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Learning Disrupted:

Young People with Disabilities' Access to and Experiences of Learning and Workplace-based Training during COVID-19

Easy Read Summary

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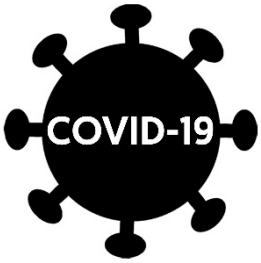
What is Learning Disrupted about?



We carried out research to find out what it was like for young people with disabilities to learn and do work experience during COVID-19.

We wanted to know what some of the positive things were about having to learn from home, but also the difficulties.

The research was carried out by researchers at University College Cork, with the National Learning Network.

We spoke to four groups of people:

- Young people with disabilities who go to the National Learning Network
- Family members
- National Learning Network staff
- Employers who give work placements to young people.

What did the research find?

Many young people with disabilities found the COVID-19 lockdown hard.

It made them feel isolated and anxious, and they missed their friends.

COVID-19 meant that face-to-face learning at the National Learning Network centre stopped.

Some work placements also stopped.

People had to learn at home instead, using Zoom or MS Teams.

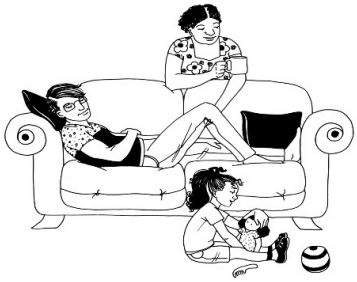
Some people liked learning online at home. They felt safe at home and could choose where they studied.

Most young people found it more difficult to work at home.

There were a number of reasons for this.

Some people did not have access to technology or found it hard to use.

They also found it harder to communicate with teachers and others in the group online.



They found it hard to study at home because it was noisy or there was no place to study.

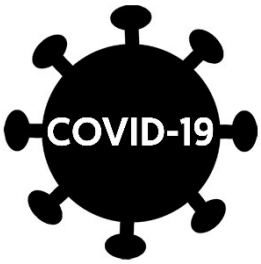
It was hard to stay motivated when learning at home.

Young people had to get more support from their families to carry on studying.

For some people this was helpful, but for others, it meant they felt less independent.

When young people went back to face-to-face learning at the NLN centre, it was important to provide supports to help them get back into a routine and feel comfortable being around other people again.

What can we learn for the future?



We need to know more about how COVID-19 affected young people with disabilities' experiences of learning.

Online learning and work experience, combined with face-to-face experience, may help people with disabilities to be more included in education and employment.

Some people with disabilities like learning online, but others find it harder.

Training and work placements need to be designed to suit different people's individual needs and preferences.

People with disabilities need more access to technology and supports to help them to study at home.

Employers and training organisations need resources to help them provide online learning and training to people with disabilities.

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