components: interpretation claims and transfer claims (Coe et al., 2021). The former ensures congruence between the ethnographer's interpretations and the research participants' understandings, whilst the latter assesses the applicability of the findings beyond the immediate research context.

The research seeks to ensure the rigour of its interpretive claims, and deploys the recommendations made by Coe et al. (2021). At the heart of these recommendations lies the strategy of thick description (Geertz, 1973), providing detailed accounts of interns' social inclusion experiences within the Supported Internship programme. These experiences are carefully contextualised within the research setting and timeline, as elaborated in Chapter 5, offering readers a comprehensive understanding of the study's backdrop. The findings chapter showcases carefully selected and analysed excerpts from interns' experiences, including samples of their handwritten work, to illustrate key themes and insights. To support this presentation, examples of full data sets are made available in the appendices, such as Appendix 17 which is a daily reflective piece of writing by Paffers during his medical records placement, ensuring transparency and allowing for thorough scrutiny of the research process. Complementing this transparent data presentation, detailed audit trails are maintained throughout the study, elucidating the thematic coding, analysis, and interpretation processes. This methodological transparency enables readers to trace the logical progression from raw data to final conclusions, thereby reinforcing the credibility of the research findings. Building

on this foundation of transparency, the study incorporates a robust member-checking process, as advocated by Nelson et al. (2013), involving not only the interns but also key people in their microsystem, including tutors, job coaches, and parents. This recurring verification of my interpretations with participants serves to ensure data authenticity and assess my comprehension of the social world under study.

The emphasis on member checking addresses an important ethical consideration in qualitative research: the potential for power imbalances between researcher and participants. By actively engaging participants in the interpretation process, the study aligns with Simmons-Mackie and Damico's (1999) recommendation to bridge the gap between researcher interpretations and participants' lived experiences. This approach not only enhances the validity of the findings but also empowers participants, giving voice to their perspectives throughout the research process. Through the integration of these methodological strategies – thick description, transparent data presentation, rigorous audit trails, and collaborative member checking – the study provides a comprehensive, credible, and participant-validated account of the interns' social inclusion experiences. This multi-layered approach to data collection, analysis, and interpretation ultimately strengthens the foundation upon which the study's conclusions are built, ensuring that the findings accurately reflect the complex realities of the participants' experiences within the Supported Internship context.

Regarding claims to transferability, this study acknowledges the limitations of generalisability in ethnographic research due to the typically small sample size and the uniqueness of each case under investigation (detailed further in 'Sample: Participants and Site of Research' section) (Gobo, 2011; Denzin and Lincoln, 2017). As Gobo (2011) notes, generalisability is not the primary aim of ethnography, as each case under investigation is unique. Rather than seeking broad generalisability, I focused on providing a rich, in-depth understanding of social inclusion within a specific Supported Internship, aligning with O'Reilly's (2009) perspective that ethnography enhances academic literature from a depth over breadth perspective. The thick description element of this study enables readers to assess the transferability of the findings to other contexts through naturalistic generalisability (Smith, 2018; Coe et al., 2021). Aligning with Smith (2018) and Coe et al. (2021) ethnographic recommendations, this study resists the temptation to make broad claims of relevance or applicability and instead limits claims about transferability to the context that has been described in similar levels of detail to the originally studied context. Consequently, this study aligns with Rampton et al., (2015) who view the aim

of ethnographic research as the identification of theoretically ‘telling’ cases rather than as generalisable to communities.

Arguably the range and extent of data collection in this ethnographic study contributes to its trustworthiness (see section ‘Methods of Research’ for methods of data collection). As Geertz (1973) and Lee et al. (2017) emphasise, ethnographic methods prioritise inductive and open-ended approaches to gathering rich descriptions (Geertz, 1973) and insights into individuals' experiences. This study embraces a multi-method, naturalistic approach, incorporating observations, conversations, reflective fieldwork journaling, walking interviews, documentation analysis, and participatory methods tailored to young disabled people (Atkinson et al., 2001; Sandiford, 2015; Roller and Lavrakas, 2015; Coe et al., 2021; Mycock, 2019; 2020; Punch, 2002; 2012). This methodological flexibility allows for the capture of nuanced meanings and the emergence of variables throughout the research process, and thus aligns with the views of Damico et al. (1999), Nelson and Damico (2006), and Butler and Derrett (2014).

In summary, this ethnographic study employs a multifaceted approach to enhance its trustworthiness, drawing upon various strategies and quality indicators. These methodological approaches facilitate the assessment of how findings may translate to different settings, as discussed by Smith (2018) and Coe et al. (2021). The thick description element of this study enables evaluation of the findings' transferability to other contexts through naturalistic generalisability, aligning with the perspectives of Smith (2018) and Coe et al. (2021). By addressing the challenges inherent in ethnographic research, such as inference quality, the magnitude of data collection, and ethical considerations, this study commits to its axiological stance of amplifying the authentic participants' perspectives and experiences. The strategy of using diverse research methods (presented in the next section 'methods of research: unstructured and structured') elevates the trustworthiness and comprehensiveness of the methodology. Through its rigorous and considered approach, grounded in the principles and insights of seminal works in the field (e.g., Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019; Geertz, 1973; Denzin, 1978; Punch, 2001; Parr, 2007; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011), this study offers unique insights into the lives and social inclusion of supported interns. It prioritises their voices and perspectives while maintaining the wellbeing of both participants and the researcher.

Methods of research: unstructured and structured

This qualitative, inductive, and interpretivist ethnography employs a range of unstructured and structured data collection methods to explore social inclusion from interns' perspectives within the day to day running of their Supported Internship. Unstructured methods, characterised by their flexibility and openness, facilitated an inductive approach where I became immersed in the setting, allowing the data to guide the investigation organically. This approach aligns closely with the interpretivist paradigm, enabling the exploration of multiple realities and socially constructed meanings without the constraints of predetermined arrangements. Central to this unstructured approach was the maintenance of fieldnotes, which capture nuanced observations and reflections, providing rich insight into the research context (Madden, 2017). Complementing this inductive strategy, structured naturalistic methods offered more systematic data collection techniques while maintaining the qualitative focus. These include scheduled interviews that elicit detailed first-hand accounts from participants, and document analysis to scrutinise relevant materials and artefacts, enhancing the trustworthiness of findings. The study also utilised participatory methods, such as walking interviews with structured questions, which actively involved the participants in the research process and fostered a collaborative dynamic that aligns with the interpretivist emphasis on co-constructing knowledge. In addition to which, creative data collection approaches, including drawing exercises and examination of students' work, provided alternative modes of expression that revealed perspectives that were challenging to articulate through traditional methods. The combining of unstructured and structured techniques provided an opportunity to gather deep, nuanced understanding of the research context, which supporting the study's qualitative, inductive, and interpretivist framework. Demonstrating their specific contributions to the overall research design, the subsequent sections will elaborate on each of these methods: observations, interviews, reflective fieldnotes and collection of artefacts and documents.

Observations

Observations of daily life are deeply congruent with the ontology and epistemology of interpretivist, qualitative paradigms (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). Lauded by ethnographers because they provide rich, contextually situated data that illuminates the intricate interplay of social forces and individual agency, they enrich ethnographers' understanding of human behaviour (Angrosino and Rosenberg, 2011; Fuji, 2015; Roller and Lavrakas, 2015; Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). The decision to employ observation as the primary data collection method in this ethnographic study of young disabled people participating in a Supported Internship is

grounded in the ontological and epistemological principles of interpretivist and qualitative paradigms. These paradigms emphasise the importance of understanding phenomena within their natural context, and observation provides opportunity to witness and comprehend the lived experiences of participants in the setting where they unfold (Fetterman, 2010; Gobo, 2011; Nelson et al., 2013; Sandiford, 2015; Howell, 2018). As Geertz (1973) asserts, observation involves a continuous cycle of observing, recording through fieldnotes, and analysing, allowing for a deep engagement with the complexities of social life.

Observation is a traditional method in ethnographic research, defined by Marshall and Rossman (1989, p. 12) as ‘the systematic description of events, behaviours, and artefacts in the social setting chosen for study’. This approach was critical for this study, enabling an authentic and comprehensive description, from which explanations could be drawn of the interns' lived experiences within their Supported Internships. By observing interns in real-time, I could capture the nuances and complexities of their experiences, which Gobo (2011) and Sandiford (2015) suggest may not have been fully accessible through other data collection methods like interviews or surveys. This first-hand observation provided invaluable insights into how interns navigated their roles, responded to challenges, developed skills, and constructed meanings within their working environments. Specifically, it allowed me to examine the interns' behaviours, social interactions, interpersonal relationships, and community participation as they relate to social inclusion, as defined by Simplican et al. (2015) in Chapter 1, Figure 1. This method contributed to a rich, contextual understanding of the interns' experiences, encompassing both their observable behaviours and the ways in which they navigated and made sense of their internships. Relying primarily on observation however posed challenges that required careful mitigation. A primary concern was the potential for researcher bias stemming from deep immersion in the research context (Brannan and Oultram, 2012). This concern is particularly relevant as Ghodsee (2016) and Howell (2019) emphasise that observation is a skill that ethnographers must master, involving critical observation and documentation of daily life's nuances. To enhance the rigour of observations and address potential biases, this research employed several strategies. Guided by Coe et al., (2021) suggestions, these included maintaining a reflexive stance, regularly interrogating my own assumptions, and actively seeking out alternative perspectives and interpretations. By engaging in ongoing critical self-reflection and dialogue with participants, I aimed to minimise the impact of my subjectivities on the research process and outcomes (Lee et al., 2017). This careful approach to observation and reflexivity was crucial for representing the interns' experiences as authentically as possible.

While acknowledging that I could never fully inhabit the interns' perspectives, these strategies allowed me to broaden my viewpoint and set aside personal biases as much as possible. Consequently, I was able to strive for a more nuanced understanding of the internship experience from the interns' point of view. Ultimately, this interpretive approach aimed to loosen the threads tying me to my own perspectives, allowing for a richer, more comprehensive understanding of the interns' lived experiences. By doing so, I sought to represent their experiences as authentically as possible, recognising the importance of capturing their unique voices and perspectives within the context of Supported Internships.

Another challenge associated with observation is the 'familiarity problem' (Delamont, 2012, p. 8). My prolonged engagement with the research setting and participants, may have led to over-familiarity, potentially blinding important insights or nuances that may have been overlooked due to immersion in the Supported Internship. As Coe et al., (2021) suggests, a guiding principle for mitigating this is to make the familiar strange, as ethnographers must not become complacent or presume complete understanding of a phenomena otherwise insights may be lost during observations. Thus, strategies in this research included regularly checking with participants to check on the accuracy of my interpretations, actively seeking out disconfirming evidence and negative cases, and employing a variety of observation techniques across different times (chronosystem), spaces (ecological systems), and social contexts within the Supported Internship. To further mitigate the familiarity problem and ensure the accuracy of my interpretations, I actively worked to create a climate where interns felt empowered to share their perspectives, even if it meant contradicting my observations or interpretations. Throughout the research process, I consistently reminded interns that their viewpoints were invaluable and that it was not only acceptable but encouraged for them to correct me if they felt I had misunderstood or misinterpreted something. For example, during a reflection session with Arjuice, an intern at the hospital's restaurant, I shared my observation that he seemed more confident when interacting with customers compared to his first week. Arjuice politely disagreed, explaining that while he appeared more at ease externally, he still felt quite anxious during these interactions. This correction was crucial, as it revealed the complex interplay between outward behaviour and internal experiences.

The use of observation as the primary data collection method in this study is justified by its unique ability to provide a rich, authentic, and holistic understanding of the interns' social

inclusion experiences within the Supported Internship. By observing the interns' behaviours, interpersonal relationships, community participation, and meaning-making processes within their working environment, this study captures the complex, multifaceted, and often tacit dimensions of lived experiences. This approach aligns with Simplican et al., (2015) conceptual framework of social inclusion and the PPCT-EP model (Figure 6). This approach aligns with the principles of ethnographic research, which seeks to understand social phenomena from the perspectives of those who live them, and potentially contributes to a nuanced, contextualised, and trustworthy understanding of the ways in which young disabled people navigate and construct meaning (Gobo, 2011; Sandiford, 2015; Howell, 2018) within the Supported Internship. Moreover, observation as the primary method is well-suited to this study when researching young learning-disabled people, who may face challenges in articulating their experiences or perspectives through more structured or language-based methods, such as interviews or surveys. This approach therefore allowed for a more inclusive and equitable representation (Kontos, 2004) of the interns' lived experiences and contributes to a deep understanding of the ways in which the Supported Internship may mediate their social inclusion. With the rationale for choosing observation as the primary method established, it is crucial to examine the specific strategies employed to ensure rigorous and ethical data collection. Thus, the following section delves into the observation techniques utilised in this study, highlighting how they were tailored to capture the nuanced experiences of young learning-disabled people in the Supported Internship programme.

Observation strategies

This study employs a range of observational techniques, each serving a specific purpose. Firstly, the study used the 'complete observer' role, defined as a researcher being neither seen nor noticed by participants (Gold, 1958; Roller and Lavrakas, 2015). The complete observer role was implemented for brief periods during this research, for example, at times when I was positioned in the canteen within view of, but not near, the interns during their lunch breaks with other interns or placement mentors. It was also used when observing interns arriving at the start of their shifts. Adopting a complete observer role allows for more unobtrusive observations which enable better understandings of the context in which social inclusion unfolded. This included observing the depth of interpersonal relationship dynamics between interns and their interaction partners, noting who they communicated with during less structured moments of the programme beyond the placement environment. This approach

aligns with the ethnographic principle of minimising the researcher's impact on the studied environment to capture authentic behaviours and interactions (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). However, as Coffey (1999) argues, the idea of a truly unobtrusive observer is somewhat illusory, as the researcher's presence inevitably influences the setting to some degree. To mitigate this influence, whilst acknowledging that it can never be entirely eliminated, I employed strategies which supported my appearance of blending into the environment. For instance, when observing lunch breaks, I would eat my own lunch at a separate table, ensuring I did not communicate with or interrupt the interns' interactions. This approach aimed to make my presence appear more natural while maintaining the observational stance necessary for the research.

Another frequently employed technique was the 'observer as participant' role, defined as a situation where the ethnographer is known to participants but maintains a primarily observational stance with limited interaction (Gold, 1958; Roller and Lavrakas, 2015). I used this approach primarily to shadow interns during their work placements. This method allowed me to understand the interns' roles and community participation experiences without unduly distracting or burdening them, providing insight into social inclusion as it naturally occurs in the workplace. As Spradley (1980) notes, the observer as participant role allows ethnographers to maintain a balance between insider and outsider perspectives, facilitating both empathy and analytical distance. However, Garfinkel (1984) cautions about the 'observer's paradox', where the act of observing inevitably influences the observed phenomena. This potential limitation underscores the importance of employing a range of observational strategies. By using multiple approaches, I aimed to mitigate the criticisms associated with any single method and obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the interns' experiences.

A key aspect of my observational approach for the observer as participant role in this study was 'hanging out' - immersing myself in the research setting (the Supported Internship) and engaging in informal conversations and activities with participants (Geertz, 1998). This is a prevalent component of trustworthy ethnography (Adler and Adler, 2012; Coe et al., 2021); it enables me to become part of the studied world as much as possible. In this study, I spent time with the interns during moments like Supported Internship induction, breaks/lunches, and walking out of work together. Paying close attention during these 'accidental moments' that arise by chance can yield significant insights (Fuji, 2015). For these moments deepen contextual interpretations and provide knowledge crucial to understanding the broader

ecological systems. As Trigger et al. (2012) suggests, treating everyday encounters as sources of revelation requires an open-minded, inductive approach, that includes recognition that insights can emerge from seemingly unremarkable moments. However, the notion of 'hanging out' has been critiqued for its potential to blur the lines between the researcher and participant (Irwin, 2006), further justifying the detailed reflexivity and ethics sections in this study. Nonetheless, hanging out minimises positionality concerns by making me visible to participants and eroding perceptions of the ethnographer as 'other' (Emerson et al., 1995). It builds trust and rapport, providing access to participants who may have been hesitant to engage if approached formally (Bolognani, 2007; Browne and McBride, 2015). These informal interactions serve as a gateway to more active, reciprocal roles like 'participant as observer', thereby improving this study's axiological commitment to socially just research.

The 'participant as observer' role, defined as being semi-engaged with the participants (such as participating alongside them), is strategically used in this study and involves greater levels of engagement compared to the observer as participant role (Gold, 1958; Roller and Lavrakas, 2015). From my perspective, this meant extending my role beyond observation as participant into a more active role, whereby I actively listened to interns discuss their experiences, including asking them to clarify points about their roles and feelings. As an approach, the participant as observer role provides an empathetic understanding of work and social interactions (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995), however it also requires researchers to balance being an interactive participant and a detached observer (Nelson et al., 2013). Constant reflexivity was thus required to navigate this dual role and ensure that my participation did not significantly alter the natural course of events (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003). Critics argue that the participant as observer role risks the researcher becoming too enmeshed in the setting, potentially losing sight of the research objectives (Van Maanen, 2011). To address this concern, I implemented regular time for reflection and analysis (further discussed in the Chapter: Ethnographic Data Analysis as An Iterative Process). This approach aligned well with the type of ethnography I used, which emphasises the importance of both immersion and critical reflection. It allowed me to engage deeply with the ecological systems at play in the Supported Internship environment while maintaining the analytical distance necessary for rigorous research.

Occasionally, this ethnography adopts the 'complete participant' role (Gold, 1958; Spradley, 1980) because I was fully engaged in activities with interns. This involved directly

experiencing events and recording my own interpretations. Examples include, alongside interns portering equipment and serving customers at their placements. Whilst participating in activities alongside interns, rapport is built and power imbalances addressed, thus further reinforcing this study's axiological commitment. Whilst used sparingly to avoid detracting from interns' work experiences, complete participation provides an empathetic understanding of the contextual, emotional and social factors shaping meaning. This approach recognises understanding the nuances of social inclusion requires observing, and actively experiencing the world of participants (Honer and Hitzler, 2015). However, the complete participant role has been criticised for its potential to compromise the researcher's objectivity to critically analyse the setting (Bernard, 2017). Thus, reinforcing the rationale of using a range of observation strategies and other methods to minimise the criticisms of the overuse of one observational approach.

My goal throughout the research process was to uncover authentic interpretations. In the spirit of a qualitative approach, data was analysed continuously. When I encountered apparent contradictions or phenomena that were outliers from the general pattern, I engaged in further enquiry. This often involved conducting additional interviews or observations to explore these areas more deeply. This iterative process of data collection and analysis allowed me to continually refine my interpretations. I carefully considered how different data sources contributed to my evolving understanding, always prioritising participants' voices and experiences. By revisiting and re-examining my data, I was able to develop a more holistic and in-depth understanding of social inclusion as experienced by the participants. As Silverman (2017) notes, using multiple methods requires careful consideration of how different data sources are integrated and interpreted. In my approach, I focused on how each method and data source could deepen my understanding, rather than using them to verify or validate each other. This process aligns with qualitative traditions that value the depth and richness of participants' perspectives (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011).

Ethnographic observation, while invaluable, comes with inherent complexities, as my presence inevitably shapes the dynamics of the setting, and the act of interpreting observations is filtered through my own lens of understanding (Gaidys and Fleming, 2005). To address these challenges, I immersed myself in multiple observational roles, weaving together a tapestry of perspectives that illuminated different facets of the internship experience. This multifaceted approach enabled me to construct a richer, more nuanced understanding of the Supported

Internship and its participants. My decision to engage in sustained immersion and repeated observations over time was rooted in a desire to capture the authentic, lived experiences of the interns as fully as possible. By repeatedly revisiting the setting and its inhabitants, I peeled back layers of meaning, allowing deeper insights to emerge organically. This iterative process of observation and reflection refined my understanding, challenging initial assumptions and revealing subtleties that might otherwise have remained hidden (Charmaz and Mitchell, 2001). Throughout this process, my ethnographic approach was guided by a commitment to honouring the unique, subjective experiences of each participant. Instead of pursuing a singular, objective truth, I embraced the multiplicity of perspectives, recognising that each intern's journey was deeply personal and contextually situated. This orientation kept me open to the unexpected and attuned to the nuances of individual experiences that collectively painted a vivid picture of the internship landscape. Central to this approach was the use of reflective fieldnotes which is discussed in the next section as they served as both a record of observations and a tool for deeper analysis.

Reflective fieldnotes

Fieldnotes were a crucial tool throughout my 40-week ethnographic immersion in the Supported Internship, serving as a companion to observations and other research methods. Essentially, fieldnotes are an ethnographer's detailed written account of their experiences, observations, and reflections in the field (Ghodsee, 2016). More than just a simple notebook, they represent a systematic and reflective documentation process that captures the richness and complexity of the research setting. In my study, fieldnotes always accompanied me, they took the form of a digital journal on an iPad, allowing for flexibility and ease of use in various contexts. This approach, aligned with Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007) emphasis on fieldnotes as fundamental to ethnographic research, allowed me to capture the nuances of daily interactions, environmental factors, and significant events within the internship setting. My fieldnote process balanced the need for detailed observation with the inevitability of ongoing interpretation, reflecting the complex nature of ethnographic research. During active fieldwork moments, my focus was on recording observations - describing what I saw, heard, and experienced without immediate analysis. However, following Billings and Kowalski's (2006) emphasis on enhancing personal awareness within the research context, I often jotted down initial thoughts, questions, or connections as reflexive notes alongside these observations. These were not full interpretations, but rather markers for later reflection, acknowledging that my perspective inevitably influenced what I chose to record and how I recorded it.

The practical realities of the internship environment necessitated a flexible approach to notetaking. During more passive observation periods, such as observing from a distance during lunch breaks, I could take extensive real-time notes on my iPad. In contrast, when actively participating in activities with interns, like assisting with portering duties around the hospital, I relied more heavily on mental notes, quickly jotting down key phrases or reminders when possible. This adaptability allowed me to maintain an ecologically valid portrayal of the setting, as advocated by Bronfenbrenner (1977). At natural breaks throughout the day, I would expand on these initial jottings, adding more detail while events were fresh in my mind. This iterative process helped me capture the richness of the interns' experiences while maintaining my engagement in the field. Each evening, I set aside dedicated time to transform these accumulated notes into more comprehensive fieldnotes. This end-of-day writing served multiple purposes: it allowed me to flesh out the day's observations with additional context and details recalled from memory, engage in initial reflection, and identify emerging themes or questions to focus on in subsequent observations. As my research progressed, I found that my observations became more focused based on these emerging patterns, demonstrating the interplay between observation and interpretation over time. This evolving focus, as noted by Jeffrey (2018), helped refine my research questions and deepen my understanding of the interns' social inclusion experiences.

Regular review and annotation of my fieldnotes, a process emphasised by Lee et al. (2017), informed subsequent observations and interactions with participants, creating a cyclical process of data collection and preliminary analysis. This ongoing analysis of my fieldnotes directly influenced my research choices. For instance, when I noticed recurring themes related to interns' interactions with mentors, I adjusted my observation schedule to ensure I captured more of these moments. Similarly, when my notes revealed gaps in understanding certain aspects of the interns' experiences, I was able to refine my informal interview questions or seek out specific situations to observe. This adaptive approach, guided by the insights emerging from my fieldnotes, allowed me to pursue the most relevant and rich data sources as my understanding of the field evolved. By maintaining this detailed and reflexive fieldnote practice, I created a comprehensive record of the Supported Internship environment and the interns' experiences within it. This approach not only documented observable aspects of social inclusion but also tracked the evolution of my own perspectives and interpretations throughout

the study period, aligning with Eisner's (1991) and Parr's (2007) discussions on the value of fieldnotes in documenting the research process itself. The resulting body of fieldnotes served as a crucial data source for later, more formal analysis and interpretation, providing a rich foundation for understanding social inclusion in this specific context, consistent with the approaches outlined by Brannan and Oultram (2012) and Fuji (2015) in their discussions of ethnographic fieldwork. As will be discussed in the next section, these fieldnotes formed the basis for more formal analysis and follow-up interview methods, allowing for a deeper exploration of the themes that were identified during the initial observations.

Interviewing learning-disabled participants

This study employed semi-structured interviews as a key data collection method. These interviews allow researchers to explore participants' perspectives and experiences in depth while maintaining a flexible approach. In this research, interviews are not limited to formal interactions; they encompass various levels of formality (Stewart and Shamdasani, 2014). The study strategically employed a range of interview techniques to elicit young people's perceptions and worldviews, enabling them to share their stories (Spradley, 1979) and thereby enhancing the trustworthiness and inference quality of the ecological, social inclusion findings. The techniques include one-to-one semi structured, dyadic and walking interviews. The rationale for using multiple interview techniques lies in their ability to supplement and deepen my observational data.

One-to-one, semi-structured interviews form an important component of the interview strategy in this ethnographic study. Informed by Mauthner and Doucet, (1998) the content of the interview questions was guided by the literature review and developed with central themes from the research agenda, such as Simplican et al., (2015) framework of social inclusion and the PPCT-EP model (Figure 6). The open-ended nature of the interviews allowed interns to discuss matters related to the Supported Internship and other ecological systems such as their home life and the community in a safe environment, enhancing the depth of data from an ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Hammersley, 2006). To elicit authentic responses and minimise power differences between the ethnographer and interns, an informal and conversational approach was adopted during the interviews (Denzin, 1997; Spradley, 1979; Westby, 1990). This approach involved using open-ended questions, active listening, and allowing the interns to guide the conversation to some extent. Whilst interviews can be

critiqued for their potential inability to fully capture the meaning of everyday human activities (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1989), this study addresses this limitation by supplementing interviews with a range of other methods, such as participant observation and document analysis (Lee et al., 2017; Howell, 2018). This multi-method approach ensures a more comprehensive understanding of the interns' experiences and the contexts in which they occur.

Dyadic interviewing forms a crucial component of this study's interview strategy. This approach involves simultaneously engaging with two participants - the intern and a secondary participant of their choosing, such as a parent, fellow intern, or job coach/tutor. Paired interviews create a dynamic environment for rich information exchange. This method recognises the interdependent nature of human agency in relationships, as supported by Bandura (2000, 2001) and Caldwell (2013). It allows participants to build on each other's responses, revealing insights into shared experiences and relationship dynamics. This approach acknowledges that thoughts and behaviours are shaped by social interactions, providing a deeper understanding of how people influence each other's perspectives and decision-making processes. It serves to complement the data gathered from individual interviews, offering a more holistic view of the intern's experiences and support systems. The inclusion of a key support person, selected by the intern, acknowledges the vital role of interdependence in promoting independence and social participation for disabled people. This approach aligns with the work of researchers such as Lloyd (2001), Tregaakis and Goodley (2005), and White et al. (2010), who have highlighted the importance of recognising these interconnected relationships. However, it is important to note that joint interviews have faced criticism in disability research. Some scholars argue that this method potentially suppresses the voices of disabled people through facilitated responses or the use of proxies (Antaki et al., 2007; Goodley and Rapley, 2002; Perry, 2008).

To address these valid concerns, the study implements several critical distinctions. Firstly, the choice of the secondary interviewee lies solely with the intern, ensuring their comfort and agency in the process. Secondly, I clearly define the role of the secondary participant as supportive rather than dominant, maintaining the intern's voice as the primary focus. Lastly, my role as a researcher is primarily to facilitate and amplify the voices of disabled people, ensuring their experiences are shared and heard (Caldwell, 2013). This approach represents a challenge to conventional research methods. It recognises the inherent connectedness of individuals and rejects the notion that 'independent' participation must occur in isolation.

Instead, I embraced a more inclusive and representative research environment for this ethnography that respects the diverse needs and preferences of disabled participants. By doing so, I aimed to contribute to a broader understanding of the experiences of disabled interns, while maintaining the integrity and authenticity of their voices throughout the research process.

Walking interviews, an innovative variation of traditional interviewing methods, are also incorporated into this study to add an embodied understanding of the experience of disability (Butler and Derrett, 2014). This method aligns with the mobility paradigm, where walking with participants creates the capacity for additional insights in conjunction with observational techniques (Butler and Derrett, 2014; Kusenbach, 2003; Carpiano, 2009). Most walking interviews were conducted one-on-one, though in some cases, small groups of two to three interns were interviewed together. Walking interviews provide a unique window into the embodied, biopsychosocial experience of disability (Mycock, 2019; 2020), offering insights into the day-to-day experiences of interns (the individual ecological system: Figure 6) during the SI, such as portering patients around the hospital during work placements. However, it is important to recognise the limitations of walking interviews, as there is scarce research making direct comparisons between seated and interviews with an embodied perspective (Butler and Derrett, 2014). Additionally, the physical exertion placed on participants during walking interviews can be tiring and burdensome, potentially impacting the quality of data collection. To mitigate these concerns, the study ensures interns have control over the circumstances of the walk undertaken and where they lead me, enhancing the authenticity of the interview process.

Artefacts and documents

Including artefacts (Table 1) in this ethnographic study is important for capturing an ecological understanding of the social inclusion experiences of interns. As Nelson et al., (2013) argue, the artefacts and documents that people create and utilise during their participation in the ethnographic process provide insight into the complexities of experiences. This perspective aligns with the assertions of Spradley (1979) and Russell et al. (2012), who emphasise the importance of artefacts and documents as a further aspect of inference and understanding within ethnographic research. Consequently, the selection of artefacts for this study was guided by the need to capture rich (Geertz, 1973) insights into the ecological systems that mediate social inclusion within the Supported Internship site. Drawing from the synthesised PPCT-EP

model (Figure 6), the artefacts chosen encompassed a range of proximal and distal system influences that shaped the interns' experiences of social inclusion.

Table 1 Artefacts collected during data collection

Artefact	Ecological system(s)
Interns' curriculum work (placement logbooks, daily reflections, and weekly workplace diaries)	Individual Organisational
Interns' employment planning meeting reports	Individual Interpersonal
Weekly mentor feedback	Interpersonal
Posters displayed in the Supported Internship classroom	Organisational
Hospital policies	Organisational Socio-political
Education Health and Care Plans	Individual Community
Vocational profiles (Appendix 47) and 'all about me' documents	Individual

The incorporation of these artefacts from various ecological systems in this study represents a concerted effort to elucidate the multifaceted interplay between individual, interpersonal, organisational, and socio-political systems that mediate social inclusion. For example, the inclusion of EHCPs, vocational profiles, and 'all about me' documents offered rich data that illuminates the individual system, shedding light on the interns' idiosyncratic characteristics, strengths, and support needs. The weekly feedback documents from mentors provided insights into the interpersonal and organisational systems, unveiling the proximal and reciprocal interactions that unfold within the immediate environment. These documents offer comprehensive insights into the ways in which mentors and interns co-construct meaning and negotiate their roles and relationships, illuminating the interpersonal processes that can mediate social inclusion. The incorporation of artefacts such as posters displayed in the Supported Internship classroom based within the hospital site and hospital policies allows for an additional layer of analytical depth, situating the interns' experiences within the broader organisational and socio-political systems. These artefacts provide evidence of the distal influences that shape the processes and practices within the hospital, offering an understanding of the range of factors that mediate the interns' social inclusion. This multi-layered approach, which integrates data from various ecological systems, allows for a nuanced examination of the phenomenon, overcoming the limitations associated with focusing exclusively on individual or interpersonal systems mediating social inclusion.

Synthesis of the methods

Having discussed each method individually, this section now explicitly addresses how these various techniques were employed in a complementary manner to create a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the ecological systems mediating social inclusion in the Supported Internship. The combination of methods in this ethnographic study was deliberately designed to be synergistic, with each technique enhancing and expanding upon the others. Observations, serving as the foundational daily method alongside fieldnotes for nine months of data collection, were consistently augmented by other data collection approaches to provide a more complete picture of the interns' experiences. For instance, observational data frequently prompted follow-up interviews or informal conversations. When an interesting interaction or event was observed in the workplace, a semi-structured interview or casual discussion with the intern involved could be arranged to explore their perspective on what transpired. This approach allowed for the capture of both the observable behaviours and the subjective meanings attributed to them by participants, aligning with Geertz's (1973) concept of thick description. Similarly, artefacts and documents were used to complement and contextualise data gathered through observations and interviews. For example, if an intern mentioned a particular aspect of their training during an interview, their curriculum work or logbook entries could be examined to provide more detailed information about the content and structure of that training. This multi-method approach enabled a more comprehensive understanding of how various ecological systems, from the microsystem of classroom instruction to the macrosystem of workplace policies, influenced interns' experiences of social inclusion (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Walking interviews were employed as a complement to static observations and traditional interviews. These mobile conversations often revealed elements of social interaction or aspects of the physical environment that might have remained hidden or partially hidden had a mixed method approach not been applied. For instance, a walking interview conducted while an intern performed their duties could provide insights into the embodied experience of their work and the spatial dynamics of social inclusion in the workplace. The collection of artefacts, such as 'all about me' documents and vocational profiles, provided valuable contexts for interpreting observational and interview data. These documents offered insights into the individual characteristics and support needs of interns, helping to situate their observed behaviours and

reported experiences within a broader personal context. Fieldnotes served as a crucial linking element across all methods, providing a space for ongoing reflection and preliminary analysis. Observations, informal conversations, and insights from document analysis were all recorded in fieldnotes, allowing for the identification of emerging themes and the development of lines of inquiry to be pursued through more formal interviews or targeted observations. Moreover, the complementary use of methods was guided by the voices and preferences of the interns themselves. Participants often had input into which methods were used to explore their experiences further, reflecting the study's commitment to participatory research principles and recognising the expertise of people in their own lived experiences. In summary, whilst each method contributed unique insights, their true power lay in their complementary application. This integrated approach enabled a holistic exploration of the complex, multi-layered ecological systems mediating social inclusion in the Supported Internship context, providing a rich and nuanced understanding that no single method could have achieved alone.

Methods summary

In summary, this ethnographic study employs a diverse array of methods to build rapport with young interns, authentically represent their voices, and capture the multifaceted ecological systems mediating social inclusion (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). The 9-month immersion in the Supported Internship provided numerous opportunities to deploy multiple data collection techniques, enabling the observation of interns' actions and comparison with their self-reported behaviours (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1989). This approach was crucial in accommodating the varied needs and preferences of disabled participants. For instance, one intern found written expression more comfortable, while another preferred walking interviews. By tailoring methods to individual preferences and abilities, the research ensured maximum engagement and authentic representation of each participant's experiences. The range of methods deepens the understanding of social inclusion by unpacking the intricacies of the young people's ecological systems (Simplican et al., 2015; Coe et al., 2021). This approach enhances the trustworthiness of the research and provides a more comprehensive and nuanced picture of social inclusion. Additionally, it allows for flexibility in data collection, adapting to the changing needs and circumstances of participants throughout the year-long study. For example, sensory-friendly methods could be employed when necessary, or alternative communication strategies could be used to ensure all voices were heard. Furthermore, this methodological diversity aligns with the principle of 'nothing about us without us' (Charlton, 2000), empowering participants to contribute in ways that best suit their abilities and comfort

levels. It also acknowledges the dynamic nature of disability experiences, allowing for the capture of data across different contexts and time periods. The methods employed in this ethnography align with Wolcott's (1994, p. 15) assertion that the appropriate amount of data is 'as much as is needed to produce a coherent and compelling account'. By employing this range of methods, the research provides a more transferable and ecologically valid understanding of social inclusion within the Supported Internship setting, while respecting and accommodating the unique needs of each participant with a disability. With this methodological approach established, the next section shifts attention to the specific context of the study, detailing the participants and the research site where these methods were applied.

Sample: participants and site of research

During 2022-23, this research took place during a year-long Supported Internship programme at a large public hospital. The fieldwork approach involved sustained engagement at a single site over the course of an academic year (forty weeks), allowing me to develop deep connections with participants. This extended timeframe enabled the observation of changes, developments, and patterns that were identified across different temporal periods - from daily interactions to weekly progress, monthly developments, and longer-term transformations throughout the academic year. The rationale for the extensive immersion within this setting is discussed in the 'long-term immersion' section. Whilst primary research activities were centred within departments where the interns were placed, this study encompassed a broader exploration of the working environment, including areas such as the canteen, corridors, meeting rooms, and the classroom (located at the hospital). The selection of this site for research was a combination of purposive and convenience sampling. As the sole Local Authority-recognised Supported Internship locally, it offered a pertinent focus for the study. Its proximity to myself enabled frequent, in-depth interactions with interns, enriching data collection. This convenience did not detract from the study's trustworthiness, as the research sought to explore typical Supported Internship experiences rather than exemplary ones. The chosen programme provided an authentic view of Supported Internship implementation, aligning with the study's aim to understand these initiatives in their everyday context.

A total population sampling strategy (Lavrakas, 2008) was employed, encompassing all six interns from the 2022-2023 cohort. The group consisted of two females, three males, and one non-binary person, all aged 18-19. All the interns shared several key characteristics: they had all attended the same special school in the previous year, held Education, Health and Care Plans

(EHCPs), and were diagnosed with either a disability, autism, or both; see *Table 2*. The ethical considerations surrounding participant consent, including ongoing consent, are addressed in the section titled ‘Ethical Considerations When Researching Alongside Young Disabled People’.

Table 2 Characteristics of the sampled participants

Pseudonym	Diagnosis/'s according to EHCP	SEX	Ethnicity	Primary communication method
Holly	Learning disability Language disorder and difficulties with auditory and short-term memory Prader Willi Syndrome	Female	White British	English, oral
Arjuice	Learning disability Global Development delay	Male	Asian	English and Punjabi
Princess Glitter	Learning disability Ormotor Dyspraxia, Delayed balance Perthes of her right hip Spina Bifida at L5/S1 level and partial hearing impairment	Female	White British	English, oral
Paffers	Learning disability Autism	Male	White British	English, oral
Hurricane	Learning disability Mild Cerebral Palsy. Autism and visually impaired.	Male	White British	English, oral
Eunie	Learning disability Autism	Male	White British	English, oral

For this study, the interns selected their pseudonyms - Arjuice, Eunie, Holly, Hurricane, Paffers, and Princess Glitter - and during their first week of the Supported Internship, each one wrote a personal introduction through a pen portrait. Building on Hurricane's later suggestion, they also chose a photograph to complement their written portraits. These self-chosen written and visual introductions, which align with my axiological goal of centralising learning-disabled peoples' voices, appear below.

Arjuice

Hi, I'm Arjuice. I like spending time with my family and talking to my friends on the phone every evening. I also love watching Disney movies and going on holidays. This summer, I went

to San Francisco for a wedding with over 1,000 people! I chose this photo (Figure 7) of me because it makes me smile.

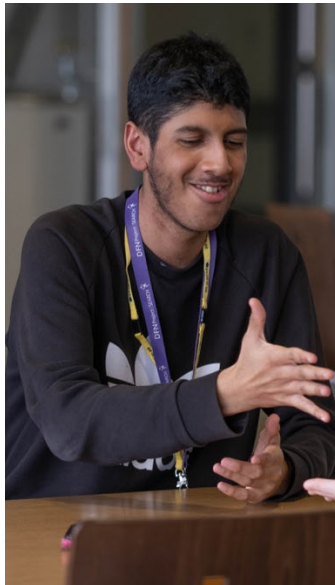


Figure 7 Arjuice portrait

Eunie

Hi, I'm Eunie. I picked this pseudonym name because it's the name of my favourite anime character, and that's why it's also my photo (Figure 8). When I'm not at the Supported Internship, I like playing video games on my Nintendo Switch and working on creative projects like writing.



Figure 8 Eunie portrait

Holly

My name is Holly. I'm confident and used to be on the School Council where I helped speak up for other students with disabilities. I like this research because it's a chance to be heard. It's why I wanted to use the photo (Figure 9) of me presenting at University of Derby conference with Wykeham about the Supported Internship as I got to speak to over 100 people! In my spare time, I have been working on being more independent. I have started taking the bus around town and swimming on my own.



Figure 9 Holly portrait

Hurricane

Hi, I am Hurricane. I really like football and enjoy watching the local teams. I also love playing football and want to join a Cerebral Palsy football team. I was the one who suggested adding photos to show what we do during the Supported Internship. I hope you like them and learn about what we've done this year. I chose this photo (Figure 10) of when I was working on the main reception placement at the hospital when I would wear Uniform each day. I think it makes me look professional!



Figure 10 Hurricane portrait

Paffers

My name is Paffers, and I am an Autistic 18-year-old. I am very active and love playing indoor football every week. I used to do a lot of climbing, and a fun fact is I almost went to the Special Olympics. I hope to get back into it soon. I am excited about starting the Supported Internship and can't wait to share my experience. I also did the Duke of Edinburgh Award at school, which helped me learn to read maps, something I think will help me find my way around the hospital. I chose this photo (Figure 11) of when I had a portrait taken of me when I worked in the portering department for my second placement. It makes me feel like I am an employee at the hospital and not just an intern as I wore a uniform like every other employee.

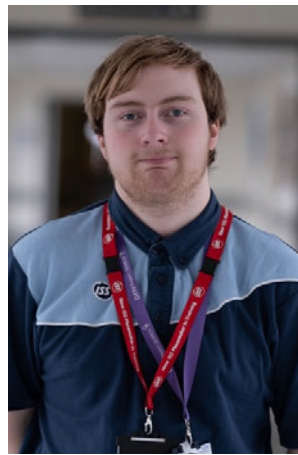


Figure 11 Paffers portrait

Princess Glitter

Hi, my name is Princess Glitter. I chose this name for the research because it makes me smile, and I hope it makes you smile too. I have a Border Collie named Hugo. I like baking with my mum at home, and after I finish the programme, I want to work in a café. Something new I am doing is learning to drive. I just started lessons with my Dad, and I hope I will be driving by the time I finish the programme.

I picked the photo (Figure 12) of me when I was in the alumni group at the Supported Internship. I chose this photo because I genuinely think I was smiling most days during the programme.

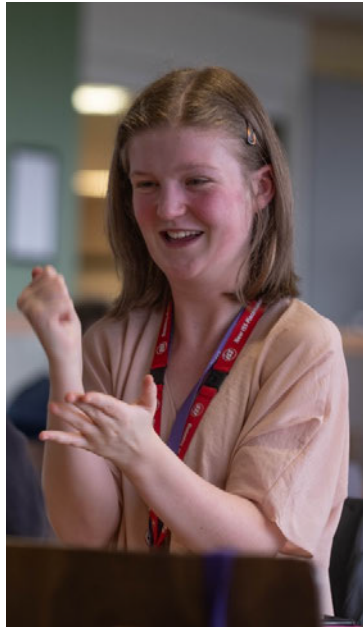


Figure 12 Princess Glitter portrait

Having introduced the intern participants above, Table 3 presents an overview of the interns' three ten-week work placements undertaken during the Supported Internship programme.

Table 3 Interns' placements

Intern	Placement
Paffers	1. Medical records 2. Portering: Patient and non-patient facing. 3. Theatre Porter job trial
Holly	1. Cleaning (Appendix 26) 2. Back of House Catering 3. Various: Wellbeing, Portering and Barista
Arjuice	1. Front of House Catering 2. Sterilisation services 3. Various: Receipts and Distribution and Back of House Catering
Eunie	1. Library 2. Medical Records
Hurricane	1. Back of House Catering 2. Split placement: Main reception, Charity hub and Back of House Catering 3. Xray receptionist
Princess Glitter	1. Wardhosting: Children and Adult wards 2. Facilities Management 3. Housekeeping

In addition to the interns as participants, the study also included a sub-sample of people within and outside the workplace environment. This sub-sample complements the small primary sample (Merton, 2014) and comprises contributions from various stakeholders in the Supported Internship programme to enrich the ecological and contextual understanding of the study. Within the programme, the sub-sample included the Tutor, Job Coach, work placement mentors, alumni interns and host business employees closely connected to the interns, representing their interpersonal system (Figure 6). Additionally, the study gathered perspectives from influential figures in the interns' lives beyond the Supported Internship environment, such as parents/guardians and the interns' former teachers. The consent of this group to participate in the research is also discussed in the 'Ethical Considerations When Researching Alongside Young Disabled People' section of this thesis. This range of participants contributes to a comprehensive exploration, ensuring a rich description (Christensen et al., 2011; Coe et al., 2021) of the Supported Internship programme and its effects on social inclusion. Nonetheless, it is paramount to emphasise that this research maintains a core focus on the interns, reflecting a commitment to upholding the axiological stance of prioritising the lived experiences of learning-disabled people. The interns' voices serve as the central pillar of this study, reflecting a commitment to cultivating in-depth insights and solidifying the rationale for a small primary sample.

Ethical Considerations When Researching Alongside Young Learning-Disabled People

This study's ethical framework was constructed to address the unique challenges presented by ethnographic research involving young learning-disabled people in a Supported Internship. The research received ethical approval from the University of Derby's Ethics Committee (Appendix 1-3 details the ethics form and confirmation of ethics). It adhered to three ethical guidelines: the University of Derby's (2002) 'Research Code of Ethics', the British Educational Research Association's (BERA) Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (BERA, 2018), and the Association of Social Anthropologists (UK) Ethical Guidelines (2021) which specifically address ethnography. The integration of these guidelines did however present challenges which required the reconciling of potentially conflicting recommendations. In relation to this study specifically, this required a careful consideration of the ethical implications of informed consent. Whilst BERA (2018) stresses the importance of establishing ongoing consent, ASA (2021) points to the ethical significance of creating minimal disruption in ethnographic settings. Balancing these valid ethical implications required the application of

reflection and adaptive strategies. For as Guillemin and Gillam (2004) argue, procedural ethics alone are insufficient for addressing the day-to-day ethical issues that arise, and this is particularly true given the 'so called' vulnerability of the participant group.

The process of obtaining informed consent was guided by Wiles et al.'s (2005) conceptualisation of consent as a negotiated, ongoing process rather than a one-time event. This approach served as a bridge between the potentially conflicting recommendations of BERA (2018) and ASA (2021). By viewing consent as an ongoing process, the study adheres to BERA's emphasis on the importance of establishing ongoing consent, whilst also taking into account the ASA (2021) guidance regarding the need to minimise disruption in the ethnographic setting. Although participants were over 16 and legally able to consent, the importance of involving parents/guardians in the consent process was recognised. This decision was informed by research on parent/guardian interactions with young disabled people (e.g., Foley, 2012; Holmbeck et al., 2002), which highlights the complex dynamics of autonomy and support in these relationships. To ensure accessibility, informed consent documents and research information sheets were created (Appendix 4-8), drawing on Nind's (2014, p4) work on adapting consent processes for 'individuals with intellectual disabilities' (Appendix 9-11). These materials were designed to be comprehensible to all participants, using accessible language supplemented by visual aids. The consent process involved obtaining written consent and engaging in ongoing discussions with interns about the nature of the research, their rights, and their role in the study. These discussions were tailored to interns' communication preferences and cognitive abilities, ensuring that consent was genuinely and authentically informed and freely given. For example, for Arjuice, who had difficulty processing verbal information, I used a combination of simplified written explanations and visual aids, including pictures and diagrams, to explain the research process. I also encouraged Arjuice to ask questions and express his understanding by drawing or writing, allowing him to engage with the consent process in a way that suited his communication style. In contrast, for Hurricane, who was more comfortable with verbal communication and found that barriers were best removed when information was presented in shorter more frequent chunks, I broke down the consent information and revisited key points regularly.

Regarding the ethical need to minimise disruption in the ethnographic setting (ASA, 2021), Renold et al.'s (2008) work on participatory ethics was drawn upon as the basis for embedding a multi-faceted approach to ongoing consent. The strategy included daily verbal check-ins with

interns, development of non-verbal cues for interns to indicate temporary withdrawal, and careful observation and interpretation of interns' body language and behaviour. Interns were also taught a discreet hand signal they could use to indicate they wanted a break from being observed, without drawing attention from others in the Supported Internship. This subtle approach further balanced the need for ongoing consent with minimal disruption to the research setting. This method allowed for continuous reaffirmation of consent (addressing BERA (2018) guidelines) while maintaining the natural flow of the ethnographic environment (aligning with ASA's (2021) recommendations).

To disrupt the power imbalances inherent in researcher-participant relationships and to enhance the ethical integrity of the study, several strategies were employed, these were informed by best practices in inclusive research methods (Atkins and Duckworth, 2019). Interns were given agency in various aspects of the research process, including the choice of pseudonyms, as suggested by Atkins and Duckworth (2018). This practice protected their identities and gave them a sense of ownership in the research. The process of choosing pseudonyms became an engaging activity for many interns, with some using it as an opportunity to express aspects of their personalities or aspirations. Furthermore, interns were regularly consulted about the methods used during each interaction, allowing them to have a voice in how they engaged with the study. This approach was informed by Nind and Vinha's (2014) work on inclusive research methods. For instance, some interns expressed a preference for active methods like walking interviews, whilst others felt more comfortable with traditional, seated interviews. This flexibility in methods respected the interns' preferences and aimed to yield richer, more diverse data. Building rapport was essential to creating an environment where interns felt comfortable discussing personal topics related to social inclusion. The initial phase of the research prioritised 'hanging out' with interns in informal settings, an approach advocated by Corsaro and Molinari (2008) in their work on ethnographic research with children. This strategy allowed trusting relationships to develop before more formal methods, such as interviews, were introduced. For instance, I spent time in communal areas, like the hospital's canteen, engaging in casual conversations and participating in non-work-related activities with the interns, gradually building familiarity and trust, providing context that enriched later, more structured research methods.

To avoid overburdening the interns and to respect their primary commitment to the internship programme, existing curriculum work was often utilised as artefacts that elucidated greater

depth and thicker descriptions about their social inclusion experiences. This approach aligns with Cock's (2006) recommendations for minimising research burden on vulnerable participants. For instance, daily reflection journals created as part of the internship programme were analysed with permission, rather than requesting additional written work solely for the research. Crucially in relation to ongoing consent, a process was implemented to ensure interns'-maintained control over what curriculum work they included/excluded from this research; this process was enacted using a green and red folder system. At the beginning of each week, interns were reminded of their right to withhold any of their work from the research, utilising the folders they placed work they consented to include in the green folder, and work they wished to keep private in the red folder. This system allowed interns to easily manage their consent on an ongoing basis, ensuring they could write freely without concern that all their work would automatically become research data. When handwritten work was used, it was scanned and saved to a protected OneDrive account on a weekly basis, with original documents returned to participants, ensuring data protection while respecting participants' ownership of their work. Only documents from the green folder were scanned and included in the research data. This method reduced the time demands on interns, provided authentic insights into their learning experiences and reflections on social inclusion in the workplace, and respected their autonomy in deciding what to share. The use of existing work was carefully balanced with other data collection methods to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the interns' experiences, while the ongoing consent process ensured that participants' rights and preferences were continuously respected.

Grounded in Dockett and Perry's (2011) work into participatory research with young people, interns were informed about the ongoing analysis and interpretation of data. Implemented through a process of setting up weekly collaborative sessions with each intern (illustrated in Figure 13), preliminary findings were discussed and interpretations checked (discussed further in Chapter 4). While the term 'debrief' was initially used, it is important to note that these sessions were, in fact, reciprocal exchanges. They involved my presentation of ongoing interpretations and analysis, followed by a discussion that added greater depth and nuance to the findings. These sessions were structured to be accessible and engaging, using visual aids and simplified language where necessary to ensure interns could fully participate in the interpretative process. For example, emerging themes were presented using colourful mind maps, and interns were encouraged to add their thoughts using sticky notes or drawings. This participatory approach strengthened the accuracy of interpretations and empowered interns'

engagement as co-constructors of knowledge, which in turn enhancing the ethical integrity and authenticity of the research findings.



Figure 13 Participant debrief with Hurricane

Throughout the nine-month ethnographic study, these ethical considerations were not static but continually reflected upon and adjusted as needed, for example, through regular reflections with my supervisory team. This dynamic approach to ethics acknowledged the complex and often unpredictable nature of ethnographic research with vulnerable populations, allowing for adaptations as new ethical challenges emerged. For instance, when it became apparent that some interns were struggling with the time commitment of weekly debriefs, the format was adjusted to bi-weekly sessions with options for shorter, more frequent check-ins. I maintained a reflective journal throughout the study, documenting ethical dilemmas, decision-making processes, and the impact of these decisions on the research process and participants to enhance the study's trustworthiness.

In summary, the ethical approach taken in this study went beyond mere compliance with institutional guidelines. It represented a comprehensive, participant-centred strategy that prioritised the well-being, autonomy, and dignity of the young interns throughout every stage of the research process. This approach protected the participants and enhanced the quality and authenticity of the data collected, contributing to a nuanced and ethically sound understanding of the experiences of young learning-disabled people in a Supported Internship. The ongoing reflection and adaptation of ethical practices throughout the study underscore my commitment to maintaining the highest standards of ethical conduct in research with 'so called' vulnerable populations.

Chapter Summary

This study used an ethnographic approach to examine the social inclusion experiences of six learning-disabled interns participating in a Supported Internship at a large public hospital, employing an inductive approach over a nine-month period guided by principles of qualitative research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019; Fetterman, 2010). I deployed various methods including observations, interviews, and artefact analysis, adapting data collection techniques to accommodate interns' diverse communication abilities, while the extended engagement fostered trust and rapport essential for capturing authentic experiences. Aligning with disability research principles (Oliver, 1992; Barnes, 2003) and the 'nothing about us without us' ethos (Charlton, 2000, p.10), the study incorporated participatory elements that involving interns' data collection and analysis. This approach aimed to amplify the voices of learning-disabled young people, disrupt traditional research power dynamics, and align with recent educational research guidelines (BERA, 2018). The research focused on understanding ecological systems (PPCT-EP: Chapter 2, Figure 6) influencing social inclusion, employing thick description (Geertz, 1973) to capture nuanced experiences and explore factors facilitating or hindering social inclusion within the Supported Internship context. Throughout the process, I maintained reflexivity and critical self-reflection (Berger, 2015) to mitigate personal biases. This methodology facilitated the generation of rich insights and was designed to produce what Atkins and Duckworth (2019) describe as socially just research. Therefore, having discussed the methodology and methods employed, the next chapter will explore how the data collected through this methodology was analysed.

Chapter 4: Data analysis: Ethnographic analysis as an iterative process

Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed examination of the analytical processes employed to understand learning-disabled interns' social inclusion experiences within a Supported Internship programme. Drawing on established ethnographic approaches guided by O'Reilly (2012) and Hammersley and Atkinson (2019), the analysis integrates multiple data sources collected over forty weeks of fieldwork. Central to this analysis is Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic framework, which provided a systematic approach while maintaining the flexibility essential for ethnographic inquiry. The chapter begins by examining ethnographic data analysis as an iterative process, exploring how data collection, analysis, and writing intertwined throughout the research and involved continual and back and forth theorising and reflexive work. Following this, attention turns to the practical implementation of each phase of thematic analysis, from initial data familiarisation through to the final production of research findings (Chapters 5 and 6). The discussion demonstrates how digital tools, particularly NVivo-14, supported the analytical process while preserving interpretive integrity. Throughout, the chapter emphasises how methodological choices were guided by the dual imperatives of analytical rigour and ethical representation of learning-disabled interns' voices, as emphasised by Walmsley and Johnson (2003). Through detailed exploration of each analytical stage, the chapter reveals how five key themes were identified from the data, providing insights into the ecological systems mediating social inclusion within the Supported Internship context.

The process of thematic analysis

This ethnographic study employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis approach to analyse the data. This method was chosen for its flexibility and suitability for exploring the voices of learning-disabled interns and the complex phenomena of social inclusion. The iterative nature of this approach aligns well with prolonged ethnographic research, allowing for continuous refinement of interpretations as new data emerges (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The method excels in distilling meaning from rich, descriptive data, enabling nuanced exploration of multifaceted experiences while identifying patterns across the dataset (Clarke and Braun, 2017). This is crucial given the heterogeneous nature of disabilities and varied internship experiences. Furthermore, its compatibility with an ecological

perspective facilitates a multilayered examination of social inclusion, from individual experiences to broader societal influences (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). The approach's proven effectiveness in disability research (e.g., Nolan et al., 2019; Lindsay and Fuentes, 2023) provides a robust foundation for exploring the complex interplay between disability, workplace dynamics, and social inclusion in a Supported Internship. This established history, combined with its alignment to the ecological perspective, further validates its selection for this study's specific context and objectives.

The six phases of thematic analysis (Table 4) include: familiarisation, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Braun and Clarke, 2006). While thematic coding serves as a foundational analytical guide in this ethnography, it is important to acknowledge that there are no inflexible rules for transforming data into findings (Thomas, 2006; Braun and Clarke, 2013). The analysis often involved recurring and iterative elements, requiring me to navigate through the phases in a nonlinear manner. This approach aligns with the nature of ethnographic research, which involves an iterative and inductive process of data collection, analysis, and interpretation (O'Reilly, 2012). The six steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) function as a guiding framework rather than a rigid, step-by-step process. This flexibility is crucial in ethnographic research, where the interplay between data collection and analysis is ongoing and dynamic. To provide a clear understanding of the formal analysis for this research, the following sections systematically discuss each phase of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework. This discussion illustrates how each phase was applied to this specific ethnographic study, highlighting the iterative nature of the process. Furthermore, it demonstrates how member checking (peer debriefing) was integrated into phases two through six to enhance the rigour of the analysis. Beginning with the familiarisation phase, the next section explores how immersion in the data laid the foundation for the analytical process, setting the stage for the subsequent phases of coding, theme development, and refinement that led to the production of a cohesive analytical narrative.

Table 4 Thematically analysing ethnographic data overview

Thematic stage	Description (Braun and Clarke, 2006)	How the thematic stage was deployed in this study
Stage one: Familiarisation	Immersing oneself in data through repeated active reading, searching for meanings and patterns	Reviewed ethnographic data including intern interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and work samples, focusing on social inclusion and ecological systems
Stage two: Generation of initial codes	Systematically identifying interesting features across the dataset that appear relevant to answering the research question	Used inductive approach to generate codes from ethnographic data over multiple coding cycles, with member checking with the interns to ensure I made accurate codes of the intern's experiences
Stage three: Searching for themes	Sorting and collating codes into potential themes, gathering all relevant coded data extracts within identified themes	Connected and categorised initial codes through multiple iterations of data examination, identifying potential themes around interns' social inclusion
Stage four: Reviewing themes	Checking if themes work in relation to coded extracts and entire dataset, generating a thematic map	Refined categories to ensure data cohered meaningfully, merging or eliminating themes to create distinct set.
Stage five: Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine specifics of each theme and generate clear definitions and names	Produced five clear themes, ensuring each captured intern experiences accurately.
Stage six: Producing the report	Final analysis and write-up of report	Created two chapters: one presenting five themes grounded in data (Chapter 5), another applying Person, Process, Context, Time- Ecological Pathways (PPCT-EP Theory framework (Chapter 6)

Stage one: Familiarisation

Table 4 indicates the first stage of thematic analysis (as proposed by Braun and Clarke, 2006) is familiarisation; for this study that means the importance of immersing oneself in the ethnographic data collected from the Supported Internship. Familiarisation involves working through transcripts of interviews with interns, fieldnotes from observations, samples of interns' educational work, and any other data gleaned over the ten-month ethnographic study. This

process is done line by line to make sense of what is revealed about social inclusion and the ecological systems that mediate it. The process of sense making facilitates the identification of initial concepts related to social inclusion and categorisation of them, a practice referred to by Becker (2014) as abduction. At this stage, the primary goal is not to establish definitive categories or be overly concerned about their alignment with the overarching research aims of understanding social inclusion and the ecological systems that mediate it. Rather, as suggested by Hammersley and Atkinson (2019), it aims to generate ideas and provide the study with a guideline for further inductive data collection exploration of the interns' social inclusion experiences. For example, during data collection, the hospital cafeteria was identified as an important part of some of the interns' experiences. Interns frequently mentioned it as a space for informal networking, observing staff interactions, and feeling more at ease compared to other hospital areas. While not immediately categorised as a factor mediating social inclusion, this observation prompted further questions about how different spaces within the Supported Internship might mediate interns' social inclusion. This initial concept provided a starting point for deeper exploration of the interns' social inclusion experiences within the organisational system of the hospital.

The organisation of data collected during ethnography is a key preparatory stage for familiarisation and formal thematic analysis (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019), therefore, guided by the recommendations of Ryan and Bernard (2003) and Mertens (2015), I used distinct labels to organise the qualitative data. Specifically, I dated the data, categorised it into internship placements (Autumn: Placement 1; Spring: Placement 2; and Summer: Placement 3), and attributed it to specific interns. Beyond being a merely technical exercise, the process was an ethical one, ensuring that interns' voices remained central, as advocated by Hammersley and Atkinson (2007). For example, this system allowed me to track how one intern's perspectives on workplace dynamics evolved from Placement 1 to Placement 3, while also comparing their experiences with those of another intern in a similar context, thereby preserving individual narratives within the broader organisational landscape. I strategically incorporated supplementary data from people within the interns' interpersonal system, such as mentors, tutors, and job coaches, to provide context while maintaining the primary focus on the interns themselves. This approach was grounded in the PPCT-EP model (Figure 6), which situated the interns' experiences within their complex web of relationships and interactions. Throughout the analysis, I remained committed to amplifying the voices of learning-disabled interns, representing their experiences authentically and respectfully in alignment with

inclusive research principles as outlined by Walmsley and Johnson (2003) and the social model of disability (Oliver, 1990).

Using digital tools for analysis

To manage the extensive dataset, I used digital tools to support thematic analysis. Microsoft Word and Excel facilitated initial data organisation and categorisation. NVivo-14 served as the primary tool for coding and theme development. Selected for its qualitative analysis capabilities (Lewins and Silver, 2014), NVivo-14 enabled efficient coding of rich data, thematic structural organisation, and coded segment retrieval and comparison. To mitigate potential digital tool limitations (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013), I made coding decisions rather than automating these using software and used an iterative process of self-checking to ensure that coding decisions were valid (see account of trustworthiness earlier in the chapter). Coded data was regularly reviewed in its original context, and analytical memos documented decision-making and emerging interpretations. This approach ensured systematic data management while preserving interpretive integrity.

Using NVivo-14 for the analytical process was a strategy for achieving trustworthiness. As highlighted by Rodik and Primorac (2015), these benefits go beyond mere convenience, facilitating the core principles of ethnographic research. Firstly, the software's adaptability is crucial for maintaining research integrity. As new insights were identified from intern interactions, I could quickly modify coding schemes and reorganise data, ensuring the analysis remained grounded in their experiences. This responsive engagement with the data is essential in ethnography. Secondly, NVivo-14 offers efficient data organisation and access, which facilitates immersion in the field and deep understanding of interns' experiences. The ability to quickly retrieve and review relevant data maintained a close connection to interns' perspectives throughout the analytical process. This feature supports the iterative nature of ethnographic analysis, allowing seamless movement between data collection and analysis, thereby refining the understanding of social inclusion within the Supported Internship context. Lastly, the use of NVivo-14 enhances researcher integrity by providing a secure and transparent means of storing and accessing raw data. The consolidation of multiple data sources, including digitised intern handwritten employability folders (Figure 14), into a unified central repository ensures accurate analysis of diverse data types in one place. This approach addresses concerns about

the time-consuming nature of ethnographic analysis, as noted by Lofland and Lofland (1984), while enhancing the overall quality and trustworthiness of the research process.



Figure 14 Wykeham pictured with interns' curriculum folders

Stage two: Generation of initial codes

The second stage of this study's thematic analysis, guided by Braun and Clarke (2006) involved the generation of initial codes, which required further organisation of the data. This coding process lies at the heart of thematic analysis and takes on an inductive approach, allowing codes to emerge organically from the data rather than being guided by a predetermined theory (Braun and Clarke, 2006). During this phase, the focus was on generating codes that capture the interns' experiences, perspectives, and the contextual systems mediating social inclusion. As suggested by Bailey (2018), these codes initially took the form of descriptive markers, representing the interns' actions, words, and observed behaviours (see Appendix 12). Transitioning from coding to analysis involved an iterative process of refining the coded categories, often requiring multiple rounds within the coding cycle, as described by Madden (2017). By engaging in this iterative coding process, the research addressed the interns' experiences and the complex dynamics shaping their social inclusion while ensuring that the analysis remained grounded in the data.

Member checking

To minimise the impact of researcher perspectives on the analysis, the reflexive technique of member checking (debriefing), enhanced the study's trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Birt et al., 2016). Member checking is a process where researchers share their interpretations

and findings with participants to verify accuracy and ensure that the researcher's understanding aligns with the participants' experiences and perspectives. Involving a process of dialogue between researcher and participants (Varpio et al., 2017), member checking enabled me to verify my interpretations and analysis with the participants (interns, job coach, tutor and placement mentors) to ensure they accurately captured their experiences. This approach facilitated the gathering of multiple perspectives and ensured a holistic understanding of the interns' experiences and the ecological systems mediating social inclusion. These dialogues focused on specific details, such as observations recorded in field notes, the interns' employability work, and subsequent analysis. As Candela (2019) highlights, this procedure mitigates the risk of misrepresentation during data analysis. However, it is crucial to consider the ethical implications of member checking, particularly when working with learning-disabled interns.

To avoid overburdening the interns, I carefully planned the member checking sessions at convenient times, providing clear explanations of the process, and creating an environment that encouraged open communication. Another important consideration during the member checking process was the potential for chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1986a) changes in opinions and perspectives. As the interns' progressed through the Supported Internship, their experiences and understanding of social inclusion evolved. To account for this, member checking was conducted at various stages of the research, allowing for the capture of these changes and the incorporation of new insights into the analysis. It is noteworthy that all the themes featured in this study were understood by the interns themselves and also by the Job Coach, Tutor, and Placement Mentors. Several interns, in collaboration with myself and the support staff, shared these insights across diverse platforms. These dissemination efforts included presentations at NDTi regional meetings, career fairs, the inaugural Supported Internship symposium at the University of Derby, and the creation of dissemination videos. Thus, emphasising this study's commitment to promoting transparency and accountability in the analysis process while ensuring the interns' voices were amplified, and ecologically validated. Despite the sincere efforts to capture the interns' experiences, it is important to note my role necessitates the synthesis and categorisation of their narratives, which may inadvertently lead to the omission of their underlying depth and intricacies. Thus, it is crucial to emphasise the caveat that I ultimately bear the responsibility of presenting participants'

realities. The reality of this responsibility is captured by Mauthner and Doucet (1998, pp. 138-139), who ultimately points to the researcher's power.

Far removed from our respondents, we make choices and decisions about their lives: which particular issues to focus on in the analysis; how to interpret their words; and which extracts to select for quotation. We dissect, cut up, distil, and reduce their accounts, thereby losing much of the complexity, subtleties, and depth of their narratives [...]. We categorise their words into overarching themes, and as we do so, the discrete, separate, and different individuals we interviewed are gradually lost [...]. We extract and quote their words; often out of context of the overall story they have told us. Though we might adopt a bottom-up approach in that the starting point for our research is the perspectives and words of the individuals we study, we are nonetheless the ones who will be speaking for them. We are in the privileged position of naming and representing other people's realities.

By acknowledging Mauthner and Doucet's (1998) insights about researcher power in data interpretation, I approached the code generation process with heightened awareness of how my coding choices would inevitably filter and restructure the interns' narratives. While this transformative nature of coding cannot be fully eliminated, I implemented specific strategies during initial coding to preserve as much of the interns' authentic voices as possible. These included: using in-vivo codes that maintained participants' original language and conducting iterative member checking sessions specifically focused on code development. Through these approaches, I worked to address, where possible, Mauthner and Doucet's (1998) concerns about researchers' privileged position in representing participants' realities while maintaining the necessary systematic rigor of thematic analysis.

Stage three: Searching for themes

Following the completion of the initial coding phase, stage three of the thematic analysis guided by Braun and Clarke (2006) involves searching for themes which in this study occurred through a process of axial coding (Bailey, 2007; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Axial coding systematically connecting and categorising initial codes to identify potential themes, exploring relationships and hierarchies among these codes, and refining them into a coherent framework that captures the essence of the data in relation to the research question. The method serves as an additional abduction strategy aimed at identifying themes (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006; Merton, 2015). Guided by these insights, the study engaged in multiple iterations of data examination to uncover connections, patterns, and themes specific to the interns' social inclusion experiences.

By developing themes and iteratively re-examining data, the study establishes a comprehensive audit trail of the findings, signifying deeper engagement with the data (Finlay, 2021), increasing the dependability of the study and ensuring the research process is logical, traceable, and clearly documented (Tobin and Begley, 2004). This step was crucial in the ethnographic analysis process, as it allowed for a nuanced understanding of the complex ecological systems (Figure 6) mediating the interns' social inclusion experiences.

Although there is no universal template for the process of identifying themes in qualitative data collected in an ethnographic approach, I employed several widely recognised strategies suggested by ethnographers Hammersley and Atkinson (2019). One approach, called enumeration further supported by Bailey (2018) and Murchison (2010), involved tracking the frequency of codes or categories across different data forms, such as interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and interns' work samples. For instance, the code 'tiredness' was cited by all interns over 200 times throughout the year on the Supported Internship, suggesting its potential relevance and significance in their lives. When a topic appeared more than twice, I considered it as forming a pattern that could provide additional insights into the research question, while remaining cognisant that not every repeated occurrence necessarily indicated a meaningful pattern. In addition to frequency, I also considered aspects that were absent or not present in the data, as Reeves et al., (2013) and Anne and Hitzler (2015) suggest that this approach often leads to valuable insights. Another method I employed in this study, guided by Jeffrey's (2018) approach, was significance coding, which focused on identifying data that held meaning for the interns in the Supported Internship. Following Jeffrey's (2018) framework, I paid close attention to instances where interns' words or actions signalled that something was especially important or impactful to them. This included coding critical incidents they experienced during their internships, compelling cases they encountered, or moments that elicited strong emotional responses. For example, I noted when an intern emphasised a particular learning experience or expressed strong feelings about an interaction with a placement mentor. By using the interns' own language and observing their non-verbal cues, as suggested by Jeffrey (2018), I was able to capture and analyse experiences that were salient to them in the context of their Supported Internship. This approach allowed me to ground my thematic analysis in what the interns themselves found meaningful, ensuring that the emerging themes accurately reflected their lived experiences. To illustrate how I interpreted non-verbal cues, in one instance, I observed an intern with cerebral palsy pointing at their supportive chair while discussing tiredness. To ensure accurate interpretation and to practice member checking, I followed up by asking, 'I

noticed you were pointing at your chair when you referred to tiredness. Can you tell me a little bit more about this?’ This approach not only helped clarify the intern's intended meaning but also provided an opportunity for them to elaborate on their experience. In this case, the intern explained how despite feeling tired he was using his chair less due to feeling stronger. This insight highlighted the complex interplay between fatigue associated with his work placement and the development of stamina, a subtheme that might not have been identified without careful attention to non-verbal cues and follow-up questioning.

Following the recommendations by Reeves et al., (2013) the research question also guided the coding and analysis process, ultimately shaping Chapter 5. I intentionally evaluated the data for themes related to the research question, even if they did not frequently surface, and remained open to revising the question if the data and analysis suggested that the initial question was not quite right (Murchison, 2010; Jeffrey, 2018). While some ethnographers, like McGuire (1998), conducted analysis free from the interference of existing literature, allowing them to listen to the students' words without attempting to fit them into predefined moulds, this approach did not align with my research philosophy. Instead, as suggested by Roller and Lavrakas (2015) and Hammersley and Atkinson (2019), I found it prudent to employ more structured analytical methods while avoiding the imposition of predetermined interpretations and hasty conclusions based on prior research findings.

Stage four: Reviewing themes

This fourth phase of thematic analysis called reviewing themes, focussed on refining categories and initial themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The overarching aim was to ensure that the data was cohered in a meaningful manner, reflecting the richness and depth of the interns' experiences within the Supported Internship. Braun and Clarke (2021) emphasise that the adequacy of the data is not contingent upon a fixed number or length of interviews but rather hinges on the dataset's richness and the interpretation process, ensuring the collection of sufficient data to develop comprehensive themes. In this study, the research successfully attained what Malterud et al., (2016) describe as 'information power'. This concept indicates that the data possessed substantial richness, depth, density, diversity, and complexity, facilitating the development of robust themes that accurately captured the interns' experiences and the ecological systems mediating their social inclusion. The achievement of information power can be attributed to the long-term immersion in the Supported Internship, which Schwedler et al. (2019) highlight as playing an important role in achieving data richness.

Drawing from the extensive data collected over a year from the Supported Internship, a meticulous evaluation of the selected themes was conducted to ascertain their capacity to provide a detailed response to the research aim and objectives. This assessment involved examining each theme to determine whether they could be merged, refined, or eliminated. The goal was to create a set of themes that were distinct, coherent, and representative of the interns' experiences and the ecological systems at play. Particular attention was devoted to creating clear and distinct contrasts between themes, with the aim of minimising overlaps. This process involved assessing the boundaries and relationships between themes, ensuring each theme captured a unique aspect of the interns' experiences. Throughout this phase of analysis, it was crucial to maintain a reflexive stance, constantly questioning and refining the themes to ensure they remained grounded in the data and true to the interns' experiences. By adopting this rigorous and iterative approach to theme refinement, the analysis aimed to produce a set of themes that were robust, trustworthy, and capable of providing valuable insights into the systems (Figure 6) mediating interns' social inclusion.

Stage five: Defining and naming themes

The fifth phase of thematic analysis concerned the defining and naming of themes, the focus being on prioritising clarity, continuity, precision, and overall quality of the thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2013). After identifying all potential themes through the initial coding and theme refinement processes (Stage Four), the evaluation and review process commenced. This involved examining each theme to ensure it accurately captured the essence of the interns' experiences and the ecological factors mediating their social inclusion. The process of defining and labelling themes facilitated the enhancement of clarity and depth within each theme, ensuring the titles and descriptions succinctly conveyed the key aspects of social inclusion. This step is important in instilling confidence in the representation of the interns' experiences and the systems shaping their social inclusion.

The final iterations of themes and subthemes are presented in Figures 15-19 through theme maps. The first theme (*Figure 15*), 'Engagement within the work community', focuses on the depth an intern participates within the workplace environment. The subthemes include 'Progression to engagement' and 'Factors contributing to the depth of placement engagement'.

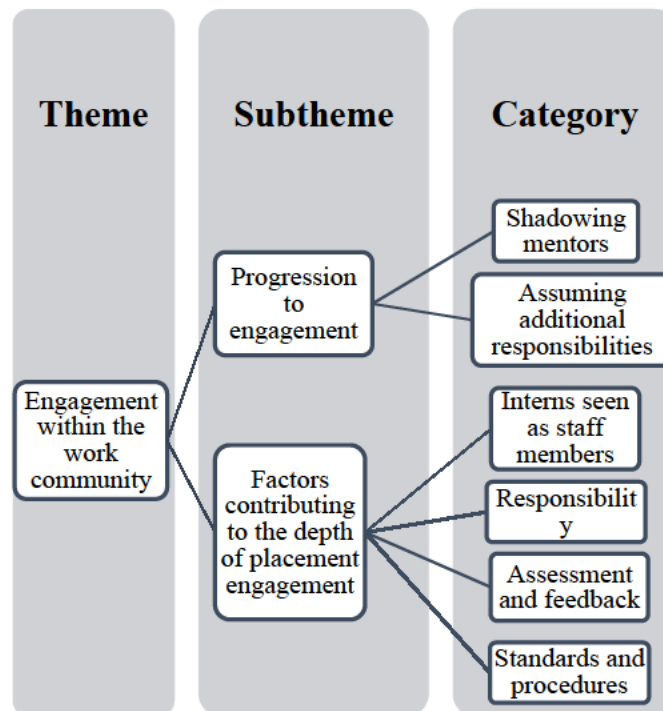


Figure 15 Theme 1 Engagement within the work community

The second theme (Figure 16), 'Expansion of Interpersonal and Professional Networks', pertains to the interns' network, which broadened professionally and personally. The subthemes include 'Nondisabled Relationships' and 'Disabled Relationships'.

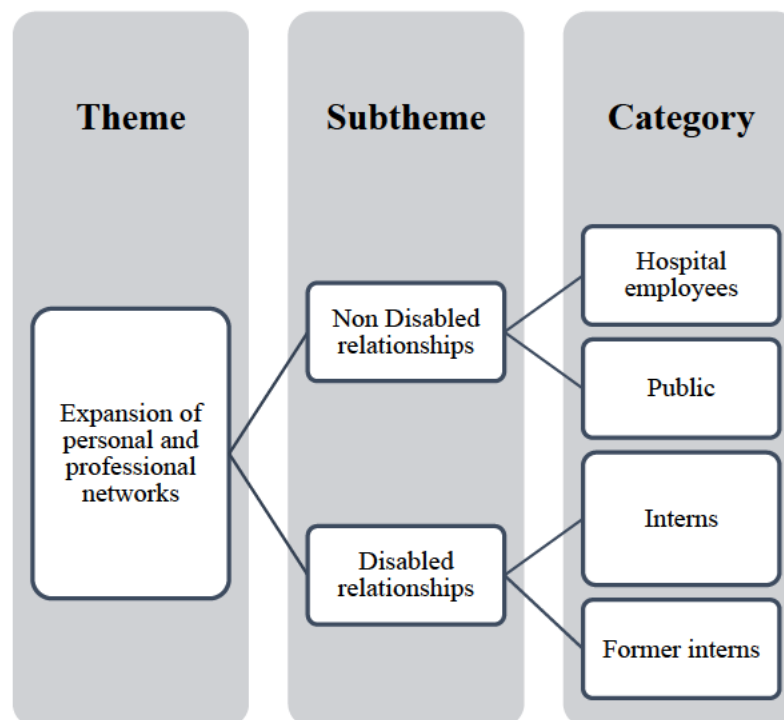


Figure 16 Theme 2 Expansion of interpersonal and professional networks

The third theme (*Figure 17*), ‘Interpersonal Support in the Workplace’, underscores the role of support as a mediating system factor for interns' social inclusion. The subthemes include ‘Informal Support’ and ‘Formal Support’.

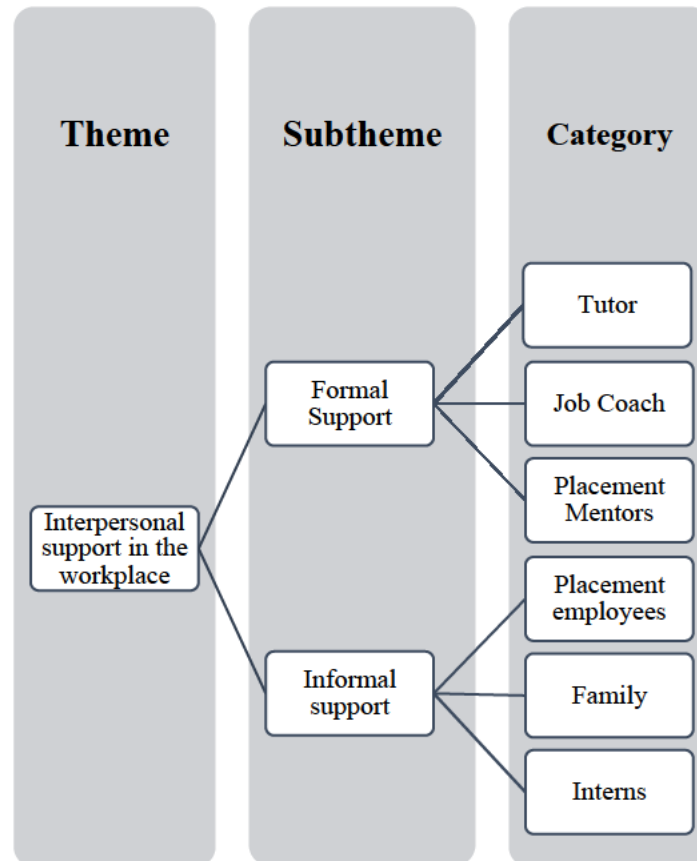


Figure 17 Theme 3 Interpersonal support in the workplace

The fourth theme (*Figure 18*), ‘Intern Development’, encompasses the interns' overall development. The subthemes include ‘Professional, Physical, and Personal Development’ during the interns’ participation in the Supported Internship, which enhanced their capacity to engage in the work community and broaden their interpersonal relationships.

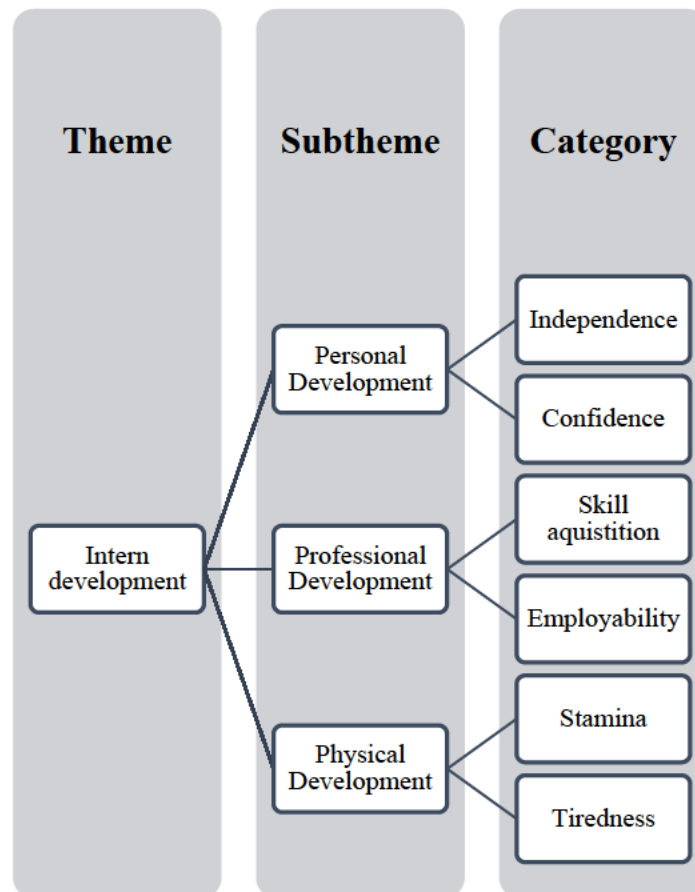


Figure 18 Theme 4 Intern development

The fifth and final theme (*Figure 19*) pertains to ‘Sustainability’. The two subthemes include ‘Interns’ Post-Supported Internship Phase’ and ‘Supported Internship Structure’.

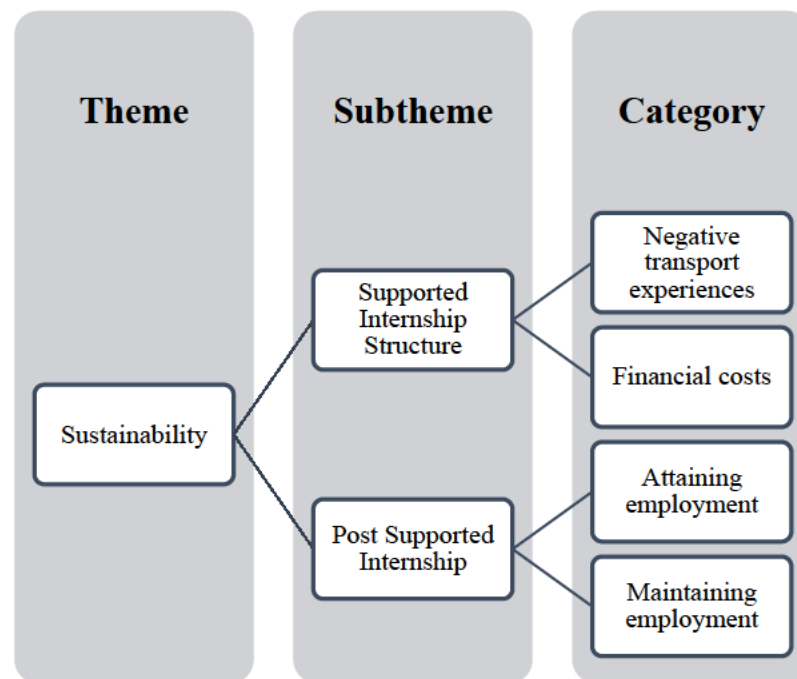


Figure 19 Theme 5 Sustainability

Stage six: Producing the report

The analysis process culminated in the creation of two comprehensive findings chapters, following the guidelines set forth by Braun and Clarke (2006). Chapter 5 presents the five themes that were identified from the inductive thematic analysis, providing a detailed exploration of each theme supported by rich data from the study. This chapter upholds the axiological values detailed in the methodology (Chapter 3), centralising the voices of learning-disabled interns. By presenting themes derived directly from the participants' experiences, this chapter ensures that the perspectives and lived realities of interns remain at the forefront of the findings, honouring their expertise and insights.

Chapter 6 then builds upon this foundation by discussing these themes through the lens of the synthesised PPCT-EP model put forth in Chapter 2: *Figure 6*. This chapter interweaves the five themes into an analytical narrative, demonstrating how they manifest across different ecological contexts. By applying the ecological systems framework to the inductively derived themes, this chapter interconnects the data and provides a deeper understanding of how various system levels – Person, Context (Interpersonal, organisational, community and sociopolitical), and Time (chronosystem) - mediate interns' social inclusion. This approach enables a nuanced exploration of how the identified themes operate within and are influenced by broader ecological systems, offering a comprehensive and theoretically grounded interpretation of the findings while maintaining the centrality of learning-disabled interns' voices and experiences.

Chapter summary

In summary, the ethnographic analysis conducted in this study about the social inclusion experiences of learning-disabled interns in a Supported Internship is, as Wolcott (1994) describes, a rigorous and artistic endeavour that goes beyond mere technique. As Bailey (2007) suggests, ethnographic analysis is an art form that requires skilful navigation. The analytical process, which takes on a funnel-like structure, gradually shaped codes and themes as the research scope became clearer. This journey involved the repeated application of initial coding and thematic analysis strategies during and after data collection to confidently establish claims about social inclusion, aligning with the ethnographic practices described by Hammersley and Atkinson (2019). It is crucial to acknowledge the inherent subjectivity of analysis, with research inevitably influenced by biases, values, and deeply rooted historical and contextual dimensions, as highlighted by Mauthner and Doucet (1998) and Nelson et al., (2013). However, the five themes identified through thematic analysis, which emerged through the process of initial coding and theme refinement, provide a comprehensive description and align closely with the aims and objectives of the research focused on understanding the ecological systems mediating social inclusion for disabled interns. The importance of this rigorous approach to analysis cannot be overstated, as it upholds the axiological commitment to authentically capturing the interns' lived experiences. The trustworthiness of the findings was further enhanced through regular member checking, which involved actively engaging the interns and their microsystem in the ecological validation of the themes and ensuring that they authentically represented their lived experiences, as recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Candela (2019). This collaborative approach to analysis, coupled with the prolonged engagement in the Supported Internship and the use of multiple data sources, contributed to the development of a robust understanding of the ecological systems mediating social inclusion for disabled interns which is presented in detail across the next two chapters.

Chapter 5: Presentation of Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the ethnographic research, focusing primarily on the experiences and perspectives of interns who participated in the Supported Internship. The research was guided by the following aim and objectives:

Research Aim:

How does the social ecology of a mainstream workplace environment mediate the social inclusion of learning-disabled interns within a Supported Internship programme?

Objectives:

1. From a social inclusion standpoint, describe in a rich and illustrative way a long running, supported internship programme delivered in a large public sector organisation.
2. Map changes to the depth and breadth of social inclusion as experienced by learning-disabled interns whilst they are engaged in a Supported Internship programme.
3. Using an ecological systems approach, understand the processes which mediate the depth and breadth of social inclusion as experienced by the interns.

This chapter is structured with reference to the ethnographic tradition of presenting findings in two main sections (Emerson et al., 2011; Fetterman, 2019). The first section, guided by Wolcott's (2008) approach to ethnographic writing, provides contextual foundation through thick description (Geertz, 1973) of the research site and Supported Internship programme. Building on this context, the second section presents five key themes that identified from thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006): 1) engagement within the work community; 2) expansion of interpersonal and professional networks; 3) interpersonal support within the workplace; 4) interns' development; and 5) sustainability. These themes, previously visualised in Chapter 4's theme maps (*Figure 15-19*), are illustrated through multiple data sources including observations, artifacts, curriculum materials, verbatim statements, and interview excerpts. To enhance this presentation, charts, photographs, and tables are integrated throughout (Miles et al., 2014).

Data is referenced using square brackets with four components: [Name, Date, Research Method, Reference Number]. For example, [Eunie, 17.02.23, Written reflection, Data 1] indicates data from intern 'Eunie' collected on February 17, 2023, through a written reflection,

labelled as Data 1. This systematic timestamping and sequential numbering serve two purposes: it tracks social inclusion changes across the nine-month collection period, aligning with the PPCT-EP's (Figure 6) concept of the chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1989), and establishes a cross-referencing system for Chapter 6's theoretical discussion. Together, the two sections for this chapter address the first research objective: to describe a long-running Supported Internship programme as experienced by young learning-disabled people in rich, illustrative detail, reserving the PPCT-EP analysis and critical discussion for Chapter 6.

Section 1: Research site context

The Supported Internship operates within a public hospital, employing over 10,000 staff members. This institution serves a substantial number of patients daily, with thousands of outpatients attending and hundreds of emergency admissions. The hospital houses forty operating theatres, allowing for tens of thousands of surgical procedures to be performed annually. With facilities, including over 7,000 rooms and several miles of corridors, the hospital conducts more than 200 daily elective procedures. The institution also provides approximately 3,000 meals per day to patients.

Figure 20 [Artefact, NHS (2020) Exceptional care together 2020-2025 policy, Data 1] is an artefact retrieved during data collection visually overviewing the hospital's diversity. The figure's purpose is to demonstrate that the hospital site manifested diversity in several ways, for example, its large size, varied work roles, as well as the gender and ethnicity of staff.

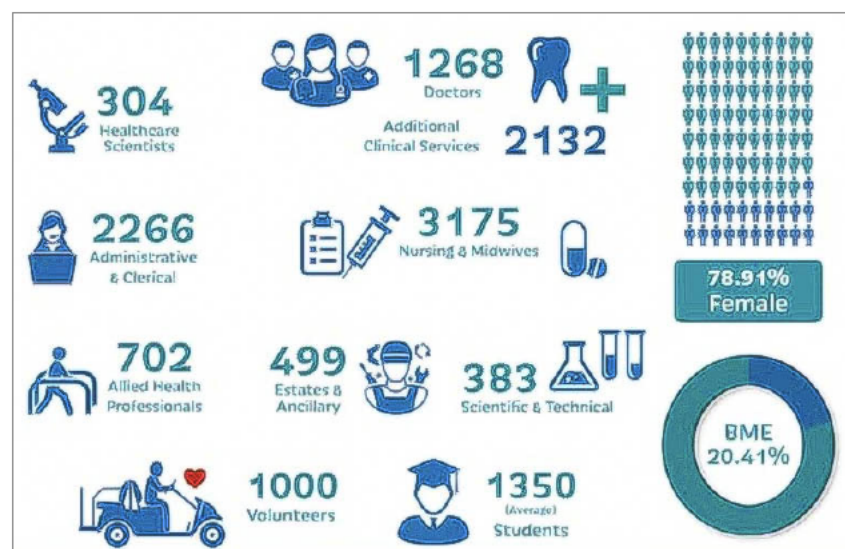


Figure 20 Hospital Diversity [Artefact from the NHS (2020) Exceptional care together strategy policy, September 2022].

Figure 21 [Artefact, Poster in the Hospital corridor, September 2022, Data 2] showcases the national flags of the hospital's staff, representing over 90 different nationalities. Providing this context is crucial because the location of a Supported Internship likely influences the breadth of an intern's interpersonal relationships.



Figure 21 Hospital Employee Nationalities Poster

The Supported Internship context

The Supported Internship, following the Project SEARCH model, is a one-year, full-time educational course delivered by a Special School. Operated as a Year 14 pathway for people aged 18-19 with a SEND diagnosis who hold an EHCP. This eligibility criterion is more restrictive than most Supported Internships which are delivered by FE colleges who typically enrol young people aged 18-25 with an EHCP.

Following a discussion during the first week of data collection with the Deputy Head Teacher of the special school, the Supported Internship was established in 2019 to address limited sustainable opportunities for their learners as they transition out of education. The programme combines practical work experiences with training in employability including CV development. The programme is designed to provide entry-level job experience through placements in a hospital. It is expected that interns pursue competitive employment upon completing the programme, either within the hospital or by applying their transferable work skills to a different business sector, extending beyond healthcare [Interview, 21.09.22, Data 3].

Figure 22 is a visual overview of the Supported Internship year [Artefact: Curriculum material, 21.09.22, Data 3]. It shows prospective interns underwent a structured process before participation in the Supported Internship. They applied for the programme, attended an assessment day for formal evaluation, and were either accepted or declined. Travel training and transition days were part of the preparation phase. The official start of the programme marked a full-time schedule from Monday to Friday, running from September to July, aligned with the local school calendar. The initial three weeks focused on orientation, introducing interns to the hospital and placement options. This period included onboarding, training sessions on topics like health and safety, confidentiality, infection control, and code of conduct, detailed further in a subtheme under Theme 1: Factors Contributing to Depth of Engagement.

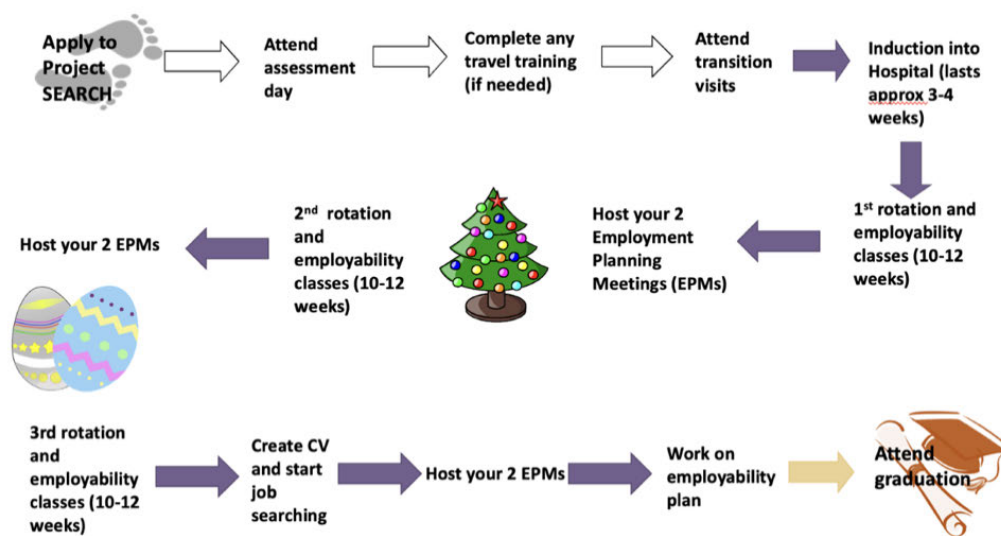


Figure 22 Supported Internship year overview

Interns participated in three unpaid ten-week placements as part of the Supported Internship, structured as follows:

- Placement 1: October to December
- Placement 2: January to March
- Placement 3: April to July

In each rotation, two employment planning meetings (EPMs) involved the intern, Tutor, Job Coach, placement mentor, and parents/guardians. These collaborative meetings aimed to create a comprehensive plan in supporting the intern's progress to employment.

The Project SEARCH Supported Internship involves a partnership among the host business (the hospital), subcontracted departments within the site offering non-clinical placements, the Special School as the lead educator, and a job coach provider. The Supported Internship day's structure (Table 5) includes employability curriculum sessions delivered by the Tutor from 9:00 to 10:00 and 15:00 to 16:00, with placements occurring from 10:00 to 15:00, including a 30-minute lunch break. Interns accumulate approximately 720 hours in placements learning marketable skills and 180 hours in a classroom, totalling approximately 900 hours embedded in a business setting.

Table 5 Supported Internship daily structure

Time	Details
09:00 – 10:00	Classroom employability curriculum
10:00 – 15:00	Interns working in their Departments (Interns follow departments lunch and break schedule)
15:00 – 16:00	Classroom reflection

Table 6 offers contextual information about the content interns learn during the classroom component of the programme. The content is tailored to interns and focuses on topics that increase employability and community participation in the workforce. Appendix 13 overviews further thick, contextual detail of the curriculum.

Table 6 Curriculum contents

Unit	Curriculum topic	Description: intern activity
1	Teambuilding	Acquire skills to function within a team while understanding roles and responsibilities.
2	Financial Literacy	Gain financial management skills.
3	Workplace Safety	Demonstrate knowledge and skills related to safety in the workplace. Demonstrate safe and healthy precautions during an emergency.
4	Employability	Demonstrate positive work ethic and understanding in effective communication.
5	Health and Wellness	Explain the impact of health and wellness on their personal lives and employment. Figure 24 depicts an example of a healthy eating lesson.
6	Preparing for Employment	Create a professional portfolio of documents required for employment.
7	Self-Advocacy	Demonstrate an understanding of self-advocacy.
8	Technology	Demonstrate knowledge of basic technology.

9	Social and Communication	Demonstrate effective communication across settings.
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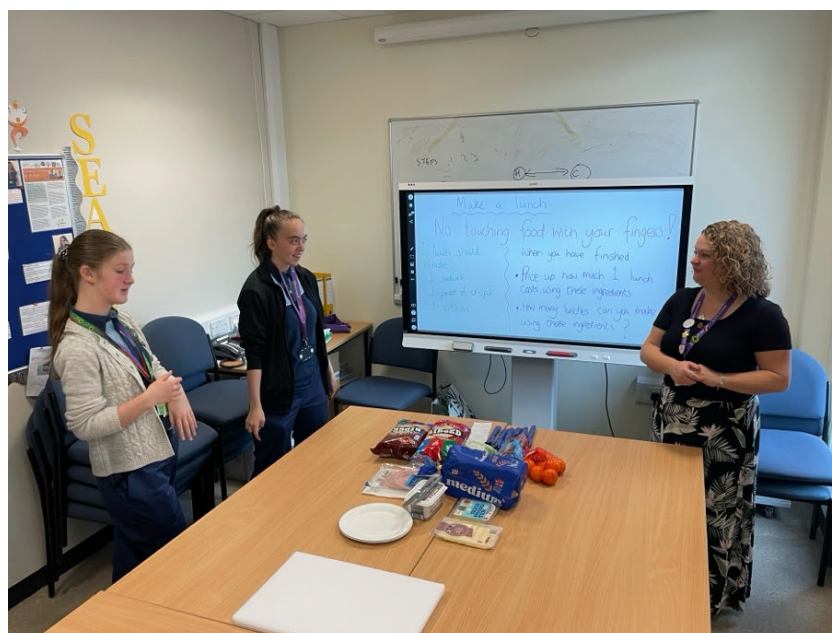


Figure 24 Classroom induction activity: making lunch

Guided by the Tutor and Job Coach, interns collaborate with hospital employees to find entry-level placements mirroring real job prospects. The inclusion of the Supported Internship within a large employer expands placement options across the hospital and its subcontracted departments. Table 7 details the range of non-clinical placements. Placements are tailored for each intern based on aspirations and skills, guided by the Job Coach who actively works to broaden available placements and therefore community participation experiences in a workplace.

Table 7 Overview of placements

Placement	Placement details
Portering	Patient-facing (transporting patients) and non-patient portering roles such as transporting mattresses, gases, bins, equipment, and cages.
Back of House Catering	Bagging condiments, wrapping rolls, picking meals for patient orders, and maintaining a clean environment.
Front of House Catering: Café and Restaurant	Working in the restaurant and coffee shop, wiping tables, pot washing, emptying bins and serving food.
Receipts and Distribution	Processing orders, delivering parcels around the Hospital, managing, and auditing Personal Protective Equipment.

Medical Records	Filing and extracting confidential patient records, using computers to book patients into clinics and transporting medical records around the Hospital.
Cleaning	Ward and non-ward cleaning.
Ward Hosting	A patient feeding role on the ward, collecting orders from Back of House Catering, preparing, heating, and serving food at lunch time, undertaking tea round, clearing and pot washing, taking food orders, maintaining a clean, hygienic environment in the ward and satellite kitchens.
Library	Collecting, processing, and filing book returns and new books, audits, book straightening, using online databases and working at the front desk.
Sterilisation services	Checking and sterilising medical and clinic equipment, undertaking several types of wrapping including bandages, medical equipment, and clinic packs.
Reception front desk	Working on the main Hospital reception directing patients, dealing with customer enquiries, using telephones, computers, and sourcing wheelchairs.
Xray	Receptionist role that meets and greets patients, books them into their appointments and maintains a clean and safe environment.
Fundraising	Working in a small shop selling a range of products, dealing with customer enquiries, taking payments from customers, stock management and administrative tasks.
Facilities Management Administration	Range of administration tasks including computer work and filing, audit and inspection visits and booking interpreter appointments.
Housekeeping	Ward-based encompassing a range of non-clinical tasks. Responsibilities involve interacting with patients, managing the procurement of non-clinical supplies, maintaining cleanliness and organisation on the ward, overseeing meals including serving and clearing, preparing snacks and beverages, reporting equipment faults, managing clerical and administrative duties, arranging patient transport, and receiving visitors. These tasks contribute to efficient ward operation (NHS Estates, 2001; May, 2013).

To summarise section one, the research setting has been thickly described, detailing the scale and diversity of the hospital and the structure of the Supported Internship programme. Through a combination of classroom-based employability curriculum and three 10-week work placements, interns gain experience across various clinical and non-clinical departments including portering, catering, medical records, and ward hosting. Building upon this detailed

contextual foundation, the following section presents the five themes identified through thematic analysis.

Section 2: Presentation of thematic findings

This section explores five interconnected themes that were identified from the study. The first theme examines interns' depth of engagement within the work community, where they formed connections during their placements. As these interpersonal relationships deepened, the second theme reveals how interns broadened their networks beyond immediate peers, building wider professional relations throughout the organisation. The third theme of interpersonal support underpinned this deepening engagement and relationship broadening, creating a foundation that enabled interns to strengthen their social inclusion. This nurturing environment fostered the fourth theme of intern development, encompassing personal, professional, and physical growth. Finally, the fifth theme examines the sustainability of interns' social inclusion as they navigate the transition from the Supported Internship into employment.

Theme 1: Engagement within the work community

Commencing with the theme of engagement within the work community, the data indicates a dynamic progression during interns' hospital placements, moving from initial interactions and an observational stance to complete participatory inclusion into work roles. From thematic analysis I discerned two subthemes (Table 8): progressive engagement and factors contributing to depth of engagement. The significance of this theme lies in its contribution to the research question, as it elucidates the nature of the Supported Internship while demonstrating processes that mediate the depth of interns' workforce community participation.

Table 8 Theme 1: subthemes

Subtheme	Description
Progressive engagement	Interns deepened community participation in the workforce over the course of the programme
Factors contributing to depth of engagement	Intern motivation, interns seen as staff members, responsibility, standards and procedures, assessment and feedback contributed to depth of engagement in the workplace.

Progressive engagement

A recurring phenomenon in the data, spanning the entire duration of the Supported Internship, is the gradual progression of all interns towards increased independence in performing work-related tasks. This theme was identified through an ongoing process of iterative analysis over the course of the year, covering the interns three placements. In the initial week of placements, the interns primarily:

Listened to what the job involved [Holly, 21.04.23, Written Reflection, Appendix 14, Data 4].

During this phase, the interns predominantly assumed what Eunie termed an 'observation-based position' [Eunie, 17.02.23, Written reflection, Appendix 38, Data 5]. The interns shadowed their mentors, gaining insights into the responsibilities they would be working towards during their ten-week placement. Whilst engaging in an observation-based position, Eunie went on an initial visit to a potential placement and met his mentor at the hospital library. The mentor articulated how participation on a placement looks and articulated,

We would begin with the basics first, and then, as the weeks progress at your pace, gradually introduce tasks such as working at the counter and interacting with the library's service users [Mentor, Field Observation, 21.09.22, Data 6].

The findings suggest an important aspect of the interns' work experience involved intensification of their engagement within the work community, a trajectory that was tailored with each intern's developmental stage. Reflecting on this visit, Eunie stated:

I really appreciate how the placement goes at my speed, like I definitely wouldn't feel confident working on the counter straight away so I'm glad she [the mentor] will gradually let me build up the number of tasks I do [Eunie, Walking interview, 21.09.22, Data 7].

As the interns' advanced in their placements, they worked towards greater independence in their tasks. This evolution is illustrated in an excerpt written by Eunie at the midpoint of his library placement:

What I have liked about this week is I partially took the lead on my tasks to get work done without needing directions from my mentors and colleagues all the time [Eunie, Workplace Diary, 04.11.22, Appendix 15, Data 8].

This data emphasises the interns' progress in taking more responsibility and exhibiting a sense of pride in growing independence. Princess Glitter, for instance, shared a similar sentiment during her ward hosting placement (Pictured in *Figure 25*); she expressed being:

Proud of taking food orders and doing a tea round on my own without my mentor [Princess Glitter, Conversation, 10.11.23, Data 9].



Figure 25 Princess Glitter Ward hosting

Arjuice also echoed this sense of achievement of progression to independence during his first placement in the restaurant, stating:

I'm proud of doing the pot wash on my own without any help [Arjuice, Conversation, 31.10.22, Data 10].

These instances point towards interns' growing competence and self-reliance as they navigate their placements and become more involved in performing work-based tasks.

To further exemplify the theme of progressive engagement to independence in the Supported Internship, the longitudinal data collected concerning Paffer's experience during his second placement as a Porter is illustrated below, albeit similar experiences were documented by all interns. In a reflective piece of writing towards the conclusion of Paffer's first placement in Medical Records, he described visiting the portering department as observing the process of delivering and retrieving oxygen (Appendix 39). Paffers suggested the significance of observing employees in departments bolsters his confidence and gains deeper insights into work roles before immersing himself fully in a placement or assuming additional responsibilities [Paffers, Reflective writing, 29.11.22, Appendix 16, Data 11]. This perspective

is further highlighted in a reflective piece of writing, documented in his Medical Records placement:

The tasks I have completed today include: Working on the admissions desk. I was delivering files to the wards with Bob, one of my mentors. It was nice being out of medical records to almost explore the hospital. I observed what it's like to be on the phone in admissions. It didn't look that difficult [Paffers, Participant reflective writing, 28.11.22, Appendix 17, Data 12].

Once the interns had cultivated confidence and honed specific job-related skills, the interns worked more independently—a transition that was appreciated and acknowledged by all interns. To illustrate this, Paffers wrote:

I really appreciated the fact I completed tasks on my own, even if my mentor was there. It was like I didn't need my mentor. I also had a day where I was answering the phone [Paffers, Reflective writing, 19.05.23, Appendix 18, Data 13].

Paffers also observed that, in addition to progressing towards independence during his placement, his deepening engagement involved taking on more complex tasks. For instance, he initially worked in a non-patient facing portering role, delivering gases and mattresses, to build confidence in navigating the hospital and handling large objects. This experience prepared him for a patient-facing portering role in the Accident and Emergency (A&E) and Theatre departments.

The progression of Paffers being an observer at the outset of his placement to achieving a state of independence was valued and embraced by all the interns. Paffer's heightened appreciation for working independently is further illuminated through his experience during a work trial. After Paffer's initial 10-week placement in Theatre portering, the team extended the opportunity for him to engage in a further 10-weeks on a work trial to further prepare him for employment. This phase entailed additional responsibilities and focused on achieving full independence while still being enrolled on the Supported Internship. Paffers details this stage, stating:

For the first time ever, I have completed jobs on my own in theatre portering. This is a massive achievement for me because it gives me the responsibility to look after the patients, equipment and do my job properly. This is like the beginning of my work trial, which officially starts next week. There are a few jobs that I need training in, such as pat (ient) sliding, gases, and bloods. All the training will be sorted as soon as possible thankfully. so, I'll be fully trained [Paffers, Reflective writing, 22.06.23, Appendix 19,

During a similar period when Paffers reflected about performing work independently as a Theatre Porter, his mentor (Pictured in *Figure 26*) indicated similar insight during a conversation I had with him, stating:

I'm just a spare wheel. Paffers can do it all by himself, I sometimes used to speak a bit to patients when he started, but now, I can't get a word in when he's transporting them. I'm just at the back, following, doing nothing. He just needs to apply for a job now as he's doing the exact same as all of us porters here, just without being paid. So hopefully he feels confident he can be a porter, as we all know he's great and we tell him that [Mentor, conversation, 20.04.23, Data 15].



Figure 26 Paffers portering Oxygen around the Hospital with his mentor

To summarise, among all interns, the data reveals a pattern of gradual deepening participation in the workplace. Paffers' experience serves as an illustrative example of this wider trend. The data indicates a convergence of perspectives across all interns, with Paffers' case highlighting the typical progression observed. Building on this insight, the following section explores potential processes that facilitated this increased depth of intern participation.

Factors contributing to the depth of placement engagement

The subtheme (Table 9), contributing factors to depth of engagement contains data related to intern motivation, the interns seen as staff members, responsibility, standard and procedures and assessment and feedback played a role in fostering the interns' deepening engagement during their placements.

Table 9 Factors contributing to interns' depth of engagement

Factors contributing to depth of engagement	Description
Intern motivation and engagement	Interns were motivated to engage in the programme as they wanted to pursue paid employment.
Interns seen as staff members	Interns were viewed as staff members. They wore the same uniform as employees, attended department social activities, had access to staff benefits of the host business and participated in employee induction and mandatory training.
Responsibility	Interns gained experience in placements that were challenging, with high expectations and responsibility, enabling similar depth of engagement to paid employees.
Standards and procedures	Interns complied with a range of standards and procedures in patient and non-patient facing placements that enabled them to participate in work-based roles.
Assessment and feedback	Interns valued regular assessment and feedback to support them with deepening their workplace engagement.

The interns articulated a range of motivations for participating in the Supported Internship, all with the objective of securing paid employment after completing the programme (Appendix 30-32). Their motivations for paid employment, as opposed to engaging in voluntary work or pursuing alternative activities, varied such as to become financially independent, to pay for hobbies and to become less reliant on their parents. For example, Hurricane conveyed his perspective, stating:

Getting paid and living on my own is massive to me, I want to be paid because later down the line I want to provide for myself or my family as I rely on my mum, and it annoys me. The sense of independence for me is all I have ever wanted, it means I could meet up with mates, come back late at night and do stuff like people who don't have a disability do. That's why I want to earn and get money after here [referring to the programme] [Hurricane, Semi-structured Interview, 01.11.22, Data 16].

Princess Glitter also said:

I want to be paid so I can buy my parents gifts [Princess Glitter, Conversation during the curriculum session, 02.11.22, Data 17].

The data in this subtheme contains accounts of other incentives that motivated interns to participate in the Supported Internship, including satisfaction, happiness, and giving back.

Paffers stressed the importance of finding 'satisfaction and enjoyment' in one's work [Paffers, Reflection writing, 29.12.22, Data 18], while Arjuice expressed his desire to work in the hospital due to family connections [Arjuice, Reflection writing, 29.12.22, Data 19]. Paffers also emphasised the significance of happiness in a job and one that involves physical activity [Paffers, Conversation, 08.12.22, Data 20]. Eunie aspired to be autonomous and part of a respectful group, highlighting the desire for personal and professional fulfilment [Eunie, Reflective Writing, 29.12.22, Data 21]. Hurricane believed that satisfaction from one's job made it easier, and Princess Glitter aimed to help people and find happiness in her work. The importance of job satisfaction was a common topic among the interns, as they recognised its significance alongside financial income.

The corpus data also contained stories of interns' deepening engagement, for example Paffers said:

I love it here so much, I've started to watch super hospital, extreme ER, the one filmed at this hospital, 24 hours in A&E and quite a few other shows. I never thought I'd enjoy the hospital so much, but I've really gotten into it, the people are really nice and friendly, and I like the routine of the job [Paffers, Semi-structured interview, 01.11.22, Data 22].

The experience of 'Happiness' emerges from the data for this subtheme to be an engagement motivator. Paffers exemplified this aspect during his concluding placement. He expressed:

I know most of the interns here want a job because of the doh' [referring to money in a joking manner], but passion and enjoyment are the main things for me when wanting to work, but obviously, money comes with it, which is a necessity [Paffers, Discussion during curriculum session, 04.05.23, Data 23].

On another occasion, Paffers reiterated his motivation to engage in the Supported Internship, driven by his aspiration to extract the maximum benefit from it. He stated:

I want to get the most out of the programme as I want to increase my chances of actually getting a job. I'm really looking forward to trying new things and becoming more confident in the world of work [Paffers, Observation of Curriculum session, 06.06.23, Data 24].

Therefore, motivation initially appears to contribute to the depth of the interns' engagement and their commitment throughout the programme.

In addition to monetary incentives for all interns to enrol in the programme, two interns, Princess Glitter and Hurricane, were motivated to 'give back'. These interns had a personal history with the hospital as former patients. Their eagerness to join the programme stemmed from their wish to view the hospital through a distinct lens — that of contributing resources rather than being recipients of them.

Princess Glitter said:

I'm comfortable being in the hospital as I'm here all the time with appointments. I still have loads of hospital appointments here now, and if I get a job here, it will mean a lot that I'm giving back to all the people who have helped me and are still helping me today with my medical needs. I think it's why I want to work with children too as I can tell them what I went through and that it will be okay [Princess Glitter, Semi-Structured interview, 04.10.22, Data 25].

One week into the programme, Hurricane stated:

I've had more christmases and birthdays in here (the hospital) than I have at my own home. I know it like the back of my hand, so I just want to give back and help others where I can. I want to turn the bad memories I have of this place and start creating some new ones here; it's why I really want a job here when I finish next year [Hurricane, Semi-structured Interview, 22.09.22, Data 26].

Hurricane's motivation to give back appeared to remain a strong incentive for him to engage and pursue work in the hospital during his final placement on main reception (*Figure 27*) when he said:

I want a job in the main reception because it is what I wanted to do at the start of the programme, and it's because I am also familiar with the hospital. I enjoy showing people where to go because of my background as I've spent most of my life here as a patient [Hurricane, Semi-structured interview, 22.06.23, Data 27].



Figure 27 Hurricane working in the main reception placement

During a serendipitous encounter in the hospital corridor with a former intern, now employed at the hospital, shared his initial motivation for joining the programme. He likened his experience to those of Hurricane and Princess Glitter, saying:

I had regular appointments at the hospital as a child due to an accident and joined Project SEARCH because I wanted to give back because of the support I had as a patient. Like for me, what I like about Project SEARCH Supported Internship is being based in the Hospital. About 9 years ago, I was knocked off my bike by a car and I was airlifted and then transferred to the hospital. So, I would like to give back to the hospital [Former intern, fieldnotes, 03.04.23, Data 28].

The evidence suggests that interns' depth of engagement within the work community during their placements is influenced by their motivation to contribute to and reciprocate the hospital's support. This drive to deepen their social inclusion in the workplace may persist if they pursue employment at the hospital following the completion of their Supported Internship.

The interns' depth of engagement was influenced by how they were perceived within the organisation. This was seen through the thematically analysed codes; they included interns wearing uniforms akin to hospital employees, engaging in department social activities, undertaking induction and mandatory employee training and access to staff benefits.

The qualitative data of these facets are presented below. The interns appeared to be regarded as fundamental team constituents, which in turn elevated their sense of belonging within the work community. Consequently, through interns being seen as staff members, Paffers said:

I was doing my best to set an example towards the patients, nurses, and surgeons, acting friendly so I can represent the team of porters and the other departments in the hospital. I get fulfilment from this [Paffers, Written reflection, 19.5.23, Data 29].

Eunie's mentor in his Library placement also explicitly mentioned Eunie as part of the team and said:

Eunie is doing really well, has grown in confidence massively, has dealt with staff shortages well, working on the counter and is really part of the team. We're all really pleased [Mentor, Mentor weekly feedback, 18.10.22, Data 30].

The subsequent section explores key factors that led interns to be perceived as integral staff members and deeply engaged throughout their placements.

Throughout the interns' active engagement during their placements, specific departments required interns to wear work uniforms. At various points during the Supported Internship, all interns wore uniforms during one of their placements. They conveyed positive sentiments about this, particularly being recognised by the company logo, which was meaningful to them, evoking a sense of pride. For instance, on Arjuice's initial day for his first placement working in the restaurant, he was provided with a uniform identical to what all other employed staff members wore; he elicited a broad smile and a sense of pride [Observation, 30.09.22, Data 31].

Later that week, Arjuice said:

Since wearing my uniform, I feel like a part of [placement], and what I've found is... soo many people approach me when I'm in the uniform [Arjuice, Walking interview, 03.10.22, Data 32].

This sentiment points to his sense of pride when wearing the same uniform as employees. Moreover, Arjuice highlighted his experience wearing uniform led to an increase in interactions, with people approaching him for conversations or seeking advice. He also shared:

I get asked for directions around the hospital all the time [Arjuice, Walking interview, 03.10.22, Data 33].

This quote demonstrates that visitors regularly mistook him for a staff member when he wore his uniform. This phenomenon effectively blurred the distinction between Arjuice's role as an

intern and that of an employee. Consequently, wearing the uniform deepened his workplace engagement and provided numerous opportunities that broadened his interpersonal relationships within the hospital setting.

Princess Glitter shared a similar experience about wearing uniform which was noted during her EPM. She suggested wearing uniform made her feel like a full-fledged staff member. This experience may have arisen from the situation that other employees, who may not have had direct interactions with her in the placement environment, might not have realised she was an intern because she mentioned:

If I have a uniform on, everyone says hiya [Princess Glitter, EPM Conversation, 17.03.23, Data 34].

Paffers expressed a similar sentiment regarding wearing a uniform, stating:

Patients see me as a member of the hospital and not as a student or a worker in training. When they see me in the uniform, they think I'm the same as everyone else [Paffers, Walking interview, 25.01.23, Data 35].

On another occasion, Paffers added:

I like wearing white [Theatre Porter Uniform] because it makes me feel part of the department and stand out compared to other workers. It gives me a sense of pride in being in an important position and job [Paffers, Conversation, 13.02.23, Data 36].

The data related to interns wearing uniforms provides evidence of a potential mediator on their perception of being acknowledged and recognised as integral hospital staff. This likely resulted in a deepening of their self-esteem and played a role in fostering broadened connections with others, including interactions initiated by staff, patients, and visitors.

Participation of interns in departmental social activities during their placements elicited favourable responses from the interns, indicating a treatment akin to staff members. This observation underscores their active involvement during placements and experiences associated with their professional roles.

Eunie was the first intern to participate in an out-of-work social activity with his colleagues from the library placement. This evening social activity marked his first such experience, a

notable milestone that surprised his parents. Eunie proudly shared his adventure returning home at midnight, with the rest of the library team. This social event involved an evening of ‘axe throwing,’ an experience he detailed in a reflective statement:

Last night I went axe throwing with the team in the library. We stayed out till midnight which surprised my parents as I've never been out in an evening before in my life, we also had food and drinks and I just generally had a good time with all the people in my placement [Eunie, Reflective writing, 14.10.22, Data 37].

The axe throwing experience was an opportunity that broadened and deepened Eunie's professional network (further discussed in Theme 2), but it marked a turning point in changing Eunie's perception of the hierarchal nature of the hospital, as seen in the below statement:

In the workplace, I think I distinguish who's above or below me. I consider the ones who teach me to be above me so in my placement even when Lars (Mentor) wants me to consider him even to him, I still thought to some extent he was above me but doing that (axe throwing) it convinced all of my brain that I'm or he's not superior to me and we are all equal [Eunie, Workplace diary, 20.10.22, Data 38].

The library team, presenting Eunie's experience as an example, observed the positive influence of axe throwing on his engagement upon returning to the placement. As a result, the department made concerted efforts to include him in various social activities for the remainder of his placement. This extended to Eunie participating in a well-being day, a Christmas meal, and quizzes, among other occasions. These activities seem to have contributed to his sense of feeling like a genuine staff member and fostered a sense of belonging to the department. This, in turn, may have increased the depth of his participation in workplace tasks and enhanced interactions with people within the placement. For example, his mentor said:

He speaks a lot more since we went axe throwing, he appears more confident and asks for more tasks when he finishes some of his work [Mentor, Semi-structured interview, 26.10.22, Data 39].

The data content for category ‘seen as a staff member’ also includes instances of interns engaged in social activities with their placements, contributing to the breakdown of perceived hierarchical barriers within teams. One example is Princess Glitter, who was invited to and participated in a farewell event for a colleague she had worked alongside during her second placement in Facilities Management. Princess Glitter expressed her enjoyment, stating:

I really enjoyed seeing them all out of work, it's like they see me as one of them [Princess Glitter, Conversation, 31.01.23, Data 40].

Later that week, she remarked:

I feel closer to them now since we went out as a team, and I just get a bit more stuck into the job and help each other out more [Princess Glitter, Walking interview, 03.02.23, Data 41].

Arjuice also engaged in a social activity during his placement. For instance, a celebration was organised at the end of his second placement in the sterilisation department. One member of the department where Arjuice was on his placement mentioned:

As a tradition, we ensure that all staff receive a proper send-off when they leave for whatever reason, and this applies to Arjuice as well, as he is just like one of us, even if he's only been here for a short time [Mentor, Semi-structured interview, 22.12.22, Data 42].

Arjuice enjoyed this aspect and said:

It was so nice we had a party at the end of my placement, I feel like I've been in that placement for years and I'm just one of them [Arjuice, Conversation, 22.12.22, Data 43].



Figure 28 Arjuice's end of placement celebration with the sterilisation department

In summary, the data indicates a pattern suggesting that while the interns' deepening participation during placement predominantly unfolds on-site, the involvement of interns in non-work-related activities among colleagues suggest a potential correlation with the

strengthening of relationships among themselves. This, in turn, contributes to their deepened engagement during placement.

The interns had access to staff benefits akin to hospital employees. These advantages ranged from discounts at local shops and services to extracurricular activities provided by the hospital. This initiative likely further facilitated the interns in broadening their workplace connections, a dimension where data is presented in greater depth within Theme 2 'Interpersonal Support in the Workforce'. Arjuice, for instance, appreciated the discount he received for his haircut due to wearing a hospital lanyard badge, emphasising how it made him feel more than an intern.

The extracurricular activities, while voluntary, held value for the interns. Holly and Princess Glitter actively engaged in these activities beyond their regular work hours which potentially contributed to the depth of their workplace community participation. Holly's account of her experience with fitness classes, such as the boxing session, highlighted the opportunity to broaden her network with hospital staff outside the confines of usual work duties. Holly said:

I really like how we can join the fitness classes. I had a go at the boxing session after the programme last evening and I got to meet quite a few new people who work here in the hospital. It was nice because I saw one of the people this morning on the bus and she said hello to me [Holly, Conversation, 23.01.23, Data 44]

Princess Glitter also described positive interactions with other hospital employees. These employees likely assumed she was a staff member, as she attended fitness sessions at the hospital after work hours. She recounted:

We did a circuit- one part was bike, and we went round- I did it with Holly and swapping with other people. We were talking to lots of people who work with the hospital, and they all just thought we worked here which I liked [Princess Glitter, Semi-structured interview, 08.02.23, Data 45].

An explanation regarding participation in such activities could have contributed to mediating relationships with other hospital employees in a relaxed and informal setting. These interactions broke down barriers and fostered potential for deeper, meaningful relationships, which, in turn, contributed to the interns' overall positive experience of the Supported Internship.

Attending EHCP review meetings revealed that interns' involvement in extracurricular activities enhanced their sense of social inclusion. Interns noted that these activities made them feel like integral members of the hospital staff. Nevertheless, logistical challenges, particularly for interns reliant on bus transportation, hindered participation, for example Paffers stated:

I would like to take part in the activities, but I just can't make it work as I rely on the bus and the times don't work out really. I think when I start working, I may have a look at them again as it will be different then [Paffers, EHCP Review Observation, 09.02.23, Data 46].

Interns received mandatory employee training during their induction before starting their placements. This training, a requirement for all employees, further established these interns as perceived staff members and contributors to the business. The induction spanned three weeks, encompassing many aspects under the new starter onboarding and induction training; see Table 10 for details. The interns' integration process in the hospital encompassed participation in staff induction, providing them with an introduction to the workplace environment, culture, and expectations. Through mandatory training on workplace safety and hygiene, interns acquired essential knowledge to confidently execute work tasks during their placements similar to paid employees working at the hospital. This is demonstrated by Holly's quote:

The training really prepared me. I felt ready to jump in and work safely alongside the regular staff [Holly, Semi-structured interview, 13.10.22, Data 47].

Table 10 Induction and onboarding content

Training	Description
Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH)	Covers regulations and procedures for managing hazardous substances to ensure workplace safety and health (HSE, 2019).
Safeguarding within Project SEARCH and the NHS	Provides guidance on protecting vulnerable individuals, recognising abuse or neglect, and following reporting protocols.
Fire safety	Focuses on fire prevention, emergency evacuation, and the use of fire safety equipment in healthcare settings. (e.g. Appendix 49)
Health and Safety	Addresses workplace safety practices, including risk assessment, accident prevention, and legal responsibilities. (e.g. Appendix 50)

Manual-handling	Teaches safe lifting, carrying, and moving techniques to prevent injuries, emphasising good posture and equipment use.
Speak up policy	Encourages reporting unethical behaviour or safety issues, outlining procedures and support for those who raise concerns.
Personal hygiene and uniform standards	Emphasises maintaining hygiene and adhering to uniform policies to prevent infection spread and ensure professional appearance.
Code of conduct	Defines ethical and professional standards, including confidentiality, professional behaviour, and compliance with policies.
Agreement to report infection	Ensures understanding of the responsibility to report infection signs, procedures for reporting, and infection prevention measures.
Equality, diversity, and inclusion	Promotes a culture of non-discrimination and inclusivity, covering legal principles and strategies to prevent discrimination.
Information governance	Provides guidelines on managing sensitive information, including data protection, confidentiality, and compliance with legislation.

The interns emphasised the importance of the induction period in preparing them for their placements. It allowed them to familiarise with the hospital environment, deepen relationships with fellow interns, and gradually adjust to the programme's structure which was a contrast to their previous educational experiences in a special school. Hurricane's perspective highlighted the importance of the induction as he noted:

It gave me the confidence to do the jobs in the right manner and in the right way [Hurricane, Semi-structured interview, 13.10.22, Data 48].

Similarly, Paffers, who initially felt nervous during his first placement in Medical Records later found enjoyment in his work, crediting the induction for his positive transition [Paffers, Semi-structured interview, 13.10.22, Data 49]. Arjuice also expressed readiness to begin his placement after the induction, stating:

I feel ready to get stuck into my placement now I've learned all the rules here, I know my way around, and I have a good idea of what I want to do [Arjuice, Semi-structured interview, 13.10.22, Data 50].

Holly, despite finding the induction to be lengthy and information-intensive, felt well-prepared to start her first placement Ward Cleaning. These accounts point towards the importance of a comprehensive settling-in phase and the value of providing interns with essential knowledge before they commence placements.

The interns also received ongoing training delivered by the Tutor; they suggested it became more relevant when they started placements. An example is when Princess Glitter discussed training about manual handling allowing for continuous opportunities for learning:

The training makes a lot of sense now I'm in placement, I can see why I need to learn about manual handling as I'm lifting loads of plates. I now know how to do it properly, like I'm not worried I'll hurt myself as I've been shown properly [Princess Glitter, Semi-structured interview, 05.10.22, Data 51],

However, the data did present instances where interns expressed a desire for additional, job-specific training beyond the induction to enable them to take on more participatory roles as they progressed during placements. Arjuice, in his paperwork for an Employment Planning Meeting mentioned:

My goal: I would like to learn how to sweep the floor and I would be receiving training on Subway [Arjuice, Written reflection, 26.10.22, Appendix 33] [referring to a fast-food sandwich shop located in the restaurant, Data 52].

The data suggests absence of comprehensive training within a placement can lead to feelings of not feeling like staff, as evidenced by Holly's experience after a day on her portering placement. She expressed frustration at not being qualified for certain tasks, which left her feeling awkward and unable to contribute fully. Holly stated:

Something that could have been better about my day would be to be a bit more experienced and trained as a Porter as when handling patients and transporting them to and from beds because I was not fully qualified, I was not allowed to support, so had to stand in a corner awkwardly [Holly, Written reflection, 18.04.23, Data 53].

Ongoing and role-specific training is therefore emphasised by interns to ensure they are well-prepared and confident in their roles to deepen their social inclusion enabling full placement participation.

Over the course of the year, various data from observations, interns' reflective diaries and Semi-structured interviews pointed towards interns experiencing intermittent periods of reduced

activity during placements. Although the hospital workplace was typically fast-paced, occasional lulls were recognised by all interns as areas for improvement. The feeling of ‘boredom’ was the prevailing emotion, evidenced in interns' daily written reflections. For instance, Paffers, stated:

What could have been better about my day: I wish I had more to do within my role as there wasn't a lot to be completed. This means a lot to me because I'm in a Supported Internship, and the purpose of me being here is to gain as much experience as possible, potentially leading to a job [Paffers, Written reflection, 30.01.23, Data 54].

To provide context, the nature of a hospital porter is characterised by fluctuations in busyness, influenced by factors including surgical operations, the time of the week and year, and healthcare strikes, which impact the frequency of patients. Consequently, these factors contributed to the category of ‘quiet periods’ such as when porters might experience brief periods of reduced activity and ‘waiting around.’ Albeit the quiet moments were a genuine insight into the job role within the host business and were experienced by staff and the interns. This reinforces the interpretation that interns were treated as staff members and had to experience less productive moments of the workplace.

The qualitative data however did suggest the quieter moments during placements provided interns with opportunities to engage in informal conversations with staff members, fostering a sense of camaraderie and allowing them to build personal connections with colleagues. These interactions likely contributed to a positive work atmosphere and deepened interns' workplace participation. For instance, Arjuice mentioned he had ‘funny giggles in the staff room’ when there was not much medical equipment to sterilise during his second placement.

Throughout the Supported Internship, interns frequently mentioned similar experiences in daily reflections. These moments often occurred when interns and staff members in the placement completed a task and were waiting for the next assignment. For example, Holly reflected during her third placement:

Something that could have been better about my day would be for it not to be so inconsistent. Today seemed a bit like one minute we were all hands-on deck, and the next minute we were sitting down having a cup of tea [Holly, Written reflection, 25.04.23, Data 55].

Holly, however, recognised a positive aspect of these quiet periods, she said:

It was a good way to rest up and make sure I was well and ready for next patient to porter [Holly, Conversation, 05.04.23, Data 56].

Although interns articulated feelings of dissatisfaction, these instances also indicated opportunities for the deepening of relationships with mentors.

A category in the data was responsibility. Here responsibility refers to interns having a duty to deal with something or having control over someone. The Supported Internship set and maintained high expectations for interns, especially within their placement immersion. The host business entrusted interns with positions of responsibility, requiring them to adhere to the organisation's standards, and procedures. The interns were engaged in responsible roles, working at the pace of employees in their placements (Appendix 34). These roles during placements encompassed tasks such as patient portering (Appendix 35), organising confidential patient records, sterilising medical equipment, and conducting audits. This level of responsibility suggests the organisation's confidence in the interns' abilities and their trust in them to handle important tasks. Engaging in these responsibilities appeared to have instilled a sense of purpose and engagement, as the interns actively contributed to the workplace. As Hurricane expressed:

I look forward to placement because of responsibility, if you like [Hurricane, Conversation, 21.09.23, Data 57].

To illustrate intern responsibility, the example of the data surrounding patient facing placements is presented, with Holly's first placement in a ward cleaning role and Paffers as a patient porter. Albeit a pattern in the corpus data highlighted that in all placement experiences, the interns worked towards participating in a full experience in the department that was a real-life job done by a paid hospital employee.

Paffers worked towards all responsibilities of a patient porter (subject to him completing training), for example, when he was working in the Theatre department he wrote:

The tasks I have completed today include taking patients to and from the theatres as well as collecting beds for patients [Paffers, Written reflection, 06.02.23, Data 58].

Holly was working towards all responsibilities as a ward cleaner and wrote:

My tasks today included cleaning patient areas [wiping patient tables, lockers] high dusting, wiping, and mopping floors, cleaning barriers rooms and cleaning and wiping bathrooms [Holly, Written reflection, 07.10.22, Appendix 36, Data 59].

Therefore, Paffers and Holly are examples that the interns undertook the same responsibilities as their mentor, a paid employee of the hospital that was meeting a business requirement.



Figure 29 Paffers portering a patient bed

Providing an authentic experience into the role of patient facing jobs, Holly and Paffers also had the opportunity to observe and take responsibility (with mentor support) for more challenging moments, such as encountering deceased or detained patients. Holly encountered this aspect for the first time three months into the programme; she expressed:

It would have been better if a patient didn't pass away when I was coming off my lunch break [Holly, Written reflection, 21.11.22, Appendix 20, Data 60].

Holly articulated her appreciation for gaining this experience, expressing:

I'm glad I got this experience because although it's not pleasant, I'd rather experience it now and see what the job is actually like rather just being shown the nice aspects of working in a patient facing environment [Holly, Conversation, 27.09.22, Data 61].

Paffers also elaborates on his experience, recounting an occasion when he encountered the responsibility of transporting a deceased patient to the mortuary. He documented his experience in a piece of reflective writing and mentioned:

I have been completing lots of interesting tasks. One of which was a witnessing a rose cottage [the portering department's slang for a deceased person], which involved transporting a deceased person and sliding them to another bed [Paffers, Written reflection, 14.02.23, Appendix 37, Data 62].

Paffers explained on another occasion during his work trial as a porter that he encountered additional challenging experiences associated with undertaking a responsible placement. This is exemplified in his written reflection:

There was a patient who had to be under supervision from the police, I had never dealt with a situation like that. However, everything had gone smoothly, and I was glad that I'm able to deal with situations I'm not familiar with because it gives me responsibility. I definitely see that my awareness of being in unpredictable situations and dealing with them has improved since I started on the programme [Paffers, Written reflection, 16.05.23, Appendix 21, Data 63].

Therefore, the intern's depth of engagement is likely attributed to them assuming or working towards responsible jobs.

Whilst some of the patient facing placements were challenging experiences for Paffers and Holly, requiring them to summon their courage, they appreciated the opportunity to engage in placements that were immersive, participatory, and authentic. Furthermore, Princess Glitter was tasked with conducting health and safety inspections during her placement in facilities management, while Hurricane was responsible for handling money and ensuring accurate change transactions in a placement within a shop. These examples point towards responsibility entrusted to the interns throughout their placement, further pointing towards processes that contributed to a deep level of participation in the workplace during the Supported Internship.

Given the host business of the Supported Internship was based in a hospital and the context of this research taking place during the COVID-19 pandemic, all the interns were entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring their safety and of others. This included wearing masks and frequent handwashing. For interns in patient-facing placement roles, they worked with COVID-19 patients, necessitating adherence to specialised protocols. This highlights considerable responsibility placed on the interns. Appendix 22 dated 27/2/23 provides further illustration of this point when an intern said:

For the first time I witnessed how you deal with a covid patient. This meant I had to wear special equipment to protect myself.

To illustrate the category of 'responsibility', this presentation draws on the placement experiences of Holly and Arjuice. Both interns complied with policies and upheld standards

that directly impacted patient lives, health, and safety. It is worth noting that this pattern was consistent across the corpus data, which indicates that all interns in the Supported Internship programme had placements with high standards and rigorous procedures.

Working with a mentor, Holly's first placement within a ward (*Figure 30*) involved cleaning patient bays and holding responsibility for reducing infection rates. They adhered to the HSE (2019) COSHH law and Standard Infection Control Precautions: National Hand Hygiene and Personal Protective Equipment Policy. This is a pertinent aspect at improving patient health and lowering infection.

Holly said:

I feel a big responsibility cleaning here because I'm surrounded by patients who are poorly and I'm kind of helping to save lives and not make them any more poorly [Holly, Semi-structured interview, 11.10.22, Data 64].



Figure 30 Holly working in the cleaning placement

Arjuice's second placement took place in a sterilisation department (*Figure 31*), where his task involved sterilising medical equipment for hospital theatres and clinics. His responsibility after receiving training from his mentors was to develop diligence and a commitment to adhering to clinical standards. Arjuice said:

I'm really enjoying my placement here, I have got to do all the tasks everyone here does, they have shown me what to do and they are all so nice. It is really hard learning all the steps to sterilise the equipment, but I love it [Arjuice, Walking interview, 27.10.22, Data 65].



Figure 31 Arjuice working alongside his mentor in the sterilisation department

The data subtly alluded to certain challenges, as interns found themselves in responsible placements within the hospital, necessitating the use of PPE and encountering communication barriers associated with wearing masks. Five out of six interns raised these concerns on a couple of occasions, for example they suggested voices being muffled and it being harder to hear people, Holly said:

I just nod even if I can't really hear people at times when they wear their mask [Holly, Conversation, 15.11.22, Data 66].

Wearing masks was particularly challenging for an alumni intern who is Deaf and said:

Because of the masks I can't lip read people, so I haven't got a clue what people are saying anymore [Alumni Intern, Conversation, 09.11.22, Data 67].

A secondary piece of data collected at the hospital also said:

Of the deaf employees working in the hospital were unable to read due to covid 19 PPE requirements which led to them feeling more isolated with 32% feeling they needed to compromise their PPE to communicate [Artefact from a Hospital banner visually displayed to the public, 17.11.22, Data 68].

At the hospital there was a trial for transparent mask wearing which some of the interns expressed may help communicating. This deepened their engagement during placement whilst they are learning job roles and need to regularly communicate with others.

The interns frequently identified the hospital's temperature as a disabling community participation factor. As Paffers pointed out in his first placement in Medical Records:

It's unbearable, and it's only winter [Paffers, Conversation, 07.02.23, Data 69].

Certain areas within interns' placements were hot, suggesting the importance of aligning the environment with the interests and needs of individuals. Some interns encountered placements where there were no windows, and the wards being hot due to the presence of medical equipment. For instance, Princess Glitter shared her experience during her third placement as a 'modern housekeeper,' describing the wards as:

So hot, like none of the windows are open because some patients are really poorly and really cold, but we are all here sweating buckets. Sometimes I just have to have a break, I don't know how my mentor keeps going [Princess Glitter, Semi-structured interview, 05.06.23, Data 70] indicating that the intern did not always participate to the same depth as employees.

A factor contributing to the interns' deepening workplace engagement was their appreciation for receiving regular assessment and feedback. For example, Princess Glitter said:

I like that we get feedback each week with targets, so we know how to keep improving. I also like how we have our EPM's and look back at the end of a placement at how far we have come. I just find that really helpful [Princess Glitter, Semi-structured interview, 06.10.23, Data 71].

Given the responsibility of intern placements, these assessments carried high expectations. Mentors provided weekly feedback to interns (Appendix 23). A key criterion in evaluating an intern's deepening engagement was their proficiency and ability to 'work at the pace of a new employee'. This factor, among others, contributed to the overall assessment of the intern's performance. From the outset, the Supported Internship maintained high expectations for interns' performance, assessing them against the standards expected of new employees. While these initially posed challenges, such as the interns not meeting the expectations and feeling deflated, the findings indicated that interns progressively embraced this concept, finding it rewarding when they met these standards (Details of interns' progress is presented in Theme 4: Intern development).

Following each placement, the Job Coach compiled the weekly feedback and presented it to

Topic Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Ave
Punctuality. Arrives/leaves on time. Returns from breaks on time	4	4	4	2	5	4	5	4.0
Appearance. Uniform/clothing/footwear	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4.4
Hygiene. Well-groomed inc. hair, nails and clothes	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4.6
Attitude to work. Appears visually engaged. Correct attitude to work	4	4	5	2	3	3	3	3.4
Effort	4	4	5	2	3	3	-	3.5
Ability to remain focussed on task	4	3	3	2	2	2	2	2.6
Reliability	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2.6
Relationships with staff	5	4	5	4	4	4	4	4.3
Relationships with customers/other depts.	4	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4.0
Body language	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3.4
Verbal communication	4	3	4	4	3	3	3	3.4
Produces work at the pace of new employee	2	2	1	3	3	3	3	2.4
Meets standards for quality and accuracy of a new employee	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	2.7
Listens and responds positively to constructive feedback	3	4	3	3	4	4	4	3.6
Admits mistakes	3	3	4	4	3	4	3	3.4

the interns using colour-codes: red, amber, and green. This format aided their ongoing development, encompassing criteria that extended beyond job-specific skills. The interns appreciated this aspect, as it enabled them to identify areas for improvement and contributed to their deepening programme participation. Illustrative of this feedback, Table 11-13 are artifacts collected from Arjuice's placement. Feedback was recorded via Likert scales, qualitative written feedback, and weekly targets. Arjuice, among all interns, found these methods meaningful for his personal and professional development.

Despite the placements lasting 10 weeks, Arjuice only received feedback for the first 7 weeks, limiting the opportunity to understand the mentor's later experiences. The data from *Table* indicates areas in green where Arjuice was scoring high such as relationships with staff and customers and areas of medium score such as his personal effort and body language.

Table 11 Arjuice placement feedback

Table 12 Summary of mentor written feedback

Week	Summary of additional feedback provided
1	Making an effort to engage but struggling with this and self-criticism. Excellent verbal communication.
2	Achieved week 1 target. Interaction improving. Very thorough with tasks set but this can add time taken to complete.
3	Impressive work and attitude. Working outside comfort zone to build confidence and communication skills.
4	Able to confidently initiate conversations with customers and increasingly independent. Video project started.
5	Able to deal with more complex customer queries and creativity shown on video project, participated in and contributed to a team meeting.
6	Helpful in supporting team to manage staff shortages. Professional work on video. Organised a team meeting.
7	Confidence, communication and knowledge have all developed. Eunie is now a part of the team!

Table 13 Intern weekly targets example. [Artefact of Arjuice's targets from placement 2, 27.02.23].

Week	Individual weekly target set
1	None set.
2	Build pace to produce work at the pace of a new employee.
3	Stay focused on tasks.
4	Remember to use 'cat's ears' for the first fold on soft pack to keep your folding as neat and tight as possible.
5	Try varying your tasks a bit more or take a short walk around the room to see if this helps with your tiredness.
6	Continue to build your resilience by finding positive strategies to focus on your work when in placement.
7	Enjoy and get the most out of your last few days on placement as possible.

Hurricane expressed positive experiences receiving feedback because he identified improvement in himself which motivated him to try harder, he said:

I liked seeing the red, amber, green as I know what I'm doing well in and also where I need to get better like for me, I really want to try and start working more independently and work a bit faster [Hurricane, Semi-structured interview, 22.03.23, Data 72].

Holly also stated after her feedback she set a goal for her EPM:

To complete my tasks to the best of my ability to a faster pace [Holly, Conversation, 22.03.23, Data 73].

Holly, valued feedback and conveyed a similar sentiment that it motivated her to exert more effort, as evidenced by the following response during her second placement:

I used my aiming high skills when I'm in the wellbeing placement because I am hoping to get a job in that sector, so I am trying to make a good mark and, on my feedback, form I got good feedback and that has motivated me to try harder and to aim higher [Holly, Written reflection, 12.05.22, Data 74].

To summarise the first theme in relation to the research questions of this study, the data demonstrated the interns' deepening engagement within the workplace during their placements which likely fostered them being given meaningful responsibilities that meets a business need and is a role currently undertaken by a paid employee, interns being valued as staff, participating in department social activities, and receiving regular feedback. These elements created a work environment that possibly empowered the interns to actively participate in a work environment, develop employability skills, and form meaningful connections with colleagues.

Theme 2: Expansion of Personal and Professional relationships

Data in Theme 2 contains participants' accounts of changes to their professional and social relationships during the Supported Internship. It contains two subthemes: Non-disabled relationships and Disabled relationships. Table 14 summarises the subtheme structure and data content for Theme 2.

Table 14 Theme 2 subthemes

<u>Subtheme</u>	<u>Description</u>
Non-Disabled relationships	This refers to an interns' network with someone without a disability. The intern's immersion in work placements enabling time to build rapport with professionals in the workplace.
Disabled relationships	This refers to an interns' network with someone with a disability. The classroom and alumni group were factors that contributed to the broadening and deepening of their network.

The hospital where the Supported Internship is situated is large in geographical size, includes an array of personnel, encompassing clinical professionals such as doctors and nurses, non-clinical staff including those in hospital maintenance and food services, and volunteers. This diversity extends beyond the employees to encompass a range of patients and visitors engaged

with the hospital. This diversity emerges as a possible factor that provides various opportunities to broaden interns' network. For instance, within the hospital environment, all interns frequently referred to social interactions in public spaces like corridors, the canteen, and outdoor areas. As an illustrative instance, Arjuice remarked:

Whenever I walk from the classroom to my placement [referring to the sterilisation department], I always see someone who says hello to me, or I know [Arjuice, Semi-structured interview, 10.01.23, Data 75].

The public hospital nature could be interpreted as a contributing element, offering interns fortuitous encounters that broaden their network with public, patients, and staff. Hurricane frequently mentioned interacting with former interns when walking around the hospital such as to placement, the classroom and the canteen, for example he said:

I see Chris, Wendy and Sarah quite a lot when I'm walking around the hospital [Hurricane, Conversation, 14.01.23, Data 76].

Eunie, also referred to the site of the Supported Internship, he noticed a shift of increased social interaction from his previous educational setting, Eunie remarked:

The workplace is the opposite end of the spectrum compared to the school we [referring to the interns] used to be at. It's mainstream, it's large, it's not just full of kids with special needs, and literally anyone can be here. It was quite daunting at first because I've been comfortable in an environment mixing with the same set of people for my whole life [Eunie, Semi-structured interview, 21.09.22, Data 77].

Eunie's transition from a special school to the workplace suggests it broadened his exposure to diverse people. This notion is further explored within the Disabled and non-disabled subthemes.

In this theme, interns accounts of the impact of using public transport are presented. Five of six interns used public transport for commuting to and from the Supported Internship. The data reflects a potential trend that this mode of transport increased interns' social interactions and provided opportunities to engage with the public, including various hospital employees. Arjuice recounted his experience one morning, mentioning:

I've met loads of people this year. Like, because I catch the bus every day, I have gotten to know loads of people who take the same route to work at the hospital. It's nice, really, as I have gotten to know the ones who I see most days, and we sometimes chat about how our day is going and when we see each other at work, we always have a chat and a laugh [Arjuice, Semi-structured interview, 18.10.22, Data 78].

The Project SEARCH programme's advocacy for interns to travel independently indicates heightened chances for interns to encounter and engage with new people, within and beyond the workplace. Public transportation has expanded interns' daily interactions compared to their special school education. For example, Princess Glitter expressed:

I used to get dropped off by my mum every day to school, and most people at school got taxis. But this is the first time I have ever taken a bus on my own. I don't just feel more confident being more independent, but I just like how I get to see loads more people each day and that is before I have even started my day on the programme [Princess Glitter, Semi-structured interview, 18.10.22, Data 79].

The data contains accounts of interns' wish to broaden their social circle through the programme. For example, at the commencement of the Supported Internship, Princess Glitter conveyed eagerness to connect with new people, stating:

I am looking forward to meeting new people other than you guys [referring to the other interns] [Princess Glitter, Classroom observation, 22.09.23, Data 80].

It is noteworthy that Princess Glitter and her peers diagnosed with SEND shared the same educational environment and class throughout most of their secondary education. Hurricane also emphasised the importance of social engagement during the programme, expressing desire for social interaction outside work. He stated:

I just want to get a drink after work like all normal people do [Hurricane, Walking interview, 09.11.23, Data 81].

Pointing to the importance of broadening their social circle beyond a 'special' environment and into a mainstream social environment.

Non-disabled relationships

This section focuses on data categorised under the subtheme changes to interns' non-disabled relationships. The data demonstrates broadening of these relationships likely resulted from factors including interactions in work placements, engagement with staff networks, and participation in specific aspects of the Supported Internship.

The predominant period of an intern's participation in the Supported Internship occurred during work placements (10am to 3pm). Consequently, it can be inferred that the five hours an intern is immersed daily in the workplace represents the primary opportunity for interns to broaden their professional networks. This inference is reflected in the interns mainly referring to their placements during ethnographic data collection. Throughout the year, all interns consistently highlighted how the prolonged engagement in their placements facilitated the broadening and deepening of their relationships with mentors and employees. For example, Paffers in his first placement in Medical Records said:

I really like the fact placements are ten weeks as I felt like I had the chance to really get to know my mentor and the team members down there [Paffers, Semi-structured interview, 17.10.22, Data 82].

Holly emphasised that her placement experience exceeded expectations, in terms of the work and the meaningful connections she developed with her mentor and colleagues. She said:

My placement completely exceeded my expectations, not the job itself but for the people. I was with my mentor and colleagues who felt more like good professional friends from the first time we met; I knew we would get along. They understood me, and I could be myself around them without a fear of being judged [Holly, Written reflection, 19.12.22, Data 83].

Holly's sentiment was echoed by Hurricane, who valued occasional quiet periods during placements, providing opportunities to connect with colleagues. He noted:

I thought it was brilliant, the staff on placements and getting to know them. When it's not as busy, you get to talk about things outside of work, which is an important thing for me. It's important for me, rather than just work-related. I got on with Stacey, we trusted each other and talked about what we enjoy watching on TV. They took an interest in what I did as a kid and my past [Hurricane, Semi-structured interview, 20.04.23, Data 84].

Hurricane's statement indicated the Supported Internship provided him to be authentic in the workplace. This environment allowed him to express himself without the worry of judgment, build trust with others, and discuss interests beyond the workplace.

In the qualitative data lunch breaks provided interns with opportunities to deepen relationships

with colleagues on placements (Appendix 42). Holly, as an example, proactively ate with her mentor, she mentioned:

I plucked up the courage and asked my mentor if I could sit and eat with her at lunch. We get on really well together. We wouldn't go out together [outside of the work environment], but if we were to pass each other outside of work, we'd say hello [Holly, Semi-structured interview, 02.11.23, Data 85].

Over the course of the year, Arjuice noted an increase in lunch companions. He mentioned:

More people now sit with me at lunch [Arjuice, Conversation, 14.02.23, Data 86].



Figure 32 Arjuice taking a selfie during lunch with Princess Glitter and Wykeham

Arjuice's network further broadened and expanded due to the range of workplace conversations. This data exemplifies social inclusion as a deepening phenomenon, illustrated by Arjuice building broader and deeper relationships over a year.

Paffers, during his Medical Records placement observed:

I guess I could get to know my mentor if I ate with him at lunch [Paffers, Semi-structured interview, 01.11.23, Data 87].

This statement suggests a professionally oriented relationship between Paffers and his mentor.

In contrast, Hurricane expressed:

I love working on the main reception because we get to chat about football, ask each other about our weekends and evenings, and just generally getting to know each other [Hurricane, Semi-structured interview, 04.07.23, Data 88].

This statement indicates a reciprocal relationship developed during placement. Hurricane also shared:

I found that really good as some of the staff understand me as much as I understand them. I know that for myself is one of my strengths now. Sometimes it's difficult interacting with customers as I'm not familiar with some areas as there are some rare ones, but I'm mainly always confident at talking to anyone now [Hurricane, Walking interview, 31.01.23, Data 89].

The content of the subtheme strongly suggested that interns in patient facing placements involved communicating with clinical staff members beyond their direct collaborators. Paffers exemplified this, mentioning:

I was communicating with the nurses when I was in the wards to know where the patients were in the wards and when the patient is ready to go to the theatres [Paffers, Written reflection, 19.5.23, Data 90].

This interaction was likely driven by the specific responsibilities tied to roles within the hospital, requiring engagement with a range of people in their tasks, thereby broadening their professional network across various professional levels.

Data in this subtheme shows all the participants broadened the breadth of their non-disabled relationships and deepened their quality; the extent of this expansion varied. Some interns formed working relationships with mentors, mainly of a temporary nature, lasting for the duration of their placements. For example, Eunie in his library placement, mentioned:

I was really close to my mentor, but now I don't speak to her or even see her anymore. Although I guess if I got a job there in the future, it would be like I've never left [Eunie, Semi-structured interview, 10.01.23, Data 91].

Eunie's passage implies that these connections may rekindle if the workplace supports sustained contact. However, the association between Eunie and his mentor during the placement remained constrained to his time in that role. Conversely, there were instances where the duration and depth of a relationship appeared to extend beyond an intern's placement. Princess Glitter, for instance, maintained contact with her mentor, a ward hostess, beyond her second placement, indicating an enduring connection. Princess Glitter's mentor expressed interest in maintaining contact through social media, stating:

Do you have Facebook or Snapchat so we can talk when I've left my job? [Mentor, Researcher Observation, 08.12.22, Data 92].

The mentor, transitioning to a different industry, sought to sustain a personal connection with Princess Glitter, suggesting a perceived friendship cultivated alongside their professional working relationship during the programme.

The interns broadened their social networks through placements requiring direct interaction, interns engaged with patients and the public, including visitors. Paffers, during his patient portering placement in the theatre department, suggested his network broadened beyond department employees. In his experience, he wrote:

If the patient is comfortable having a conversation (as they may be really ill), I try and have a conversation. I ask if they are alright, are you feeling alright with what's going to be happening, what they would be normally doing in the day and if any hobbies they had. It's nice because the patients sometimes ask me questions too, which is quite nice, and I give them a bit of reassurance that I've been through it with surgery. I like giving them a bit of distraction from what's actually happening as I would have liked that as a patient. Some of the team initially guided me what I to say, like don't make it certain like good luck, or it will be okay because being in a hospital environment, anything will happen, as I can't guarantee anything will be fine. But I reassure them that they are in safe hands as it's the safest way they can be. And I always say at the end, all the best to them before they go into surgery and theatre [Paffers, Workplace diary, 28.03.23, Data 93].

Paffers initiated and reciprocated relationships with patients, navigating conversations with sensitivity and engagement. His disclosure of personal surgery likely demonstrated empathy and an attempt to build rapport, reflecting Paffers' effort to connect with patients on a more personal level. Even though transient, spanning a day or a week depending on a patient's hospital stay, these interactions may have elevated the number of conversations for Paffers compared to when he was in a non-patient-facing placement in Medical Records. This, in turn, likely bolstered his confidence to initiate and engage in communication with others.

A further example in the data of interns' social interaction is when Arjuice engaged with patients and visitors in his initial placement at the public restaurant (*Figure 33*), expressing his approach to professional communication with customers, he commented:

I was using my talking and speaking skills when I was saying to customers what was on the menu and saying what would they like on the menu, there is a choice of chicken burger and chips and salad and sauce [Arjuice, Workplace diary, 18.10.22, Data 94].



Figure 33 Arjuice serving food in the restaurant for his catering placement

In Arjuice's second placement in sterilisation, not accessible to the public, he remarked:

I miss seeing loads of people every day. I love the team in my placement, but I used to be non-stop talking to people in the restaurant [Arjuice, Semi-structured interview, 28.03.23, Data 95].

This observation indicates that the location of the placement affects interns' opportunities to broaden their interpersonal relationships.

Disabled relationships

This sub-theme explores the broadening and deepening of interns' Disabled relationships. It highlights factors like semi-segregated environments, such as classrooms and alumni groups, which contributed to this development.

Before commencing the Supported Internship, the data strongly pointed towards interns establishing deep relationships with their peers. For example, interns rated their existing relationships at 4/5 during a skills audit in the classroom. See Arjuice's example below (Table 15): [Arjuice, Artefact: curriculum material, 21.09.22, Data 96].

Table 15 Intern curriculum material

I get on well with my peer group	5	4	3	2	1
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The close relationship between the interns could be attributed to them all previously attending the same special school before starting the programme.

Hurricane also expressed satisfaction with his capacity to engage effectively with his peers, as evidenced in an EPM preparation document (*Figure 34*) from October. This observation further suggests a likely strong and meaningful connection among peers.

How would you rate your ability to interact with
your Project SEARCH peers?
Great
Good
Okay
Could be better (Explain)

Figure 34 Ability to interact with peers feedback

The classroom component of the Supported Internship likely nurtured relationships among interns, offering a platform for sharing lived experiences. During the initial six-week induction, all interns spent the entire day together which fostered deepening connections with each other. *Figure 35* illustrates an example of an induction activity where all interns were learning how to pack condiments for a Back of House Catering placement. Holly valued this cohesive class structure, expressing:

I like the fact we stayed as a class [Holly, Semi-structured interview, 20.09.22, Data 97].



Figure 35 Group selfie during induction: replicating a back of house catering role bagging up condiments

Following the induction, daily two-hour classroom sessions persisted, serving to enhance employability skills and as a forum for interns to convene and exchange experiences. The extended year participation may have deepened camaraderie, transcending their previous relationships from special school.

Holly emphasised the classroom's importance during an EPM:

Class is important to get in the right frame of mind for work and to socialise as I'm quite grouchy [Holly, EPM observation, 08.02.23, Data 98].

This suggests Holly's perception of the classroom is important for mental preparation and social interaction, potentially contributing to relationship broadening during placements.

Observations revealed regular interactions among interns, indicating mutual support and advice based on shared experiences. As the programme advanced, expressions of camaraderie appeared to increase, evident in high fives, collective applause, and gestures of support. Hurricane's inquiry, 'How did your day go, mate?' points towards genuine concern, contributing to a cohesive sense of camaraderie between the interns.

As the year advanced, in June 2023, interns revisited the audit they completed in September 2022. All interns rated 5/5 for their relationship with their peer group, indicating a deepened bond. See Arjuice's example below (Table 16) [Arjuice, Curriculum work, 05.06.23, Data 99].

Table 16 Peer relationships

I get on well with my peer group	(5)	4	3	2	1
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While the data reflects deepened connections between interns, some interns expressed a desire for greater diversity in the peer group. This sentiment arose when the interns' visited two different Project SEARCH Supported Internships, where they met other interns between age 18 - 25. In contrast, the programme under study consisted of only 18-year-old participants. One intern remarked:

I've been in the same class with the same set of people for most of my life. Like, I'm not being offensive, but I wish I met some other interns my age who I haven't known or people who are older than me like that other Supported Internship we visited [Princess Glitter, Semi-structured interview, 30.09.22, Data 100].

This sentiment may have been mirrored in the class dynamics, as instances of interpersonal conflicts were noted. It is crucial to acknowledge that this interpretation represents a small fraction of analysed data and thus reflection on the programme, given that, during the five hours

per day, interns were immersed in separate placements and did not interact extensively with each other.

The alumni group, a social element of the Supported Internship appeared to have broadened interns' disabled networks and was universally appreciated by all interns. It provided a space for socialising and staying connected after completing the Supported Internship. The weekly gatherings took place from 3-4 pm in the public restaurant. According to Paffers:

The alumni group is a fun social club for Project SEARCH interns. It's where both current and former interns get to know each other, discuss their interests, experiences and play a few games [Paffers, Workplace diary, 05.04.23, Data 101].

Interns, like Hurricane, eagerly anticipated the Alumni group, expressing:

I look forward to it every week, I just love having a bit of time for fun after placement with my mates [Hurricane, Conversation, 05.04.23, Data 102].

This gathering provided an opportunity for interns to socialise, play games, and share experiences with others who shared a similar identity and lived experience on the Supported Internship. During these gatherings, interns connected within the hospital and ventured into the local community for meals and activities. Arjuice, for instance, shared his experience of playing crazy golf and socialising in the community, stating:

I really enjoyed it so much, I had fun playing golf because I found it interesting, and I just liked being with my friends and getting to know some of the ex-Project SEARCH interns more who worked in placements just like me [Arjuice, Semi-structured interview, 05.04.23, Data 103].

Arjuice emphasised the alumni group's significance, providing a platform to meet past and present interns, boost confidence in public transport, and engage in activities. Other interns echoed positive sentiments about alumni trips like bowling and group meals. Princess Glitter remarked:

I just feel we have become closer with all these social activities we do in the alumni group [Princess Glitter, Conversation, 05.04.23, Data 104].



Figure 36 Holly and Princess Glitter playing a game during the Alumni group

The data hints that the alumni group's importance extended beyond the workplace for some interns. Holly's parents noted its significance for her social life, stating:

The alumni group for Holly is her only social element; she doesn't really have any hobbies or meet up with anyone in the evening and mainly just stays at home other than being in the Supported Internship in the day [Parents, Semi-structured interview, 05.04.23, Data 105].

Later in the year, interactions in the local community, like crazy golf with the alumni group appeared to positively impact the interns' confidence and motivation. Holly, for example, suggested her confidence increased to undertake similar activities independently. Four interns ventured into town together for the first time without formal support, showcasing the impact of close engagement during classroom and alumni sessions. Additionally, the alumni group facilitated the broadening of Princess Glitter's network with a former deaf intern. She mentioned:

I've been trying to learn BSL (British Sign Language) so I can talk to her more easily because we went to the café to get an iced drink and went shopping [Princess Glitter, Conversation, 05.04.23, Data 106].

Princess Glitter regularly commuted with the former intern via public transport, indicating a deep relationship formed within the workplace since meeting at the alumni group.

Holly appreciated the alumni group, where she met a former intern leading to an intimate relationship; her 'first serious relationship'. They travelled, ate lunch together, and met up in the evenings, illustrating the alumni group's intertwined professional and personal connections.

Every intern valued establishing rapport with former interns, now hospital employees, resulting in friendly encounters during day-to-day responsibilities.

Hurricane shared an experience of deepening his relationship with another intern, Paffers, outside of the Supported Internship, stating:

This will be the first-ever time I meet up with Paffers outside of work and I've known him since Year 8. We even lived really close. We were always close and spoke about meeting up but never did, but since being on the programme, like in the class and alumni group, we have got closer. [Hurricane, Semi-structured interview, 23.05.23, Data 107].

This data therefore strongly suggests how the programme fostered professional relationships, personal connections and friendships.

This subtheme also highlights how the Project SEARCH model fostered disabled relationships and a sense of belonging among interns, broadening their networks with peers from other Project SEARCH programmes. The programme facilitated connections through excursions to other hospital-based programmes. Holly expressed her satisfaction, stating:

What I found enjoyable about my day was meeting another intern from a different programme. We exchanged contacts to get to know each other and stay in touch [Holly, Written reflection, 13.03.23, Data 108].

Another component of the UK Project SEARCH model was the nationwide Youth Advisory Group. Arjuice and Holly, representing the programme, participated in monthly virtual meetings discussing their experiences with other interns across England. Arjuice noted:

I really like the group because I feel part of something bigger than just what I am doing'. Holly added, 'I like that I get a voice to help change the programme, but I really just like meeting up with others who are interns from around the country [Arjuice, Conversation, 13.03.23, Data 109].

This component provided additional opportunities for socialising with peers who share similar experiences and highlighting a possible facet that broadened and deepened interpersonal relationships.

On another occasion, Arjuice referred to the alumni group and expressed anticipation for the future, saying:

I can't wait for next year as we are going to meet up as a group in person for a weekend. They almost feel like I've known them for years, and I'm hopeful we might be friends after too. [Arjuice, Semi-structured interview, 06.12.22, Data 110].

This data points towards the future potential of the Alumni group for broadening an intern's network and suggests the sense of camaraderie and friendship can develop, enhancing the interns overall Supported Internship experience.

In summary, the data from the second theme indicates changes in the interns' interpersonal relationships over the course of the Supported Internship year. These changes involved the broadening and deepening of connections with disabled and non-disabled people. The interns' networks broadened through engagement in the workplace, specifically within a large public hospital, providing opportunities for professional relationships with hospital employees. Throughout the year, these relationships generally deepened, although most were temporary in nature. One notable exception in the data was Princess Glitter, who maintained contact with her mentor beyond the placement duration. In addition to professional relationships, interns also deepened their personal relationships with each other. These connections had been established prior to the Supported Internship and continued to evolve during the programme. The data suggests that the shared experience of the internship strengthened the bonds between interns, fostering a sense of camaraderie and mutual support. While the focus of the internship was primarily on professional development, some interns reported forming personal friendships with non-disabled colleagues. These relationships, though less common, provided opportunities for social inclusion and mutual understanding beyond the professional context.

Theme 3: Interpersonal support within the workplace

This section presents data for the third theme ‘interpersonal support within the workplace’. It presents recurring data from the interns about the ‘supported’ element of the internship. The theme comprises two subthemes, formal and informal support. Table 17 summarises the content of each subtheme; it shows the formal and informal interpersonal system of support for an intern during the programme which likely mediated their social inclusion.

Table 17 Theme 3 subthemes

Subtheme	Description
Formal Support	The Job Coach, Tutor and Mentor were part of the interns’ formal support. The Employment Planning Meetings were a formal support element that engaged an intern's interpersonal system.
Informal Support	Peers, hospital employees and the work environment were elements of the interns’ informal support.

Throughout the year, as interns underwent their placements, a consistent observation surfaced in the data: the Supported Internship's support mechanisms were consistently acknowledged and valued by all interns. Holly expressed her sentiments regarding the supportive nature of the programme, stating:

I know a Supported Internship has support in its name, but it's so supportive in so many ways by so many people, and I genuinely couldn't have asked for any more support [Holly, Semi-structured interview, 05.07.23, Data 111].

Hurricane echoed this sentiment, recognising the programme goes beyond fostering transferable work skills. He remarked:

The programme doesn't just support me to gain transferable work skills, but it helps me every day to be the best person I can be, and I'm so thankful for that' [Eunie, Walking interview, 06.07.23, Data 111].

Eunie further alludes to support in receiving it in two ways formal and informal when he mentioned:

The programme supports me grow like there is the Tutor and Job Coach but also my mentor and lots of other people on placement who help me in work [Hurricane, Semi-structured interview, 07.07.23, Data 112].

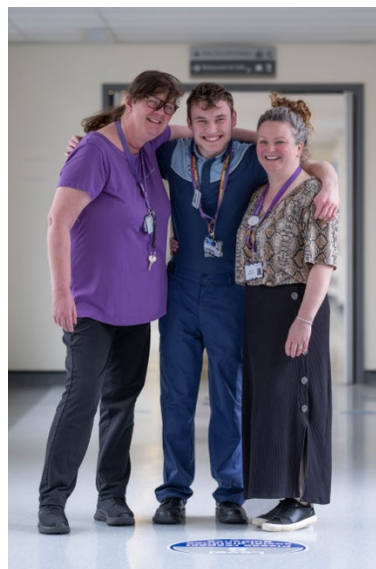


Figure 37 Portrait of Hurricane with the Job Coach and Tutor

Therefore, the following section presents data about the interns' formal and informal support.

Formal support

This subtheme contains accounts of the value that interns placed on the 'formal' support structures within the Supported Internship. When using the term 'formal' here, I am referring to trained staff directly supporting interns. This subtheme presents data of the interns' perspectives concerning the Job Coach, Tutor, and Placement Mentor, who comprised the interns' formal support network. Based on consistent intern feedback throughout the year, these individuals positively mediated interns' social inclusion within the workplace. Furthermore, the subsequent section presents data regarding a structural component of the formal support mechanisms within the Supported Internship, namely, the regular employment planning meetings. These meetings involved an intern's microsystem, encompassing people within and beyond the workplace; a likely process which mediated the depth and breadth of an intern's social inclusion.

The Job Coach was identified as the primary facilitator of the interns' transition into placement and their deepened participation during placement, according to unanimous and recurrent feedback from all interns. In elucidating the important role of the Job Coach, the interns wrote a passage within this research. To delineate the Job Coach's role, Holly's passage is presented below. Holly's introduction aims to furnish contextual and background information, after which specific facets of the passage are further discussed.

Mary is our Job Coach at Project SEARCH. I will describe her to you and tell you all about who she is, what she does and how she helps me become a better person every day. Mary will do a job of taking our personality, skills, and personal choices to match us to a placement.

Let me tell you how she does it:

1. She will have a conversation with me to find out more about me who I am, My likes and dislikes
2. After the time spent talking, she will take the information and look into placements to best suit my needs and make a vocational profile about me (Appendix 47)
3. When she has found a placement for me, the transition will start, it will start with Mary explaining what the placement is, what some of the tasks might be. She always deals with any questions or issues I may have.

4. When she is happy that I am confident with the placement, the visits will then start, she will get in touch with the staff manager at the placement to find a mentor to best suit me.
5. Once a mentor has been found and it has been confirmed that I am happy with everything, she will take me on a visit to see the placement and meet the staff. This will usually come in half day periods with sometimes a full day.
6. Within all of these visits Mary would never leave my side, she would always be there as a point of contact if I needed it, but never too in your face. She always let me get hands on.
7. After some visits we have another conversation and if I am happy about the placement chosen and they are happy to have me, the placement will start. After that Mary won't be by my side all the time, but she will always be there as and when I need her.
8. I don't know where I would be without Mary, she is my light in the dark, my hope when all is dead, she is the perfect Job Coach [Holly, Written artefact from employability folder, 17.07.23, Data 113].



Figure 38 The Job Coach supporting Holly how to make a coffee in her placement

Holly's passage indicates an appreciation for Job Coach support. Her role involved understanding the person, considering their personality, skills, and preferences to match them with placements. Holly describes how the Job Coach initiates placement matching by engaging in conversations to learn more about interns. The narrative outlines the transition process, with the Job Coach explaining the placement, addressing questions, and ensuring the intern is confident in the placement. Throughout this process, the Job Coach remains a constant

presence, providing support during visits, introducing the interns to staff, and helping them establish a connection with a mentor. The passage also emphasises the positive impact the Job Coach has on the intern's life, portraying her as a source of guidance, support, and inspiration. The use of phrases such as 'my light in the dark' and 'my hope when all is dead' conveys a deep emotional connection in the formal structures and gratitude towards the Job Coach, portraying her as a crucial figure in the intern's journey on the Supported Internship.

The Job Coach provided a support structure for all interns through transition days into placements. During these days, the Job Coach collaborated with the intern to create a task list and immerse herself alongside the intern for an entire day, offering a familiar presence to support the transition into placement. Building upon Holly's fourth bullet point, all interns emphasised the significance of visiting potential placements alongside the Job Coach. Holly expressed gratitude for the Job Coach's support during her initial visit and transition to her first placement in the cleaning department stating:

I'm glad the Job Coach was there who took notes for me and creates me a task list (Appendix 48) of the jobs I will do as it went in one ear and out the other. But when I learn on the job shadowing, the training will sink in; it was just a lot to take in [Holly, Reflection Writing, 27.09.22, Data 114].

Princess Glitter echoed a similar sentiment regarding the importance of the Job Coach and placement visits when reflecting on her transition to third placement. She stated:

Although it's my third placement and I've transitioned to two placements already, I still like the fact the job coach visits with me, spends a whole day or morning with me until I've settled. It helps as she can write the notes for me, and I can just take it all in without worrying I'll forget something. [Princess Glitter, Semi-structured interview, 24.06.23, Data 115].

The Job Coach also emphasised the significance of adeptly matching interns with placements, asserting it is pivotal for ensuring a successful placement experience and maximising social inclusion. She remarked:

The most important aspect of an intern's successful placement lies in the precise matching of their interests, skills, and abilities with the placement. This approach not only enhances their engagement in their tasks but also so that they gel with the team [Job Coach, Semi-structured interview, 31.06.23, Data 116].

Expanding on the seventh point highlighted by Holly during the discussion of her placement initiation, where she mentioned:

Mary won't be by my side all the time, but she will always be there, as and when I need her [Holly, Written passage, 04.07.23, Data 116].

This approach is referred to as: 'faded support' [Job Coach, Semi-structured Interview, 23.06.23, Data 117].

All the interns acknowledged faded support as a valuable aspect throughout the programme. According to the Job Coach this method involved her gradually reducing support to empower interns to develop independence and confidence in engaging with limited assistance in the workplace. For instance, the classroom session in September, interns expressed concerns about the Supported Internship and Eunie stated:

My main worry is what will I do once the help from Mary is gone? Will I be capable enough? [Eunie, Written reflection, 26.09.22, Appendix 24, Data 118].

Similarly, three interns at the start of placement one expressed concerns about engaging on placement without the Job Coach's continuous presence and support. However, two days later, Eunie noted:

I don't really need my Job Coach with me as much in placement as I'm starting to get the hang of the jobs I'm doing [Eunie, Conversation, 28.09.22, Data 119].

This quote suggests that Eunie quickly began to feel settled and comfortable, realising he no longer required the Job Coach's constant presence.

Eunie reflected on his activities in his library placement, noting:

A task I did today [in the library placement] was when sorting shelves, I worked as a team with Mary, though I won't have that help all the time [Eunie, Written reflection, 10.03.23, Data 120].

Eunie's passage indicates the Job Coach collaborated with the intern during the initial stages of learning the job in placement. Three weeks later, Eunie demonstrated independence without the Job Coach's presence and wrote:

The skills I have used today were independence, making choices without assistance, handling my placement without Mary [Eunie, Written reflection, 01.12.22, Data 121].

This quote points towards interns progressed towards working autonomously. At times, the intern operated without Job Coach supervision, providing authentic independent work experience. However, the Job Coach and Tutor remained accessible via phone or visits, a resource appreciated by Princess Glitter who mentioned:

I like the fact how my Job Coach is just a phone call away if I need her to come and help me out. I know I have my mentor but sometimes I'd rather just talk about it with Mary as she knows me more and is my superhero. Even though I'm coming towards the end of my placement, this week I needed her as I was struggling with tummy ache and just wanted to see what she thought [Princess Glitter, Conversation, 14.12.22, Data 122].

Princess Glitter's comment points to the strong and trusted relationship she established with the Job Coach. The intern appreciates the accessibility of the Job Coach, highlighting the comfort knowing she is just a phone call away for assistance. Despite having a mentor, the intern expresses a preference for discussing certain matters with the Job Coach due to the deeper understanding she has about them, describing her as a 'superhero.' The statement also indicates a level of vulnerability, as Princess Glitter shares a personal struggle with tummy ache and the desire to seek the Job Coaches opinion. This vulnerability implies the emotional support and trust that the Job Coach cultivated with the intern. Even as the intern approached the end of their placement, the need for Job Coach guidance persisted. This ongoing necessity underscored the enduring nature of their relationship and highlighted Mary's crucial role in providing professional and personal support for interns. Her efforts continued to be important in mediating the social inclusion of interns throughout their experience.

Hurricane also notes the importance of Job Coach faded support and said:

The Job Coach stays with me during certain tasks till I know what I am doing, she will then take a step back so I can do them independently [Hurricane, Walking interview, 25.01.23, Data 123].

The ten month collected data, encompassing interns' placements as a likely contributing factor to their involvement in the work community, revealed that interns valued the assistance during their initial adjustment to placements. They indicated as they gained confidence in their work, the fading support provided by the Job Coach became more rapid with each successive placement. For instance, Hurricane mentioned:

My first placement I needed the Job Coach to support me loads even 6 weeks in but like now [referring to 2nd week of placement 3] I don't even need her as I just feel I'm

a bit more confident to give it a go and use some of the strategies she gave me on my other placements [Hurricane, Semi-structured interview, 27.04.23, Data 124].

Within the corpus data each intern regularly indicated their experience during the programme, especially during placements, would not have been as positive or successful without the Job Coach. Hurricane, for example, articulated this sentiment, stating:

She has always been there during difficult times, like on any personal level if I have any problems at home, she takes that into consideration for when I go into work that day. Like she will come up with a plan, aware of how I am that day and tells others. She just really supports me [Hurricane, Walking interview, 22.06.23, Data 125].

The statement implies that the supportive and understanding nature of the Job Coach created a space for open communication which positively impacted the intern's confidence in expressing themselves. On a further occasion, Hurricane noted:

Sometimes Mary collects me from the taxi in the morning which helps because we can chat about what I've done the night before and things like that. I just trust her and can feel I can talk to her about anything even if it's not work related. I don't think I can come out talk things other than Mary. She just really understands me. All of the staff do. I feel I have the options to talk to the Tutor and Mary about anything. I don't think I've had that before [Hurricane, Walking interview, 21.07.23, Data 126].

The quotation suggests that interns, like Hurricane, established a deep bond with the Job Coach. Hurricane conveys a deep trust in Mary, underscoring their ease in discussing various matters, whether work-related or personal. This sense of comfort and mutual understanding is deemed important. They specifically note the approachability of Mary and other staff members, with a forthcoming section presenting data about the Tutor.

During the entire ten-month ethnographic data collection phase, the Tutor was highly regarded by all interns for the support she provided during the classroom sessions which she taught (9-10 am and 3-4 pm) and the support she offered in placements. Regarding the classroom component of the Supported Internship, Hurricane, for instance, acknowledged the support provided by the Tutor, stating:

She helps me specifically with typing and spelling. That's a massive help to me as it helps me be clear about what I am trying to say without getting confused by typing as well. She is always there if there are problems that need sorting out. She can tell when there is something going on just by looking at you. If something is on my mind she knows instantly. Things in recent months haven't been easy for me, and she takes that

into consideration when making a plan for me [Hurricane, Conversation, 05.07.23, Data 127].



Figure 39 The Tutor teaching Hurricane how to read

During the classroom element of the programme, four interns aspired to interact with people in the workplace, including mentors, co-workers, managers, and patients in patient-facing placements. However, they expressed challenges in initiating and identifying conversation topics and actively participating in non-work-related elements of placements including lunchtime and quiet periods. To address this, the Tutor conducted a weekly, hour-long lesson focussing on current news. Initially, two interns were hesitant, considering the news to be ‘boring’. Nevertheless, as time passed, their engagement appeared to increase, and some interns downloaded news apps on their smartphones. This strategy served as an ‘icebreaker’, helping them establish connections during placements. The incorporation of a news quiz, accompanied by prompts, promoted collaborative problem-solving, further contributing to the development of a cohesive community. Over time, the need for these prompts diminished as interns became well-versed in current affairs, expanding their interest beyond the workplace. This shared knowledge facilitated conversations that interns enjoyed. As expressed by Eunie:

Even though my mentor is significantly older, we can still talk about shared interests like the news... It took a while for me to appreciate, but I've come to value and enjoy it [Eunie, Semi-structured interview, 10.01.23, Data 128].

A further example of Tutor support mediating interns’ social inclusion was when the Tutor regularly visited the interns’ placements to monitor their progress. Paffers, for instance, expressed satisfaction, stating:

I enjoyed the fact I was able to show my Tutor what I was doing down at Medical Records [Paffers, Written reflection, 30.1.23, Data 129].



Figure 40 Paffers scanning patient record files in his first placement

Arjuice similarly acknowledged the Tutor's supportive presence, mentioning she offered emotional support:

She comes and sees me when I am on my placement, if I get upset or overwhelmed, she will always help me [Arjuice, Semi-structured interview, 07.02.23, Data 130].

All interns engaged in weekly one-to-one meetings with the Tutor, a practice deemed important by each intern. Paffers, for instance, highlighted the significance of these meetings, stating:

I think having a talk with my Tutor about how portering hasn't been working for me. She supported me with doing patient portering full time so I can get more focus on getting experience from the role [Paffers, Written reflection, 30.1.23, Data 131].

These meetings appeared to be a platform where interns feel confident discussing personal matters, leading to changes in their placements, as illustrated by Paffers transitioning to a patient-facing role. Holly echoed a similar sentiment about the Tutor's support, expressing:

It's important to me that I have time once a week to talk to my Tutor. If I'm ever struggling, she always helps me, so I feel best prepared for placement [Holly, Semi-structured interview, 07.02.23, Data 132].

The testimonials suggest the integral role of the Tutor providing one-to-one meetings in fostering open communication and providing tailored support to interns, contributing to their readiness for placement challenges as Princess Glitter further noted:

If I'm ever struggling, she always helps me, so I feel best prepared for placement [Princess Glitter, Semi-structured interview, 21.02.23, Data 132].

To summarise this section, the diverse narratives within the data indicate the Job Coach and Tutor are integral figures in the Supported Internship, formally providing support and mediating interns' social inclusion.

In each placement, every intern was assigned a mentor responsible for working collaboratively with the Job Coach to allocate interns' tasks. The analysed qualitative data revealed that Work Placement Mentors were important in offering support throughout placements, addressing employment-related and social aspects.

As the year progressed and interns were in their final placement, having experienced at least three mentors across different placements, they collectively contributed their thoughts during a classroom session on what they believed constituted the qualities of a good Placement Mentor (*Figure 41*) (Appendix 43) and said:

A good mentor should be friendly, helpful, introduce us to everyone in the department, patient, thorough, engage in work banter, communicative, believe in our capabilities, encourage our independence, and provide both praise and constructive feedback [All interns, Curriculum session, 06.06.23, Data 133].

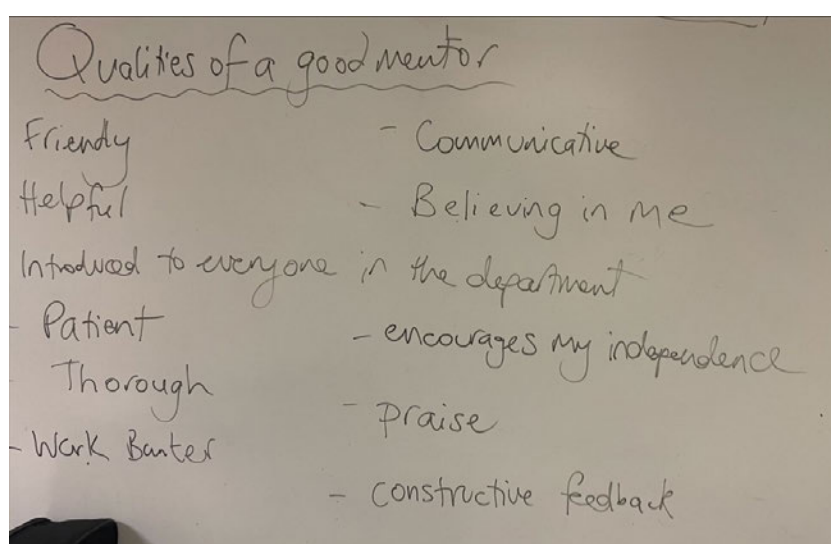


Figure 41 Group work: 'Qualities of a good mentor'

In the data for this subtheme, the focus of interns' comments in interviews and conversations consistently revolved around Placement Mentors rather than the job tasks. For instance, during a visit on the 13th of January 2023 to each intern in their second week of their second placement when asked about their experience, the responses were:

It was great; I've got a really nice mentor [Hurricane].

I'm looking forward to it; the team and my mentor were really friendly [Princess Glitter].

I enjoyed the visit; the people were really friendly [Paffers].

It was good, my mentor was really chatty [Eunie].

My mentor is really kind. I can't wait to start placement [Arjuice].

My mentor is fantastic [Holly].

Every occasion, I visited their placements asking, 'what is your placement like?' as an example, interns referred to the importance of people, and further probing was necessary to encourage them to expand on the nature of the placement itself. This pattern could be inferred that the interns' placed importance on interpersonal dynamics, with the sentiment that people take precedence over job tasks.

According to all interns, an initial step towards settling into workplace placements involved establishing rapport with mentors. This was emphasised by Eunie at the start of Placement One:

I've been struggling to socialise, finding it a bit overwhelming. That's why starting to build a relationship up with a mentor is a good first step and breaking confidence to speak to others [Eunie, Semi-structured interview, 30.09.22, Data 134].

Paffers echoed this sentiment, highlighting the important role of his mentor, particularly on his first day during second placement, portering within A&E, stating:

What I enjoyed about my day: this was my first day meeting Paul as well as the Emergency Department team. I felt welcomed by the team, and Paul absolutely made sure I was introduced to everyone there [Paffers, Written reflection, 14.2.23, Data 135].

Later in the week, Paffers expressed continued appreciation for his mentor, noting:

I'm definitely more familiar with the environment of the Emergency Department and the people. Paul, my mentor, as always, was introducing me to more of the staff. I really

appreciate this because it feels like Paul's attempt to make me as welcome to the department as possible [Paffers, Written reflection, 17.2.23, Data 136].

The accounts by Paffers and Eunie point towards Placement Mentors mediating the interns' initial inclusion into the placement environment and foster comfort and support.

After three months, Paffers continued to emphasise the importance of mentors for reassurance, even if their presence is silent without conversation or interaction. This perspective was expressed towards the conclusion of his final placement when he said:

I have used a lot of independence skills for all of the work I've completed. My mentor was there in case I needed help. However today proved I can work on my own [Paffers, Written reflection, 09.05.23, Data 137].

The mentor previously asserted, months in advance, that Paffers could work independently. However, when Paffers initiated mattress portering, he required additional time to work on placement alongside his mentor before demonstrating independence. Despite reassurances from his mentor and team affirming his performance, Paffers felt he needed extra time to build confidence in working autonomously.

Another instance evidencing the mentor's important role as formal support for interns in placements occurred when Princess Glitter, while proud of her independence, acknowledged the comfort of having her mentor nearby. This sentiment was expressed:

I used the phone in my placement. My mentor was beside me, saying I'll be alright, which made me feel more confident, but I didn't need her when I was calling [Princess Glitter, Written reflection, 18.05.23, Data 138].

Princess Glitter's mother also emphasised the mentor's significance for her child, noting:

She talked about her mentor at home and how it's like a security blanket, even if sometimes she's never needed [Parent, Semi-structured interview, 09.11.22, Data 139].

There were several accounts in the data where interns conveyed dissatisfaction with their mentors, suggesting excessive support hindered interns' independence. For instance, Paffers expressed sentiments when commencing mattress portering, stating:

What could have been better about my day: I would like to have read tasks I was given, instead of my mentor reading them [Paffers, Written reflection, 16.01.23, Data 140].

Alternatively, Paffers identified his favourite mentor mentioning:

Paul is the best mentor; he makes it known to everyone we work with that I'm in training with him. Other mentors never did that, and I think that was a bit which was missing because it's clear then that everyone knows who I am and why I'm here straight away [Paffers, Written reflection, 28.02.23, Data 141].

At times, the data appeared to indicate mentorship extended beyond instructing interns on job tasks or supporting them within the team; it encompassed providing interns with emotional and physical support (Appendix 44). Holly, for instance, highlighted:

My mentor gave me a hug, when I had a bit of a wobble, it was a huge relief that I knew she had my back when I was mopping around a patient's bed for the first time [Holly, Walking interview, 22.11.22, Data 142].

Mentors were recognised for their assistance in demonstrating tasks, aiding interns in their departmental performance and for their personal approach and meaningful conversations. For example, Princess Glitter said:

Me and Jenny have the most random of questions. We talk about our holidays, what we have for tea. We are just close. She asks about how I am and that and takes an interest in me beyond work. And I ask her so much too of similar things [Princess Glitter, Semi-structured interview, 07.03.23, Data 142].



Figure 42 Princess Glitter and her mentor during the Modern-housekeeping placement

Arjuice also suggested that support goes beyond work tasks, extending to being a close confidant in the workplace. He stated:

We have a right good giggle, a right laugh, a chinwag [Arjuice, Walking interview, 18.10.22, Data 143].

On a further occasion, Arjuice valued his mentor, demonstrated reciprocity and wrote:

I treated Amy to a cookie because when she has helped me when I was upset and when I been crying [Arjuice, Semi-structured interview, 04.11.22, Data 144].

The positive and long-lasting impact a mentor has on an intern was consistently demonstrated at the end of every placement when most interns felt upset, for example Paffers wrote:

It's going to sting for a lot of us with our mentors, in relation to missing them [Paffers, Semi-structured interview, 22.12.22, Data 145].

The structure of mentoring varied based on placement arrangements and staff work schedules, with interns exhibiting a range of preferences in this area. For instance, Eunie had an official mentor in his library placement but mentioned:

I feel the whole team are like my mentors and my main one just does the paperwork which I like because it means I go to anyone if I've got any questions [Eunie, Semi-structured interview, 30.11.22, Data 146].

In contrast, Paffers experienced multiple mentors due to employee work patterns, yet he expressed frustration, mentioning:

I wish I was paired off with someone who mentored me from the last two weeks because I personally felt really intense and overthought a lot of things with the mentor I had. His teaching didn't feel the same as others who mentored me. A lot of this had put me on the spot and not in a good way. It definitely put me down for the day. I'd describe him as critical and that pressure built up for a day [Paffers, Written reflection, 06.02.23, Appendix 25, Data 147].

Expanding on this, I discovered that Placement Mentors did not undergo formal training; they were selected by managers or Job Coaches based on personality. It could be argued that if mentors had received training on mentoring strategies, Paffers might have felt more at ease. Nevertheless, the rotation of mentors was frustrating according to Arjuice, who expressed:

I get upset and when I don't know who my mentor is today or if they have changed, it makes it worse for me and its why I ring the Tutor because I know her [Arjuice, Walking interview, 15.02.23, Data 148].

Employment planning meetings (EPMs), part of the Project SEARCH Supported Internship model, received positive feedback from interns for effectively sharing progress through written feedback, photos, and videos, about placements with parents/guardians. Hurricane expressed his appreciation, stating:

I like the EPM because my Tutor, Job Coach, Mentor, and my parents are at the meeting, and it gives me a chance to show what I'm doing. I think especially for my mum, as she doesn't believe how independent I am at work here, and it's nice others back me up and tell her what I'm doing as it might mean she lets me be more independent at home [Hurricane, Semi-structured interview, 01.03.23, Data 149].

Princess Glitter also highlighted the EPM's role in supporting her future, stating:

The EPM really supports me in what I want to do because we get to talk about what I want to do in the future and discuss with my parent's certain jobs I am quite interested in [Princess Glitter, Semi-structured interview, 20.06.23, Data 150].

This suggests interns recognised the importance of involving parents in discussions about their future, preparing them for life beyond the programme and fostering independence.

During EPM's, it was also observed that the programme provides support for interns' parents. Numerous parents expressed gratitude for being engaged and well-informed through regular meetings. For instance, Eunie's parents articulated:

The programme doesn't just offer support for my son but us as a family, [Tutor] always responds to us, is only a phone call away for a chat and never lets any issues get out of hand [Eunie's parents, Semi-structured interview, 01.02.23, Data 151].

Informal support

This subtheme explores informal support interns received during the Supported Internship, encompassing assistance from their peers and the hospital staff.

Expanding theme two, analysis revealed interns deepened their friendships and developed supportive relationships. An example is Hurricane, who expressed the positive impact of conversing with a friend during a challenging time at home, stating:

I found talking to my friend helped me get through the week [Hurricane, Written reflection, 21.04.23, Appendix 45, Data 152].

Similarly, Arjuice highlighted the mutual support among peers within the Supported Internship in the classroom and beyond. He explained:

All my friends here [referring to the interns] ask me every day how I am, if there's anything I can help with, how was placement, and we text and ring each other outside too to talk about our placements and help each other [Arjuice, Walking interview, 19.12.22, Data 153].



Figure 43 Holly, Princess Glitter and Arjuice participating in the classroom

Hurricane further suggests the supportive role of his peers throughout the year, particularly during the classroom, stating:

The group always helps me where I can. Sometimes, as I struggle to see below my eyes and find writing hard, they offer to write for me or put the paper in my folder, as I find it quite difficult doing that [referring to filing A4 hole-punch into a folder] [Hurricane, Semi-structured interview, 19.12.22, Data 154].

The data examples suggest that interns function as an informal support network for one another. They encourage each other's participation in the programme, offer advice and help across various life areas, including domestic difficulties.

The interns frequently acknowledged support beyond the formal framework of the Supported Internship, including encounters with hospital volunteers, other hospital employees, including those from placements outside their mentor. In a healthcare environment driven by a mission to aid people, there seemed to be a sincere presence of individuals genuinely desiring to support and care, extending not only to patients but to others including members of the public, visitors, and, notably, the interns. Paffers likened the hospital to:

One big, massive family [Paffers, Written reflection, 04.12.22, Data 155].

The interns frequently mentioned receiving help from hospital employees throughout the year. The informal support, where employees offered help unassigned, was noteworthy. For instance, in Paffers' portering placement (*Figure 44*), he described a challenging day, highlighting the support he received from Porters:

What could have been better about my day: I knew I could have done better at writing the tasks down. The calls were fine, but the writing was a nightmare, it was confusing to me, but the porters reassured me that I'll get a lot better at it with practise [Paffers, Written reflection, 08.11.22, Data 156].



Figure 44 Paffers in the staffroom with the portering team

This example shows how informal support from hospital employees in placements was crucial, providing encouragement and reassurance to interns facing challenges.

To summarise Theme Three, throughout the Supported Internship, interns received formal and informal support, that likely mediated their social inclusion. The formal support, orchestrated through EPM's with Placement Mentors, Tutors, and Job Coaches, provided a framework for the interns' professional development. This structured assistance facilitated the sharing of progress, feedback, and future goals, involving formal support and that of parents/guardians. In parallel, informal support emerged organically from peers, hospital volunteers and encounters with various hospital employees. These informal connections catalysed fostering a sense of belonging and community within the workplace. The blend of formal and informal

support mediated interns' professional development and contributed to their social inclusion, suggesting the holistic nature of the Supported Internship experience.

Theme 4: Intern development

Theme 4 contains data that narrates interns' development from the thematised data collected over the year from their regular assessments and feedback. The feedback is organised into three subthemes: professional, physical, and personal development. Table 18 overviews the subthemes.

Table 18 Theme 4 subthemes

Sub theme	Description
Professional development	Interns developed professional work-related skills including employability and capacity to engage in the work environment.
Physical development	Interns displayed signs of tiredness but developed strength and stamina increasing their opportunity to broaden their social network.
Personal development	Interns developed a range of personal skills

Interns had regular assessments and feedback throughout the Supported Internship, which they found beneficial for highlighting progress and boosting work confidence. The most regular feedback interns received was weekly mentor feedback about their placement engagement and progress. Holly, for instance, shared her perspective of receiving feedback mentioning:

I was never good at Maths, so I always struggled and got answers wrong, which really knocked my confidence. But I feel here [referring to the SI], I was first worried about regular feedback as I thought it would be like school, but I actually really like it because when the Job Coach puts it all together in colours at the end of placement [referring to RAG assessment], it makes me believe in myself and that I am capable of getting a paid job [Holly, Semi-structured interview, 25.02.23, Data 157].

Holly's quotation indicates purposeful feedback is an important factor for the intern's self-concept and their capacity for social inclusion.

An example of RAG assessment is provided in Table 19 and 20 demonstrating Hurricane's progress from placement one to two based on mentor subjective feedback. The areas of assessment included 'punctuality, appearance, attitude to work, effort, ability to remain focused on task, reliability, relationships with staff, relationships with customers, body language, verbal communication, produces work at the pace of a new employee, listens and responds positively to feedback and admits mistakes' [Curriculum Material: Mentor feedback, 04.04.23]. Given the axiological focus of this study concerns the highlighting of interns' voices, Table 19 and

Table 20 presents the intern feedback process and their progress. It refrains from extensively discussing the perspectives of other stakeholders, as the following section will present the self-recognised development experienced by interns during the programme.

Table 19 Hurricane's placement 1 mentor weekly feedback

Feedback Analysis

Student name: Hurricane

Placement: 1

Work Area: Back of House Catering

Number of feedback forms returned/issued: 5/7

Rating 1-5 (1 = low, 5 = high: each rating has a descriptor on the questionnaire issued to mentors to assist

Topic	Week							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Ave
Punctuality. Arrives/leaves on time. Returns from breaks on time	x	3	4	4	x	2	4	3.4
Appearance. Uniform/clothing/footwear	x	5	4	4	x	4	4	4.2
Hygiene. Well-groomed inc. hair, nails and clothes	x	4	3	4	x	4	4	3.8
Attitude to work. Appears visually engaged. Correct attitude to work	x	1.5	2	2	x	2.5	2.5	2.1
Effort	x	1	1	3	x	3	3	2.2
Ability to remain focussed on task	x	1	2	2	x	3	3	2.2
Reliability	x	3	3	3	x	3	3	3.0
Relationships with staff	x	4	4	4	x	4	4	4.0
Relationships with customers/other depts	x	4	3	3	x	3	3	3.2
Body language	x	2	3	3	x	3	3	2.8
Verbal communication	x	4	3	3	x	3	3	3.2
Produces work at the pace of new employee	x	1	1	1	x	1	1	1.0
Meets standards for quality and accuracy of a new employee	x	1	2	1	x	2	2	1.6
Listens and responds positively to constructive feedback	x	3	3	3	x	3	3	3.0
Admits mistakes	x	2	2	3	x	3	3	2.6

Table 20 Hurricane Placement 2 feedback

Student name: Hurricane

Placement: 2

Work Area: Various (Main Reception and Xray)

Number of feedback forms returned/issued: 7/7

Rating 1-5 (1 = low, 5 = high: each rating has a descriptor on the questionnaire issued to mentors to assist

Topic	Week							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Ave
Punctuality. Arrives/leaves on time. Returns from breaks on time	4	4	4	4	4.5	4	4	4.1
Appearance. Uniform/clothing/footwear	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	4.7
Hygiene. Well-groomed inc. hair, nails and clothes	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.9
Attitude to work. Appears visually engaged. Correct attitude to work	4	3	5	5	5	4	3	4.1
Effort	4	4	x	4	x	4	x	4
Ability to remain focussed on task	3	4	4	5	3.5	4	4	3.9
Reliability	2	2	1	5	4	4	2	2.8
Relationships with staff	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	4.7
Relationships with customers/other depts.	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	4.3
Body language	4	3	3	4	5	4	4	3.9
Verbal communication	4	4	4	4	5	5	4	4.1
Produces work at the pace of new employee	2	2	5	3	4	3	3	3.1
Meets standards for quality and accuracy of a new employee	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3.1
Listens and responds positively to constructive feedback	3	5	4	4	4	3	4	4.0
Admits mistakes	3	5	4	4	5	3	4	4.0

Comparing the feedback tables (Table 19 and 20) from Hurricane's first and second placement - first in Back of House Catering and second in Main Reception and X-ray - there was improvement across most performance areas, shown by an increase in green and amber ratings. Specifically, the intern showed progress in several key areas: for example. punctuality, work attitude, willingness to admit mistakes, and meeting quality and accuracy standards expected of new employees. This was a similar trend across all interns in their various placement areas.

Professional Development

This subtheme contains data about work skills interns acquired and developed during the Supported Internship. The varied experiences during three placements within the hospital contributed to the interns' development, likely augmenting their employability and capacity to participate in the workplace across diverse jobs. Engaged in authentic roles within the hospital, the interns gained entry-level job skills. For example, Paffers acquired experience as a Medical Records Assistant and Portering in a team (Appendix 40). Eunie developed skills as a library assistant and Medical Records Porter. Princess Glitter learned to be a Ward Hostess, Administrative Assistant, and Modern Housekeeper. Hurricane honed skills in a back-of-house catering role, a receptionist role and as a Radiographer Assistant (Appendix 28). Arjuice worked in a restaurant, Receipts and Distribution and sterilised medical equipment. Holly gained proficiency as a Cleaner, in back-of-house catering, as a Porter, and as a Barista (*Figure 45*).



Figure 45 Holly training as a Barista

These interns gained diverse job skills, as Hurricane highlighted:

I've never had any experience in a job before because I've even been rejected from trying to volunteer. I've loved the variety of every placement; I have a good idea of what I want to do now [Hurricane, Walking interview, 22.06.23, Data 158].

Holly also emphasised the significance of gaining authentic insights into working roles within the hospital, expanding her career ambitions and transferable work skills. This insight could potentially better equip her for a role when she applies for employment, aligning with her future aspirations. She expressed:

After three various placements, I know what I want to do and what I do not want to do in the future, and this has really helped me. I know if I get a job, I will be more prepared at certain tasks [Holly, Written reflection, 27.06.23, Data 159].

Interns' experiences suggest that work placements prepare them for jobs aligned with their interests, leading to deeper workplace participation and informed career decisions post-Supported Internship.

Physical Development

This subtheme explores a pattern in the data on physical changes noted by interns during the Supported Internship, focusing on tiredness and increased strength and stamina. While this thesis employs a qualitative approach and does not present numerical data nor is it a health study, tiredness was identified as a prominent code in the corpus data. NVivo coding revealed over 200 instances of codes related to tiredness among all interns throughout the programme (e.g., Appendix 29). Notably, more instances occurred at the beginning of the year, a phenomenon to be further explored in the subsequent section.

As noted earlier, all interns in the Supported Internship previously attended the same part-time special school, attending three to four days per week. However, a notable ecological transition (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) occurred as interns began their placements, where they were engaged five days a week, from 9am to 4pm in the programme. Thus, indicating a potential rationale why, the interns felt tired.

Tiredness was regularly noted by all interns during their daily reflections when they started their initial placement, for example Arjuice mentioned:

My feet really hurt from standing all day in the restaurant [Arjuice, Written reflection, 18.10.22, Data 160] referring to its active nature.

Despite the Supported Internship's structured schedule, it differed from the traditional academic calendar by omitting October half-term. As this period approached, I observed increased absences due to illness and a prevalent sense of intern fatigue. Contrasting their school days, interns attended more frequently during the Supported Internship and engaged in more physically demanding tasks, such as active roles like hospital portering. This heightened activity level could potentially contribute to increased fatigue. For instance, Princess Glitter,

using her smartwatch, shared data showing a rise in her physical activity since starting the programme:

I have been wearing this watch for a few years, and I often do at least 10,000 steps every day. I never used to do half that amount when I was at school [Princess Glitter, Walking interview, 23.11.22, Data 161].

This section examines qualitative data on interns' energy and sustained focus, revealing a decline during afternoon classroom sessions and towards the end of the week. An example occurred during one session when interns returned from their placements, casually placing their bags on tables and audibly exhaling, showing signs of weariness compared to their earlier energetic engagement in the morning [Observation, 18.10.22, Data 162]. The classroom often served as a refuge for many interns to unwind from daily stressors, but as fatigue set in, some displayed visible signs such as resting their heads on desks, providing less detailed responses, or refraining from active participation in reflective writing. This shift from morning engagement marked a change in their community participation, potentially impacting their social inclusion. As expressed by Arjuice:

I'm knackered today; it's just been so busy. I always am tired by the end of the day [Arjuice, Conversation, 24.11.22, Data 163].

Beyond the observation of interns presenting signs of weariness towards the end of the day, tiredness was identified as a recurrent pattern over the year. Towards the latter part of the workweek, some interns were increasingly disengaged. Hurricane's statement encapsulated this sentiment:

I just feel knackered by Friday's [Hurricane, Written reflection, 18.11.22, Data 164].

At several EPM's, fatigue became a concern according to some of the interns' parents. In the words of Paffer's mum, she expressed:

Paffers doesn't do much at the weekends anymore, he doesn't climb [his hobby], he's just too tired [Parents, Semi-structured interview, 07.01.23, Data 165].

As previously noted in Theme 1, interns deeply immersed themselves in the work community. However, this active engagement contributed to repercussions, negatively influencing an intern's overall social inclusion and their depth of participation in other spheres, such as community activities and hobbies. Therefore, it could be interpreted that the enrichment of

social inclusion within the work domain may, to some extent, as Paffer's mum noted come at the expense of participation in hobbies and home life.

To address interns' fatigue, the Tutor proposed implementing 'part-time Supported Internships', which would better align with the life goals of interns like Hurricane, who expressed:

I would like to work part time, ideally three days per week as full time is too much for me [Hurricane, Written reflection, 11.01.23, Data 166].

The Tutor suggested adjustment may alleviate interns' fatigue and promote more balanced participation and enhance social inclusion across different arenas, beyond the workplace.

Despite interns expressing fatigue towards the end of the day and week, Hurricane, who has cerebral palsy, noted physical adaptations throughout the year, in terms of increased strength and stamina attributed to his placements. Contextualising Hurricane's experiences his initial placement involved a back-of-house catering role (*Figure 46*). This role included hands-on tasks including packaging condiments, maintaining cleanliness, and retrieving meals, all of which required him to be physically active—an aspect of employment that Hurricane eagerly pursued.

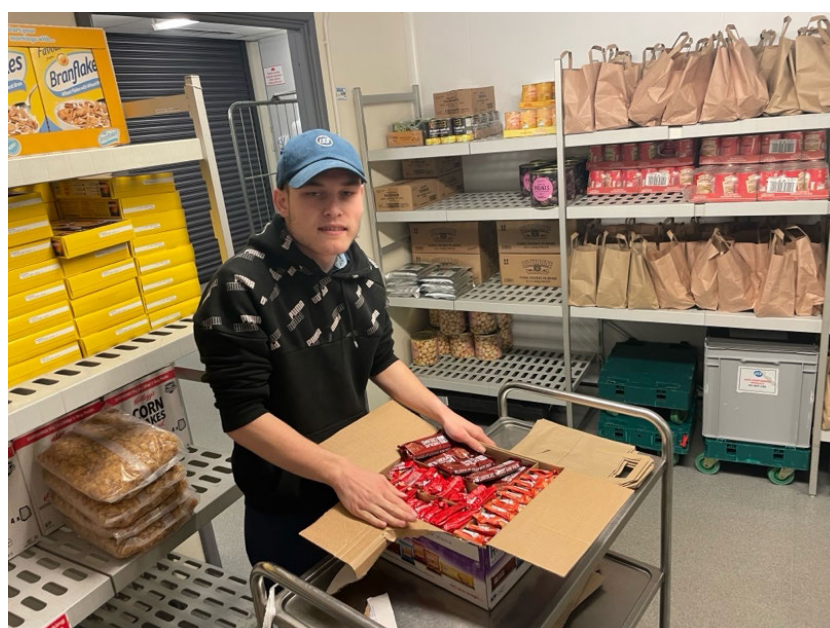


Figure 46 Hurricane working in the Back of House Catering placement

At the commencement of Hurricane's journey in the programme, he recognised the need for the development of his fine and gross motor skills. Moreover, when Hurricane embarked on his active placement in Back of House Catering, he found it necessary to take regular breaks sitting on his supportive chair. In the initial weeks, he adhered to a structured regime of 10-

minute breaks every half-hour. Additionally, he devoted two hours to the task of wrapping bread rolls, striving to complete it at a pace nearly three times faster to align with the business's time expectations. However, as Hurricane approached the final weeks of his placement, he made strides in the speed of bread roll wrapping. During his three-month placement, noticeable improvements were observed, these advancements seemed to stem from enhanced hand-eye coordination, refinement of technique, and increased stamina. He also gained the ability to independently disassemble cardboard boxes, reducing his need for rest. Consequently, Hurricane began to extend periods of continuous work before seeking respite on his supportive chair, he aptly stated:

I hardly rely on my supportive chair anymore; it's practically gathering dust [Hurricane, Semi-structured interview, 08.06.23, Data 167].

Hurricane's mum remarked in an EPM:

He's not complained about aching as much since being on the programme [Hurricane's Mum, Observation: EPM, 30.03.23, Data 168].

The statement suggests Hurricane has experienced physical development during his time in the Supported Internship programme, which may have improved his ability to engage socially.

Personal Development

The interns consistently reflected on the development of their independence, confidence, speaking skills, problem-solving (e.g. Appendix 41 and 46), self-esteem, and self-advocacy throughout their daily reflections. These developments enhanced their capacity to enrich their social inclusion.

In addition to interns demonstrating independence in performing work tasks, they showcased newfound independence in various aspects of their lives. For instance, Paffers began making his lunch at home for work, Arjuice independently bought lunch each day, and Hurricane tied his own shoes (Appendix 26) and ordered food at a restaurant for the first time without adult assistance, marking progress toward autonomy.

Throughout the duration of the programme, the corpus data pointed towards all interns demonstrating diverse levels of enhancement in their communication. Eunie, as an example, took pride in sharing his progress at the conclusion of his initial placement. During a conversation he actively conversed with everyone at the placement, interacting confidently with customers at the reception desk in the library, addressing his peers in the classroom, and

experiencing an increase in overall confidence. This positive evolution was noted by Eunie's parents likening his transformation to a 'bud blossoming into full bloom'. Princess Glitter echoed a similar sentiment, expressing amplified confidence. She felt more at ease engaging in conversations with unfamiliar people, emphasising newfound comfort stating:

I feel quite comfortable talking to others I don't know like patients and visitors in the hospital. I never thought in a million years I'd do that before [Princess Glitter, Semi-structured interview, 09.05.23, Data 169].

The data highlighted interns' social development, which expanded and deepened their social networks, and revealed frequent expressions of increased self-esteem. Princess Glitter remarked:

The Supported Internship really boosted my confidence. It's way better than how I felt back in school [Princess Glitter, Conversation, 25.06.23, Data 186].

Hurricane also shared his newfound belief in overcoming challenges related to cerebral palsy. Another intern, Eunie, added:

The programme helped me feel better about myself. It's nothing like my experience in school; I feel more capable now [Eunie, Written reflection, 27.01.23, Data 170].

These experiences suggest a transformative shift in interns' perceptions of their abilities, underscoring the programme's role in positively influencing their social inclusion.

An improvement in self-advocacy was also observed among the interns. Princess Glitter highlighted her increased confidence in discussing her disability, expressing needs, and seeking support at work when she mentioned:

I feel more confident talking about my disability at work and asking for help when I need it [Princess Glitter, Semi-structured interview, 28.02.23, Data 171].

This suggests development in her ability to communicate about her SEND's.

To encapsulate interns' personal development, the Supported Internship contributed to their own capacity to broaden and deepen social inclusion within the programme and across other arenas of participation.

To summarise Theme 4, throughout the year, the Supported Internship mediated the interns' multifaceted development—encompassing personal, professional, and physical development. Individually and collectively, these interns suggested progress in their independence,

communication, problem-solving, self-esteem, and self-advocacy. They embraced newfound autonomy in work tasks and daily life, highlighted improved communication, problem-solving acumen, and confidence. Their self-esteem rose compared to their time in school, with each intern expressing an increased belief in their capabilities. Additionally, the interns presented examples of self-advocacy, confidently expressing their needs, and asserting themselves in placements. These personal developments contributed to their increased social inclusion within the Supported Internship and positively impacted their future endeavours beyond the programme, such as participation across sites including employment and broadening and deepening their interpersonal relationships professionally and personally.

Theme 5: Sustainability

Theme 5 contains data related to the question of sustainability, referring to whether the data and social inclusion achievements observed can be maintained for the studied cohort. This theme includes two subthemes (Table 21): the enduring framework of the programme, centred on interns' experiences with public transport and finance, and the post-Supported Internship phase, focusing on interns' ability to attain and maintain employment.

Table 21 Theme 5 subthemes

Subtheme	Description
Programme sustainability	Interns faced financial challenges and some negative public transport experiences
Post Supported Internship	Attaining and maintaining employment was cited as a challenge for most interns.

Financial challenges associated with transportation during the Supported Internship was a pervasive concern for all interns, particularly those relying on public transport which were five of the six interns. Holly highlighted this frustration about transport costs, expressing:

One thing that really frustrates me with the Supported Internship is I'm not paid, which is really hard for my parents, especially when the transport is costing every day to get to the hospital [Holly, Semi-structured interview, 08.06.22, Data 172].

Paffers echoed a similar sentiment regarding financial challenges, comparing his current situation enrolled on the programme to when he and the interns were at school the previous year, stating:

I find it's annoying how I've not had a bursary this year. When I was at school, I got some money into my bank account, but this year I haven't. It's really hard as it's not like I'm earning money here. I'm working hard, and it's stressing us all out how we aren't getting any money [Paffers, Semi-structured interview, 04.10.22, Data 173].

On average, interns paid £3.80 per day for commuting to the programme, with one intern paying £5. Limited financial support, in contrast to interns' previous educational arrangements, added strain to them and their families.

In addition to financial challenges, public transportation for five out of six interns proved problematic. Late buses or buses not showing up caused stress, impacting the interns' punctuality and overall experience. Holly expressed her frustration, stating:

I was late, turned up sweaty and upset before I even started; that was the hardest part [Holly, Semi-structured interview, 25.10.22, Data 174].

Some bus drivers' behaviour appeared to exacerbate interns' negative experiences. Instances of impolite conduct from drivers were reported, intensifying the interns' overall stress before starting their day at the programme. Paffers discussed his experience, stating:

Bus drivers are alright, but it's quite often they are in a pretty bad mood [Paffers, Walking interview, 27.10.22, Data 175].

Despite these challenges, transport increased interns' community encounters (as presented in Theme 2), defined as interactions with strangers in the community setting. While these encounters may seem minor, they contribute to a sense of belonging for people diagnosed with SEND, promoting community involvement. Paffers shared:

Despite the challenges, I've met new people on the bus, and it's been a positive aspect [Paffers, Semi-structured interview, 27.10.22, Data 176].

The recurring obstacle of transportation affected interns' access to the programme and their potential for independent work. Late and infrequent buses, rude drivers, and financial barriers set a negative tone daily. Issues with bus passes and contemplating learning to drive highlight the need for improved accessibility and reliability of public transportation. The concerns

expressed by interns underline how an external exosystemic challenge can negatively impact interns' community participation.



Figure 47 Interns practising public transport

Post-Supported Internship

This section focusses on attaining and maintaining employment. The data primarily accrued in the latter stages of the ethnographic study, aligning with the interns' progression towards the conclusion of the Supported Internship. It is imperative to outline that data collection for this thesis spanned from September to August of the programme. Consequently, information concerning interns' experiences was not gathered beyond the Supported Internship. Instead, the data focuses on interns' experiences in the latter phase, encompassing aspects such as job applications and their sentiments as the programme concludes. This information, combined with insights from formal support staff, provides perspective of the interns' potential social inclusion experiences post-Supported Internship.

During the final phase of the programme, particularly the interns' third placements, the challenge of securing employment weighed heavily on five out of six interns, affecting their confidence in their employability. This stage was characterised by uncertainty about 'what's next?' with many interns feeling uneasy and apprehensive. Princess Glitter remarked:

If I don't get a job by July, I'm really worried what I will do next as there won't be the Job Coach or Tutor to help me [Princess Glitter, Written reflection, 20.06.23, Data 177].

Unlike other interns, Paffers experienced greater certainty about his job prospects after finishing the Supported Internship. Following his successful placement in the portering department, where he demonstrated independent work in patient and non-patient roles, a vacant position led to a job offer from the Portering manager (*Figure 48*). Paffers secured thirty hours per week of paid employment as a theatre porter at the hospital, the same department where he completed his second placement. He formalised his commitment to this role during the third placement, signing a contract on 12.06.23 at an hourly wage of £10.37, surpassing the national minimum wage for 18–20-year-olds of £6.83.



Figure 48 Paffers shaking hands with the portering manager after signing his contract of employment

While interns expressed satisfaction with the Supported Internship, highlighting development in transferable work skills (Theme 4) and expansion of their professional networks (Theme 2), concerns about their future emerged. Despite their pride in personal and professional development, the subsequent phase brought challenges that negatively affected the confidence and self-esteem of five interns. These challenges included rejections in interviews from disability-confident employers, discrepancies in meeting GCSE qualification requirements for entry-level jobs, despite performing well during placements, and encountering rejections in job

applications. This downturn transformed what was initially a positive experience of the Supported Internship into a daunting and disillusioning phase for the interns. Arjuice said:

I feel really upset as I don't have five GCSEs, but I have done well in all the placements. I just wish that was enough [Arjuice, Semi-structured interview, 28.06.23, Data 178].

Princess Glitter articulated the depth of these feelings, stating:

I feel useless; I just don't get it. I got amazing feedback throughout all of my placements, and now I'm not even being offered a job, never mind even getting to the interview [Princess Glitter, Semi-structured interview, 29.06.23, Data 179].

Similarly, Holly expressed her growing despondency, noting:

I'm starting to feel a bit down about myself. I've tried my best in every placement, departments said I was doing great, but I don't seem to be getting any closer to getting a job [Holly, Semi-structured interview, 30.06.23, Data 180].

Holly's quote raises important questions about the post-completion support responsibilities of the programme, especially when interns do not secure employment. The educational provider, in this case, the special school, holds the responsibility. However, once the programme ends and summer break begins, formal enrolment and support for interns' cease. Although a Job Coach from an external agency provided support for the six-week summer period to assist the five interns with job applications, this assistance was limited until the next Supported Internship cohort begins in September 2024. Therefore, Holly's concerns are significant as she transitions from a Supported Internship to being NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training).

The Job Coach highlighted a potential factor contributing to interns' challenges in securing prompt employment compared to earlier cohorts:

Employer saturation in departments [Job Coach, Semi-structured interview, 06.06.23].

In response, the Job Coach proposed a strategy for future cohorts:

Expanding the Project SEARCH model to include external placement opportunities beyond the host business [Job Coach, Semi-structured interview, 13.06.23, Data 181].

This approach requiring further research, appears to offer interns a broader range of placements across different industries outside the hospital sector, potentially enhancing their acquisition of transferable skills and employability.

The Tutor raised concerns about the sustainability of employment for interns who secure jobs after the programme. Emphasising a need for continued intern support, she stated:

Just because the interns are in employment, it doesn't mean they don't need any support in their lives anymore. They will always have a disability, and that transition to employment is even harder when the support totally vanishes especially after the programme has been supportive all the way through [Tutor, Semi-structured interview, 27.06.23, Data 182].

Holly, in her EPM suggested the importance of receiving ongoing support if she gains employment, stating:

I think I always need some support, or I'd fail if not, like just being able to talk to the Tutor or Job Coach about any concerns I had was really important for me in placement. I really fear that they won't be there when I get a job to support me [Holly, 08.02.23, Observation: EPM, Data 183].

This conversation highlighted Holly's concerns about the lack of support when transitioning from the Supported Internship (education) to employment.

Although specific data on the employment outcomes of the five interns who did not secure jobs immediately after the Supported Internship was not collected in this study, the Tutor raised a prospective concern about supporting these graduates during an informal conversation, remarking:

Although it isn't my primary responsibility, I do provide support to past cohorts whenever I can. Some of them visit my office to ask for advice, during their work, or simply drop by for a chat. However, I recognise that this isn't a sustainable approach. As the programme continues each year, providing ongoing support becomes a massive undertaking. Once the interns secure employment, their disabilities don't simply vanish. They still require support and guidance for the rest of their lives, even if it may decrease gradually over time [Tutor, Conversation, 11.07.23, Data 184].

The Tutor's quote suggests the potential long-term support needs of interns beyond their programme participation, acknowledging that it exceeds the job role and capacity of herself and the Job Coach. Furthermore, it underscores a broader dilemma within employment

regarding the support interns receive, impacting interns securing employment within the host business and other staff members. The Tutor highlighted this issue during another conversation, stating:

Some staff members who I'm fairly certain have autism and are aware of the programme approach me for a chat and seek support. Just last week, a lady came to inquire about her uniform [Tutor, Conversation, 14.07.23, Data 185].

This highlights the necessity of visible and established support mechanisms for all staff members in businesses, which can enhance their sense of belonging, overall workplace support and maintenance of employment.

In summary, this final theme highlighted sustainability issues within the programme. While interns provided positive feedback, there are concerns about its long-term viability. These concerns include challenges interns face in job applications and maintaining employment due to the lack of comprehensive support systems. Financial obstacles, particularly public transport costs, also indicate potential negative impacts on interns' experiences and their ability to participate in various arenas. This financial strain further compromises their current social inclusion.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presents thick descriptions of a Supported Internship programme for young learning-disabled people at a UK public hospital. Following the Project SEARCH model, the programme offered a year-long educational course for 18–19-year-olds which comprised of three 10-week unpaid placements in various hospital departments. Structured around the five key themes, this chapter presents the interns': progression from initial observation to full participation in work roles; their broadening relationships with disabled and non-disabled people; the formal and informal support systems they encountered; their personal and professional development throughout the programme; and challenges such as financial strain from transport costs and difficulties in securing post-programme employment. Rich descriptive data, primarily from the interns' perspectives, highlights insights into their experiences without extensive reference to academic literature. This approach amplifies the voices of the six learning-disabled participants and establishes a foundation for the subsequent discussion of findings chapter that applies the new synthesis of the PPCT-EP model (Chapter 3, *Figure 6*).

Chapter 6: Discussion of findings in the context of ecological systems theory and social inclusion

Introduction

Aligning with the work of Hansen et al., (2021), the findings presented in Chapter 5 showed that the Supported Internship did broaden and deepen social inclusion for interns. The data supporting this claim was presented in chapter 5 with reference to the five themes identified in the analysis. These were engagement within the work community; expansion of personal and professional relationships; interpersonal support within the workplace; intern development; and sustainability. This chapter then goes onto critically analyse the processes that mediate this social inclusion for the interns. Deploying the synthesised PPCT-EP model (Chapter 3, *Figure 6*) as a lens, this chapter shines a light on the web of interconnected ecological systems that bring about this social inclusion. Mirroring the nested nature of the ecological system presented in *Figure 6*, the structure of this chapter begins with the *person* and expands outward to the *socio-political*:

- *personal characteristics*, i.e., interns' self-motivation, disability-related demands, and resource development;
- *interpersonal* support networks, i.e., Job Coaches, Tutors, Placement Mentors, alumni, peers and family;
- *organisational* structures within the Supported Internship programme and host hospital, i.e., the structured learning environment combining workplace and classroom instruction;
- *community conditions*, i.e., transport accessibility;
- *socio-political* forces, i.e., SEND policies and funding.

The analysis concludes with a discussion about the temporal dimension beyond the internship period.

Throughout the chapter, proximal processes (P) and elements of time (T) (*Figure 6*) are discussed in relation to each system, reflecting the synergistic and interactive nature of these systems that cannot be truly compartmentalised. The chapter shows how the deepening and broadening of interns' social inclusion requires the collective addressing of barriers and enabling factors across all ecological systems with emphasis on the synergistic relationships between personal characteristics, interpersonal support, and organisational structures. The significance of this ecological analysis lies in demonstrating how sustainable social inclusion

for young learning-disabled people requires a coordinated, system-wide approach rather than isolated interventions at any single level.

Person: The intern as mediator in constructing pathways to social inclusion

This section discusses the data pertaining to the intern as their own system within the PPCT-EP model (Chapter 2: *Figure 6*). It examines how the intern, embodying the Person (P) component of the model, mediates their own social inclusion within the Supported Internship programme. The person system being the complex interplay of biological, psychological, and behavioural characteristics that make up an individual, where each person is viewed as a dynamic system of interconnected attributes and pathways that influence and are influenced by their environment. The discussion focuses on the intern's individual characteristics through Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (1998, 2006) tripartite categorisation of disposition, demand, and resource.

Drawing on data contained within Theme 1 (see Chapter 5), 'Engagement with the Work Community' and its sub theme 'Factors Contributing to Depth of Engagement', interns' self-motivation was identified as a primary 'disposition' (Chapter 2: *Figure 6*) characteristic. This drove their depth of community participation within the workplace, corroborating McConkey and Collins' (2010) assertion that intrinsic motivation mediates the depth of social inclusion. This self-motivation manifested primarily in the desire for post-internship employment, as was illustrated by Hurricane (Data 16) who powerfully articulated his annoyance at wanting to be independent. This finding supports CGR's (2020) observation that employment aspirations can foster deep Supported Internship community participation. The study's findings however extend beyond these conventional employment-centric motivations, with interns like Princess Glitter (Data 25) and Hurricane (Data 26) expressing aspirations for broader interpersonal relationships and societal contribution with the notion of giving back after being former patients at the hospital where the Supported Internship was situated. Such a multi-dimensional perspective on intern self-motivation enriches the understanding of the factors mediating young people's social inclusion within Supported Internships. The strength of these motivational forces directly influenced the interns' engagement in 'proximal processes' (P) (*Figure 6*), such as workplace interactions and skill development in placements, which in turn built pathways to deeper community participation.

Building on this foundational role of participant self-motivation, the data contains accounts of a dynamic interplay between interns' evolving self-concept and their social inclusion. Hurricane's journey illustrates this evolution. At the start of the programme, he expressed self-doubt (Data 22) and by January, his confidence had grown where he suggested he was confident talking to anyone (Data 89). This development aligns with Harris and Orth's (2019) observation of a positive feedback loop between self-concept and community participation across various domains. The expansion of interns' positive self-concept appeared to arise from their ability to meet high expectations and receive positive feedback from placements in the work environment, consistent with Hanson et al.'s (2017) findings. This resonates with the principles of self-efficacy theory, suggesting that mastery experiences and positive reinforcement contribute to the development of a strong self-belief in one's capabilities (Bandura, 1977). Hurricane's transformation over these months, from initial uncertainty to viewing himself as a competent social actor, illustrated how the internship programme, acting as a 'proximal process' (P) (*Figure 6*), reshaped a person's disposition characteristics and fostered a capability-oriented self-concept. For all the interns, this growth in self-concept and independence extended beyond the workplace, as evidenced by interns like Princess Glitter (Data 106) engagement in social activities such as shopping in town with friends, demonstrating the interconnectedness of ecological systems in mediating social inclusion. From a chronosystem perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1988, 1989), these changes over time highlight the dynamic nature of a person's disposition characteristics. This temporal dimension has important implications for understanding pathways of social inclusion. The positive feedback loop between interns' evolving 'disposition' characteristics (*Figure 6*) and their broadening community participation underscores the bidirectional nature of development emphasised in Bronfenbrenner's (1999) bioecological model and reflects Simplican et al. (2015) social inclusion concept of interconnectedness which occurs across the multiple spheres of community participation.

The development of a sense of belonging was identified as another person 'disposition' (*Figure 6*) characteristic mediating interns' social inclusion within the Supported Internship. This aligns with Bronfenbrenner and Evans' (2000) concept of forces that mobilise 'proximal processes' (P) (*Figure 6*). Mahar et al. (2013) define this sense of belonging as feeling indispensable, valued, esteemed, respected, or harmonious within a group, characteristics indicative of deep community participation. This disposition mediated interns' depth of participation with their

work environment and colleagues, ultimately affecting their psycho-social well-being. The study's data revealed multiple instances where this disposition manifested in interns' behaviours, driving their engagement in proximal processes within the workplace. For example, Arjuice's voluntary early arrival in his restaurant placement to sweep floors, Hurricane's remorse for illness-related absences, Eunie's willingness to make up missed time, Holly's pursuit of additional responsibilities in her placement, and Paffers' initiative in addressing urgent departmental tasks all exemplified how a person's disposition towards belonging motivated proactive and deepened workplace engagement. These behaviours, stemming from the interns' disposition towards belonging, illustrate a positive feedback loop where feeling valued encourages actions that further deepen workplace community participation. The Supported Internship programme, by cultivating environments that nurtured this disposition characteristic, facilitated this feedback loop, aligning with Bronfenbrenner's and Morris (2006) PPCT model where personal dispositions both shape and are shaped by environmental interactions. As interns felt a greater sense of belonging, they engaged more deeply with their work and colleagues, which in turn reinforced their feeling of being integral to the hospital. This dynamic enhanced the interns' well-being and deepened their social inclusion, demonstrating how the programme fostered the development of belonging as an important disposition characteristic that mediated interns' inclusion into the workplace community. While this sense of belonging mediated interns' development, it operated alongside other personal characteristics that influenced their social inclusion. Of particular significance were the interns' 'demand' characteristics (*Figure 6*), especially those related to their disabilities, which shaped how they interacted with and were perceived within their work environments.

These 'demand' characteristics (*Figure 6*), as conceptualised by Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006), offer a valuable lens through which to examine how interns' disabilities mediate their social inclusion. Such characteristics, which invite or discourage reactions from the social environment, manifested in the form of disabilities among the study's participants. The research builds upon Engel's (1977) biopsychosocial perspective of disability, revealing the interplay between interns' disability types, functional capacities, and social environments in shaping their inclusion. The findings also build upon previous research by Abbot and McConkey (2006), OECD (2010), and Clarkson et al. (2009), highlighting the nuanced impact of disability and functional capacities on social inclusion. The impact of these demand characteristics is evident

from the data as interns transitioned from part-time education to full-time participation in the Supported Internship programme. This ecological transition, viewed through Bronfenbrenner's (1989) chronosystem lens, often exacerbated the effects of tiredness, a finding that resonates with Smith et al.'s (2021) work on fatigue among young people with a diagnosis of SEND. For instance, from Theme Four 'Intern Development,' Hurricane (Data 164) noted he felt tired by the end of the week. Such experiences underscore the complex relationship between physical capacity and social inclusion, mediating interns' ability to engage in work activities and social interactions - the very proximal processes that Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998, 2006) identified as drivers of development. The experience of intern fatigue and endurance align closely with Phillips' (2015, p.16) definition of work endurance as 'the psychophysiological condition needed for physical activity or mental processing over time in and out of the workplace', and Boersema's (2018, p.6) elaboration of work endurance as the 'ability to sustain working activities for a number of hours per day and per week'. Despite the implementation of reasonable adjustments within placements such as scheduled breaks, placement matching, and job carving (defined as customising job duties based on a person's skillset, Scoppetta et al., 2019), many interns continued to face challenges of endurance, highlighting the persistent influence of a person's demand characteristics on social inclusion. These observations challenge the assertions of Luecking and Fabian (2000) and Christensen and Richardson (2017) regarding the correlation between increased placement hours and heightened employability. The findings suggest caution against adopting a one-size-fits-all approach to placement duration and that these endurance matters demonstrate that the pathways mediating social inclusion are also embodied and speak up for the PPCT-EP model as a good fit with what was observed.

The study also showed how a person's (P) (*Figure 6*) support needs can change, as demonstrated when Hurricane (Data 167) indicated he needed his supportive chair less frequently. The physical demands of his placement in a back of house catering role included lifting boxes and engaging in push and pull motions, contributed to the development of Hurricane's strength and capacity. This transformation builds upon Sjøgaard et al. (2016) concept of the workplace as an arena for developing a person's capacity, illustrating the bidirectional relationship between personal demand characteristics and environmental factors in Bronfenbrenner's (1989) model. As Hurricane's physical capacity improved, so did his ability to engage in work activities and social interactions, demonstrating how changes in a

person's demand characteristics can lead to broadened social inclusion opportunities. The variability in interns' experiences with demand characteristics underscores the need for flexible, individualised approaches in Supported Internships, echoing Fullan's (2007) advocacy for personalised support. This need is further emphasised by interns' own reflections, such as Hurricane who desired to work part time (Data 166). Such insights suggest that accommodating the diverse and changing demand characteristics of interns may require options like the Project SEARCH Supported Internship model considering part-time placements or customised schedules, tailored to individual fatigue patterns and endurance levels. As Paffer's mum (Data 165) observed, Paffers became less active at weekends due to tiredness. Thus, whilst social inclusion broadened and deepened for interns within the Supported Internship environment, it was negatively impacted in other arenas such as home and the community. This complex interplay between demand characteristics and social inclusion naturally leads to the next section which considers how interns' resource characteristics also evolved throughout the Supported Internship.

From a person's 'resource' (*Figure 6*) characteristics perspective, drawing from Theme Four 'Intern Development' the data provides narrations of the development of interns' skills, knowledge, and experiences throughout their Supported Internship placements. Utilising a prolonged 'chronosystem' (*Figure 6*) perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1988), the research captured a deepening progression in interns' community participation, illuminating how their evolving resource characteristics mediated their social inclusion within the work environment. This progression, aligned with the curricular goals of Project SEARCH Supported Internships (Project SEARCH, 2022), demonstrated a trajectory from initial presence and observation to active involvement and independent task performance in placements. As interns gained confidence, developed new skills, and familiarised themselves with work placement responsibilities - all key resource characteristics - their level of participation deepened, as exemplified by Eunie's (Data 121) reflection when he suggested he became more independent. In the microtime scale (*Figure 6*), daily interactions and task performances in the workplace contributed to the incremental development of interns' competencies, whilst the mesotime (*Figure 6*) perspective revealed how these experiences accumulated over weeks and months, resulting in interns feeling their employability grew. This developmental process aligns with Bronfenbrenner and Evans (2000) concept of 'proximal processes' (*Figure 6*), where repeated interactions with the work environment led to increasingly complex patterns of participation,

facilitated by the curriculum's structure of gradually increasing interns' responsibilities. As interns' resource characteristics broadened, so did their capacity for meaningful participation, moving beyond mere presence - which Clement and Bigby (2009) argue is insufficient for deep social inclusion - to genuine and active engagement within the workplace. By the end of their placements, many interns achieved a depth of participation comparable to regular employees, a key objective of the Project SEARCH (2022) curriculum, with this transformation evident not only in their ability to perform tasks but also in how hospital employees perceived and treated them as fellow staff members, deepening their sense of inclusion.

In summarising the interns' 'disposition', 'demand', and 'resource' characteristics within the Supported Internship programme, viewed through the lens of the PPCT-EP model (*Figure 6*) i.e. the person (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006), reveals the complex and dynamic nature of personal attributes as pathways in mediating social inclusion. This approach aligns with Engel's (1977) biopsychosocial perspective, demonstrating how individual factors interact with environmental contexts to shape inclusion experiences. Interns' disposition characteristics, such as self-motivation and sense of belonging, was identified as internal drivers of engagement, evolving over time and creating positive feedback loops that deepened social inclusion. Interns demand characteristics, primarily manifested through interns' disabilities, highlighted the challenges and opportunities presented by individual differences, underscoring Bronfenbrenner's (1989) concept of person-context interrelatedness. Interns' resource characteristics, encompassing developing skills and experiences, illustrated the important role of personal growth in mediating inclusion, aligning with Bronfenbrenner's (1988) emphasis on development over time. The PPCT-EP approach (*Figure 6*), integrating biopsychosocial considerations, provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the mediating influences on social inclusion, emphasising the need for holistic, individualised approaches in Supported Internship settings. The subsequent examination of the interpersonal system will further elucidate how these personal characteristics interface with broader environment contexts, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the complex ecological pathways through which interns social inclusion is mediated.

Interpersonal ecological system

This section discusses the first contextual layer, the 'interpersonal system,' within the PPCT-EP model (*Figure 6*). Interpersonal systems being the immediate social networks and direct relationships that shape a person's daily experiences and development. It draws primarily from

Theme Three, 'Interpersonal Support in The Workplace' (*Figure 17*), which identifies pathways that mediate interns' social inclusion. Consistent with prior Supported Internship research (Hernandez et al., 2008; Kaye et al., 2011; Luecking, 2008), all interns in this study emphasised the role of formal, paid support staff, specifically Job Coaches and Tutors, in enabling their social inclusion. However, this study contributes new insights by revealing the significance of informal, interpersonal support systems, such as Placement Mentors, alumni, peers and family members, in mediating interns' social inclusion—an aspect scarcely discussed in existing literature. The interns' experiences echo the findings of Edwards and Burns (2022), demonstrating the supportive nature of Supported Internships serve as enabling pathways, empowering interns to deepen their workplace community participation and social inclusion. Interestingly, the study also reveals a potential paradox, whilst interpersonal system support is important, excessive or overly cautious support can sometimes hinder social inclusion. This insight challenges the prevailing notion (e.g., Zylbersztejn et al., 2022) that more support invariably leads to better outcomes, underscoring the need for a balanced approach that provides support while fostering an intern's workplace autonomy. To fully understand this delicate interplay of support mediating interns' social inclusion, the following section discusses the roles of Job Coaches, Tutors, Placement Mentors, peers, alumni and family members within the interpersonal ecological pathways system.

As mediators in the interpersonal system (*Figure 6*), Job Coaches play an important role in social inclusion within Supported Internships, a finding that corroborates and extends previous research (e.g., Clarkson et al., 2009). All the interns consistently reported the Job Coach as pivotal in broadening and deepening their interpersonal relationships within placements, as evidenced in Holly's detailed reflection about her role in matching interns' personality and aspirations with placements whilst remaining consistently available in supporting them (Data 117). This multifaceted approach of Job Coaches, extensively documented in previous studies (CGR, 2013; 2020; Hanson et al., 2021), encompasses systematic instruction, faded support to promote independence (Wenzel et al., 2022), and liaison roles between interns and the broader organisational ecosystem (CGR, 2020; Romualdez et al., 2020). When viewed through the lens of the PPCT-EP model (*Figure 6*), Job Coaches constitute a part of the intern's interpersonal system - the immediate environment with which the person has direct interactions. The Job Coach influence however extends beyond this immediate context, as they actively promote what Bronfenbrenner (1979) terms mesosystem interactions - the interrelations among two or

more settings in which the developing person actively participates. By introducing interns to Placement Mentors and by collaborating on vocational profiles (Appendix 47), Job Coaches facilitate connections between different microsystems, such as the intern's immediate work environment (placements) and the broader organisational culture (hospital). These mesosystem interactions likely deepen interns' social inclusion by creating a more interconnected and supportive environment. Thus, the Job Coaches' role in facilitating these interactions demonstrates how they not only support interns within their immediate microsystem but also help interns navigate and connect more broadly with contexts within the workplace, thereby deepening their social inclusion and demonstrating the complex, interconnected nature of support within Supported Internships. While Job Coaches played this intermediary role, they worked in tandem with another key figure in the Supported Internship ecosystem - the Tutor, whose contributions were also important in mediating interns' social inclusion.

Within the classroom and during placement visits, Tutors engaged in critical 'proximal processes' (*Figure 6*) within the interns' immediate microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1989), functioning as mediators of 'boundary crossing' (Tanggaard, 2007). This mediation was highlighted during a classroom session when Arjuice (Data 130) expressed that the Tutor visited and supported him when he felt overwhelmed during his placement. These activities represent proximal processes within the interns' immediate microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1989) and function as mediators of 'boundary crossing' (Tanggaard, 2007). From a mesotime perspective (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006), the Tutor's role extended beyond the classroom through regular placement visits and one-to-one meetings, which all interns valued. The organisational structure of the Supported Internship positioned the Tutor as a key mediator between classroom learning and workplace experience, facilitating transitions between these different environments. The Tutor's boundary-crossing role was particularly evident in how classroom curriculum adapted to support workplace needs, exemplified when four interns expressed challenges in initiating conversations with colleagues during placement quiet periods and lunchtimes, leading the Tutor to implement weekly news discussions. This intervention proved successful, as Eunie (Data 128) later reflected that he discussed news with his Placement Mentor forming a deepened relationship with each other. Such instructional strategies ensured the educational curriculum was tailored to each intern's needs, fostering deeper community participation in the workplace, while demonstrating how the organisational structure, characterised by the interplay between classroom learning and workplace experience,

contributed to broadening and deepening interns' community participation. This integration of different microsystems not only illustrates Bronfenbrenner's (1979) emphasis on the importance of interconnections between various ecological systems in an individual's development but also aligns the Supported Internship with the principles outlined by DfE (2022), including personalised learning, employer engagement, and developing work-related skills in real-world settings, ultimately promoting social inclusion in the mainstream work environment.

While Tutors provide formal support within the Supported Internship, also important is the role of Placement Mentors in mediating interns' social inclusion – an aspect of the 'interpersonal system' (*Figure 6*) that has received limited scholarly attention. Building upon Romualdez et al.'s (2020) small study of a Supported Internship programme, this research reveals Placement Mentors as indispensable mediators within the interns' microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). Eunie's mentor (Data 30) demonstrated this supportive role providing regular written feedback. The day-to-day support, guidance, reassurance, and practical assistance offered by Placement Mentors constitute what Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) term 'proximal processes' (*Figure 6*). These processes likely catalyse interns' professional development and cultivate a nurturing environment conducive to their social inclusion. Critically, Placement Mentors transcend their role as mere professional guides by actively fostering social inclusion through inclusive gestures, such as organising social events and team outings. While mentor support is crucial, it must be carefully balanced, as evidenced when Paffers expressed he would have liked to have participated more during a placement, however his Placement Mentor did some of the tasks for him (Data 140). Paffers' experience challenges Zylbersztejn et al.'s (2022) assumption that more support is inherently better and points towards the need for Supported Internships to balance fostering interns' autonomy with formal mentorship. This delicate balance is complemented by another form of interpersonal support - the alumni network.

Through the lens of the PPCT-EP model mesotime perspective (*Figure 6*) (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006), the alumni network was identified as an important interpersonal support system, where current Project SEARCH interns broadened their disabled network through encounters with former interns employed at the host hospital, occurring informally in corridors and formally through alumni gatherings. These connections, aligning with Simplican et al.'s (2015) framework of relationship depth, spanned multiple levels of intimacy - from casual

acquaintances to close friendships, and in Holly's case, an intimate partnership - supporting McVilly et al.'s (2006b) assertion that varied relationship types strengthen network belonging and social inclusion. Building on research by Cummins and Low (2003), Hall (2009) and Nash (2005), the shared experiences between current and former interns created a foundation of trust and reciprocity, fostering confidence development among interns with similar identities and lived experiences, manifesting through various channels from shared commutes to alumni group participation. The evolution of alumni into mentor figures aligns with Shpungin et al.'s (2012) principles of peer mentoring, as former interns effectively applied their employment experiences to support current participants, often extending beyond designated roles to work alongside current interns in various placements. These findings extend Rillotta and Nettelbeck's (2007) research on the significance of broad social connections for disabled people, demonstrating how Supported Internships facilitate organic, sustained support networks that transcend formal programme structures, creating lasting interpersonal support systems among current interns.

These peer dynamics emerged as 'interpersonal system' (*Figure 6*) mediators of social inclusion. Hurricane's growing friendship with Paffers illustrates this - despite knowing each other since the age of eleven and living nearby, they never met outside of education. However, through the programme's classes and alumni group, their relationship deepened to the point where they planned their first social meeting in the community (Data 107). These peer relationships demonstrated lasting and reciprocal qualities, aligning with Asselt et al.'s (2013, 2015) relationship framework, and extended beyond the educational setting into both private and public spaces. The Simplican et al. (2015) framework provides valuable insight for interpreting these findings as deepened social inclusion, particularly in how these peer connections enabled broader community participation. This was evidenced through interns engaging in shared social activities such as shopping, weekend outings, and meeting in town. While these outcomes support Haegele and Maher's (2021) findings on relationship-building among young disabled people with shared experiences and McPherson et al.'s (2001) homophily theory, this research reveals how peer relationships can evolve from shared experiences into rich, community-integrated social connections.

This study illuminates the complex role of families as another 'interpersonal system' (*Figure 6*) mediator of interns' social inclusion. The data contains accounts of a nuanced duality in

family influence, serving as enabling and disabling interpersonal systems in interns' social inclusion journeys. This is exemplified in Hurricane's (Data 149) reflection that his work independence could help change his home situation: since his mother was sceptical of his workplace capabilities, having others confirm his independent accomplishments might convince her to grant him more freedom at home. These experiences align with Clement and Bigby's (2009) assertion about the varying impacts of family perspectives on social inclusion. The study's data emphasises that active parental involvement, particularly in Employment Planning Meetings within the Supported Internship, is important for mediating interns' social inclusion. As Eunie's parents (Data 151) noted the programme provided family support, with the Tutor being accessible, responsive, and proactive in addressing concerns before they escalate. These meetings, representing mesosystem interactions (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), facilitate connections between family and internship microsystems. The study however also reveals a discrepancy between interns' independence within the Supported Internship and the constraints they face at home. This finding resonates with Bronfenbrenner's (1986) concept of ecological transitions, emphasising the challenges people face when navigating different microsystems with varying expectations and support. It also underscores the need for a holistic social inclusion approach that extends beyond the Supported Internship, encouraging families to foster consistent, supportive environments across various ecological systems. Greater family involvement and natural supports are strongly associated with increased community participation for learning-disabled people (Verdonschott et al., 2009; Amado et al., 2013; Foley et al., 2014).

To summarise this section, this study illuminates the roles of multiple actors within the interns' 'interpersonal system' (*Figure 6*) as mediators of social inclusion in Supported Internships. Job Coaches emerge as facilitators of mesosystem interactions that broaden interpersonal relationships and deepen workplace participation, while Tutors serve as bridges between classroom learning and workplace application, embodying 'boundary crossing' (Tanggaard, 2007) to enhance interns' personal, professional, and physical development. Work Placement Mentors, though often overlooked in prior research, mediate day-to-day social inclusion and foster workplace belonging, while the alumni network creates organic support systems based on shared experiences, often evolving into mentoring relationships that benefit current participants. Peer relationships among current interns extend beyond the educational setting into broader community participation through shared social activities and deepening

friendships. Family members play a complex dual role, both enabling and disabling social inclusion through their involvement in Employment Planning Meetings, with the study highlighting notable discrepancies between interns' experiences of independence at work versus home. These findings emphasise the intricate interplay of 'interpersonal system' (*Figure 6*) mediators in shaping interns' social inclusion experiences, underscoring the importance of considering the full ecological context in understanding and fostering social inclusion within Supported Internships, and setting the stage for exploration of organisational ecological system pathways in the next section.

Organisational ecological system

This section examines the second inner contextual (C) layer, the 'Organisational system,' within the PPCT-EP model (*Figure 6*). It focusses on the organisational structure of the Supported Internship and the hospital as the host business for the programme and how they mediate interns' social inclusion. The organisational system structure (Simplican et al., 2015) of Supported Internships varies across England and likely mediates the depth and breadth of interns' social inclusion, while some programmes operate on a part-time or blended basis between colleges and businesses (CGR, 2020; Stacey and Dewey, 2024), the Project SEARCH model examined here maximises workplace immersion through full-time, on-site participation. This approach is central to breaking down traditional barriers to employment for learning-disabled young people. The immersive nature of Project SEARCH (2022) manifests through daily workplace participation, with interns completing three distinct ten-week placements. This structure represents their primary avenue for community participation (Purvis et al., 2012), and its impact is evident in participants' responses. As Hurricane (Data 158) explained he never had any experience in the workplace and was even rejected from volunteering opportunities. This testimony underscores how the programme's immersive approach addresses the exclusion many young learning-disabled people face when seeking work experience. The emphasis on diverse workplace exposure through multiple placements further strengthens this model's effectiveness, supporting Edwards and Bunn's (2022) findings about successful Supported Internship elements. This comprehensive approach is particularly important given the compound challenges these young people face – not only the historical barriers to education and employment for people with disabilities but also the additional disruptions caused by COVID-19 lockdowns. By providing structured, immersive experiences, Project SEARCH's (2022) model directly tackles these accumulated disadvantages. The programme's full-time,

varied placement structure serves as an approach for overcoming both long-standing systemic barriers and recent pandemic-related setbacks. However, while the placement structure advances community participation, other organisational system factors of the Supported Internship mediate interns' social inclusion.

A further 'organisational system' (*Figure 6*) pathway mediating the breadth of interpersonal relationships pertains to the educational provider's role. Through a 'chronosystem' (*Figure 6*) lens (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), time-related elements shaped the interns' social interactions and relationship development. The ethnographic data revealed that pre-existing relationships among the interns, stemming from their shared educational background at the same special school, limited the broadening of new interpersonal relationships within the Supported Internship. As Princess Glitter (Data 100) expressed she was in the same class with the same set of young people for most of her life, aspiring to meet other interns of different ages similar to another Supported Internship programme she had visited. This observation aligns with Beyer et al.'s (2013) finding that the type of educational institution offering the Supported Internship, whether a school or college, influences the eligibility criteria for young people diagnosed with SEND participating in these programmes. The Supported Internship in this study, operated by a special school holding a Project SEARCH license, enrolled students for a one-year programme designed for 18-year-olds. In contrast, Beyer et al. (2008) examined Supported Internships delivered by Further Education colleges, which typically have broader age-based enrolment criteria, usually accepting people between eighteen and twenty-five years old (Beyer and Kaehne, 2008). This age restriction not only affected the programme's capacity—Müller and VanHuyzn (2010) noted that most Project SEARCH Supported Internship cohorts included ten to twelve interns, compared to the six in this study—but likely reduced pathways for interns to broaden their interpersonal relationships with peers of various ages which according to Bigby (2008) is an important element in the breadth of a person's network.

The programme's 'organisational system' pathway (*Figure 6*) enabled interns to expand their networks beyond their immediate peer group by connecting with interns from other Supported Internship programmes. This value was captured in Holly's written reflection (Data 108), where she described enjoying meeting and exchanging contact information with an intern from a different programme. These connections occurred through in-person visits and virtual platforms like the Project SEARCH Youth Advisory Group. Arjuice described this broader

engagement as feeling part of something bigger, looking forward to meeting other interns across the UK (Data 110). While these relationships were often temporary due to geographic distance, they improved interns' development of social skills, self-confidence, and sense of community belonging. This challenges Simplican et al.'s (2015) emphasis on sustained relationships, as even brief, intensive interactions through structures like the National Project SEARCH Youth Advisory Group meetings fostered social capital development and identity formation within the disabled community. These organisational connections, viewed through the PPCT-EP framework (*Figure 6*), demonstrate how structured networking opportunities, despite their temporary nature, contribute to interns' social inclusion and personal development.

The 'organisational system' (*Figure 6*) structure of the Supported Internship mediated social inclusion through combined classroom learning with immersive work experiences. Following the Project SEARCH model outlined by Davis et al. (2021), the programme's structure was organised around a consistent daily pattern: morning classroom preparation (9:00-10:00), workplace immersion (10:00-15:00), and afternoon reflection (15:00-16:00). The morning classroom sessions established a foundation for daily engagement and social inclusion, as evidenced by Holly's (Data 98) observation during her Employment Planning Meeting where she suggested it was important for her to get in the right frame of mind before starting her placement. These dedicated morning spaces served dual purposes: delivering a formal employability curriculum while simultaneously creating what Hall (2010) terms a disabled space where interns could develop mutual support networks and friendships. From the perspective of Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (2000) bioecological model, these regular classroom sessions served as proximal processes facilitating the interns' social development, aligning with Simplican et al.'s (2015) framework which emphasising the importance of consistent engagement in fostering social inclusion.

The core work placement period represented the primary arena for community participation, occurring in mainstream environments, an approach that Verdonschot et al.'s (2009) research suggests deepens community participation for learning-disabled interns compared to segregated initiatives such as sheltered employment programmes. The 'organisational' (*Figure 6*) structure ensured interns were treated as staff members, receiving privileges commensurate with their colleagues. The programme's design incorporated three distinct ten-week placements throughout the year, exposing interns to various roles and departments within the host

organisation, broadening both their skill sets and interpersonal relationships. This immersive exposure was particularly significant for interns who, like Hurricane, had never been in the workplace before, providing them with broad work experiences that Edwards and Bunn (2022) emphasise as crucial for the success of Supported Internships. The emphasis on authentic roles encompassing productive activities aligned with real-life business needs, such as patient care, Modern Housekeeping (May, 2013), sterilisation of medical equipment, and patient transportation services, enhanced the interns' sense of purpose and belonging within the organisation.

The afternoon reflective sessions completed the daily structure of the Supported Internship by providing a space for processing workplace experiences, aligning with Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory and Gibbs' (1988) Reflective Cycle. These sessions facilitated self-reflection and documentation of daily work experiences, enabling interns to actively construct meaning and develop metacognitive abilities for self-directed learning and self-advocacy – key components of social inclusion as noted by Wehmeyer and Shogren (2016). This integrated structural approach is beneficial for learning-disabled people (Kang and Martin, 2018), equipping interns with employability skills and socio-emotional competencies, as demonstrated by Hurricane's (Data 111) recognition that the support extended beyond just work skills to help his overall personal development. The 'organisational system' (*Figure 6*) structure thus created what Biggs (1999) terms 'Constructive Alignment,' where theoretical knowledge, practical application, and structured reflection worked together to support interns' development, creating multiple touchpoints for learning and social interaction. This balanced approach enabled interns to gradually build confidence, skills, and social connections while maintaining access to necessary support systems, effectively mediating their social inclusion through a comprehensive framework that balanced supported learning environments with mainstream workplace settings.

Although Supported Internships are based within a range of businesses (DFN Project SEARCH, 2022a), this study found specific 'organisational system' (*Figure 6*) pathways associated with the hospital in mediating interns' social inclusion. The hospital, as a mainstream organisational setting for the Supported Internship programme, played a role in mediating social inclusion for young learning-disabled people through its distal processes (Bronfenbrenner, 1999) and its distinct spatial organisation. This represented an ecological

transition (Bronfenbrenner, 1979b) as interns moved from segregated special school environments, where education is limited to students with formal SEND diagnoses and EHCPs (Ebenbeck et al., 2022), to a diverse public workplace. Unlike their previous educational settings where interactions were primarily with peers sharing similar disability experiences (Emerson and Hatton, 2014), leading to segregated interpersonal relationships (Simplican et al., 2015) and homogeneous social networks throughout adolescence (Holt et al., 2017), the hospital's organisational structure - with its diverse population of staff, patients, and visitors - created numerous opportunities for broader social engagement. This was evidenced by Eunie (Data 77) who contrasted his current workplace with his previous school environment, noting how the work setting was more diverse and inclusive - it was a mainstream, larger environment open to everyone, rather than being limited to students diagnosed with SEND - reflecting what Bronfenbrenner (1976, 1977b, 1977c) described as an ecological transition. The hospital environment facilitated what Bigby and Wiesel (2011) and Wiesel et al. (2013) term community encounters, with Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (2006) concept of microtime evident in how repeated casual encounters developed into meaningful connections. These broadened social networks, ranging from brief encounters to sustained relationships, align with Simplican et al.'s (2015) conceptualisation of social inclusion and expand Hanson et al.'s (2021) findings about Supported Internships' role in broadening participants' interpersonal relationships, while increasing opportunities for emotional, informational, and instrumental support (Forrester-Jones et al., 2006).

The hospital's 'organisational system pathway' (*Figure 6*) structure and physical layout mediated interns' social inclusion through its spatial characteristics, with the environment divided into clinical and non-clinical spaces that each offered opportunities for interaction and community participation. This spatial classification, emerging from observations of how interns interacted with and ascribed meaning to different areas, aligns with Warf and Arias's (2009) insights on space-place dynamics, where clinical spaces associated with medical procedures mediated professional relationships while non-clinical areas like cafeterias and communal spaces served as informal social arenas reminiscent of community establishments. The hospital's 24/7 operational nature created a rich tapestry of social interactions through multiple shift patterns, aligning with Granovetter's (1973) weak ties theory as interns engaged with diverse staff across temporal boundaries, while the continuous flow of patients and visitors exposed them to broader societal cross-sections, supporting Putnam's (2000) conception of

workplaces as societal microcosms. Supporting Lacanna et al.'s (2018) concept of 'conviviality,' these informal spaces facilitated spontaneous interactions and casual discussions that built community connections. This was highlighted by Hurricane's (Data 26) observation about how his relationship with the space had transformed - from being a former patient to now seeing the hospital environment from a completely different perspective, even noting he had spent more Christmas periods there than at home. This personal account exemplifies the transformation of the hospital from a space of discomfort to one of belonging, demonstrating Bronfenbrenner's (1976, 1977b, 1977c) concept of ecological transition while aligning with Low and Altman's (1992) theory of place attachment as interns developed deep connections transcending the hospital's functional role. Although this social ecosystem faced challenges including sensory sensitivities to environmental conditions and infrastructure limitations such as the absence of dedicated learning spaces, which constrained programme scalability as noted by Purvis et al. (2012). Through sustained community participation across these varied spatial contexts - from classrooms serving as preparatory microsystem pathways to workplace placements acting as transformative mesosystems and alumni groups bridging past and present experiences - interns forged interpersonal relationships within their placement areas and the broader hospital community. This supports Lawrence (1992) and Hummon's (1992) observations about collective workplace attachment while building upon recent research on social spaces (Kersten et al., 2022) and places of encounters (Oldenburg, 1989; Soszynski et al., 2021) to reveal how diverse spatial contexts collectively mediated meaningful community participation for young people on the SEND register (Slee, 2018) through their varied socio-spatial pathway conditions.

Building upon the concept of space and place, from Theme Two and its sub theme 'Disabled Relationships,' (*Figure 16*) the role of semi-segregated spaces within the hospital, particularly the alumni group, mediated interns' social inclusion. This group, comprising only current and former interns, met weekly in the hospital canteen, serving multiple functions including cultivating belonging and identity, facilitating transition to mainstream settings, providing ongoing support, and broadening interpersonal relationships. Engagement in semi-segregated activities offer learning-disabled people opportunities to develop a sense of belonging, confidence, and group identity (Blake et al., 2021), which Hall (2013) suggests augments an individual's ability to transition to and actively participate in mainstream settings. From a 'mesotime' perspective (*Figure 6*) (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006), the alumni group

provided regular proximal processes for current and past interns to interact, bolstering their confidence to engage collectively outside the group and participate in community outings. Moreover, the group functioned as a community participation nexus, allowing the Job Coach and Tutor to maintain communication with former interns, aligning with the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion's (2012) recommendations for sustained graduate engagement which likely sustains social inclusion affirmations. However, there are limitations of segregated spaces, as they may inadvertently reinforce societal divisions and hinder inclusion in mainstream settings (Putnam, 2000). While interns reported that these spaces provided a sense of belonging and support, their overemphasis could impede the development of mainstream, inclusive environments and perpetuate marginalisation. Therefore, the data from this study suggest that a balanced approach fostering semi-segregated and mainstream community participation arenas within Supported Internships is important to ensure the holistic development and empowerment of learning-disabled people in mediating social inclusion. This nuanced understanding of the role of semi-segregated spaces within the hospital setting highlights the complex interplay between organisational structure pathways mediating interns' social inclusion.

To summarise this section, the 'organisational system' pathway (*Figure 6*) of the Supported Internship and hospital mediated interns' social inclusion in multiple ways. Following Project SEARCH's (2022) model, the programme's three ten-week placements and daily structure of classroom preparation, workplace participation, and reflection created opportunities for skill development and interpersonal relationship building. The hospital's organisational structure further mediated interns' social inclusion by facilitating what Bigby and Wiesel (2011) term community encounters through its diverse environment and spatial organisation, contrasting interns' previous segregated education at a special school. While the educational provider's role sometimes limited relationship breadth due to age restrictions of the Supported Internship and pre-existing peer groups, semi-segregated spaces like the alumni group helped balance mainstream participation, supporting interns' transition to, and engagement with, inclusive environments. Building upon this analysis of organisational systems, the next section examines how the community system mediates interns' social inclusion.

Community ecological system

This section examines the penultimate ecological context (C) within the PPCT-EP synthesis model (*Figure 6*), focusing on community system pathways that mediate interns' social inclusion. Community systems being the broader environmental and social conditions that influence social inclusion. A recurring community pathway reported by the interns was transport. Through daily commuting on public transport to the Supported Internship, interns developed interpersonal relationships with fellow hospital workers. Arjuice (Data 78) explained that he formed casual friendships with regular bus commuters who worked at the hospital, leading to friendly conversations during their commute and when they crossed paths at work. This conceptualisation of transport as a 'third place' builds upon existing literature that emphasises public transport's role in facilitating community participation and social inclusion for disabled people (Mwaka et al., 2024; Sven et al., 2022). While recent initiatives in sustainable transportation aim to provide equal access for all community members regardless of income, age, or disability (Kunskaja and Budzynski, 2024), implementation often falls short, exacerbating social exclusion when transportation systems are inadequate (Lucas and Jones, 2012; Bezyak et al., 2020). Several barriers undermined the potential of transport as a social inclusion mediator, including restricted bus pass times preventing free travel before 9:30am, unreliable services particularly in rural areas, and negative encounters with bus drivers. Holly's (Data 174) experience illustrated these difficulties, as she described arriving late, physically uncomfortable and distressed before her day had even begun. These limitations likely constrain interns' future ability to maintain employment but also restricted their access to broader social opportunities such as hobbies and community activities, affecting their autonomy, interpersonal relationships, and physical activity levels through reduced active commuting (Patterson et al., 2018; Cvijetić et al., 2021; Velho, 2019). While some interns reported positive interactions that broadened their social networks, aligning with research on public transport's role in facilitating community encounters (Bigby and Wiesel, 2011; Wiesel et al., 2013), the various barriers they encountered demonstrate that achieving inclusive transport requires addressing infrastructural and attitudinal challenges. This disconnect between sustainability intentions and the reality faced by disabled people (Sevenko-Kozlovska et al., 2022; Hulse et al., 2010) highlights the need to address these distal, ecological, community system disparities to foster deep social inclusion for all members of society.

The transport findings powerfully exemplify the dynamic processes theorised in the PPCT-EP synthesis model (Chapter 2: Figure 6). Transport emerges as both a literal pathway - the physical movement through space and time - and as a metaphorical conduit for social connection, demonstrating how the person (P), contextual (C), and temporal (T) elements of PPCT interact to shape process (P) outcomes. Through this lens, the contrasting experiences of Arjuice (Data 78) and Holly (Data 174) illustrate how social inclusion pathways are constructed or constrained through the complex interplay between system levels. When positive alignment occurs between intrapersonal characteristics (e.g., Arjuice's capacity for social interaction), organisational structures (workplace schedules and colleague presence), and community systems (accessible transport infrastructure), transport functions as an effective mediator for both broadening and deepening social inclusion. Conversely, when misalignment occurs across these ecological levels - as evidenced in Holly's experience where personal support needs conflicted with inflexible transport schedules and organisational requirements - the pathway becomes compromised, potentially catalysing social exclusion. This analysis extends beyond traditional linear models of causation to reveal how participation in social life is shaped by the dynamic interaction between personal, organisational, and community ecological contexts, thereby empirically validating the 'EP' (Ecological-Pathways) theoretical synthesis. The transport pathway thus serves as a crucial empirical demonstration of how social inclusion outcomes emerge through the complex orchestration of multi-level system interactions rather than through isolated contextual or personal factors.

Socio political ecological system

This section examines how broader societal systems and policies affect the social inclusion of learning-disabled interns, focusing specifically on what Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) call distal processes - the indirect ways that large-scale 'socio-political system' pathways (*Figure 6*) shape young people's experiences. Research by Allott and Hicks (2016) reveals that Supported Internships receive less recognition, funding, and awareness than traditional apprenticeships, despite Ofsted's (2015) endorsement of them as a valid alternative. Many people in the hospital environment, including patients, visitors, and staff, demonstrated limited knowledge about Supported Internships, as shown through Paffer's interactions where people often compared them to the more familiar concept of apprenticeships. The findings suggest that strengthening the legislative framework around Supported Internships could address this recognition gap by raising the programme's public profile and creating more favourable

conditions across all levels of society. Such enhanced legal recognition would likely encourage more organisations to offer internship placements, thereby increasing opportunities for learning-disabled young people to participate in the workforce and ultimately achieve deep social inclusion in their communities. This need for stronger legislative support becomes more apparent when examining specific administrative shortfalls.

The administrative challenges within the current 'socio-political system' (*Figure 6*) are evident in issues about the prevalence of outdated Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) for all interns, despite their status as a mandatory requirement for Supported Internship participation (DfE, 2013). This discrepancy between policy and practice creates barriers to support, as evidenced by all interns who reported that their EHCP was out-of-date and failed to reflect their current circumstances and needs. The impact of this administrative shortfall is far-reaching, with the Job Coach and Tutor reporting EHCPs outdated by up to five years, limiting their ability to understand interns' needs and secure appropriate placements. This lack of current information reflects recent national reports by NAO (2024) and undermines the provision of timely and appropriate support, a pathway important for mediating social inclusion among participants (as identified in the Interpersonal System section). The situation points to maladministration by the Local Authority, contravening established policies such as DfE (2015) Regulation 22 of the SEND Code of Practice, which mandates regular EHCP updates through annual reviews and timely amendments. Such socio-political systemic failures not only compromise the effectiveness of the Supported Internship but also align with broader concerns raised by Ofsted (2021) and Azpitarte (2023) regarding local authorities' neglect of statutory duties in supporting people diagnosed with SEND. These findings collectively underscore the need for socio-political system reforms to address EHCP management issues, ensure compliance with legal obligations, and ultimately enhance pathways for interns' social inclusion. Beyond administrative inefficiencies, deeper structural barriers emerge when examining EHCP requirements as a gateway to support.

Paradoxically, legislative frameworks intended to facilitate inclusion often inadvertently perpetuate marginalisation (Quinn and Doyle, 2012; Vanhala, 2011). This manifests clearly in the EHCP mandate (DfE, 2013), which excludes people with SEN Support but without an EHCP limiting their access to workplace community participation, a concern echoed by Princess Glitter, who expressed a desire for a broader range of interns on the programme other

than those from her special school. Her comment underscores the need for more inclusive eligibility criteria and highlights how current ‘socio-political system’ (*Figure 6*) policies exacerbate existing disparities, particularly gender-based inequalities in SEND support provision. Official statistics reveal a gender gap, with 15.4% of boys receiving SEN assistance compared to 9.2% of girls, and 72% of pupils holding an EHCP are boys (Office for National Statistics, 2024), reflecting potential diagnostic biases and stigmatisation surrounding learning-disabled girls rather than actual prevalence differences (Loomes et al., 2017; Lundström et al., 2019). This gender imbalance is mirrored in Supported Internship programmes, as exemplified by this study’s cohort where 33% of participants were female, mirroring DFN Project SEARCH, (2023) broader supported internship programmes, underscoring the compounding effects of gender and disability-related barriers. While this study demonstrates the positive impact of Supported Internships in mediating social inclusion, their reach remains limited, with access often dependent on factors such as family social capital (Holt et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2024) and local authority discretion rather than individual needs, with Azpitarte (2023) aptly describing SEND provision as a ‘postcode lottery’. To advance social inclusion pathways and meet employment targets for disabled people (DfE, 2023), adopting a more flexible approach to Supported Internship eligibility, decoupled from EHCP status, could broaden access to community participation and align support provision with genuine needs rather than administrative requirements, ultimately enhancing the programme’s effectiveness in promoting social inclusion and employment opportunities for a wider range of people on the SEND register.

While systemic barriers to programmes access presented significant challenges, a further ‘socio-political’, ‘time’ specific force (*Figure 6*) (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006) disabling the social inclusion of Supported Internship participants was the COVID-19 pandemic. The data reinforces existing research (e.g., Amorim et al., 2020; Banks et al., 2021; Fancourt et al., 2020), demonstrating how lockdowns and restrictions exacerbated the social barriers faced by already vulnerable groups. For Supported Internship participants, this meant entering the programme with limited prior work experiences and reduced peer interactions, further hindering their social inclusion in the workplace from the outset. The nuanced findings reveal how well-intentioned ‘socio-political system’ (*Figure 6*) policies, such as COVID-19 PPE regulations (DHSC, 2020), had unintended yet pernicious disabling repercussions on interns’ social inclusion, illustrating the ‘bidirectional’ (*Figure 6*) influences within Bronfenbrenner and Morris’ (2006) ecological systems theory. A poignant example identified from a

serendipitous encounter with an alumni intern who shared COVID-19 face masks created communication barriers, as they prevented her from reading lips and understanding what others were saying (Data 67). These barriers impacted the intern's ability to form and maintain interpersonal relationships in the workplace; key components of social inclusion (Simplican et al., 2015). The research thus unveils the complex interplay between macro-level socio-political systems and individual experiences, highlighting how systemic ecological pathways can create multi-layered obstacles to social inclusion for Supported Internship participants. These obstacles manifested in reduced opportunities for interns' workplace socialisation, limited face-to-face interactions with colleagues, and challenges in accessing the informal interpersonal relationships important for developing a sense of belonging and inclusion within their placements.

Chronosystem: Social Inclusion Beyond the Supported Internship

While previous sections of this chapter examined the Person (P) and contextual (C) system pathways that mediate interns' social inclusion across 'micro', 'meso', and 'macro' levels, this section discusses the temporal (T) component within the PPCT-EP model (*Figure 6*). The section draws upon Theme Five, 'Sustainability,' (*Figure 19*) and the two interconnected subthemes: 'programme sustainability' and the 'post-internship phase.' This temporal discussion reveals the complex dynamics mediating interns' long-term social inclusion.

Despite interns demonstrating employability skills and receiving positive employer feedback during their Supported Internship, barriers to employment transition persisted. The approaching end of the programme triggered heightened anxiety among participants, revealing a contrast between their proven workplace abilities and their psychological readiness for independent employment. While interns had successfully navigated three consecutive ten-week placements, five out of six participants expressed concerns about maintaining their professional momentum without formal support structures. This anxiety intensified during the job search phase, as shown by two interns experiences. Holly (Data 183) emphasised her reliance on support from Tutors and Job Coaches during placements, expressing fear about losing this support system in future employment. Meanwhile, Princess Glitter's (Data 179) confidence was shaken when she faced job rejections despite receiving positive feedback during her placements, leaving her feeling frustrated and confused about why she could not progress to interviews. These findings demonstrate that successful placement experiences and positive feedback may not sufficiently address the underlying barriers learning-disabled people face in

transitioning to independent employment, extending previous research by Moore et al. (2016) and Sung et al. (2023) on systemic barriers. The research reveals a critical gap between developing workplace competence and building the sustained confidence necessary for successful employment transitions; while also suggesting that despite positive internship experiences, entrenched employer attitudes and recruitment practices may continue to disadvantage learning-disabled candidates in competitive hiring processes.

The transition from supported placement to independent employment exposed several interlinked systemic pathway barriers that risked undermining interns' social inclusion progress. A key issue was the mismatch between practical workplace success and formal qualification requirements - a contradiction that worked against the Supported Internship programme's goals. This was illustrated by Arjuice (Data 178), who expressed frustration that his strong placement performance could not overcome his lack of formal GCSEs. This finding builds upon Wehman et al.'s (2018) research by illustrating how rigid formal qualification requirements effectively negate demonstrated workplace abilities, creating an often-insurmountable barrier to employment even after successful internship completion. The systemic nature of these barriers was further emphasised by the Job Coach's observation regarding employer saturation in departments, which illuminated the structural limitations of post-programme employment opportunities. This insight reinforces and extends CGR's (2020) findings about the critical need for expanded placement opportunities across diverse business sectors, suggesting a misalignment between programme outcomes and employment market realities.

The financial challenges posed a threat to interns' social inclusion, affecting current programme participation and future employment opportunities. The immediate, 'micro' (*Figure 6*) financial strain was highlighted by Holly, who described how the unpaid nature of the internship combined with daily transport costs created difficulties for her family (Data 172). The systemic nature of these financial barriers became more apparent through Paffers' (Data 173) perspective, as he noted the contrast with his previous educational experience - where he had received a bursary - versus the current programme where he neither earned money nor received financial support. These financial constraints represent compounding pathway barriers to both programme participation and future employment opportunities, extending Power's (2013) and Beyer and Robinson's (2009) research on structural barriers to social

inclusion by revealing the interconnected nature of financial support and programme effectiveness.

The programme faced a structural weakness in its inability to provide formal ongoing support after completion, creating a gap in helping interns transition to sustainable employment and social inclusion. While the Tutor (Data 174) tried to help former students informally, when possible, she recognised this was not a viable long-term solution, as the accumulation of new cohorts each year made continued support increasingly unmanageable. This insight extends Landmark et al.'s (2010) and Beyer's (2012) research by revealing how informal support networks necessarily develop to address formal support gaps, while simultaneously highlighting the unsustainable nature of ad hoc solutions. The Tutor emphasised (Data 182) the ongoing nature of support needs, noting that employment does not eliminate disability-related challenges, and that the abrupt end of programme support makes the transition difficult after interns have become accustomed to consistent assistance. This recognition of learning-disabled peoples ongoing support needs challenges the assumption that programme completion equates to independence and sustained social inclusion. This aligns with the NAO (2024) findings, which showed lower rates of sustained education and employment among young people on the SEN register after age 18 compared to their peers without SEN.

This comprehensive analysis demonstrates that while the Supported Internship under study mediates the depth and breadth of interns' social inclusion during the programme period, maintaining these developments faces multifaceted challenges in the post-programme phase. The research suggests that current programme structures require reconceptualisation to incorporate formal post-programme support mechanisms, similar to the approach exemplified by the US Project SEARCH Supported Internship model's integration with vocational rehabilitation services (Oulvey et al., 2013; Christensen, 2015; Salimi et al., 2024). These findings emphasise the importance of viewing social inclusion through Bronfenbrenner's (1989) chronosystem lens, providing a deeper understanding of how temporal changes impact individuals' experiences and outcomes across multiple dimensions. This temporal (T) (*Figure 6*) perspective strongly supports and extends Purvis et al.'s (2012) and CGR's (2013) calls for more comprehensive support system pathways during the transition from Supported Internship to employment, suggesting the need for a more integrated and sustained approach to supporting learning-disabled young people in their journey toward employment and social inclusion.

Chapter Summary

The PPCT-EP (Figure 6) analysis has been effective because it integrates the unique strengths of both frameworks - incorporating Simplican et al.'s (2015) Ecological Pathways to social inclusion (EP) framework into Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (2006) Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model provides a focused lens for understanding how social inclusion manifests across ecological systems, while the additional emphasis on 'pathways' enhances the ability to trace the dynamic routes and mechanisms through which inclusion is achieved, thereby enabling this study to comprehensively map both the factors and processes that mediate social inclusion within Supported Internships. Starting with the 'person' system, the analysis demonstrated how interns' individual 'disposition' characteristics (such as self-motivation and sense of belonging), 'demand' characteristics (particularly disability-related factors), and 'resource' characteristics (including developing skills and experiences) shaped their social inclusion. Moving outward through the ecological contexts of the PPCT-EP Model (Figure 6), the discussion examined how 'interpersonal system pathways' (including Job Coaches, Tutors, Placement Mentors, alumni, peers, and family members) created supportive networks that enabled and disabled social inclusion. At the 'organisational system pathway' level (Figure 6), the analysis revealed how the Supported Internship's structure and the hospital's environment mediated inclusion through spatial arrangements and opportunities for diverse social interactions. Analysis of the 'community system pathway' (Figure 6) highlights how transport infrastructure and accessibility mediated broader social, community participation (Lucas and Jones, 2012; Mwaka et al., 2024), while the 'socio-political system pathway' (Figure 6) examination revealed how larger structural forces, including legislative frameworks and policy decisions, shaped inclusion pathways and barriers. Finally, through the 'chronosystem' lens (Figure 6), the discussion demonstrated the temporal dynamics affecting social inclusion sustainability beyond the Supported Internship period. This comprehensive PPCT-EP analysis (Figure 6) illuminated how social inclusion is mediated through multiple, interconnected system pathways, emphasising the need for holistic approaches that address barriers and enablers across all ecological systems to foster meaningful and sustainable social inclusion for young learning-disabled people.

Chapter 7: Conclusion of the interns' social inclusion experiences

This final chapter brings together the key findings and implications from this ethnographic study focussed on the factors mediating social inclusion for six learning-disabled interns on a Supported Internship programme. The chapter begins by addressing the research gap identified in the Supported Internship literature, particularly the lack of intern perspectives and the predominant focus on employment outcomes rather than broader social inclusion experiences. The chapter then presents three main areas of contribution: methodological innovation through ethnographic approaches in Supported Internship research, theoretical advancement through the synthesis of PPCT-EP framework (Figure 6), and a critical examination of evaluative measures for Supported Internships that challenges the current singular focus on employment outcomes. Building on these contributions, the chapter provides detailed recommendations across all levels of the PPCT-EP framework (Figure 6), from person-centred approaches to sociopolitical system pathway considerations. The discussion then explores future research directions, including community systems investigation, comparative policy analysis, organisational system framework studies, and longitudinal, chronosystem research to understand long-term outcomes. The chapter concludes with a critical examination of the study's limitations and ethnographic reflections, before ending with insights directly from the interns themselves about their social inclusion experiences.

The lacuna in Supported Internship Research

The literature review revealed gaps in research on Supported Internships (also known as transition to work programmes in the USA), particularly within the UK context, where studies are predominantly evaluative and consist largely of grey literature. A notable example is CGR's (2020) evaluation, which lacks both methodological transparency and intern perspectives while operating from an unstated yet arguably neoliberal orientation which privileges paid employment outcomes. This approach stands in marked contrast to the present study's explicit ontological positioning and theoretical framework. This narrow focus on employment metrics is further exemplified in the broader research landscape, with studies like Wehman et al. (2020) primarily examining employment outcomes, an emphasis that aligns with the Department for Education's (DfE, 2022, p. 1) singular evaluative 'measure of success of a Supported Internship' defined as 'a transition to sustained and paid employment.' While Hanson et al.'s (2021) small-scale study begins to challenge this limited perspective by suggesting broader social inclusion implications for learning-disabled young people, their investigation provides scope for greater depth of understanding regarding the underlying mechanisms of inclusion. In response, this study addresses this knowledge gap by amplifying the voices of learning-disabled young

people and examining the systemic factors that mediate their social inclusion during Supported Internships within a complex ecological framing. Using an inductive, ethnographic research design underpinned by a Person, Process, Context Time and Ecological Pathways (PPCT-EP) approach (Figure 6), the research provides rich descriptions that illuminate the processes mediating social inclusion.

Shaping and influencing the social inclusion of interns

Focussing on the first aim of this thesis, to describe from a social inclusion standpoint, in a rich and illustrative way a long running, supported internship programme, this research shows how a partnership between a special school and a large public hospital has created a comprehensive learning environment through a structured daily cycle of learning. The programme implements a tripartite daily structure: beginning with theoretical employability instruction, followed by five hours of hands-on placement experience, and concluding with guided reflection. This pedagogical approach, reflective of Dewey's (1938) experiential learning theory and Kolb's (1984) reflective cycle, creates a systematic framework for learning within a healthcare setting serving over 1 million individuals annually and employing 13,000 staff. Through the Supported Internship's adaptation of the Project SEARCH model for 18-year-old students with a SEND diagnosis, the programme demonstrates how structured workplace learning across varied placements, including cleaning, portering, catering, and equipment sterilisation, facilitates both vocational and social inclusion development. The programme's outcomes are quantifiable through the 100% employment rate of the previous cohort, while simultaneously addressing broader dimensions of social inclusion and personal development that extend beyond employment metrics.

Focussing on the second aim, to map changes to the depth and breadth of social inclusion as experienced by interns, this research shows how interns' social inclusion evolved across multiple ecological system pathways. The findings reveal changes in interns' interpersonal relationships and community participation as they navigated new environmental contexts. Within their expanding microsystem, community participation broadened as interns engaged in mainstream workplace environments through tailored, authentic placements—representing a significant ecological transition from their previous experiences. The depth of their microsystem engagement intensified over time, with interns developing more complex patterns of interaction within their workplace settings. This ecological expansion extended beyond the

workplace, with interns showing increased participation across other community systems, demonstrated by their independent navigation of public transport, pursuit of hobbies, and social activities with peers in their local area. The evolution of interpersonal relationships further illustrates the ecological transition. Previously, interns' microsystem was largely confined to special school settings where their social network primarily consisted of disabled peers. However, their participation in the Supported Internship created new mesosystem connections, exposing them to diverse interpersonal relationships including support staff (Tutors and Job Coaches), Placement Mentors, hospital employees, fellow interns, programme alumni, and members of the public including patients and visitors. These relationships varied in proximity and influence within their ecological systems, but strong proximal processes developed with fellow interns, mentors, and support staff, characterised by reciprocity and regular interaction. The development of these natural support systems through workplace relationships demonstrates how the expansion of interns' ecological systems can support future employment prospects. For learning-disabled people, these microsystem and mesosystem connections are important ecological pathways for reducing social isolation and fostering sustainable social inclusion through continued participation in broader ecological contexts.

Focussing on the third aim which concerns, understanding, from an ecological stance, the processes which mediate the depth and breadth of social inclusion, this research shows how multiple interconnected system pathways simultaneously enable and disable social inclusion. By developing and applying the PPCT-EP model (Figure 6) framework, this research demonstrates how individual characteristics, including work capacity and motivation, influence an intern's ability to engage with Supported Internships. The analysis unveiled the important role of interpersonal system relationships with Job Coaches, workplace mentors, colleagues, and family members in creating supportive networks, while community system level pathways such as local attitudes and transport accessibility shaped inclusion depth. Organisational system, particularly the hospital's workplace culture and the Supported Internship's immersive programme structure within a mainstream environment, identified as an enabling inclusion pathway, operating alongside broader sociopolitical system factors like Supported Internship legislative frameworks and the Covid-19 pandemic. This intricate web of influences illustrated that deep social inclusion requires simultaneous attention to multiple systemic pathway levels, where enabling elements in one system, such as supportive workplace relationships, help to overcome barriers in another. These findings emphasise that while individual factors remain important, as highlighted by the PPCT-EP model, sustainable social

inclusion depends on addressing barriers and leveraging opportunities across all system pathway levels, suggesting that Supported Internship programmes must adopt a holistic approach rather than focusing solely on isolated interventions.

Contribution

This study advances three key areas of knowledge: methodological approaches to Supported Internship research, theoretical understanding through the PPCT-EP framework, and alternative evaluative measures for Supported Internships. The following sections explore each of these contributions in detail.

Methodological advancement

This study makes a methodological contribution to the field of disability studies through its novel application of ethnographic methodology within a Supported Internship context. While ethnographic approaches have been employed in disability research, their application within Supported Internships represents an innovative advancement that centres the authentic voices and lived experiences of learning-disabled young people. Through sustained engagement over an academic year, I developed meaningful relationships with participants based on mutual trust and understanding, where young people felt empowered to share their experiences on their own terms. This relationship-centred approach, guided by strong axiological values (Mertens, 2009), prioritises the expertise and perspectives of learning-disabled young people in shaping how their social inclusion experiences are understood and represented in research. The longitudinal nature of the ethnographic immersion enabled young people to gradually take increasing ownership of how their experiences were represented in the research, challenging traditional power dynamics that have historically marginalised learning-disabled voices in academic research. This methodological approach demonstrates how sustained, relationship-based ethnographic engagement can reveal the nuanced ways that learning-disabled young people navigate, shape, and experience social inclusion within Supported Internships, while simultaneously providing a framework for conducting research that centres their perspectives and expertise regarding their own lives.

Theoretical development

This study makes a theoretical contribution through the development of the Person, Process, Context, Time-Ecological Pathways (PPCT-EP) model (Figure 6), which integrates components from Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (2006) Person-Process-Context-Time (PPCT)

(Figure 4) framework with Simplican et al.'s (2015) ecological pathways (EP) model (Figure 5) to better understand the processes mediating social inclusion for learning-disabled people. The PPCT-EP model builds upon Bronfenbrenner's work by incorporating elements of proximal processes and the temporal dimension, enabling analysis of how recurring interactions between learning-disabled people and their environments evolve over time. This temporal dimension allows examination of microtime (continuity of ongoing episodes), mesotime (frequency of these episodes over days and weeks), and macrotime (changing expectations and events across generations), while also emphasising the active role of learning-disabled individuals through their personal characteristics - including disposition, demand, and resource characteristics. The model then integrates Simplican et al.'s (2015) ecological system pathways approach to social inclusion, maintaining its focus on interpersonal, organisational, community, and socio-political pathways that affect learning-disabled people's inclusion experiences. By positioning the learning-disabled individual at the centre and acknowledging how personal characteristics and environmental system pathways continuously interact through bidirectional relationships, the PPCT-EP model enables researchers to track how proximal processes evolve across different ecological systems over time, examine both immediate and long-term impacts of inclusion interventions across multiple ecological levels, and study how temporal changes in any system affect learning-disabled people's social inclusion outcomes. This theoretical synthesis provides researchers and practitioners with a more nuanced analytical tool that captures the complex, dynamic nature of social inclusion development for learning-disabled people, making it valuable for both research design and practical interventions across various contexts.

Supported Internship evaluative measures

The findings of this study challenge the Department for Education's (2022) singular focus on employment outcomes as the measure of success for Supported Internships. While the DfE (2022, p. 1) states that 'the measure of success of a Supported Internship is a transition to sustained and paid employment', this reductive definition fails to recognise how these programmes create ecologies of belonging and transformation for learning-disabled people. The study reveals that viewing Supported Internships through a purely transactional, neoliberal lens – where success equals employment – profoundly misunderstands their educational and developmental nature, overlooking how these programmes foster environments where interns develop the confidence to ask questions, feel safe to take risks, and gradually open up to new possibilities. This ecology of belonging, which is synonymous with meaningful social

inclusion, creates the conditions necessary for personal transformation that extends far beyond employment metrics, as evidenced in interns' narratives of growing self-advocacy, deepening interpersonal relationships, and evolving self-concept. Such transformative experiences emerge from carefully cultivated environments that recognise and respond to each intern's individual journey, much like the way other educational programmes create supportive ecosystems for learner development. By advocating for a more comprehensive understanding of success, this study contributes to the growing body of literature that emphasises the need for a paradigm shift in evaluating Supported Internships (Hanson et al., 2021), as the DfE's (2022) singular focus on employment outcomes fails to recognise how the programme's ecology – its relationships, support structures, and opportunities for meaningful participation – creates the very conditions that make all forms of success possible. This limited evaluation framework not only risks overlooking the valuable progress and achievements made by learning-disabled people but fundamentally threatens to undermine the essential elements that make Supported Internships transformative learning experiences.

Biopsychosocial Ecological System Theory Recommendations

Analysis of the Supported Internship findings through a PPCT-EP lens (Figure 6) provides valuable insights for deepening learning-disabled people's social inclusion. While this study was conducted in a specific setting and does not claim broad generalisability, its findings can be relevant to similar contexts where readers identify comparable conditions. By systematically applying PPCT-EP principles (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006; Simplican et al., 2015) to examine how different environmental layers mediate social inclusion outcomes, this analysis offers practical recommendations for improving Supported Internship practice across various system levels.

Person

The findings reveal that interns actively mediate their own social inclusion through the person component of the PPCT-EP Model (Figure 6). Drawing on these insights, three person-centred recommendations are proposed to enhance interns' social inclusion.

- **Diverse Placement Experiences:** Open-mindedness towards diverse placement experiences broadens interpersonal relationships and helps acquire transferable skills (Lindsay et al., 2018). Engagement in varied work environments and tasks facilitates the development of multiple skills and professional connections.

- Public Transportation Independence: Utilising public transportation enhances independence, self-efficacy, and engagement in community settings (Beyer et al., 2016). Navigation of public transportation systems is crucial for accessing employment opportunities and participating in community activities. Mastery of this skill builds autonomy and confidence, contributing to social inclusion.
- Regular Self-Reflection: Regular self-reflection enables the setting of personalised targets for broadening and deepening social inclusion throughout the programme (Shogren et al., 2015). Structured opportunities for reflecting on experiences, challenges, and successes are valuable components. This reflective process develops greater self-awareness, problem-solving skills, and self-advocacy abilities. Personalised targets based on these reflections support ownership of the social inclusion journey. Collaboration with Supported Internship staff facilitates the sharing of reflections and goals.

Interpersonal system

This study's findings support the PPCT-EP Model (Figure 6) by demonstrating that the interpersonal system pathway mediated interns' social inclusion. This system encompasses formal support (Tutors, Job Coaches, and Placement Mentors) and informal support (peers and alumni) within the Supported Internship programme. Based on these findings, three interpersonal-system recommendations are proposed to deepen interns' social inclusion.

- Mesosystem Interactions Strengthening: To strengthen mesosystem interactions (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006), prioritise regular engagement between Tutors, Job Coaches, Placement Mentors and parents/guardians. This collaboration will create a supportive network around the intern, ensuring all parties work together to promote the intern's social inclusion and employability. Utilise effective communication strategies, such as EPM's, to ensure parents are well-informed about their child's progress.
- Community Participation Promotion: Promote community participation across a breadth of settings, with a focus on mainstream placement participation (Simplican et al., 2015). Strive to provide interns with opportunities to engage in specialised and mainstream community settings. While some interns may benefit from initial participation in supportive, specialised environments, the goal should be to support their transition to mainstream placements where they can interact with a diverse range of people and develop broader interpersonal relationships.

- Alumni Engagement: Engage alumni interns as mentors and role models to provide ongoing affirmation and motivation for current interns (Blake, 2021). Actively maintain connections with alumni and invite them to share their experiences, successes, and challenges with current interns. These mentoring relationships can provide guidance, inspiration, and a sense of belonging for current interns, ultimately enhancing their motivation and commitment to their social inclusion and employability goals.

Organisational system

This study's findings demonstrate that the organisational system component of the PPCT-EP Model (Figure 6) played a mediating role in interns' social inclusion. Specifically, this relates to the organisational system pathways of both the supported internship programme and the host hospital. Based on these findings, three organisational-level recommendations are proposed to deepen interns' social inclusion.

- Dedicated Classroom Space: Establish a classroom space for delivering an in-house employability curriculum to create an authentic, immersive experience (Wehman et al., 2012). This classroom setting is important to teach employability skills, discuss challenges and successes, and foster a sense of camaraderie among interns. By creating an immersive, supportive learning environment, organisations can help interns develop the knowledge and confidence needed to succeed in their placements and beyond.
- Diverse Placement Opportunities: Offer a breadth of placement opportunities, including externships, when necessary, to broaden interns' work placement community participation and ensure alignment with their skills and career aspirations. When an organisation's internal opportunities are limited, externships with partner organisations could be explored to ensure interns can access placements that align with their career aspirations.
- Fostering Social Integration: Integrate social activities into the workplace ecosystem to broaden and deepen interns' social networks. Encourage placements to involve interns in departmental social endeavours, cultivating a sense of belonging throughout their internship experiences.

Community system

This study found that the community system pathway of the PPCT-EP model (Figure 6) mediated interns' social inclusion. Based on these findings, three community-level recommendations are proposed to enhance interns' social inclusion.

- **Bus Travel Pass Revision:** Revise bus travel pass to remove financial barriers for interns commuting before 9:30am to education programmes. Collaborate with Supported Internships to highlight the impact of financial barriers on interns' ability to access education and employment opportunities.
- **Bus Driver Training:** Implement bus driver sensitivity training and awareness to contribute to a more inclusive and supportive transportation environment. Community transportation providers to partner with Supported Internships to develop and deliver training programmes that educate bus drivers about the needs of disabled people. These programmes should focus on promoting empathy, patience, and communication strategies, creating a welcoming and accessible transportation experience for all public members.
- **Supported Internship Expansion:** Encourage the establishment of more Supported Internships across various businesses to broaden social inclusion opportunities and enhance employability skills across diverse sectors (Wehman et al., 2018). Businesses in the community contact Supported Internships to host interns. By building a network of diverse placement partners, Supported Internships can offer interns a wider range of opportunities to develop their skills, interests, and interpersonal relationships, ultimately promoting greater social inclusion and employability.

Socio political system

This study found that the distal layer (the sociopolitical system pathway) of the PPCT-EP model (Figure 6) mediated interns' social inclusion. Based on these findings, three recommendations are proposed to further enhance social inclusion.

- **Success Criteria Revision:** Department for Education to revise Supported Internship success criteria to extend beyond employment outcomes at the end of the programme, recognising the value of personal and professional development, social inclusion (Simplican et al., 2015): interpersonal relationships and community participation. Policymakers and programme funders should take a more holistic approach to

evaluating the impact of Supported Internships, considering the various dimensions of development experienced by interns. By broadening the definition of success, stakeholders can create a more accurate and nuanced understanding of the programme's value and justify continued investment in these initiatives.

- Supported Employment Services Establishment: Establish supported employment services across all local authorities to ensure interns have access to ongoing support that facilitates the maintenance and attainment of employment (Wehman et al., 2012) and social inclusion. Policymakers should prioritise the creation of a comprehensive, integrated system of supported employment services that bridges the gap between Supported Internships (education) and long-term employment. By ensuring that interns have access to ongoing job coaching, mentoring, and advocacy services, local authorities can promote the sustainability of employment outcomes and prevent the erosion of skills, confidence and social inclusion gained during the programme.
- Flexibility in Supported Internship Design: Advocate for educational institutions to adopt a flexible approach when designing Supported Internships. This adaptability should cater to a wide spectrum of people. Recognise that full-time programmes may not always be feasible, as some young individuals may not aspire to seek full-time employment.

Recommendations for future research within the Supported Internship field

Drawing from this ethnographic study of a Supported Internship programme, four key directions emerge for future research using the PPCT-EP model (Figure 6).

Community Systems Investigation

While this study focused on organisational systems within the internship programme and hospital setting, future research should examine how broader community pathways influence social inclusion outcomes. This research would investigate how neighbourhood resources, local business networks, and community attitudes affect programme success and shape the experiences of participants as they transition into employment settings.

Sociopolitical Systems Comparative Analysis

Given the established presence of Supported Internships in the United States and its richer research base, comparative policy analysis between USA and English programmes is needed. This research should examine how different national approaches to disability employment policy, funding structures, and institutional frameworks influence programme implementation and social inclusion outcomes. Such analysis would provide valuable insights into how varying sociopolitical contexts shape programme effectiveness and could inform policy development in both nations.

Organisational Systems Framework Study

A detailed analysis should examine the organisational structures and system pathways that support internship delivery across different settings. This investigation would explore how institutional arrangements, inter-departmental relationships, and organisational culture influence programme implementation and outcomes. Understanding how different organisational models within the apprenticeship framework affect participant experiences and success rates would provide valuable insights for programme development. Such research could also illuminate the ways in which organisational systems either facilitate or create barriers to successful internship experiences.

Chronosystem Analysis through a Longitudinal Study

A comprehensive longitudinal study is needed to understand how time-related changes affect social inclusion outcomes for disabled young people participating in Supported Internships. This research should capture the experiences of participants who gain and maintain employment, those who secure but later leave employment, and those who do not complete the programme. The study would examine how support systems evolve over time, track changes in social inclusion patterns, and document the development of participants throughout their employment journey. Understanding these temporal aspects would provide crucial insights into the long-term effectiveness of Supported Internships and the sustainability of their outcomes.

Limitations

Whilst this qualitative, interpretative study has contributed to the understanding of how Supported Internships mediate the social inclusion of learning-disabled people, it is imperative to critically acknowledge its inherent limitations. Notably, the research design focused on

giving voice to learning-disabled young people. As much of the research on Supported Internships does not capture the voices of interns (for example, CGR, 2020; Purvis et al., 2021) and narrowly focusses on employment, the significance of a study which critically analyses interns' perspectives beyond the narrow ridge of employment should be acknowledged. That said, the field's interest in employment, also means that Tutors, Job Coaches, Placement Mentors, and wider family have also had little opportunity to share perspectives beyond the ontologically neoliberal focus on employment. Thus, there is further scope to explore in-depth other microsystem perspectives, such as parents, Tutors, Job Coaches, or Placement Mentors, who may offer alternative insights into how Supported Internships mediate social inclusion such as bidirectional influences. Furthermore, while the interns expressed trepidation and concerns regarding sustainability of outcomes post-supported internship, the data collection period did not extend beyond the internship itself. Thus, the insights regarding the future trajectory and maintenance of employment and social inclusion remain speculative. Future ethnographic studies may benefit from a greater extended data collection period that captures the experiences of individuals after completing the Supported Internship, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of its implication on social inclusion during this ecological transition.

The study's qualitative and interpretative nature should be analysed for what it does not achieve, as well as what it does. While the research provides rich, detailed insights into individual experiences and meanings attributed to social inclusion through Supported Internships, it should be acknowledged that the primary aim was not to derive universally generalisable conclusions. Although certain elements may exhibit transferability to similar contexts, this was not the central intent. The study illuminates the experiences and perspectives of a specific group of learning-disabled interns, offering valuable insights into how they negotiate and understand social inclusion. However, it is not designed to provide statistical evidence of programme effectiveness, measure quantifiable outcomes, or establish causal relationships between specific internship elements and social inclusion. Additionally, while the study reveals important patterns in how interns experience social inclusion, it cannot claim to represent the experiences of all learning-disabled young people in Supported Internships across different geographical, cultural, or institutional contexts. This limitation in scope, while intentional, suggests opportunities for future research to examine these patterns across broader populations and settings.

Ethnographic Reflections

This section evaluates the ethnographic research design, which proved transformative for me, offering an immersive approach that enabled active engagement with the interns throughout their participation. Through ethnography, I developed a deep and genuine rapport with the interns, witnessing firsthand the nuanced journey of their experiences over the programme's duration. The privilege of being present alongside them, observing their triumphs, challenges, and emotional responses as they unfolded, revealed insights that more detached methodological approaches simply could not capture. This sustained immersion, which often involved 'hanging out' in the Supported Internship space, fostered a deep trust between myself and the interns, empowering them to share their authentic social inclusion experiences, while allowing me to observe ecological transitions such as their moves from special school to Supported Internship and between various placements. The methodology's success extended beyond traditional ethnographic approaches, with walking interviews that the interns affectionately dubbed 'walkie talkies,' and their creative engagement in selecting pseudonyms (with 'Princess Glitter' emerging as a particular favourite of mine) demonstrating how the research process itself became a space for participant empowerment. These methodological choices transcended mere data collection, they created opportunities to observe proximal processes and ecological transitions (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) in situ, capturing lived experiences without distortion while developing thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of the context. The journey of conducting this ethnographic research has fundamentally shaped my understanding of both research methodology and the lived experiences of interns; walking alongside these young people, sharing in their daily experiences, and witnessing their growth through a chronosystem lens has deepened my appreciation for ethnography's unique power to illuminate voices that might otherwise remain unheard. This immersive approach has reinforced my conviction that understanding learning-disabled people's social inclusion requires more than observation, it demands presence, patience, and genuine engagement with participants' lived experiences, allowing the research to unfold organically through authentic immersion in the Supported Internship.

Conclusion

To conclude, this ethnographic inquiry into the lived experiences of six learning-disabled interns participating in a Supported Internship programme has yielded significant insights into the processes mediating social inclusion across ecological systems. By developing a Person, Process, Context, Time-Ecological Pathways (PPCT-EP) model, this study elucidates the

multifaceted system pathways that mediate social inclusion. The findings challenge the DfE (2022) reductive focus on employment outcomes as the sole measure of success, advocating instead for a holistic evaluation that recognises personal growth, skill development and social inclusion. This research contributes to the nascent literature on Supported Internships in the UK context, offering ecological implications that span individual, interpersonal, organisational, community, and sociopolitical pathway systems. These insights have the potential to inform policy and practice, reshaping the conceptualisation and implementation of Supported Internships. Furthermore, this study underscores the imperative for continued research, including longitudinal and comparative analysis, to build a more comprehensive evidence base. Ultimately, this investigation reinforces the critical role of Supported Internships in fostering social inclusion for learning-disabled people.

As this study is simply not possible without the interns' active engagement, the last words are from Hurricane:

We hope you have found this study about our Supported Internship experiences interesting and encourage you to share it so many can hear about all of the great things we get up to! [Hurricane, Written Response, 01.07.2023].



Figure 49 Group photo picturing the interns' and Wykeham

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Application of registration

To: Wykeham Bosworth- Nightingale

University of Derby

Dear Wykeham

The College Research Committee (CRC), has approved your application for registration.

The report and feedback can be viewed [here](#)

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact Bill Esmond.

We would like to take this opportunity to wish you every success with your research degree.

Appendix 2: Ethics form

Ethics ETH2122-3174: Wykeham Bosworth- Nightingale

Date Created	08 Mar 2022
Date Submitted	23 Jun 2022
Date of last resubmission	09 Aug 2022
Date forwarded to committee	30 Jun 2022
Researcher	Wykeham Bosworth- Nightingale
Student ID	100425133
Category	Postgraduate research student
Supervisor	Geraldene Codina
Project	An ethnographic study of a supported internship programme within a large private sector organisation: understanding ecologies of social inclusion.
College	College of Arts, Humanities and Education
Current status	Approved

Ethics application

Project information

Project title

An ethnographic study of a supported internship programme within a large public sector organisation: understanding ecologies of social inclusion.

What is the aim of your study?

Identify the ecological pathways present for social inclusion within a supported internship from the perspective of young people with disabilities.

What are the objectives for your study?

1. To describe in a rich and illustrative way, a long running, supported internship programme delivered in a large public sector organisation who work in collaboration with a college of Further Education.
2. Using an ecological systems approach, map changes to the depth and breadth of social inclusion as experienced by interns with learning disabilities whilst they are engaged in the supported internship programme at an important transition stage in their life course.
3. ☐ To understand the processes which mediate the depth and breadth of social inclusion as experienced by interns with disabilities with reference to identity, relationships, and workplace culture.

Are there any research partners (NOT including your supervisor) within the University of Derby involved in the project?

Are there any research partners external to the University of Derby involved in the project?
No

If yes, please provide details

Initial screening

Does this project involve human participants?

Yes

If yes, should your research adhere to the British Psychology Society (BPS) code of ethics and conduct?

No

Does your study involve data collection with any persons who could be considered vulnerable (under 18 years or the elderly, or those with physical or mental disabilities)?

Yes

Does your project involve collecting data within NHS organisations or from any NHS employees or patients?

No

Does it involve collecting or analysing primary or unpublished data about people who have died, other than data that is already in the public domain?

No

Does your study involve direct access to an external organisation?

Yes

Does your study involve species not covered by the Animals Scientific Procedures Act (1993)?

No

Does your study involve ionising radiation?

No

Does your study involve the evaluation of medical devices, or the testing of medicinal and pharmaceutical products?

No

Does your study involve Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service?

No

Does your study involve serving offenders, professionals who work with them, or questions relating to criminal offences?

No

Does your study involve a need to see, acquire or store material that could be viewed as illegal or that may attract the interest of the police, security or intelligence services?

No

Will your study have any impact on the natural or built environment?

No

Funding and previous applications

Has this research been funded by an external organisation (e.g. a research council or public sector body)?

No

If yes, please provide the name of funder:

Has this research been funded internally?

Yes

Name of internal fund

Post Graduate Research Studentships (PGRS) The PGR Student is enrolled and registered for the following [full-time] post graduate research degree at the University: [College of Arts, Humanities and Education, Ecologies of Social Inclusion] (the Research).

Funding amount

15609

Term of funding

The University awarded the bursary to fund my post graduate research as well as complete and submit a postgraduate research qualification with the University of Derby. The expectation of the bursary is for the ethnographer to commit a minimum of 1665 hours per year normally comprising 37 hours per week over 45 weeks each year to the Research.

Date funding agreed

22 Sept 2021

Have you submitted previous requests for ethical approval to the Committee that relate to this research project?

No

At any point during the study will you be alone in a room with a participant?

Yes

Do you have convictions that would disqualify you from undertaking a research project involving work with anyone under the age of 18?

No

Do you already have a DBS certificate (or Certificate of Good Conduct if based outside the U.K.)?

Yes

Are payments or rewards/incentives (e.g. participant points) going to be made to the participants?

No

Do you propose to carry out your project partly in a non-English language?

No

Research undertaken in public places

N/A all research will be undertaken within a public sector company and not within a public space.

Appendix 3: Ethics approval

University of Derby

Dear Wykeham

ETH2122-3174

Thank you for submitting your application to the College of Arts, Humanities and Education Research Ethics Committee, which has now been reviewed and considered.

The outcome of your application is:

approved.

Feedback on your application is available [here](#).

If any changes to the study described in the application are necessary, you must notify the Committee and may be required to make a resubmission of the application.

Please note that ethical approval for this application is valid for 5 years

On behalf of the Committee, we wish you the best of luck with your study.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan O'Donnell

Appendix 4: Informed consent forms

Social inclusion within a Supported Internship for young people with disabilities

Please read the following and use a 'tick' or a 'cross' to indicate 'yes' or 'no' respectively.

I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet.

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction.

Up until February 2023, I understand my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw without giving a reason.

I consent to provide information via interview and a variety of research methods.

I understand the data will be anonymised, published using a pseudonym, and archived in a password protected computer for a minimum of five years.

I consent to the audio recording and subsequent transcribing of my interview.

I understand that should the researchers wish to re-use any of the data for a future publication they need to seek my permission.

I understand I can (should I wish) work with a researcher to discuss my interview transcript and the researcher's interpretations/fieldnotes.

Prior to the publication of my data, I understand my approval will be sought.

I understand that once the PhD thesis is finalised by the researcher, I will not be able to alter or withdraw.

The final two bullet points are only applicable to the young disabled people:

- I have been provided by a member of the senior management team in the school with a letter from the researcher and a Project Information Sheet.
- I have gained verbal approval from this member of the senior management team of the school that they have also given their consent for me to take part in this research project.

I agree to take part in this project:

Name of participant.....

Signature of participant.....

Date.....

Appendix 5: Cover letter/invitation to participants

Dear Intern,

My name is Wykeham Bosworth- Nightingale, and I am a 23year old researcher for the University of Derby where I am currently studying my PhD.

I am very interested in writing and observing about your experiences of the Supported Internship over the year in a rich and illustrative way. I would like to describe the changes to the depth and breadth of your social inclusion and understand what mediates these processes during the internship.

I would like you to be involved in this research because it is very rare to read information from the perspectives of young people in relation to education and work. As a young person myself, I am very passionate at ensuring your voice is represented at university level and through publications. Therefore, if you did provide consent, you would directly have a voice in my research, so we can inform more companies about your experiences to increase the number of opportunities provided for young disabled people within the local area. I also want employers to reflect on feedback directly from you to inform future programmes, so they are effective as possible for supporting young people progress to employment.

This research is very much a joint process in the sense, I want to give power to you to be actively involved in this study, you will have the opportunity to tell me your opinions throughout the year and what you would like me to write about in relation to the programme. Hence, I will make sure to adjust communication methods and the research to you, I will very much take on your feedback throughout the whole research process; if you prefer communicating to me through conversations in a relaxing environment, or through a digital device I will make sure the research is adapted to you throughout the year.

If you did take part in this research, it will not provide any burden on you, and I hope we would build a positive relationship with each other throughout the entire study. I want you to have the confidence to discuss in a safe manner about your thoughts of the programme. Whatever you say will not have a negative impact to you on the programme as your views will be anonymised. It would therefore be great to hear your honest views throughout the year.

I think it is a very exciting piece of research, and I hope you will enjoy it too as it is a really unique opportunity to have you actively take part in research.

For your reference I have attached a:

- Project Information Sheet which describes the project in more detail.
- In principle consent from St Martins school regarding their approval for this research

I very much thank you for taking the time to consider your participation in this research, and I actively welcome any questions you may have. I also encourage you to discuss your participation in this research project with your parents/guardians. I really hope you find this piece of research as exciting as I do, and I look forward to hearing and seeing you at the supported internship where I will introduce myself in a less formal manner so you can ask lots of questions about this research 😊.

Many thanks

Wykeham Bosworth-Nightingale (PhD Scholar)
Institute of Education,
University of Derby, Kedleston Road, Derby, DE22 1GB

Appendix 6: Covering letter for senior manager of the Supported Internship programme within the employment setting

Dear (company)

My name is Wykeham Bosworth- Nightingale, and I am a PhD scholar at the University of Derby where I am in the process of formulating my research; the study endeavours to explore social inclusion within a Supported Internship (SI) setting for young disabled people.

Due to my supervisory team: Dr Geraldene Codina and Professor Deborah Robinson did previous research regarding a similar topic, their findings suggested for further research to explore the topic in depth due to the positive outcomes the SI brought to the field of SEND.

Therefore, I am asking you whether there is the possibility that you could kindly give your initial, in-principal consent for my proposed research to take place starting September 2022 within (company) Supported Internship programme.

I have attached the project information sheet which describes my project in more detail. Although, it would be brilliant if you have any time to meet through a more personal outlet via Microsoft teams or I can come visit you in person to further discuss the intricacies of the research project if this research sounds like something of interest to you/your company

Thank you very much for taking the time to consider your company's participation in this research and I really look forward to hearing from you. Please ask any questions if you require further clarity 😊

Many thanks

Wykeham Bosworth Nightingale

Appendix 7: Debriefing material

Debrief letter

Dear [name of participant],

Thank you for taking part in the study over the year between September 2022- September 2023.

The research you have contributed to is designed to throw light onto Supported Internships in relation to social inclusion.

I will contact you again to ensure you are happy with the final draft of the thesis, and at this point seek your signature for the qualifications submission to ensure your voice accurately represents the situation under study.

Wykeham's thesis is due for submission by August 2024, and it is anticipated it will be approved by early 2025.

Once again, many thanks for your support, I couldn't have completed this important work without your contributions.

If you have any questions about this research or the process of submitting it for approval, please feel free to contact Wykeham.

Warm regards

Wykeham

Appendix 8: Serendipitous encounter paper

Thank you for the conversation.

My name is Wykeham Bosworth-Nightingale, and I am undertaking research within the hospital; the study surrounds social inclusion within a Supported Internship for young disabled people.

If you would like to know any more, feel free to contact me

Thanks

Wykeham Bosworth-Nightingale (PhD Scholar)
Institute of Education
University of Derby,
Kedleston Road,
Derby, DE22 1GB

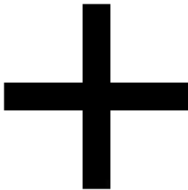
Appendix 9: Accessible cover letter

	<u>About me</u> My name is Wykeham or (Wyke) 23 years old Researcher at the University of Derby I have always lived in the local area
	<u>Your role</u> I want to hear about your experiences of the Supported Internship Your voice is the main part of this research
	<u>Why?</u> Your opinions of the internship will help me tell others about what is going well and what we can do to improve it

	<u>How I will research</u> I will mainly observe and take notes when you are taking part in the various jobs I will then ask you questions about what I have observed to make sure I understand what you are doing and how you are getting on
	<u>How long will the research be for?</u> This research will take place during the entire programme. I will let you know when I visit and observe you in advance
	<u>If you have any questions, please contact me:</u> w.bosworthnightingale1@unimail.derby.ac.uk

Appendix 10: Participant information sheet

	<u>The aim of the research</u> To hear about your experiences of the Supported Internship
	<u>How I will research</u> I will mainly observe and take notes when you are taking part in the various jobs I will then ask you questions about what I have observed to make sure I understand what you are doing and how you are getting on
	<u>Why</u> Your opinions of the internship will help me tell others about what is going well and what we can do to improve it

	<u>Benefits</u> It will be a fun and rewarding piece of research Your voice will be heard It will develop your communication skills
	<u>Risks</u> This research will not cause any disadvantage or additional burden to you All of your views will be anonymous
	<u>Using your data</u> I will submit the research by 2024 All of your data will be stored securely on a password protected computer
	<u>Leaving the study</u> You can withdraw from this study at any time up until a date which will be agreed.
	<u>Contact me</u> w.bosworthnightingale1@unimail.derby.ac.uk

Appendix 11: Informed consent

Please tick or cross to indicate yes or no to the statements

<u>Picture</u>	<u>Statement</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
	I understand the Participant Information Sheet.		
	I have been able to ask Wykeham questions about the research		

	I consent to provide information via interview and a variety of research methods,		
	Up until February 2023, I understand my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw without giving a reason.		
	I understand the data will be anonymised and password protected		
	I consent to the audio recording and subsequent transcribing of my interview.		
	I understand that should the researcher re-use any data for future publications they will seek my permission.		
	I understand I can (should I wish) work with a researcher to discuss my interview transcript		
	I understand that once the PhD is finalised by the researcher, I will not be able to alter or withdraw.		
	A staff member from school have given me a letter from the researcher and a		

	Project Information Sheet.		
--	----------------------------	--	--

Name of participant.....
..... Date.....
Signature of participant.....
..... Date.....

Appendix 12: Codebook example from NVIVO (2months into collection)

Name	Files	References
active	2	2
adjustments	1	1
aiming high	7	10
alumni	3	3
appearance	2	2
ask for help	8	9
aspirations	11	18
assessment	1	1
autonomy	1	1
barriers	10	21
belonging	2	4
bespoke	1	1
best week	1	2
Bonding relationships	4	6
boring	1	2
breaks	1	1
busy	7	16
classwork	4	12
confidence	3	6
conversations	1	1
could be better	2	3
covid 19	1	1
demonstration	1	1

Name	Files	References
destinations	2	3
development	1	1
diaries	1	1
difficulty	1	1
disability	2	2
employer	1	1
Enjoy	12	31
environment	10	11
epm	4	6
family	1	1
feedback	4	5
first day	1	1
fitness	2	2
frame of mind	1	1
friend support	1	2
goals	1	1
growth	1	2
hard	1	1
health and safety	1	1
helpful	6	8
high standards	1	1
home life	7	11
image	1	1
impact	1	1
independence	9	27
induction	1	1
interaction with peers	11	36
intern relationships	1	1
interns	2	20
job role	7	51
job roles	2	2
large employer	2	6
employer flexibility	1	1

Name	Files	References
leadership	2	2
learning new skills	7	10
maths	1	1
mental health	2	5
mentor	12	63
mistakes	1	1
nature of the job	1	2
nervous	1	1
network grown	3	5
open minded	1	1
overwhelmed	1	1
participation	8	21
people	2	2
personal mood impacting social	3	10
placement issues	2	2
placement matching	1	1
placement visit	2	2
pressure	1	1
previous history as a patient	1	1
prior connection in workplace	1	1
productive	3	4
project search	1	2
proud	7	13
quality	1	1
Quiet	5	7
quiet period	5	14
reflection	1	1
relationship with staff	11	44
researcher relationships	3	3
resilience	4	4

Name	Files	References
responsibility	6	24
role model	3	3
routine	1	1
routine and enjoyment	4	5
sad to leave	2	2
Satisfaction	9	11
self-advocacy	9	20
self-efficacy	1	1
self esteem	1	1
sickness	2	3
skills	9	18
social interaction	16	30
speaking to others	9	33
speed	8	14
Former school	1	2
staffing issues	1	1
staying positive	3	3
strategies	1	1
strategy	1	1
strength	3	3
stress	4	6
support	4	12
staff support	9	17
job coach	11	20
tutor	8	16
support others	2	2
talk to others	8	29
task list	3	3
teamwork	11	28
Tiredness	15	143
training	5	6
transferable skills	1	1
transition	3	3

Name	Files	References
travel	2	2
Untitled	1	1
ups and downs	1	1
upset	2	3
variation of tasks	3	5
varied	1	1
variety	2	3
visibility	1	1
wayfinding	1	2
working with others	5	5

Appendix 13: Curriculum content

Nine units with each including an objective and a range of topics outlines below to foster interns' employability.

Unit 1: Team Building

Objective 1.1: The intern will acquire skills necessary to function within a team while understanding roles and responsibilities.

Lesson 1.1.1: Demonstrate the ability to communicate personal needs, wants, and questions within a team.

Lesson 1.1.2: Exhibit the steps necessary to complete a task within a team.

Lesson 1.1.3 Solving conflict within a team.

Lesson 1.1.4: Demonstrate appropriate positive behaviours when presented with established team processes and procedures.

Lesson 1.1.5: Exhibit the ability to follow directions.

Lesson 1.1.6: Identify team members' roles and responsibilities and be able to perform your role in a team.

Unit 2: Workplace Safety

Objective 2.1: The intern will demonstrate knowledge and skills related to safety in the workplace.

Lesson 2.1.1: Demonstrate functional safety literacy skills for the workplace.

Lesson 2.1.2: Follow safe working practices related to the host business culture.

Lesson 2.1.3: Demonstrate knowledge of occupational safety practices in the workplace.

Lesson 2.1.5: Recognise and respond appropriately to workplace bullying and sexual harassment.

Lesson 2.1.6: Identify appropriate reporting procedures when hazards happen in the workplace.

Lesson 2.1.7: Participate in host business employee onboarding practices.

Objective 2.2: The intern will demonstrate safe and healthy precautions during an emergency.

Lesson 2.2.1: Demonstrate proper techniques for cleaning, disinfecting, and materials management.

Lesson 2.2.2: Demonstrate proper techniques for handwashing, coughing, and sneezing.

Lesson 2.2.3: Demonstrate proper techniques for using PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) in the workplace.

Unit 3 Technology

Objective 3.1: The intern will demonstrate knowledge of basic technology skills

Lesson: 3.1.1: Demonstrate basic operation of a computer.

Lesson 3.1.2: Create, save, and organise documents using appropriate software to complete an assignment.

Lesson 3.1.3: Navigate websites to locate information to complete a task and/or answer a question.

Lesson 3.1.4: Establish and use an email account.

Lesson 3.1.5: Create a public presentation that utilises technology skills.

Objective 3.2: The intern will examine what it means to be a good digital citizen.

Lesson 3.2.1: Explain the importance of online safety and how to appropriately protect oneself in an online environment.

Lesson 3.2.2: Demonstrate the boundaries of healthy communication online (multi-player games, social media) and explain the concept of a digital footprint and the consequences of how you express yourself online.

Objective 3.3: The intern will demonstrate appropriate skills using electronic devices and virtual platforms in the workplace.

Lesson 3.3.1: Explain the importance of following workplace policies regarding the use of personal and workplace electronic devices, such as appropriate usage and maintenance.

Lesson: 3.3.2: Responding to, sending, or taking messages through various forms of communications using technology (phone, email, text, etc.) in a workplace setting.

Lesson 3.3.3: Demonstrate a working knowledge and etiquette of using a virtual platform (such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, etc.) with a professional appearance, using backgrounds, sharing content, using the chat, reaction buttons, muting, working in a quiet space, etc.

Unit 4: Self-Advocacy

Objective 4.1: The intern will demonstrate an understanding of self-advocacy skills.

Lesson 4.1.1: Demonstrate an understanding of one's disability.

Lesson 4.1.2: The intern will self-advocate for own disability and accommodations within Project SEARCH and other settings.

Lesson 4.1.3: Locate laws explaining the rights and responsibilities pertaining to people with disabilities.

Lesson 4.1.4: Communicate/Disclose individual strengths, needs and accommodations to be successful across various environments including work

Lesson 4.1.5: Access appropriate community service agencies that meet individual needs (transportation, employment, healthcare, social services, etc.).

Objective 4.2: The intern will demonstrate self-advocacy skills across various settings.

Lesson 4.2.1: Identify and utilise natural supports.

Lesson 4.2.2: Recognise situations when you are being taken advantage of (i.e., financial, employment, relationships, etc.).

Lesson 4.2.3: Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of voting, the voting process, accessibility, making informed decisions about candidates, schools, organisations, and issues that impact your community and quality of life.

Lesson 4.2.4: Understand the various types of legal status and their effect on decision making (types of guardianship, emancipation, power of attorney).

Unit 5: Maintaining Employment

Objective 5.1: The intern will demonstrate positive work ethic.

Lesson 5.1.1: Comply with the confidentiality requirements of the workplace.

Lesson 5.1.2: Demonstrate the ability to prioritise, plan, and complete assigned tasks.

Lesson 5.1.3: Self-monitor required professional behaviors and respect in the workplace.

Lesson 5.1.4: Demonstrate skills to manage a work schedule.

Lesson 5.1.5: Demonstrate giving, receiving, and complying with constructive feedback.

Objective 5.2: The intern will demonstrate effective communication across settings.

Lesson 5.2.1: Identify the “Chain of Command” for each internship.

Lesson 5.2.2: Demonstrate the appropriate way to ask questions related to employment needs.

Lesson 5.2.3: Demonstrate appropriate conversation skills in work settings

Unit 6: Financial Literacy

Objective 6.1: The intern will gain financial management skills using EVERFI: Financial Literacy for High School. EVERFI is a digital financial education programme with interactive lessons.

Lesson 6.1.1: Develop strategies for managing finances, making wise financial decisions, and promoting financial well-being over a lifetime.

Objective 6.2: The intern will develop functional financial management skills.

Lesson: 6.2.1: Distinguish the difference between earning and spending money (income versus expenses).

Lesson 6.2.2: Create a personal budget and understand how life circumstance impacts the budget (i.e., hours worked, overtime, calling off, non-paid leave, increase in bills).

Lesson 6.2.3: Demonstrate the understanding of how to make purchases (face-to-face, credit, or online) based on a given budget.

Lesson 6.2.4: Demonstrate understanding of the cost of living on your own: renting, roommates, paying monthly bills, understanding leases, start-up costs of an apartment, etc.

Lesson 6.2.5: Demonstrate the ability to interpret a paycheck (i.e., hours worked, withholdings, income taxes, deductions, etc.).

Lesson 6.2.6: Demonstrate an understanding of paying taxes and the benefits they provide.

Lesson 6.2.7: Identify different types of banking services including payment, deposit, and withdrawal methods.

Lesson 6.2.8: Demonstrate the understanding of credit, debit, and on-line apps in making purchases.

Unit 7: Health & Wellness

Objective 7.1: The intern will explain the impact of health and wellness on their personal lives and employment.

Lesson 7.1.1: Explain how employment can be impacted by physical and mental health.

Lesson 7.1.2: Demonstrate strategies for managing stress and mental health.

Lesson 7.1.3: Demonstrate the importance of eating a balanced, nutritious diet.

Lesson 7.1.4: Identify appropriate leisure, service, and recreation activities available in the community.

Lesson 7.1.5: Demonstrate appropriate hygiene, grooming, and appearance for the workplace.

Objective 7.2: The interns will build an understanding of the important role that physical and mental health plays in employment preparation.

Lesson 7.2.1: Healthy choices and setting goals for better health.

Lesson 7.2.2: Understand exercise and how it affects the body.

Lesson 7.2.3: Strategies for managing stress and enhancing self-esteem.

Lesson 7.2.4: Understand food groups, healthy diet, and portion control.

Lesson 7.2.5: Understand different types of physical activity and fitness options in the community.

Objective 7.3 Interns will identify situations and choose an appropriate coping strategy when needed.

Lesson 7.3.1: Using coping skills and relaxation at work.

Unit 8: Preparing for Employment

Objective 8.1: The intern will create a professional portfolio of documents required for employment.

Lesson 8.1.1: Develop a personal résumé highlighting skills and abilities.

Lesson 8.1.2: Create a Reference List

Lesson 8.1.3: Develop a cover letter or letter of introduction.

Objective 8.2: The intern will exhibit appropriate interview skills.

Lesson 8.2.1: Demonstrate appropriate interview etiquette in person and virtually.

Lesson 8.2.2: Demonstrate a confident response (i.e. staying on topic, providing relevant information, etc.) to interview questions.

Lesson 8.2.3: Evaluate interview performance and change behaviour based on feedback.

Lesson 8.2.4: Explain appropriate ways to set up and follow up on an interview.

Objective 8.3: The intern will develop job search skills to gain competitive, entry-level employment.

Lesson 8.3.1: Evaluate personal skills to create an entry-level employment goal.

Lesson 8.3.2: Identify various sources to find job opportunities.
(i.e. online, networking, LinkedIn, Indeed.com etc.)

Lesson 8.3.3: Complete a job application on paper or online.

Unit: 9 Social and Communication Skills

Objective 9.1: The intern will demonstrate effective communication skills across settings.

Lesson: 9.1.1: Demonstrate appropriate written communication skills across settings.

Lesson 9.1.2: Demonstrate appropriate nonverbal communication skills across settings
(i.e., reading body language and facial expressions).

Lesson 9.1.3: Demonstrate appropriate verbal communication skills across settings.

Lesson 9.1.4: Comprehend and transmit messages accurately across settings.

Lesson 9.1.5: Demonstrate active listening skills across settings.

Lesson 9.1.6: Identify and practice appropriate conversation topics permitted in the workplace.

Appendix 14: ‘Listening to what the job involved’ data

*Listening = I used this skill when
visiting my new placement. I had to
listen to what the job involved.....*

Appendix 15: ‘Partially taking on the lead’ data

Leadership— I partially took the lead on my tasks to get work done without needing directions from my mentors and colleagues all the time.

Appendix 16: Importance of observing other data

I made a visit to portering in the morning. I was ~~observing~~ observing delivering and taking out oxygen.

Appendix 17: Paffers's data

The tasks I have completed today include:

Includes Friday: I was working on the admissions desk. I was delivering files to the wards ~~to~~ with Don, one of my mentors. It was nice being out of medical records ~~to~~ to almost explore the hospital. I observed what it like to be on the phone in admissions. It didn't look that difficult.

Appendix 18: Workplace diary extract

Explain something that happened this week, this could be something you are proud of, something you did for the first time, someone new you spoke to or how you are feeling about your week.

I really appreciated the fact I had completed tasks on my own, even if my mentor was there. It was like I didn't need my mentor. I also had a day where I was answering the phone. I would describe my week as balanced because it was busy, not so busy, and I was answering calls. However, my mood wasn't the best it could be. One of the reasons is because of the stress I dealt with outside of Project SEARCH. As a result, this caused me to have a lack of sleep, affecting my days.

Appendix 19: Weekly reflection data

Explain something that happened this week, this could be something you are proud of, something you did for the first time, someone new you spoke to or how you are feeling about your week.

For the first time ever, I have completed jobs on my own in theatre porters. This is a massive achievement for me because it gives me responsibility to look after the patients, equipment and do my job properly. This is like the beginning of my work trial, which officially starts next week. There are a few jobs that I need training, such as the patching, gases and bloods. All the training will be sorted as soon as possible thankfully so I'll be fully-trained.

Appendix 20: Holly's reflection of her day

It also would have been better if a patient didn't pass away when I was coming off my lunch break.

Appendix 21: Paffers reflection about his work trial

Is there anything concerning you about your current job?

There was a patient who had to be under supervision from police. I had never dealt with a situation like that. However, everything had gone smoothly. I was glad that I'm able to deal with situations I'm not familiar with because it gives me responsibility. I definitely see that my awareness of being in unpredictable situations and dealing with them has improved significantly since I started on the programme.

Appendix 22: Portering responsibilities

The tasks I have completed today include:

I went back to the basics of Theatre portering. I've delivered beds to recovery, took patients to ortho or general theatres and for the first time, I witnessed how you deal with a Coniotra patient. This meant I had to wear special equipment to protect myself.

Appendix 23: Weekly Mentor Feedback form

Intern:	Week commencing:	Handed out:
Dept:	Mentor:	To be returned on:
Personal Focus: (What task/skill is the intern working on this week?)		
Weekly Staff Development: (What tasks/skills are the interns working on in the baseroom ?)		

This section should be completed by the department manager/mentor:

Please circle/highlight as appropriate

Punctuality • Arrives/Leaves on time • Returns from breaks on time	Always late	On time with prompting	Generally, on time	Always on time	Generally early
Appearance • Uniform/clothing/footwear	Inappropriate clothing and/or footwear	Untidy	Tidy, but inappropriately dressed	Tidy, appropriate appearance	Very smart, appropriate appearance
Hygiene • Well-groomed incl. hair, nails & clothes	Unacceptable	Poor	Adequate	Acceptable	Excellent
Attitude to work • Appears visually engaged • Correct attitude to work	Lacks interest, minimal effort	Some interest, task completed over an extended time	Interested, tasks completed on time	<u>Well</u> /highly motivated conscientious	<u>Well</u> /highly motivated conscientious and striving to improve
Effort	Needs to be improved	adequate	Good	Very good	Exemplary
Ability to remain focussed on task	Easily distracted, needs frequent prompting	Some distraction, needs some prompting	Some distraction but returns to task independently within an appropriate amount of time	Minimal distraction, returns to task without prompting	Totally focussed
Reliability	Needs constant supervision	Reliable with supervision	Reliable but requires regular checks	Reliable with minimal supervision & checking	Takes responsibility, accurate & flexible
Relationships with staff	Uncooperative & difficult	Reluctant to engage	Acknowledges other staff but has difficulty engaging	Engages & shows respect	Very willing & makes positive contributions
Relationships with customers/other depts.	N/A	Reluctant to engage	Engages with difficulty	Helpful, shows respect	Excellent feedback, willing & positive
Body Language	Needs to be improved	Adequate	Good	Very good	Exemplary
Verbal communication	Needs to be improved	Adequate	Good	Very good	Exemplary
Produces work at the pace of new employee	Completes tasks considerably below the pace of a new employee	Completes tasks below the pace of a new employee	Completes tasks equal to the pace of a new employee	Exceeds the pace of a new employee in learned tasks	Exceeds the pace of a new employee in a full job role
Meets standards for quality and accuracy of a new employee	Considerably below the quality of a new employee	Below the quality of a new employee	Equal to the quality of a new employee	Exceeds the quality of new employee	Exceeds the quality of a new employee in a full job role
Listens and responds *positively* to constructive feedback	Rarely uses feedback to improve or responds negatively	Doesn't often use feedback to improve	Requires repetition of feedback for specific task(s) to improve	Often uses feedback to improve	Always uses feedback to improve
Admits mistakes	Denies making any mistakes	Negative verbal and/or non-verbal reaction but corrects mistake 50% of the time	Verbal and/or non-verbal reaction but corrects mistake 70-90% of the time	Admits mistake & corrects it 90-100% of the time	Self corrects mistakes

Appendix 24: Eunie's reflection

- What will I do once the help from Jane is gone?
- Will I be capable to enough?
- Will I get something wrong?

Appendix 25: Paffers reflection of the day

What could have been better about my day:

I wish I was paired of with someone who mentored me from the last 2 weeks because I personally felt really intense and overthought a lot of things with the mentor I had. His way of teaching didn't feel the same as the others who mentored me. A lot of this had put me on the spot and not in a good way. It definitely put me down for the day. ~~The~~ I'd describe him as ~~very~~ critical and that pressure built up throughout the day.

Appendix 26: Hurricane's written work

Resilient 'learnt to tie my laces'

3. RESILIENT LEARNT TO TIE MY
LACES

Appendix 27: Holly's responsibility during her cleaning placement

Holly's cleaning roles

I am an intern in the Cleaning department. Something I am proud of is trying something I have not experienced at this level and kind of succeeding

The new skills I have learned are: using the new equipment such as mops, new chemicals, Sweeps

Appendix 28: Hurricane's reflection of the day

I had a good time at my placement to learn some new skills to help them in my now one and I think that it will help me succeed later on in my life.

Appendix 29: Tiredness data

What have I found my weaknesses to be at this internship?

- Being on my feet all day

Appendix 30: Intern motivation to work

What is your reason for doing this course?

I would like to move on to full-time work and provide a great service for the hospital.

Appendix 31: Reason for doing the Supported Internship

What is your reason for doing this course?

My reason for wanting to complete the internship is because I want to gain transferable skills needed to one gain a place in either in the workforce or in further education and also to live independently.

Appendix 32: Motivation for joining the course

What is your reason for doing this course?

Just Being confident and independent
working on my own.

Appendix 33: Intern Goals

Write a goal for yourself that you plan on working on until your next Employment Planning Meeting.

My goal: I would like to learn How To swiping the floor. and I would be getting Training on Subway union House Pot washing by Subway manager and my mentor.

Appendix 34: Working to the pace of an employee

What is my goal by the next Employment Planning meeting?

My goal for the next epm would be to complete my tasks to the highest of my ability at a faster pace than usual

Appendix 35: Responsibilities as a patient porter

The tasks I have completed today include:

I've been on theatre portering so I had a lot of responsibilities. These include taking patients to and out of the theatres, as well as collecting beds for patients.

Appendix 36: Responsibilities as a ward cleaner

My tasks today included cleaning patient areas (wiping patient tables, lockers) high dusting, wiping and mopping floors cleaning barrier rooms the only difference is having to clean/wipe bathrooms

Appendix 37: Portering deceased patients

The tasks I have completed today include:

I have been completing a lot of interesting tasks. One of which was witness a rose cottage. This one is a little complicated to explain but a rose cottage involves transporting a deceased person. The people who were transporting the deceased had to pat slide them to another bed.

Appendix 38: 'Observation-based position'

*During this first experience, ~~I~~ ~~the~~ ~~years~~ I ~~was~~ ~~more~~ was in a more observation-based position.

Appendix 39: Portering duties

I made a visit to portering in the morning. I was ~~observing~~ observing delivering and taking out oxygen.

Appendix 40: Teamwork data

A fair bit of teamwork came into play when a job required two porters. It was lucky I was there.

Appendix 41: Problem solving skill

I used problem solving skills when dealing with a difficult patient when they were having trouble at this point I spoke to my mentor who told me not to worry as we are not qualified

Appendix 42: 'What I enjoyed about my day' data

What I enjoyed about my day:

i enjoyed eating with my mentor at lunch

Appendix 43: 'What does a mentor mean to me'



Appendix 44: Physical support data

me and my mentor hugged as well which was helpful for my mental health

Appendix 45: Hurricane's weekly reflection

Explain something that happened this week, this could be something you are proud of, something you did for the first time, someone new you spoke to or how you are feeling about your week.

I HAVE HAD A REALLY DIFFICULT (difficult)
WEEK BECAUSE OF PERSONAL
STUFF. I found talking to my friends
helped me get through the week.

Appendix 46: Speaking skills data

Speaking - I feel my articulation has
been continually improving in
placement over time

Appendix 47: Vocational profile example

My Vocational profile

Name:	Hurricane
Important people to you:	Family – Mum, Dad, 3 siblings, Friends, Project SEARCH group
 Communication style: (like spoken, <u>makaton</u>, BSL)	Speaking Pictures help me if they are big enough and in colour Any written/printed work will need to be large enough for me to view, at least font size 24
 Reading/writing ability: (Do you need support?)	I use a magnifying glass to read. I will need support with longer words. When I write I struggle to stay on the lines and will need reminding about my finger spacing. I find writing in a computer easier than on paper.
 Can you use technology? (phone, tablets, computers)	I can use my phone independently; I will need support with other forms of IT and often forget passwords.
 Can you read and understand the time?	Yes, I can read analogue and digital time, I may need reminders to help structure my day though, prompts are useful, <u>ie</u>, 10 mins left etc
 How would you describe your personality?	Easy to get on with, hard working. If there is a job to be done, I will do it and always try my best.
 Any health conditions and medication you take?	I have a visual impairment which means I am unable to see lower than my sight line. I will need support until I am familiar with the working environment and may struggle to locate things if they are higher or lower than my sight line. I have a condition where I might sometimes need a longer toilet break. I have epilepsy but been seizure free for 6.5 years, if I have a seizure then please ring 999 immediately and time my seizure.
 What could be upsetting or challenging to you at work?	Not knowing what I am doing if I don't have a buddy to show me
  What support would you like at work?	Large print text, basic step by step instructions. Pictures will help me if I am doing a task independently. I would like some support at social times to get to know people.

Appendix 48: Placement task list example

Task List: Retail Catering

Version

1

Task

Prepare for work in men's changing rooms and leave bag there

Put on cap and/or hairnet and wash hands well

Ask mentor or staff member for first task

Carry out tasks as needed

Lunch break 11.30-12.00

Cleaning tables

Spray bottles are in a bucket behind the counter.

Green cloths in the drawer. Blue cloths can be used if there are no green ones

Clear and wipe tables when they are empty

Wipe down any other surfaces when needed

Put chairs back under the table if needed

If it is very quiet, clean the chair and table legs

Rinse out the cloth or throw away if very dirty, wash hands

Serving food

Wash hands well

Make sure you know what the menu is and how to serve everything before you start

Ask the customer what they would like

Serve the customer, ask a member of staff if you need help

Use the right sized box and close it before giving it to the customer

Do not touch any of the food you are serving with your bare hands

Emptying bins

Get a cable tie from the drawer

Remove the bin bag from the bin

Tie a knot in the bin bag

Tie the cable tie underneath the knot with the writing on the cable tie facing the outside

Clean the bin if needed and replace the bin bag

Take the full bin bag to the correct bin and wash hands

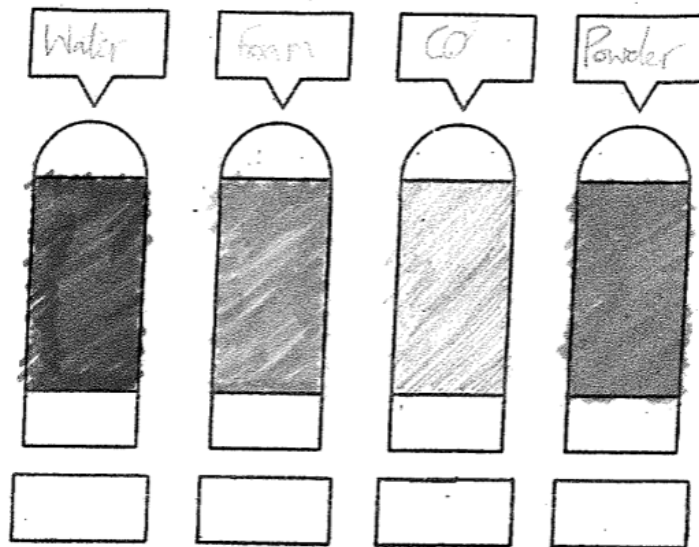
Appendix 49: Health and Safety curriculum work

Fire Extinguishers

Look at the fire extinguishers

and complete the diagram

below by adding the colour of the label and information on each type of extinguisher.



The main chemicals used in fire extinguishers are listed below. Explain why they are suitable for fighting fires?

Water.

A water extinguisher is good against solid combustibles - wood, paper and textiles.

Foam.

Foam extinguishers are effective against solid combustibles and flammable liquids - petrol, diesel and paraffin.

CO². (Carbon Dioxide)

A CO² extinguisher is effective against flammable liquids and electricals - computers and electric heaters.

Dry Powder.

Dry powder extinguishers are good against solid combustibles, flammable liquids, flammable gases and electricals.

Appendix 50: Safety curriculum work

Safety Signs

Sign	Meaning
	Warning Signs
	
	No smoking
	All staff wearing mask
	All was wash hands
	Fire extinguisher
	First aid
	
	

Fire Drill

What is the fire and emergency procedure for ISS?

When the fire alarm sets off continuously, leave to the nearest ^{fire} exit possible without picking up any belongings.

Personal Protective Equipment

What Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is required for your workplace and why?



PPE	Why is it important?
Mask	To protect yourself & others from germs
Gloves	To protect hands from cleaning materials or patient safety
Steel Cap Shoes	To protect your toes from being crushed by cylinders
Apron / Panny (As Required)	Infection Control
Visor	Infection Control
Ungerm ((Clean))	To prevent infection control
High-Viz Jackets	It's to stand out when you're in public or tunnel
Ear defenders	When you're driving tugs.