



## 4. Support for young people

### 4.6 Life after school

## Introduction

You may not have given much thought about what you want to do after you finish school or you may have been planning it for a long time! It can be an exciting, anxious and uncertain time while you figure out what's next and begin to take your first steps into it.

In this section we look at what choices are available to you after finishing school and where to find out more information about them.

## Finishing school

The end of your school time may be feel like an exciting point in your life when you consider what you may do next and what options are available to you. It can also be a daunting time and many people feel unsure or nervous about what they want to do next.

You may be thinking about starting a job, going to university, spending time traveling or something completely different. There are many options open to you and it is important that you find one that suits you.

## When can you leave school?

You used to be able to leave school at the age of 16, but now you are required to stay in some kind of education or training until you are 18.

These changes don't mean that you need to stay in school. There are lots of things that you may want to do. Your options include:

- Staying in education

If you decide that you want to stay in education, you can go to a school or college. You can choose from A levels, BTECs or a range of other courses. To find out about courses that are available in your area, visit [here](#).



- Starting an apprenticeship

Apprenticeships are a way of learning and earning money at the same time. You would be in a proper working job for most of your time and then also spend some time in training. To find out more about apprenticeships, visit [here](#).

- Work

You may want to start a part time or full time job, volunteer or start your own business. To find out more about starting work, visit [here](#). We will also talk more about the work place later in this section.

## Work experience

Work experience can give you the opportunity to get hands-on experience of what it is like in a working environment. This may be something you consider doing while at school, college or University to gain practical experience and skills for the work place.

By developing your skills and confidence in a working environment, you are able to show potential employers what you can offer.



**My work experience was so valuable to me, because it let me prove that the chair doesn't get in the way of being able to work and have an income for yourself, that you can be 100% independent in the work environment and it gave me a taster into what employers expect, so I'm prepared for work life. It really opened my eyes to how different the education system is compared to working in an office, but I enjoyed every minute and would do it over again if I could.**

Ashleigh, 17, work experience at Back Up

At Back Up we have had several young people come into the office to gain work experience. There may be a particular area of work you are interested in, such as fundraising or finance and we can offer an insight into what this work involves. Even if you don't have a specific interest, just by being in an office you can gain valuable and

transferable skills such as working with programs like Excel. Find out more about setting up work experience with Back Up by [emailing Beth](#) or calling 020 8875 1805.



Whizz-Kidz offer a range of work placement and internships opportunities, and work skills days aimed for young people with disabilities aged between 14-25 years old. Find out more about [work experience with Whizz-Kidz](#).

If you are thinking about moving away from home, living independently or heading to University, and want to develop your life

skills, our Moving Forwards course at Back Up may be for you. The course is aimed at young people aged 18-25 years old. Covering tasks such as transfers, getting dressed independently, accessing public transport, making a meal, the course will help you to build in confidence and achieve your goals. Find out more about our [Moving Forwards course](#).

## Getting a job

As discussed above, one of your options when leaving school is to find a job.

If you are over 18, a **Disability Employment Adviser** at your local Jobcentre can help you find a job and discuss other support available to you.



It may be that you need adjustments made to a work place to enable you to work. The Equality Act 2010 means that employers have to remove barriers in the workplace for disabled people and financial support is available to help them do this.

The Access to Work scheme can provide money towards these adjustments to help you find a job and stay in work. Find out more [about the Access to Work scheme](#).

If you are thinking of getting a job, you may be interested in our Back Up to Work course. The course is about equipping you with the knowledge and confidence you need to work towards your employment goals. Find out more about [Back Up to Work](#).

## Going to University

If you've finished school or college and are looking at going to University, there are a few things you may want to consider.

Funding is available for students with disabilities for things like specialist equipment or note-takers. You may be entitled to **Disabled Students Allowances (DSAs)** for physical or mental impairments, long-term or mental health conditions, or specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia. Find out more about [how to apply for DSAs](#).

It is also important that you talk to your course providers about what support you need.

It can be a good idea to visit the University too so that you can have a look around at the facilities such as the lecture halls, libraries and living accommodation. Arranging to meet with staff there to talk about your needs, any concerns you have and to explain what is important to you can be reassuring and allows them to understand what you need.

Visiting a University is also a useful opportunity to look around the area. You may want to investigate what local access to shops and venues is like.



**When I looked at the University halls where I'd be living, I wanted to make sure I wasn't in a room away from other first years just because I needed accessibility. I talked to the staff and explained that it was important to me that I was included with everyone else. This made sure they were considering this when making arrangements and reassured me that they understood my needs.**

Ella, Schools inclusion coordinator

If you have a personal assistant to help you with your care needs, then you may be unsure how this will work at University. If you go to a university, even if it is outside your Local Authority (LA) area, you can take your care package with you.

Moving away to University can be daunting. You may be moving into University living accommodation, are starting a new course and making friends. There is lots to think about and having to consider your disability on top of all that can feel overwhelming. It is understandable if you are feeling anxious or stressed.

We have a section of our toolkit that talks about what support is available for [dealing with your emotions](#).

The mental health charity **Mind** have also recently set up a free app for the ups and downs of university life, called Emoodji. By choosing emotion icons to match your mood, the app will then show you how your mood has fluctuated. It's also packed with tips on how to deal with different aspects of uni life. Find out more about [Emoodji](#).

Find out more information about [applying to University](#).

Our team of school advocates, who all have a spinal cord injury themselves, can visit your University with you to help support you asking questions and finding out relevant information. If you would like to arrange this, [email Ella](#) or call 020 8875 1805.

## Studying abroad

Some Universities offer students the chance to spend a year abroad as part of their degree. This can be the ideal opportunity to combine travel with study, learn a new language or just experience what it is like to live in a different country.

If you are thinking of studying abroad, you may want to consider:

- starting your research early
- finding out about support available
- speak to your University's International office



**Don't be put off by the challenge of studying abroad with a disability as some university staff may see it as too difficult and might try to dissuade you. It's an amazing experience to find out what you're capable of and studying abroad also makes you super employable - even more so if you do it with a disability.**

Merryn, year abroad in Florence, Italy

Studying abroad with a disability may feel like a big challenge, but there are many students who do it. Find out more about [studying abroad with a disability](#).

If you are looking to study in Europe, the Erasmus Programme is an European Union exchange student programme offering opportunities to do so. Students with disabilities may be entitled to extra funding to cover associated costs on your Erasmus placement. Find out more about [funding for an Erasmus placement](#).

## Travel

The world is a big place with lots of countries to see and explore. You may not feel ready right now to be going to University or finding a job and instead thinking about going traveling.

You may want to go on an organised gap year on an internship or to volunteer, travel with a group through a company or plan your trip by yourself.

When you have a spinal cord injury, there are certain things you have to consider and plan around when traveling such as medical supplies and accessibility. You may need to think about things such as pressure relief when on long journeys and what support you may need while away.

Although it may feel a bit overwhelming, it is also exciting thinking about what new places you can visit and how you will make it work with your needs.

Find out more information about [planning a travel trip if you have a disability](#).



## Your choices

Do remember that whatever you decide to do, nothing has to be forever. Whether you decide to get a job, go to University, travel or do something completely different, you are the one living it and you know what that feels like. Let people know how to best support you and if something isn't working then talk to someone about alternative options.

You can also call our office on 020 8875 1805 if you want to ask us any questions about post school life with a spinal cord injury.

## Resources

**National Careers Service** offers careers advice with a specific section for young people aged 13-17.

**Plotr** is a free website bringing together insight and guidance from industry to help 11 to 24 year olds plan the careers they want.

**icould** video library is a collection of films featuring young people sharing their career stories.

**Student Minds** run student support groups so that students experiencing mental health difficulties have access to a supportive environment in which they can talk openly about life, university and mental health.

**Disability Rights UK** have a helpline for students with disabilities that you can call if you have any specific questions on 0800 328 5050.

**The Student Room** has an online forum where you can post questions and seek peer support.

**Disabled gap years** provide relevant information and good advice to anyone, whether disabled or not, wishing to take a gap break. You will find case studies written by young people with disabilities who have undertaken challenging gap year projects overseas or in the UK.

**Great with disability** has been developed to provide really useful and practical advice for students and graduates with a disability or long-term health condition.

**EmployAbility** is an organisation dedicated to assisting students and graduates with all disabilities, including dyslexia or long term health conditions, into employment.

**BASE** is the national trade association for the supported employment sector, providing support for people with disabilities who want to work.

**Movement to Work** is a collaboration of leading UK employers helping thousands of unemployed young people, giving them the skills and confidence to find a job.

**ExchangeAbility** is a long-term project of Erasmus Student Network and it was developed to increase the participation of students with disabilities in mobility, and make Erasmus Student Network an accessible organization