

As your child grows into a young person your role as a parent changes. You may have made decisions on their behalf in the past, whereas now they'll be encouraged to form and share their own views. They will need to think about their goals and ambitions and what they want to achieve in the future. This factsheet is about the role of parents and others in supporting a young person to set and achieve their goals.

When does preparing for adulthood (PfA) start?

Ideally, as early as possible. Although as a parent it might seem strange to be thinking about your child's adult life when they're still in nursery or primary school, it's worth keeping it in mind. All the support that your child or young person gets should aim to challenge them to achieve the best they can and be as independent as possible. And all that support over the years builds into small stepping-stones on the journey to adulthood.

Guidance on the law says that discussions about long term goals should start early – ideally well before year 9. If your child has an Education Health and Care (EHC) plan, the review meeting each year should include a focus on preparing for adulthood from Year 9 onwards. Your young person's EHC plan should grow and evolve as they learn new skills and achieve outcomes (goals). The outcomes should be 'ambitious and stretching'.

Your young person can ask to have a PfA social worker at EHC plan review meetings. If they're between 12 and 18 and are likely to need support or care when they become an adult, you or they can ask for help from the Preparing

for Adulthood team. The team help young people to make the most of the opportunities of adulthood, becoming as independent, self-reliant and confident as possible. There is information and a referral form for the PfA team on the Local Offer website.

EHC plans can stay in place from when a young person turns 19 until they're 25. This will only happen if there are education or the training outcomes in their plan which have not yet been achieved. There isn't an automatic right to have an EHC plan until a young person is 25.

Some specific decision-making rights pass to your young person after compulsory school age (16). These are the right to

- ask for an assessment for an EHC plan (which they can do at any time up to their 25th birthday)
- ask for changes to the content of their EHC plan
- ask that a place of learning is named in their EHC plan, such as a specific college
- ask for a personal budget for elements of an EHC plan
- appeal to the SEND Tribunal about decisions concerning their EHC plan

The law says that parents should still be involved in discussions about a young person's future and they're still likely to need your help with this process.

What should you plan for?

These are the main things to think about when preparing for adulthood.

Education and training after leaving school

You can find out about colleges in your area and what they offer through Devon's SEND Local Offer. You can also visit college websites and go to their open days. Colleges are happy to talk to students and parents about the courses they offer and the support they can give. The information in your young person's school plan or EHC plan will help with these discussions. It's a good idea to ask about work experience opportunities too. Apprenticeships, traineeships and supported internships may also be available.

Post 19 higher education and/or employment

Some students with special educational needs will go on to study at university. EHC plans end when a young person goes on to higher education such as a degree course, but the information that's in them can still help universities to support their needs. Your young person will need to think about how they're going to prepare for work, where they will work or where their future income will come from.

Independent living

Many young people with special educational needs will want to leave home and live independently or with support. Preparing for adulthood includes thinking about when a young person will leave the family home, where they will live and what support or skills they might need to do this. Young people will also need to think about managing money, keeping themselves safe, making friends and being part of their local community.

Being part of society

You can help your young person think about living in their wider community and how they will have a social life. Help them to think about their interests and hobbies, whether they want to join clubs or organisations and where they will meet and find friends. Some young people choose a volunteer role to begin with, to help them feel more independent and get a feel for the world of work.

Being healthy

As well as thinking about exercise and diet, your young person will need to take steps to stay healthy and well.

This might mean regular check-ups, such as at the dentist and an on-going health plan with the professionals they see already like an OT, doctor, physiotherapist, specialist nurse or consultant. The health professionals they see are likely to change as they move from child to adult services and this needs to be planned well in advance.

A small number of young people may need a continuing health care (CHC) plan. This supports people who need a lot of help because of their health, and can include help with living accommodation, carer support and travel.

The Care Act 2015 says that some young people with more complex needs may be eligible for adult care services. In Devon the Preparing for Adulthood Team can help your young person get the right services and support when they become an adult.

Who might be involved in preparing for adulthood?

The following people should be involved.

- **The young person** The law says that as a young person develops, they should be more closely involved in decisions about their future, and if there is a disagreement their view can override that of their parents. Young people can say what their needs are and what they would like to do after leaving school. They can also ask for the support of an advocate. This person's role is to make sure that the young person's views are considered by everyone involved.
- **Parents or carers.** If your young person wants you to, you should continue to be involved in discussions about their future. Think about what they would like to achieve and what support they may need to do this.
- **The school or college** will provide information about their progress and the support they may need.
- **Independent careers advisors.** Careers South provide independent careers advice in Devon.
- **Other professionals** actively involved with your young person.
- **Health and social care professionals**, if your young person is likely to need continuing health or care services.

How can you help?

You can talk to your young person and explain what they need to think about. You and your young person can use the 'what should you plan for?' list together. DiAS has a factsheet and information on our website that can help you to support your young person to give their views.

You could think about:

- Their strengths (what they're good at) and what they enjoy doing.
- What is important to them now and for the future.
- The support that has worked well and what they have achieved
- The support that hasn't worked so well and may need to be changed.
- What they still need to learn and what support they might need to do this.



Important to know

Preparing for adulthood is a process and happens gradually. That's why it's good to start early and have a plan to work towards!

Can my young person get information, advice and support?

The law says children and young people can access information, advice and support separately from their parents. This must be impartial, confidential and free. If parents ask DiAS for support for a young person over 16, we will ask for the young person's consent and discuss the types of support we offer.

Need more information?

Devon SEND Local Offer

Information about education, health and social care services and support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in Devon

w: new.devon.gov.uk/send

Preparing for adulthood team – Devon County Council

Supports young people who are likely to have needs for care and support into adulthood.

w: www.devon.gov.uk/education-and-families/send-local-offer/preparing-for-adult-life-ages-14-25-years/the-preparing-for-adulthood-team/

Council for Disabled Children - Funding of students 16-25 with SEND - A Quick Guide

A guide to how funding works for young people in education, training or apprenticeships

w: www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk

SEND Code of Practice

Guidance on the special educational needs and disability (SEND) system for children and young people aged 0 to 25.

w: www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25

Careers South West

Learning and work choices information for young people age 16-19.

w: www.cswgroup.co.uk/home/young-people/

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