



Department
for Education

Special educational needs and disability

A guide for parents and carers

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Young people aged 16 and over in further education

This section looks at what you can expect if your child is in further education.

Many young people with SEN or disabilities, once they are over compulsory school age, move into further education (FE), such as FE and sixth form colleges and 16-19 academies. For simplicity, this section refers to all post-16 providers as colleges.

Colleges should be involved in plans for young people to leave school and enter college, so they can be prepared to meet their needs. They should give young people the chance, before they enter college, to say whether they have SEN or a disability which might affect their learning. Colleges should then discuss with young people and explain how they will provide support to meet their needs.

If your son or daughter has SEN, the college needs to use its best endeavours to give them the support they need. Support for most young people will be provided through SEN support (see section in this guide on [Support for children and young people with special educational needs](#)). This might include support from outside the college. The college should keep the support it provides under review and discuss it regularly with you and your son or daughter. They should keep records of your son or daughter's progress and the support they receive up to date and keep you all informed of progress.

At age 16, and beyond, young people will often become increasingly independent and may want to exercise more control over the support they receive for their SEN. Colleges, your local authority and others who provide services for young people when they are over compulsory school age are expected to communicate directly with the young person. You should talk to your son or daughter and agree how best you can be involved and how much support they will need as they get older. Once you have agreed arrangements which work for you, your son or daughter should let their college know so that you can receive the information and support you need as a parent to continue to give your child the support that they need from you.

If a college, despite its best endeavours, can't meet a young person's needs then a young person, with support from their parents, should consider whether they need an Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment, which might lead to an EHC plan (see section in this guide on [Education, Health and Care needs assessments and plans](#)). If you think your son or daughter needs an assessment, you should both discuss this with the college. A request can be made for an EHC plan up until a young person reaches the age of 25.

For more information about support for young people aged 16+ in further education who have SEN or disabilities, please look at Chapter 7 of the [0-25 SEND Code of Practice](#). You can also check your local authority's Local Offer (see section in this guide, [The Local Offer](#)). Or you can speak to your local authority's [Information, advice and support](#) service.

Questions you might want to ask:

- if my child has a statement or EHC plan in school, does that carry forward to college?
- where can I find out information about colleges that are able to provide the right support for my son or daughter?

Notes

Preparing for adulthood

This section looks at how services should work together and support you to help your child prepare for adulthood, such as going into higher education, independent living, being involved in their community and being as healthy as possible in adult life.

From the age of 16, the law recognises young people have rights to take some decisions for themselves (provided they are capable of doing so). For example, they have a right to request an Education, Health and Care plan directly from their local authority, and a right to request a Personal Budget. That doesn't mean that you, as parents, are excluded. Your local authority or your child's college should still continue to involve you – particularly when your child is 16 or 17. Typically, young people this age will still want support from you as parents and will want your advice on decisions that affect them.

As children get older and become young people and adults, it is important that they are given opportunities to take more control over their lives. All young people need support at this important time – from you as parents, and from professionals such as teachers, college lecturers, youth workers and others. This is particularly important for young people with SEN or disabilities.

Preparing for adulthood is about preparing for things like higher education, independent living, being involved in the community and being as healthy as possible in adult life. It needs to start early – schools and other service providers should start having discussions with young people about long-term goals, ideally before they reach the age of 14. As parents, you of course need to be included in those discussions.

Recognising the increasing independence of young people once they reach 16 and beyond, your local authority has a number of legal responsibilities such as:

Making sure information, advice and support is available directly to young people, independent of their parents if they wish it. [Information, advice and support](#) services should work sensitively with families, and explain to you what this means for you as parents

Including information in the Local Offer (see section in this guide, [The Local Offer](#)) about preparing for adulthood, and support available to them in higher education

Making sure that all reviews of Education, Health and Care plans (see section in this guide on [Support for children and young people with special educational needs](#)) for young people from age 13-14 onwards, include a focus on preparing for adulthood

Making sure services they provide – such as housing and adult social care – help children and young people prepare for adulthood

Carrying out an adult care transition assessment for young people aged 18 and over with SEN or disabilities, if they think it will benefit that young person

Further information

More information about preparing for adulthood can be found from your local authority's [Information, advice and support](#) service and from your local authority's Local Offer (see section in this guide, [The Local Offer](#)). More details about what this means and what the law requires can be found in Chapter 8 of the [0-25 SEND Code of Practice](#).

Questions you might want to ask:

- what happens if I am excluded from discussions about my child's future?
- what if my child and I disagree?
- what if my child is not capable of making decisions for him or herself?