Essex County Council
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

# Preparing for Adulthood: Easy Read Guide for Families




Preparing for Adulthood: Targeted Employment SEND Strategy and Innovation

Produced with the support of Essex Family Forum

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# About this guide



**Preparing for Adulthood is a journey.**

Families and young people learn and make choices along the way.

This guide will help you understand the journey.



It will give you information, support and guidance.
We hope it helps you feel more confident about planning for the future.

Essex Family Forum helped to make this guide.

They listened to families in Essex.

They shared what families said to help make services better. Their ideas and feedback helped shape this guide.



Essex Family Forum is for families of young people with SEND.

SEND means: **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.**




This guide is for families in Essex but can be useful for others too. It covers education, work, and independence for young people with SEND.

This Easy Read guide gives a summary of the main information. If you would like more detail, you can read the full **Preparing for Adulthood Guide**.

# What is Preparing for Adulthood?

Preparing for Adulthood means helping young people get ready for adult life.

This includes:



- getting a job



- learning new skills



- being more independent



- making friends



- staying healthy



- taking part in the community



**Everyone's journey is different.**

# Young person's voice

Your young person should be involved in decisions about their future.

Listening to their views, wishes and goals can help them make choices that are right for them.

Families can help by:



- asking about their interests



- talking about their hopes and goals



- including them in planning and discussions




- supporting them to make their own choices



- listening to what is important to them

# Start planning early



Planning for adult life should start early.



It also includes looking at post-16 opportunities after Year 11, such as:

- Sixth Form
- Further Education
- Apprenticeships
- Life skills
- Employment



EHCP reviews help plan for adulthood. They should start by Year 9.

EHCP means: **Education, Health and Care Plan**

An EHCP outlines a young person's needs and the support they require for education and preparing for adult life.




Careers advice can help young people explore jobs and make decisions about their future.

# Planning for the Future

**Age 13/14**



- Start talking about the future
- Think about strengths and interests
- Start planning for adulthood

**Age 15/16**



- Visit colleges and training providers
- Explore careers and employment options
- Think about travel and independence

**Age 16+**



- Start post-16 education, training or employment
- Develop work and life skills
- Build confidence and independence

**Age 18+**



- Learn about adult services
- Think about housing and supported living
- Continue education, training or employment
- Learn about money and benefits

## Every journey is different

- Some young people move quickly towards independence
- Others need more time and support
- There is no single right path

# The four areas of Preparing for Adulthood



**Work**

Young people can learn skills for future jobs.

This might include:

- work experience
- volunteering
- supported internships
- apprenticeships
- higher education
- paid work



**Independent Living**

Young people can learn skills to become more independent.

This might include:

- cooking
- shopping
- cleaning
- managing money
- travelling independently

# The four areas of Preparing for Adulthood

## Friends and Community

Young people can build relationships and take part in their community.



This might include:

- making friends
- joining clubs
- volunteering
- taking part in local activities

## Health and Wellbeing

Young people can learn how to stay healthy and look after themselves.



This might include:

- staying healthy
- understanding their needs
- attending appointments
- managing medication when appropriate

# What can families do?

Families play an important role.

You can:



- encourage independence



- help build confidence



- talk about work



- explore interests



- support travel skills



- help with future planning



- attend reviews and meetings

# Becoming more independent

Independence develops over time.

Skills may include:



- managing money



- ordering food



- making appointments



- using public transport



- doing the washing



- shopping

Small steps make a big difference.

# Money and benefits

Young people can learn about money as they get older.

This might include:



- using a bank account




- saving money



- paying for things



- budgeting



- understanding benefits



- managing money safely

Families can help young people build money skills over time.

# Travel Training

Travel Training helps young people become more independent by learning how to travel safely on their own.



- buses



- trains



- walking routes

Travel Training helps young people access:



- college



- work



- volunteering



- social activities

Want more information?

Read the full guide: Pages 36-40 (Independent Travel)

# Thinking about employment

Young people need a range of skills for employment.

These include:



- communication



- team work



- timekeeping



- problem solving



- reliability

Families can help develop these skills at home.

Want more information?

Read the full guide: Pages 11-26 (Readiness for work)

# Vocational Profiles



A Vocational Profile helps identify:

- strengths



- interests



- support needs



- future goals



A Vocational Profile helps everyone understand the young person's hopes for the future. This helps families, education and support staff work together to plan the next steps.

**Key message:**

A Vocational Profile helps young people identify their strengths, interests and future goals so everyone can plan together.

Want more information?

Read the full guide: Pages 28-35 (Vocational Profiling)

# Post-16 options



After Year 11 there are different options.

What is right depends on the young person's needs, interests and goals.

Different post-16 settings offer different types of support.



Some focus on academic learning, others on life skills or work.

Choosing the right setting depends on the young person's needs, strengths, and goals. Support and inclusion are important factors.

**Key message:**

There are different pathways after Year 11.

The best option depends on a young person's strengths, interests and future goals.

Want more information?

Read the full guide: Pages 41-52 (Post-16 education)

# Sixth Form



A Sixth Form usually focuses on:

- A Levels
- BTECs
- academic study

It may be:

- in a school
- in a Special School
- in a sixth form college

Young people usually study a small number of subjects they enjoy.

They are encouraged to become more independent and do more things for themselves.

Sixth Form can feel similar to school.

**Key message:**

Sixth Form may suit young people who enjoy academic study and want to continue learning subjects they are interested in.

For some young people, it may feel more familiar than college, especially if it is based in their current school or Special School.

Want more information?

Read the full guide: Pages 43-44 (Sixth Form)

# Further Education



Colleges offer lots of different courses.

These can include:

- vocational courses
- supported learning
- life skills courses
- employment programmes

Young people can choose courses that match their interests and future goals.

Colleges are usually more independent than school.

**Key message:**

Colleges offer a range of courses and can help young people develop skills for employment, independence and adult life.

The environment may feel more adult than school.

Want more information?

Read the full guide: Pages 45-46 (Further Education)

# Supported Internships



Supported Internships are for young people aged 16 to 24 with an EHCP who want to work in the future.

They include:

- work experience
- support from a Job Coach
- learning at college
- developing work skills

The aim is paid employment.

**Key message:**
A Supported Internship helps young people gain real work experience.

It helps them build confidence, learn work skills and prepare for paid employment.

Want more information?

Read the full guide: Pages 60-65 (Supported Internships)

# Apprenticeships



An apprenticeship is a paid job where young people learn while they work.

Apprentices:

- gain practical skills at work
- learn through training
- work towards qualifications
- gain valuable work experience

Foundation and Accessible Apprenticeships offer extra support for those who need it.

**Key message:**

Apprentices learn by doing a real job while completing training and working towards qualifications.

This helps them gain skills, knowledge and experience for their future career.

Want more information?

Read the full guide: Pages 66-76 (Apprenticeships)

# University



University is one option for young people after Sixth Form, college or an apprenticeship.

At university, students can:

- learn more about a subject they enjoy
- gain qualifications
- develop new skills
- prepare for future careers

Students are expected to be independent and manage their own learning, but support is available for students with SEND.

**Key message:**

University is one of many pathways after education.

It can help young people gain qualifications, become more independent and prepare for future employment.

Want more information?

Read the full guide: Pages 77-82 (University)

# Looking at Colleges and Training Providers

Before choosing a setting ask these questions:



## Course

- Does the course match my young person's interests and goals?



## Support

- How do you support learners with SEND?



## Travel

- How will my young person get there?



## Wellbeing

- What support is available?



## Independence

- How do you prepare young people for adult life?



## Employment

- Are there work experience or employer links?

Want more information?

Read the full guide: Pages 47-50 (Which setting is right?)

# Work Experience



Work experience helps young people:

- learn about jobs
- build confidence
- meet people
- gain skills
- explore choices about the future



It gives them the chance to see what a workplace is like whilst still in education and explore jobs that may interest them in the future.

**Key message:**

Work experience is an important step towards future employment and greater independence.

Want more information?

Read the full guide: Pages 54-59 (Work Experience & Volunteering)

# Volunteering



Volunteering means giving your time without being paid.

It can include:

- charity shops
- libraries
- community groups
- events
- environmental projects



Volunteering can help young people gain experience, confidence and new skills.

**Key message:**

Volunteering helps young people contribute to their community while building experience and confidence.

Want more information?

Read the full guide: Pages 54-59 (Work Experience & Volunteering)

# Adult Community Learning (ACL)



Adult Community Learning offers a wide range of courses for adults from the age of 19 and over.

People can:

- learn something new
- improve their skills
- gain confidence
- work towards qualifications
- prepare for future opportunities
- achieve their personal goals

Support is available for learners with additional needs.

**Key message:**

People can continue learning after school and college.

ACL offers courses for adults aged 19 and over.

Courses can help people build confidence, independence and skills for the future.

Want more information?

Read the full guide: Pages 86-90 (Adult Community Learning)

# Supported Employment



Supported Employment helps people with disabilities or additional needs find and keep a paid job.

Support may include:

- understanding strengths and interests
- finding suitable jobs
- applications and interviews
- job coaching
- support in the workplace

Some services are only available to certain people. Ask the organisation if you are unsure.

**Key message:**

Supported Employment aims to help people find and keep paid work, and become more independent.

Want more information?

Read the full guide: Pages 91-94 (Supported Employment)

# Connect to Work



Connect to Work is a programme that helps people who may find it harder to get a job.

The programme provides support to meet each person's needs. It can help people to

- look for jobs
- prepare for interviews
- build confidence
- get support in the workplace

The aim is to help people find and keep paid employment.

**Key message:**

Connect to Work offers personalised support.

The support is based on the person's goals, strengths and needs.

Want more information?

Read the full guide: Pages 95-96 (Connect to Work)

# Jobcentre Plus




Jobcentre Plus can help people find work and prepare for employment.

The service can help people to:

- look for jobs
- write a CV
- prepare for interviews
- find training and work opportunities
- understand benefits
- build employment skills




**Disability Employment Advisors** can provide extra support. They can help young people with SEND understand their options and build skills for work.

**Key message:**

Jobcentre Plus offers information, advice and support to help people move towards employment.

Want more information?

Read the full guide: Pages 97-100 (DWP/Jobcentre Plus)

# Day Opportunities



Day Opportunities can help adults:

- learn new skills
- meet people
- build confidence
- become more independent
- prepare for employment

Examples may include:

- community activities
- volunteering
- social activities and groups
- learning programmes



Some people use Day Opportunities after education.

A Social Worker can assess whether support from Adult Social Care may be available.

**Key message:**

Day Opportunities can help people stay active, learn new skills and build independence after education.

Want more information?

Read the full guide: Pages 83-85 (Day Opportunities)

# Looking after mental health



Looking after your wellbeing is important. Young people may need support with:

- anxiety
- stress
- change
- confidence



It is important to ask for help early. Support is available for:

- young people with their wellbeing
- parents and carers
- families with advice and support

**Key message:**

There are organisations in Essex that provide wellbeing and mental health support for young people and their families.

Kooth provides free online mental health and wellbeing support for young people.

www https://www.kooth.com

SET CAMHS supports children and young people with mental health difficulties.

www SET-CAMHS.referrals@nelft.nhs.uk

0800 953 0222

Want more information?
Read the full guide: Pages 102-108 (Support)

# Key messages



- Start planning early



- Focus on strengths



- Encourage independence



- Explore different options



- Visit colleges and open events



- Listen to your young person's wishes



- Include them in decisions about their future



- Ask for support when needed



- Every journey is different

Preparing for Adulthood is about helping young people have a meaningful, happy and independent future.

# Getting Help: useful organisations

Essex County Council

## Essex Local Offer

Provides information about services and support for children and young people with SEND aged 0-25. You can find information about:

- education
- health
- social care
- preparing for the future
- activities and support services

https://send.essex.gov.uk/

## Essex Local Offer Roadshows

Meet local organisations and find information, advice, and support for children and young people with SEND and their families.

https://send.essex.gov.uk/i-think-my-child-needs-help/essex-send-local-offer-roadshows

Essex County Council

## SPACE

Supports families of children and young people with SEND. They offer:

- parent support groups
- workshops
- training
- SEND information
- peer support from other parents

SPACE@essex.gov.uk

https://parent-send-support.essex.gov.uk/about-space

# Getting Help: useful organisations

## Essex Family Forum

A group for parents and carers of children and young people with SEND. They:

- listen to families
- share parents' views with services
- provide information and support
- help improve SEND services in Essex

info@essexfamilyforum.org

www.essexfamilyforum.org

## Essex Carers Network

Helps families and carers who look after someone with a learning disability, autism or additional needs. They provide information, advice and support on:

- preparing for the future
- information and advice
- understanding services and support
- family support and peer support

info@essexcarersnetwork.co.uk

www.essexcarersnetwork.co.uk

01255 554029

# Getting Help: useful organisations

## SENDIASS

Gives free, confidential and impartial information, advice and support to children and young people with SEND, and their families.

https://www.essexsendiass.co.uk/

www.essexsendiass.co.uk/self-referral

## Adult Community Learning (ACL)

Helps adults learn new skills, gain qualifications and prepare for future opportunities across Essex.

lifelong.learning@essex.gov.uk

www.aclessex.com

## ECL Inclusive Employment

Helps people with learning disabilities and autism find and keep paid work. The service offers personalised support to job seekers and employers.

ECL.ContactCentre@essexcares.org

https://www.ecl.org/supported-employment/inclusive-employment

# Targeted Employment

Essex County Council

Our **newsletters** share information about:

- jobs and employment
- training and learning
- support for young people with SEND
- preparing for adulthood
- local events and opportunities

Each newsletter includes:

- useful information and news about local services
- success stories
- advice and guidance

We write 3 newsletters a year - if you would like to receive them in the future please email us:



targetedemployment@essex.gov.uk

These are some of our previous newsletters:



July 2026



November 2025



April 2026



July 2025

We have also created **Job Guides** to help young people learn about different careers.



Easy-read Job Factsheets

Our **Events Calendar** can also help young people and families find information on careers and Preparing for Adulthood events throughout the year.



https://essexcc.pagetiger.com/calendar2526/1

Essex County Council
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities




For the latest version of the full **Preparing for Adulthood: Parents and carers guide to post-16 opportunities**, please refer to the online version using the link or QR code below:

The QR code helps us understand how many people use this guide. Your information stays anonymous.

https://www.essexopportunities.co.uk/post-16-parents-carers-guide/post-16-parents-carers-guide/

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