



**A CAREERS RESOURCE FOR PARENTS,
GUARDIANS AND TEACHERS IN SUSSEX**

WHAT'S NEXT AT 14, 16 AND 18?

**ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HELPING
YOUNG PEOPLE MAKE INFORMED CHOICES**

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INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS THIS GUIDE?

Parents/guardians and teachers have huge influence on the decisions young people make about their futures. The purpose of this guide is bring together key information and advice for teachers, parents and guardians of young people who are;

- ▶ In Year 8 or 9 and choosing GCSEs
- ▶ In Year 10 or 11 and deciding what to do once GCSEs are complete or
- ▶ Coming to the end of college or an apprenticeship and deciding on their first steps into the world of work or higher/further education.

The information will be focused on Sussex, but will also be relevant to readers across the UK.

HOW TO USE THE GUIDE

This guide consists of:

- ▶ Key information e.g. understanding different qualifications, making applications
- ▶ Key advice e.g. how to cope with different issues that arise during decision making

While you may wish to read the whole guide, some of the information is targeted to parents/guardians and teachers of different age ranges. In this case you may just want to initially read the sections aimed at the age of the young person or people you care for. Alternatively, you may feel you have a good knowledge of the options and pathways and instead want to focus on the advice sections from Making Choices onwards.



FURTHER SUPPORT

Careers guides for young people

What Next at 14, 16 and 18 for Young People (the accompanying guide to this one, aimed at young people). Distributed across schools in Sussex and available at www.sussexlearningnetwork.org.uk

Your questions answered

If you have any questions about the information in this guide or about the young person or people you care for, email questions@elev8careers.org.uk and a qualified careers advisor will respond.

Careers webinars

We will be holding regular online webinars on different topics such as:

- ▶ Choosing subjects to study
- ▶ Getting work experience
- ▶ Applying to Degree Apprenticeships

You can email any questions in advance to questions@elev8careers.org.uk or ask questions at the end of the webinar. To find out more information about these webinars visit www.sussexlearningnetwork.org.uk



SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITY FOR CAREERS

Schools have a statutory duty to provide independent careers guidance for students from year 8 to 13. There are useful links to what schools should be doing here www.ucas.com/ucas/16-18-choices/help-and-support/parents-and-carers/careers-information-and-guidance-schools.

Teachers can check the most recent statutory duty here www.gov.uk/government/publications/careers-guidance-provision-for-young-people-in-schools.

Teachers may also be interested to read www.gatsby.org.uk/education/focus-areas/good-career-guidance and can check the CDI's register to find a professional Careers Advisor here www.thecdi.net/Professional-Register.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S FUTURES: SOME KEY CONSIDERATIONS

The ways we learn and work have changed dramatically in the 21st century and will continue to. While we can't predict the future, we can do our best to be prepared and to help those starting out to be as ready as possible to navigate the changing world of work. Below are some important points that can have a big impact on the the young people making decisions today about their futures.

APPRENTICESHIPS AND UNIVERSITY

For many years, **Apprenticeships** were seen as the alternative route for those who could not attend university. This is now changing as there are many more apprenticeships available across many industries. This is likely to increase with the recent introduction of the 'Apprenticeship Levy' (where companies who pay out wages higher than 3 million must invest in apprenticeships). The Government target is to achieve an additional 3 million apprenticeships in England by 2020. Furthermore, Higher and Degree Apprenticeships (which provide at least a level 4 qualification – the first year of a university degree) mean it is possible to achieve the same qualification level as doing a degree. Right now there are few of these degrees available in Sussex (although more are in development and 3000 were announced in November 2017, see www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-and-degree-apprenticeship-vacancies) so young people would need to be willing to travel, but there may be significant benefits in doing so.

In terms of **University**, with over 50,000 courses, young people have a huge number of subjects to specialise in. Many courses also now include work related learning (including work related placements) to add to students employability prospects. Universities are working hard to ensure they attract and support young people from many different backgrounds. So whether they have studied A Levels, BTECs or Access courses there will be a course for them. Young people can also expect a range of benefits from trying new activities to immersing themselves in new cultures and meeting new people and employers; which can all have a big impact on their success. Research also shows that people who gain a degree:

- ▶ Have higher employment rates
- ▶ Have more skilled jobs
- ▶ Earn around £10K per year than non-graduates

For more information on the different routes have a look at www.ucas.com/what-are-my-options.

KEY FACTS

90%

NUMBER OF APPRENTICES WHO STAY IN WORK FOLLOWING THEIR APPRENTICESHIP

KEY FACTS

£500K

MONEY EARNED OVER LIFETIME BY THOSE WITH A DEGREE OVER THOSE WITHOUT

SOFT SKILLS MATTER

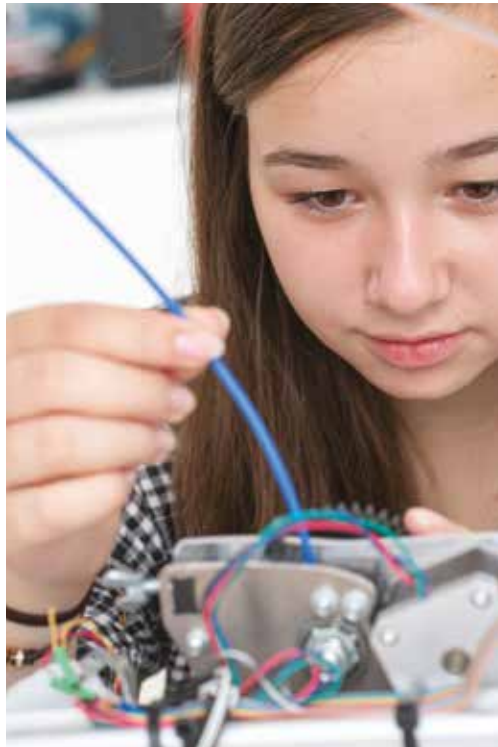
In the future, to hold down a career, people will need to be flexible and have transferable skills (those that are useful in a number of settings). An entrepreneurial mindset and the ability to work in cross-cultural teams will also be very useful. These skills are often referred to as 'soft skills', but in school may also be called 'employability' skills, 'learning for life', 'enterprise', or 'careers learning'.

Although many schools take the development of these skills seriously, many employers still say young people are not entering the workforce demonstrating them enough.

So while qualifications do matter, it is also very important that young people are developing skills such as:

- ▶ Communication
- ▶ Resilience
- ▶ Confidence
- ▶ Initiative
- ▶ Leadership
- ▶ Team-work
- ▶ Critical thinking
- ▶ Drive

Developing these skills (through activities such as work experience) will help young people to navigate the changing 21st century labour market (see below) and maintain their employability prospects.



CHANGING LABOUR MARKET

Technology is having a huge impact on the way that we work and the kinds of work that we do. Anyone starting their career today is likely to have ten or more jobs during their working life and technology is likely to play a key part in whatever work they do.

When making decisions it is important for young people to consider the potential future prospects of careers that interest them and whether the skills they are developing will be transferable. For example, some jobs are more at risk of automation (where technology replaces human work). Because of this it is increasingly important that young people become as skilled as possible and continue to learn throughout their lives.

SOME JOBS THE UK IS CURRENTLY STRUGGLING TO FILL

 ENGINEERS	 NURSES	 DEVELOPERS	 TEACHERS	 CHEFS
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TOP PAYING UK JOBS CURRENTLY

ROLES IN TECHNOLOGY, SALES, MEDICINE, STEAM (SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, ARTS AND MATHS) CAREERS SUCH AS FLIGHT ENGINEERS, BUSINESS, FINANCE (E.G. BROKERS), LAWYERS AND AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS.

GROWING SECTORS IN SUSSEX

CREATIVE DIGITAL AND IT, ADVANCED ENGINEERING AND MANUFACTURING, ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNOLOGY, BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL SERVICES, HEALTHCARE AND LIFE SCIENCES, FOOD AND HORTICULTURE INDUSTRY, CONSTRUCTION, HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE AND THE VISITOR ECONOMY.



MORE INFORMATION

www.coast2capital.org.uk/storage/downloads/labour_market_information_booklet-1487092243.pdf

QUALIFICATIONS AT 14, 16 AND 18 EXPLAINED AND HOW THEY MIGHT AFFECT A YOUNG PERSON'S FUTURE

With all the recent changes in course qualifications, you can be forgiven for not being sure what the options are! Some young people are also not quite sure what qualifications they will achieve at the end of their course or what their qualifications can lead to. Read on for a better understanding of the options at 14, 16 and 18 and what a young person needs to consider.

Helping young people understand what they are working towards will make sure they recognise the connection between study and future options and are on track to achieve their ambitions. For an overview of the different levels of qualifications, have a look at www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/list-of-qualification-levels. For a summary of the choices a young person will need to make, read on.

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS (SEN)

Some students with SEN will have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). This lasts till they are 25 and can mean they are able to stay in free further education till this age. There is further information on SEN and EHCP and the options with study and training here www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-19-to-25-year-olds-entitlement-to-ehc-plans/send-19-to-25-year-olds-entitlement-to-ehc-plans.

GCSE YEARS 13/14 – 16 YEARS OLD

Up till year 11 most young people will study GCSEs (which are Level 2 qualifications) and some may also have studied BTECs (which at GCSE age are also level 2 qualifications). Some young people may also have studied some work related qualifications which may be certificates or awards which will likely be at Level 1 or 2. Students are expected to make their GCSE choices in either year Year 8 or 9 so some students will be making decisions which could potentially limit their later options as young as 12! It is important then to be aware of the implications of this first decision making step.

New gradings

From summer 2017 GCSEs are moving to a number graded system. A 'C' grade is now a 4 (and a high C a 5) and the top grade is a 9.

The English Baccalaureate (Ebacc)

Some schools are aiming for students to achieve the Ebacc. This is awarded when students achieve grades 4 and above in five of the following core GCSE subjects: English (or a 4 and above in English Language or English Literature if taking both), Mathematics, History or Geography, a Language and the Sciences (4s and above in Core and Additional or two subjects if Triple Science is taken or Computer Science instead of either Physics, Chemistry or Biology).

While achieving the Ebacc demonstrates achievement in a broad range of academic studies it can mean some young people feel pressured to drop non Ebacc subjects they enjoy or have high ability in. While schools are judged on their Ebacc achievements it is important for individual young people to feel able choose subjects that are right for them (within the confines of school timetabling).

BTECs vs GCSEs

Some schools offer the option of taking some courses as BTECs rather than GCSEs. BTECs are generally more coursework than exam based which may suit some students. However, this potentially can have implications on later subject choice. For example doing a science BTEC would make it very difficult to go on to take a science subject at A Level.

Some universities may also question the choice of BTEC courses at GCSE as they do not necessarily show as high a level of academic achievement.

Keeping options open and thinking ahead Choosing with your future options in mind:

The core subjects all young people study at GCSE generally mean that if a good grade is achieved they can continue that subject at A Level and beyond. However, there are certain subjects that if not studied at GCSE can be tricky to come back to at a later date. These include languages, art, and music.



Furthermore many subjects require certain grades at GCSE. Some examples include:

- ▶ Studying A Levels (usually 3 subjects) – 5 or more GCSE including English and Maths at Grade 4 and above
- ▶ Psychology A Level - usually requires a B (grade 6) in Maths
- ▶ Music A Level - usually requires a B (grade 6) in Music
- ▶ Biology, Chemistry or Physics or Maths - minimum of a C (grade 4) in Double Science. Realistically a 6 or more suggests the student can cope with the demands of A Level.

University perspective

If a young person is keen to go on to university then it is important to have that in mind when choosing GCSEs. A useful document to help with these choices is called Informed Choices and is written by 24 leading UK universities. You can find it here: <http://russellgroup.ac.uk/media/5457/informed-choices-2016.pdf>.

College and employer perspective

Other than grades employers and colleges are also interested in what a young person is like as a student. Behaviour and attendance will be taken into account. So it is important for a young person to be aware that their performance at school may be judged and can have implications on their future options.

QUALIFICATIONS BY LEVEL

QUALIFICATION/ LEVEL	SUMMARY OF LEARNING	EXAMPLES OF QUALIFICATION
ENTRY LEVEL	Basic knowledge and skills	Entry Level 1, 2 and 3 in subjects such as Life skills.
LEVEL 1	Basic knowledge and skills and ability to demonstrate applying the knowledge gained.	GCSE grades 1 - 3, ASDAN Level 1 Certificate, NVQ Level 1
LEVEL 2	More detailed knowledge gained in specific subject and ability to demonstrate knowledge in a range of tasks	GCSE grades 4 - 9, NVQ Level 2, BTEC Firsts
LEVEL 3	Deeper and higher level understanding and demonstration of skills, knowledge and application of knowledge. Can lead to university, further education and apprenticeships.	A Levels and AS Levels, Foundation Diploma in Art and Design, BTEC Subsidiary Diploma, BTEC Diploma, BTEC Extended Diploma, NVQ Level 3, Music grades 6, 7 and 8 in an instrument
LEVELS 4-8	Very high level of learning specialising in one subject or vocational area.	Level 4 - 5 = Higher Level Apprenticeships, NVQ Level 6 = Bachelor Degree (3 year university degree) Level 7 = Masters Degree Level 8 = Doctorate

COLLEGE OR APPRENTICESHIP – 16 –19 YEARS OLD

TYPES OF COLLEGE

At 16 if a young person wishes to consider studying they can attend a college.

Colleges are either:



A SCHOOL 6TH FORM COLLEGE



A 6TH FORM COLLEGE NOT ATTACHED TO A SCHOOL (ONLY FOR 16 - 19 YEAR OLDS)



A FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGE (ALL AGES AND MAY HAVE HIGHER EDUCATION COURSES AS WELL)



A SPECIALIST COLLEGE (E.G. HAS A FOCUS ON MUSIC)

COLLEGE

If a young person has managed to get a range of level 2 qualifications by the end of year 11 (including Maths and English GCSE) then they can move on to level 3 qualifications at college. If not, then it is likely they will study level 2 qualifications for another year alongside Maths and English if not yet passed, or a combination of level 2 and level 3 qualifications. Students have up to three years at college to receive free education but most complete their studies in two years.

Options for Students with No GCSEs

For students who have not achieved any GCSEs then they may be offered functional skills, entry level or level 1 courses depending on their ability. They may study these courses on their own or sometimes alongside GCSEs or BTEC Level 2 courses. They can then progress on to a full Level 2 programme and then to a Level 3 course or apprenticeship.

A Level and AS Levels

A Levels usually take two years and AS Levels one year although these are being phased out. They are academic qualifications that always include exams and sometimes coursework. They are always at level 3 standard. Students will need to have gained 5 GCSEs grades A-C or 9-4 (some also require specific grades in specific subjects at GCSE). There have been some changes to both A and AS Levels; they are now almost all exam based. A Levels can lead on to university.



PARTICIPATION AGE

The government has introduced the Raised Participation Age (RPA) which requires young people to continue in education, training or apprenticeships to the age of 18. This means a young person can not go straight into work at 16 unless there is training alongside it or they are studying as well.



CHILD BENEFITS

Parents and guardians of students age 16 - 18 will continue to receive Child Benefits while the young person stays in full time education. You will receive a letter in year 11 asking you to confirm their plans. Child Benefit payment does not continue if the young person starts an apprenticeship but the salary provided by the employer will be much more than any benefits previously received. Further information here www.gov.uk/child-benefit-16-19.



BTECs

BTECs can be studied at level 2 and 3 depending on age and ability. They are slightly more vocational than A Levels as they are often more connected to work. They are often more coursework rather than exam based as well. At level 3 over the two years at college students can study the Subsidiary Diploma which is equivalent to one A Level, the diploma which is equivalent to two A Levels or the Extended Diploma which is equivalent to three A Levels. These qualifications can lead on to university as long as students have the equivalent of ideally three A Levels worth of qualifications.

NVQs and other vocational subjects

If a student is studying for a vocational qualification (a course that is directly related to work and provides related qualifications) or an apprenticeship they will likely be studying a number of industry specific qualifications that prepare them to work in that particular area. These qualifications don't generally allow entry to university.

International Baccalaureate (IB)

In Sussex the IB is offered at a few colleges including **Varndean College in Brighton**, **Sussex Coast College in Hastings** and **Bexhill College in Bexhill**. It is an internationally recognised qualification that is suitable for very academic students (usually with a minimum of grades B/6 and above at GCSE) who don't want to limit themselves to three or four A Levels. Subjects are grouped into 6 and you choose three to study at a higher level and three at a lower level.

How many subjects?

If a student takes A Levels normally they will study three (or four if very able). If BTECs then they can do a BTEC diploma (equivalent to 2 A Levels) plus a Subsidiary Diploma (equivalent to 1 A Level) or the Extended Diploma (equivalent to 3 A Levels) on it's own or a vocational course on its own.

Mix and match

Some students may want to mix and match their qualifications. This is possible with A Levels and BTECs (although check with the college as some may not be able to offer the combination they want). For example a subsidiary BTEC could be studied alongside two A Levels. If studying a vocational subject such as hairdressing – they can not also study A Levels or BTECs.

Be aware some subjects can be studied at A Level and as BTECs. How they are taught and examined will differ so check with the college to see which the student would prefer. It is also possible to do two years of A Levels or BTECs and then a vocational qualification afterwards but they may end up having to pay for some of the qualification (education is free till 19). Check with the college and course to be clear on the charges.

Remember

- ▶ Students can catch up! If they start on a level 2 course and their friends are on level 3 if they work hard they will move on to a level 3 course the following year.
- ▶ Not all colleges offer the same subjects or qualifications.

- ▶ If they have a university degree or job in mind check the entry requirements as some may want specific subjects to be studied while at college. See www.ucas.com and <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/job-profiles/home>.

TRAINEESHIPS AND APPRENTICESHIPS

If the young person is interested in going into work after year 11 then an apprenticeship might be just the thing. If they do go down this route they may find they are still working at level 2 or 1, even if they achieved good results in their GCSEs. This is because it is likely they haven't studied the subject before or at least not to a high enough level to go straight in at level 3.

If they have not achieved Maths and English they will still need to retake or study functional skills while doing the apprenticeship. Some apprenticeships do require passes in these subjects before the apprenticeship begins. At level 2 (intermediate) or 3 (advanced) an apprenticeship will provide industry specific qualifications that will lead on to the next level of apprenticeship, a job or further or possibly higher education. More information and vacancies can be found at www.apprenticeships.org.uk and www.apprenticeships-in-sussex.com.

OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH NO, OR FEW GCSES WHO DON'T START OR DROP OUT OF COLLEGE OR AN APPRENTICESHIP

If a young person leaves a college course early or does not attend, there are short personal development courses available such as The Princes Trust. These courses offer training in specific areas, skill building and English and Maths. Most large Further Education Colleges and some small providers offer these courses. The following organisations can direct you and help if a student does not have a course to attend:

- ▶ In Brighton the Youth Employability Service create a monthly guide to local opportunities which is posted here www.facebook.com/yesbrightonhove. You can contact them here www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/children-and-education/youth-service/youth-employability-service.
- ▶ www.c360.org.uk/education/careers/YES
- ▶ www.westsussex.gov.uk/media/10773/careers_adviser_team.pdf

WHAT IS AN APPRENTICESHIP?

Put simply an apprenticeship is a job with training. So you earn, learn and gain a qualification. A traineeship is for those not yet ready to enter work but who have potential to succeed in an apprenticeship with a bit more preparation.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

There are three main elements to an apprenticeship:



THE EMPLOYER

(the company the young person works for)



THE APPRENTICE



THE TRAINING PROVIDER

(the organisation that teaches the young person how to do the job). Sometimes the training provider is a local college, sometimes it is a specialist training provider and sometimes they are trained in house by the employer.

WHEN DO THEY START?

A young person can start an apprenticeship after they leave school at the end of year 11 and any age afterwards, although many people are under 24. Apprenticeships have start times throughout the year.

WHAT QUALIFICATIONS DO THEY PROVIDE?

It depends on what level the apprenticeship is: intermediate, advanced or higher, and what industry they are training in.

WHERE ARE THEY?

If the training provider is a college or a specialist provider then the young person might spend a day or two a week being taught at the college and the rest of the week with the employer. In some apprenticeships they will spend all week with the employer. Each apprenticeship is different.

HOW MUCH CAN YOU EARN?

It depends on the apprenticeship level and what the company decide to pay. The minimum hourly rate for apprentices under 19 or over 19 and in the first year of their apprenticeship is currently £3.50 which will go up to £3.70 in April 2018. Many employers do pay more than this and higher and degree apprentices can earn over £300 per week and more.

DOES IT LEAD TO A PERMANENT JOB?

The idea of an apprenticeship is to prepare the learner to be able to do the job they are training for full time once training is complete. Many apprentices are hired by the company they worked for but it depends on how well they do and what jobs are available when they complete the apprenticeship.

UNIVERSITY/FURTHER EDUCATION/APPRENTICESHIP 18+ YEARS OLD

Further Study and Resits

If a student completes a two year A Level or BTEC course and wishes to do further A Level or BTEC study they should be able to an extra year of study before they turn 19 either at their current college or at a different institute.

Alternatively if a student does not achieve the grades they hope for in the first one or two years of study at college then they should be able to retake a subject or start a new one.

Speak to their school to see what the options are. A final option is to look at adult education and part time learning courses in your area either at a Further Education college or a specialist provider. Courses range from GCSE retakes (free if a student has not passed English and Maths) to professional training options.

Access courses – if they want to go to university but don't have the grades/correct subjects

An access course is a one year course that allows a student to go on to university. The young person chooses an access pathway which leads them towards a specific degree so they ideally need to have decided on the kind of degree they would like to do before starting the course. These courses are offered at a number of further education colleges across Sussex and are suitable for students who are 19 and over (some aged 18 may be considered) who have either not studied the subjects needed for their university course of choice or have not done as well as expected. If they are over 19 and have passes in two or more A Levels or equivalent they will need to take out a loan to pay. Alternatively if they are 18 or over and have less than two A Level passes then the course is free.



Art Foundation – if they want to study art further

If a young person has taken all arts subjects at college (e.g. the BTEC Extended Diploma in Art and Design, or Art, Photography and a Design or Digital Media subject at A Level or BTEC) they may be able to apply straight to an arts course at university as they will have built a sufficient amount of skills and have enough work to show in their portfolio. If not (and they may still want to even if they have studied arts based courses at college) then a foundation year in art is often required. If 19 or under when the course starts this is a free, one year course offered at further education colleges (including Sussex based ones) and art colleges. The art foundation course develops students' skills in art and helps them to identify which area to specialise in their university degree.

UNIVERSITY DEGREES – THE VARIOUS DEGREES ON OFFER

Higher education courses start at level 4. Below are the courses a young person may wish to study. If they are unsure what to study then a good place to start is looking at <http://search.ucas.com/> and <https://university.which.co.uk/a-level-explorer>.

If a young person wishes to stay at home or is not able to travel some university courses can be studied remotely or you can check The Open University www.open.ac.uk.

Foundation Year - a year long course suitable for students who have not quite achieved the required grades or have done subjects not quite suitable for their degree choice. It usually leads on to a similar degree either at the same university or a new location.

Foundation Degree - usually a two year degree which combines academic and workplace learning. You can normally add an extra year to make it into a full degree.

HND/HNC - these are work based qualifications that you study at university. The HNC takes a year and the HND two years. Both are full qualifications on their own or can be turned into a degree with a top up year or two of university study.

BA/BSc/BEng – the majority of young people going to university will apply for a three year Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Engineering degree. If the subject they wish to study is available as a BA or BSc then they need to consider whether their strengths and interests are more science based or more towards humanities and social science.

Masters – A one year course taken after your first bachelor degree which gives the learner more knowledge in a specialist area.

Doctorate – Highest level of academic and professional study usually involving research which can take many years.

Degree Apprenticeships

A higher apprenticeship is the equivalent of the first year of a degree and a Degree Apprenticeship takes at least three years and will give the student a degree as well as the experience of working in their chosen field. As well as the employer paying tuition fees, they also give the student a salary.

The University of Chichester and the University of Brighton in Sussex are both offering Degree Apprenticeships and many more nationwide. It is possible to do an advanced apprenticeship, move onto a higher and then to a degree but some higher and Degree Apprenticeships require A Levels.

Training and work

Once young people turn 18 they can go into work (before that they have to be in education or training, which includes apprenticeships). Many large organisations offer school leaver programs (and apprenticeships - see above) where they will train young people as they work and some will also pay for them to take a degree at the same time. The *100 Most Popular Employers for School Leavers* has some useful information <https://targetcareers.co.uk/school-leavers-100> and you can download the brochure <http://viewer.zmags.com/publication/d129b07d#d129b07d/90> as well as www.allaboutschoollleavers.co.uk/employer-rankings and www.notgoingtouni.co.uk.

Going straight into employment is certainly a possibility although it may take a lot of effort and hard work. Have a look at what is available locally for example at <http://beach.brightonandhovejobs.com> and speak to friends and family to see if anyone has an opening where they work.

Volunteering/work experience/internships

Many young people need to build their career learning and skills through work experience or volunteering before, during, after or instead of studying. There are various ways to access these opportunities. Nationwide volunteering opportunities can be found at www.do-it.org. Securing work experience (often short term and informal) and internships (usually more long term with agreed duties) often requires speaking to companies directly and offering your skills and willingness to learn. Start by looking at www.allaboutcareers.com/careers-advice/work-experience/how-to-get-work-experience and see the Getting Work Experience box on page 25.

Travel

Spending time abroad can be a great way to meet new people, learn new skills and explore new ideas and experiences. There are lots of gap year companies (that charge for the trip) but also look at www.concordiavolunteers.org.uk and www.yearoutgroup.org.

Self employment

If the young person has an idea for a product or service then self employment could be a possibility. There are a range of organisations that can support them such as www.princes-trust.org.uk/help-for-young-people/support-starting-business?gclid=CJmt-rOC2tYCFeyw7QodtPclgQ



MAKING CHOICES AND HOW YOU CAN HELP

TOP TIPS FOR SUPPORTING GOOD CHOICES

Have open conversations

As parents and teachers of young people the single most helpful thing you can do to support a young person is to talk to them about their future and the possibilities open to them. Encourage them to ask questions about the careers of people they encounter and help them to see beyond their immediate environment.

Keep an open mind

Even if the young person has studied the subject before the GCSE or A Level or degree may be different! Equally don't let them be put off new subjects, for example there are many degree subjects which may be new to a young person. They can check where their A Levels may lead here <https://university.which.co.uk/a-level-explorer>.



Consider the young person's interests

Encourage careful consideration about what they enjoy. Help them identify subjects that fit with their interests and abilities.

Help them to reflect on how they like to learn and help them study and revise more successfully

Are they more practical and like coursework? Then BTECs or an apprenticeship route may be suitable. Whatever they study, revision and home work is an area where most students struggle. Remind them that the better they do in their subjects the more options they will have afterwards. There is lots of useful information on revision techniques here www.sussex.ac.uk/skillshub/?id=296. Although it is aimed at university students it still applies to younger people. Some key things that help are (if possible) for students to have a quiet space where they can study, to spread the revision over time and for students to test themselves.

Help them connect current choices with their next steps

Some subjects are harder to pick up later on. For example you can't normally take a language at A Level if you didn't study it at GCSE. So as well as thinking what they are going to study they need to consider what they are stopping studying and how this might impact on future options. If a young person is keen to go on to higher education then it is VERY important to have that in mind when choosing college courses. A useful doc to help with these choices is called Informed Choices and is written by 24 leading UK universities. You can find it here: <http://russellgroup.ac.uk/media/5457/informed-choices-2016.pdf>.

Make sure it is their choice

Friends, family and teachers input is very valuable but remember to encourage the young person to make their own choices.

Reality check

If a young person has ideas for their career then helping them to gain work experience is a very valuable way to explore their interests and demonstrate it to potential employers or if they plan to attend university or do an apprenticeship.

Visit and be informed

Schools, colleges, apprenticeship training providers and universities all offer opportunities for new students to visit through a range of open eves, taster days and summer schools. This is a crucial opportunity for a young person to reality check their interests and choices and get

accurate information about options. Page 20 has some key questions that young people and those that support them can ask when visiting.

Final checks

When they have made their choices encourage them to look at their subject choices as a whole, especially at GCSE and post 16 transition. Does the young person enjoy them? Are they likely to do well (speak to teachers if unsure). Have they looked at the syllabus (the topics covered)? Is achievement measured by exams or controlled assessments? Which do they prefer?

► **Once decisions are made it is a good idea to leave some time before returning to the decision and seeing if the young person still feels the same.**

STEPS TO HELPING A YOUNG PERSON MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS

ARE YOU?

1. Talking to them about their plans?
2. Helping them to research ideas?
3. Encouraging them to consider a range of options?
4. Helping them to identify their interests?
5. Helping them to focus on how they learn best?
6. Helping them connect their choices with their future options?
7. Checking it is their decision?
8. Helping to reality check their aspirations? E.g. through work experience
9. Encouraging them to visit colleges, universities etc
10. Taking time to reflect on decisions



USEFUL RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Here are some great online resources which teachers and parents/guardians can refer to and direct young people to as well

- ▶ www.careerpilot.org.uk – for helping young people understand their choices and pathways.
- ▶ www.icould.com – lots of videos of people in a range of jobs and shows how school subjects can connect with careers.
- ▶ www.sussexlearningnetwork.org.uk – the sister pamphlet to this one aimed at young people has a range of activities to help young people discover and explore a wide range of career ideas.
- ▶ www.elev8careers.org.uk/careers-resources.html – list of resources for particular interests (e.g. an interest in animals, drama, health, sport). Includes a careers crib sheet of resources for teachers and pastoral staff working with young people.
- ▶ www.ucas.com/what-are-my-options – summary of options for after 18 here
- ▶ www.kent.ac.uk/careers/Choosing/ChoosingCareer.htm – activities for planning and exploring careers.
- ▶ www.kent.ac.uk/careers/Choosing/InterestsProfile.htm – good site for suggesting careers based on student interests.
- ▶ Sussex-learning-network.careerexplorer.co.uk – resources for researching careers in Sussex.
- ▶ www.worldskillsuk.org/directions/careers-advice-resources/career-planning-toolkit – great range of careers education and planning resources for teachers.
- ▶ www.allaboutcareers.com/career-test – a useful tool that generates career ideas based on answers to questions. The site also has lots of useful careers information.
- ▶ <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/job-profiles/home> – information on nearly 1000 jobs.
- ▶ www.outstandingcareers.co.uk/resources/ – great range of free resources, links to blogs, display materials etc.
- ▶ <https://adventuresincareerdevelopment.wordpress.com/> – useful information on developments in careers.



WORRIED ABOUT A YOUNG PERSON MAKING THE WRONG DEGREE CHOICE?

Many young people, parents, guardians and teachers can have concerns about choosing the 'right' course, especially at degree level. This is why it is really important if they do have career goals in mind they do sufficient research so they can future proof their choices.

Make sure they have explored what might be useful or even essential to study. Research jobs and entry requirements here: <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/job-profiles/home> and see what subjects are important to different jobs here <https://icould.com/watch-career-videos/by-subject/>.

Equally make sure they have considered a wide a range of possible careers as possible. For example a young person may be interested

in health care but be put off by the high entry requirements for medicine. However, there are hundreds of jobs in the NHS many of which ideally require specific degrees (see www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles).

If they have numerous career ideas or no concrete ones yet then remind them that many employers don't mind what degree a young person has, just that they have one. They can see where some degrees many lead here www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/degree/index.html.

Encourage them to focus on the subjects that they enjoy and make sure they check the modules of the course online (for example history at A Level at their college may be very different to a university's course).

QUESTIONS TO ASK AT SCHOOLS, COLLEGES, TRAINING PROVIDERS AND UNIVERSITIES

Choosing GCSEs

- ✓ What does the course cover?
- ✓ Is the course different to what I have studied so far?
- ✓ What is the percentage of coursework vs exam?
- ✓ How many courses can I take?
- ✓ Is this subject necessary for any specific A Levels or university degrees?
- ✓ What are the results like for this subject?

Post 16

- ✓ What are the entry requirements for this course?
- ✓ What is the difference between the BTEC course of this subject and the A-Level version?
- ✓ If the subject is a BTEC is it equivalent to 1, 2 or 3 A Levels?
- ✓ What is the percentage of coursework vs exam?
- ✓ What does the course cover?
- ✓ How many courses can I take?
- ✓ What level is the course - 1, 2 or 3?
- ✓ What can this course lead to? e.g. work/university/apprenticeships
- ✓ What extra curricular activities are there?
- ✓ What are the results like for this subject?
- ✓ When will the interview be?
- ✓ Is there any extra funding available?

Post 18

- ✓ What are the entry requirements for this course?
- ✓ What does the course cover?
- ✓ How is the subject taught?
- ✓ How many teaching hours are there?
- ✓ What can this course lead to? e.g. work/university/apprenticeships?
- ✓ What clubs or societies are there?
- ✓ What are the results like for this subject?
- ✓ Will there be an interview?
- ✓ Is there any extra funding available?
- ✓ What is the university or training provider's reputation?
- ✓ How much is the cost of living where the university/apprenticeship is?
- ✓ Can you give me examples of what your previous students have gone on to do?



APPLICATIONS PROCESS

PROVIDERS ACROSS SUSSEX

There is a range of educational choices across the county depending on the young person's age, interests and needs including: secondary schools and academies, special schools, private schools, colleges, pupil referral units, apprenticeship training providers and universities.

The following links will take you to list of providers in your area for you to check what is on offer. You can also compare providers across the region here:

- ▶ www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/.

Brighton and Hove 11-19 years old

- ▶ www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/children-and-education/local-offer/secondary-schools-and-special-schools-children-aged-11-16 and
- ▶ www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/children-and-education/local-offer/colleges-sixth-forms-and-special-schools-young-people

East Sussex 11-19 years old

- ▶ <https://apps.eastsussex.gov.uk/educationandlearning/schools/schoolsearch/> and
- ▶ <https://apps.eastsussex.gov.uk/educationandlearning/schools/schoolsearch/schoolsinfo.aspx?pid=5>

West Sussex 11-19 years old

- ▶ www.westsussex.gov.uk/find-my-nearest/school-academy-or-college

Apprenticeship training providers 16+ years old:

- ▶ www.apprenticeships-in-sussex.com

Universities, further education and specialist providers offering higher education courses 18+ years old:

- The University of Brighton
- ▶ www.brighton.ac.uk
- The University of Chichester
- ▶ www.chi.ac.uk
- The University of Sussex
- ▶ www.sussex.ac.uk
- British and Irish Modern Music Institute
- ▶ www.bimm.co.uk
- Brighton Institute for Contemporary Theatre Training
- ▶ www.briect.co.uk
- Chichester College
- ▶ www.chichester.ac.uk
- Crawley College
- ▶ www.crawley.ac.uk
- Greater Brighton Metropolitan College
- ▶ www.gbmc.ac.uk
- Plumpton College
- ▶ www.plumpton.ac.uk
- Sussex Coast College
- ▶ www.sussexcoast.ac.uk
- Sussex Downs College
- ▶ www.sussexdowns.ac.uk

GCSE PROCEDURE

Schools will normally ask students to make their GCSE options choices in the spring term of either year 8 or 9. Most schools will help students with these choices through offering intro sessions to new subjects and assemblies to demonstrate the range of courses on offer. Some students will be offered additional subjects if they have all round high academic ability or strengths in a particular subject e.g. they may be offered triple science.

It is important for young people to take these choices seriously, as they can impact on future options and it is tricky to change options later. See more info on pages 6-7. The school will normally offer core subjects that all students must take and then a number of free choices which may be limited by timetabling.

COLLEGE OR APPRENTICESHIP PROCEDURE

Some colleges have strict deadlines in the December before September entry. It is important therefore for students to start considering their next steps at the start of Year 11, ideally the end of Year 10, before making their application in the Autumn term. Even if they are not absolutely certain of their course choice it is better to make an application so they are on the college's system and change course choice afterwards, than to apply later and maybe miss a place altogether. Young people can make as many applications to different colleges as they wish. Ideally a young person would take the following steps to making a wise choice:

- ▶ Look at a variety of college prospectuses in the summer term of year 10
- ▶ Choose a number of college taster days to attend (usually in year 10 summer term)
- ▶ Visit college open eves/days in the autumn of year 11
- ▶ Make at least two applications to local colleges

- ▶ Attend the interview to their first choice college/s
- ▶ Accept a place at one college
- ▶ Attend an enrolment day in summer of year 11
- ▶ Start the course in September

Another point to note is that many colleges are moving to or have already moved to online application processes.



APPRENTICESHIP PROCEDURE

Applying for Apprenticeships at 16

If, at 16, a young person is interested in an apprenticeship then it is highly recommended that they also apply for a college place as back up. Apprenticeships that will start after the young person finishes year 11 often won't be advertised till late spring or early summer and there is a chance they won't guarantee one immediately.

Applying for Apprenticeships at 17 or 18+

If a young person is looking at university and Degree Apprenticeships it is a good idea to apply to both. Some degree apprenticeships have the same application deadline as the universities (January 15th) so it is a good idea to apply to both degrees and Degree Apprenticeships to keep both options open. Alternatively they can apply to some degree courses and then if they see an Degree Apprenticeship then apply to that later. If a young person wants to do an apprenticeship lower than a degree then they are advertised throughout the year and they can either apply to university as well or just focus on apprenticeships.

How do you get an apprenticeship?

There are two options to apply for an apprenticeship and both require the young person to be able to demonstrate work readiness (some of those soft skills mentioned on page 4), motivation to work in the apprenticeship area and sometimes specific GCSEs or A Levels.

1

Applying for apprenticeships online

A young person can apply for apprenticeships which have already been set up. This means the employer and training provider have already worked together to create the apprenticeship. Visit www.apprenticeships.org.uk and click on 'Find an apprenticeship' and then 'search the find an apprenticeship service' and enter just your location in the search box. By leaving the keywords box clear you will see all the apprenticeships on offer at the moment. Register with the website to get email updates about opportunities that might be of interest.

If the young person is just looking at Degree Apprenticeships then the UCAS website is a good place to look. See <https://careerfinderucas.com/jobs/apprenticeship/#browsing> as well as www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-and-degree-apprenticeship-vacancies.



2

Organise an apprenticeship themselves

You can try and help a young person set one up for themselves. For example if you know an employer or the young person already has a part time job and thinks their employer may be interested in taking them on as an apprentice. This is easier in some ways because they are not competing with others but it can be difficult finding an employer willing to commit! You can also contact the training providers listed at www.apprenticeships-in-sussex.com as they may have some suggestions of employers to contact.

UNIVERSITY PROCEDURE

For many young people and those that care for them, the process of applying to university can be quite daunting. For starters it is a good idea to find out as much information as possible. UCAS, the website through which students will make their applications is a good site to explore starting with wwwucas.com/university. Students interested in University will need to start their thinking in the first year of college. All colleges will provide their students with university application support but most will expect young people to take a proactive approach to choosing courses, specific universities, making their application to UCAS and writing their personal statements. So they make wise university applications, ideally a young person would take the following steps:

- ▶ Check wwwucas.com in the spring term of year 12 to see the kinds of courses and locations they can study at. They can also look at university prospectuses. Most schools and colleges will have up to date ones available or you can order them directly from universities. If they are not at all sure about courses to choose then have a

look at <https://university.which.co.uk/advice/choosing-a-course/help-i-dont-know-what-course-to-choose-what-do-i-do> as well as <https://university.which.co.uk/a-level-explorer>.

- ▶ Attend university open days. Open days start in the summer term of year 12 and this is a great opportunity for young people to compare and contrast different possibilities.
- ▶ Universities also offer summer schools. These are usually during the summer holiday between year 12 and 13 (although some are offered to year 11s before they start college) and offer the chance for students to stay on campus, meet other students and try out some lessons. It is a great way of exploring new subjects and becoming familiar with a university.
- ▶ In the autumn term students will need to decide their top five courses to apply to and write their personal statements (one piece of writing that goes to all the universities they apply to), and complete the requested information on UCAS.



OXBRIDGE, MEDICINE, DENTISTRY AND VET SCIENCE

If students are interested in Oxford or Cambridge Universities, and/or studying medicine, veterinary medicine/science or dentistry then the UCAS application deadline is October 15th. For these subjects it is VITAL students gain relevant work experience prior to applying so they need to do this over the summer if not before. Some courses (especially vocational ones such as midwifery) with the January 15th deadline also require evidence of relevant work experience.



TO APPLY OR NOT?

For students unsure whether to apply it's worth making an application so they have that option, especially while they have the support of careers advisors and school staff. They can always defer any offers they receive and have a gap year. This is especially true for some courses such as midwifery that may require a few applications before an offer is made.

- ▶ More information on writing personal statements here: www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/getting-started/when-apply/how-write-ucas-undergraduate-personal-statement.
- ▶ Colleges may have their own internal deadline for applications to be complete by. The final UCAS deadline is January 15th.
- ▶ Some university courses may invite students for interview so they need to check emails for any invites.
- ▶ Once the student has all their offers they must accept one place and can also specify an insurance place (in case they do not meet the requirements of their top choice).
- ▶ Students will apply for student finance and make arrangements for halls of residence (where they will stay in the first year) in early summer.
- ▶ Start the course in October or in some courses there are January starts.



GETTING WORK EXPERIENCE

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT

Work experience is a fantastic opportunity for a number of reasons. Even if it is not exactly what the young person wants to do when they are older or in the worse case scenario they really don't enjoy it it still helps:

- ▶ Young people to reality check their interest in a particular career – they may discover they love it or... hate it!
- ▶ Young people to develop 'soft skills'
- ▶ Young people to meet potential employers and mentors
- ▶ Demonstrate to employers the young person has experience and dedication to the career area
- ▶ Demonstrate to universities and training providers the young person is a suitable candidate for the course

WHEN DO THEY START?

Some schools and colleges have a dedicated week or two in the school term for work experience and will help students to identify and apply to potential employers.

If this is the case encourage the young person to engage with the process or finding a suitable position and making the most of their week at work.

GETTING WORK EXPERIENCE

HOW TO GET IT - OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL/COLLEGE



ORGANISED OPPORTUNITIES

If it is not offered it is still possible to do work experience outside of school or college. Large employers such as hospitals and councils often offer work experience placements which you can apply for.

Try googling the name of the employer and work experience to see if information about organised placements and the process to apply comes up.



TRY YOUR CONTACTS

Alternatively ask teachers, friends and family if they or someone they know would consider taking a student. Even half a day will provide insight and won't be too difficult for the employer. If they do well it may lead to further work experience or even the offer of an internship (a longer period of work experience and sometimes paid).



CONTACT COMPANIES DIRECT

Other than that it is really good practice for job hunting to ask a young person to identify and contact companies in their local area that interest them. An example could be a young person interested in digital media could look at the directory of digital media businesses in Sussex at www.wiredsussex.com, make up a list of companies to contact, make some phone calls to see who to address an email to and draft an email asking if they can come and see what the company does. They may have to try quite a few but this in itself is a helpful experience and builds confidence and resilience.



VOLUNTEER

Another work experience option is to offer time as a volunteer. This is a good route for those that need experience in health settings but there are lots of other possibilities too. A good national site to try is <https://do-it.org/>. Most towns and cities also have local volunteering opportunities for example in Brighton and Hove www.communitybase.org/volunteers.



MORE INFORMATION

www.allaboutcareers.com/careers-advice/work-experience/how-to-get-work-experience

WHAT TO EXPECT AT AN INTERVIEW

COLLEGE INTERVIEW

Here are some commonly asked questions for college interviews. Do remind young people that colleges know this might be a young person's first interview so they won't be trying to make it hard for them. Most college interviews are informal. However, it is still important for the young person to be prepared.

1. Tell me/us about yourself
2. Why have you applied to this sixth form/college?
3. Why have you applied for this course?
4. What do you find most attractive about this course?
5. What do you enjoy doing outside of school?
6. What are your most/least favourite subjects at school?
7. What are your long-term goals?
8. Why are you leaving your current school?
(Make sure they give a positive reason!)

APPRENTICESHIP INTERVIEW

Although an apprenticeship is a job, both the training provider and the employer will be aware that this might be the young person's first interview especially if they are 16. Most training providers will help a young person prepare for an interview but if the young person has applied to the apprenticeship directly then they may be interviewed by the employer straight away so it is wise to be prepared as with any job. This includes finding out as much as possible about the employer in advance and making sure they understand what the job is. They

may find they are asked the following questions at the interview.

1. Why have you applied for this apprenticeship?
2. What skills and experiences do you bring to the apprenticeship?
3. What do you hope to learn during your training?
4. Tell me/us about yourself
5. What do you find most attractive about this apprenticeship?
6. What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?
7. What are your long-term goals?
8. Why have you decided on an apprenticeship rather than studying at college?

UNIVERSITY INTERVIEW

Not all universities will interview for every course and the type of interview and the questions asked can vary from an informal chat to a vocal exam. All interviews will ask questions about the student's reasons for choosing the course they have applied for. Students applying to competitive universities and courses will also be expected to demonstrate subject knowledge. Their answers help the interviewer determine if they are suitable candidates. There is some good advice for preparing for a university interview here: www.bath.ac.uk/study/teachers-advisers-parents/parents/news/preparing-for-a-university-interview.html and some examples of the kinds of questions asked of students applying to the University of Oxford here: www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-to-oxford/interviews/sample-interview-questions.

GETTING QUALIFICATION RESULTS

Don't panic!

In the days and weeks running up to results day many students, parents and teachers worry about not getting the hoped for grades. But whatever the outcome there are always options. Encourage the young person to occupy themselves with other activities: holidays, work, volunteering, sports, reading, seeing friends. Make the focus about other things and you could even help them to practice some mindfulness (see www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/mindfulness.aspx and www.youngminds.org.uk). If they have taken BTECs then they will already have an idea of some of their results which will hopefully provide some reassurance.

On the day

If they are attending school or college students will receive their results in an envelope. They don't have to open them at once however, many schools and colleges will have teachers and guidance professionals present to help if their results are unexpected, so it is a good idea to take advantage of this support.



GCSE RESULTS – WHAT NEXT?

HEADING TO A 6TH FORM OR COLLEGE?

Results as expected

If the results are as predicted, then it should be a smooth transition. If they have had a change of heart or want to check what else is possible then it is also worth looking at the other options below.

Results better than expected

If they have done better than predicted then normally this will not affect their next steps. However, if they were on the borderline of expecting 4-5 A*s to C (grades 4 and above in the new system) they may have been offered a combination of level 3 and level 2 courses and it may be they can now just do level 3 courses. Do speak to the chosen college to see what they can offer and make sure they are happy with the courses offered.

Results worse than expected

- ▶ Though it can feel devastating for a young person there are always options. Firstly call the college or 6th Form to discuss options.
- ▶ If they were planning on doing level 3 courses (A Levels or BTECs) and have over 5 A*s-Cs (grade 4 and above) including English and maths they may well still be able to do their chosen courses (although some A Levels require grades B/6 or above if a student has studied the subject at GCSE).
- ▶ If the college can not offer alternatives it is worth trying other colleges or 6th forms as they may have courses of interest.

- ▶ If the young person has generally done well (4s/Cs and above in most subjects) but has not passed English or maths then they will need to retake these but they may be able to do this alongside the courses they were planning on taking.
- ▶ If they have not passed most of their GCSEs then they will likely be doing level 2 (GCSE level) courses for another year after which they may be able to move on to a higher level.
- ▶ If they have not passed any then they might start on level 1 courses which some colleges offer. Remember even if they are starting on a lower level course now they can and will catch up!

HEADING TO AN APPRENTICESHIP?

Some apprenticeships require GCSEs in English and Maths and possibly more GCSE passes (grade 4 and above). If the young person has not achieved the required grades do give the training provider a call, as they may be able to still offer the apprenticeship alongside retaking English and Maths or studying functional skills (an alternative qualification).

A LEVEL RESULTS – WHAT NEXT?

HEADING TO UNIVERSITY

Results as expected

- ▶ If the results are as predicted or they were offered an unconditional place at university, then it should be a smooth transition. If the young person has had a change of heart or wants to check what else is possible then it is also worth looking at the other options below.

Results better than expected

- ▶ If they have done better than predicted and want to explore alternative courses then they can try 'Adjustment'. This is a particularly good option if there was a course they were really keen on

but their predicted grades held them back from applying. Adjustment is available from the 16th till the 31st of August and they will see the option to register in 'track' when they log in to UCAS. The course they have already been accepted for will not be affected unless they confirm an alternative in adjustment.

- ▶ Remember though young people need to consider this new course and/or university as carefully as they did their initial choice. Don't let their improved grades and the limited time they have to make a choice cloud their judgment. You can find out more at the UCAS website under undergraduate adjustment.

Results worse than expected

- ▶ Though it can feel devastating there are always options. Firstly speak to the first choice university admissions. It may be the application was strong enough that one grade off will not matter. If this is not possible then there may be other similar courses the university can offer, so check with them first. They can also look at clearing which is available till September. Search the clearing courses available at <http://searchucas.com/>. As with adjustment make sure they have researched and understood any new choices before accepting a place. Don't let the pressure of decision making force them into a choice they are not happy with. You can find out more about the process at the UCAS website wwwucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/apply-and-track/results/no-offers-learn-how-clearing-works. The other option is to retake the subjects they were not happy with. Speak to the school or college to find out the options available.

OTHER OPTIONS

If the young person has already been accepted onto a school leaver programme, apprenticeship or a job which depended on grades and they have missed out on gaining those grades then the first thing to do is to call the employer or training provider. They may well still accept the student.

UNIVERSITY VS APPRENTICESHIPS

WHICH IS BEST?

If a young person is deciding whether to apply for a degree or an apprenticeship then considering the following questions is a good idea.

1. Are they interested in a particular academic course? If so then a degree is an opportunity to really specialise and learn more about a subject.
2. Does the career they are interested in specifically require a degree?
3. Which would an employer in the area they would like to work in prefer?

DO YOU NEED A DEGREE OR AN APPRENTICESHIP?

This very much depends on what the student hopes to do. Some careers such as medicine and teaching require degrees. Some careers such as law traditionally were a degree route but there are now alternatives through apprenticeships and on the job training. Some such as journalism and marketing, while many people have degrees, are possible to enter with A Levels and work experience. However, young people will find that many skilled jobs do ask for a degree.

IS A DEGREE SUITABLE FOR EVERYONE?

Very much so! Some young people may have concerns that university is not for them which is why visiting open days and attending summer schools can really help build a young person's confidence. As long as they are willing to work hard, to read and to write then the process of getting a degree can change a young person's future for the better.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

Apprenticeships are free to do and if doing a degree apprenticeship the employer pays for the degree costs and pays the student a salary. However, the student may have to move away from home to do the apprenticeship so this will have to be budgeted for out of their salary as they will not be able to apply for a loan for living costs. University degrees fees are not all payable up front. Student loans cover the degree fees (around £9000 per year) and depending on parental or guardian income students receive loans to go towards living costs. Some universities also offer grants (which students do not have to pay back) for students who are first in their family to go to university as well as other offers of support. Students do not pay anything back until they start to earn over £21,000 a year and the government have recently announced this will rise to £25,000.

CONCERNED ABOUT UNIVERSITY COSTS?

For many people the idea of finishing university with debts of £50,000 or more is a worrying prospect. But it is really important to remember that a student will only be repaying what they can afford. In the worst case scenario if despite obtaining a degree, they earn a low salary then they may never have to pay back any money they borrowed. Basically this means that a student will only be 'charged' for their degree if it has contributed positively to their future earnings.

- ▶ There is lots more useful and clear information about student loans and tuition fees here: www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/student-loans-tuition-fees-changes

DECISION MAKING – GIVING GOOD ADVICE

Whether the young person is making decisions at 14, 16, or 18 there are various issues which may come up. Here are some signs that they may need some help and suggestions of ways to support them.



IF THEY ARE LIMITING THEIR AMBITIONS

Sometimes young people choose courses or careers because they are familiar or they think they seem easy options. Often this is because they don't have the confidence to try something new and it can mean they limit their options or miss out on opportunities to fulfill their potential.

Solution

A great way to encourage aspirational thinking is by introducing young people to a range of careers. At school this can be done by inviting in professionals, colleges and universities. At home you can ask a young person to think about the jobs they come into contact with either through the media or in their day to day life. If possible

encourage them to ask questions about what the jobs is like, anyone from a doctor, to the broadband engineer, to the local cafe owner. They will all have stories to tell and will help the young person develop a broader understanding of different pathways and confidence that there are many options open to them.

You can also ask the young person questions about where they think the career they are currently interested in may lead and what they think the job will be like. Sometimes the reality of hearing the working hours would be long, repetitive and very poorly paid can get them to reconsider. Sometimes even low salaries can seem large to a young person so demonstrating how much living costs are where you live can help them to compare careers fairly by income.

IF THEY HAVE AN UNREALISTIC GOAL

Careers advisors hear from many young people that want to be 'professional sports people', 'youtube stars', or 'a forensic scientist' (the TV show CSI has a lot to answer for!) While these and other niche or specialist careers are of course possible they all require a combination of talent, luck and perseverance that may be beyond many people starting out.

Solution

Strong aspirations are fantastic and can encourage a young person to work hard. It is a delicate balance to encourage them while also introducing alternatives. Usually it is quite easy to tell a serious goal from a pipedream. For example a boy that expresses interest in being a top football star who is neither in a team nor plays much is likely the latter! In this case (and even for those who are serious) it is a good idea to have a back up. In this instance help them look at other careers in sports, or the media or science and encourage them to see that there are many other options behind the most visible and obvious jobs.

IF THEY JUST DON'T KNOW

For some people 'what do you want to do when you are older?' is a very difficult question to answer. Either they have lots of interests or very few or there are other things going on in their life which makes future planning not a priority.

Solution

It is very hard to make decisions with little information. For students struggling to make decisions research is vital. A good place to start is with an online activity which looks at their interests and strengths and recommends possible careers. The Buzz test is short and fun https://icould.com/buzz/?buzz_page=0 or try www.kent.ac.uk/careers/Choosing/InterestsProfile.htm or www.allaboutcareers.com/career-test for more

involved questions.. It is also important to remind them that any decision they make is not for the rest of their lives! While it is a good idea to anticipate where a course of study may lead them it is also ok to decide to do something because you enjoy it best at that moment in time.

IF THEY DON'T DO WELL ENOUGH

GCSE and A Level results days can be some of the most stressful in a young person's life. Years of expectations and hopes all culminating in one piece of paper is a huge amount of pressure and sometimes the results are not as expected. Equally some young people struggle in a school environment and may take a different route in their education.

Solution

While it is important for young people to recognise good grades do help you to progress more easily it is vital they are also reassured that academic results are not the be all and end all. In the worse case scenario that they fail then they may be able to retake (true for English and maths GCSE and most A Levels and BTECs and degrees). There are always alternative routes to achieve a goal and with some creative thinking it is always possible to move someone forward even if it is not the route originally planned. For more information see the section on Getting Qualification Results on page 27.



IF THEY HAVE A LACK OF CONFIDENCE, SEEM DEPRESSED AND UNABLE TO MAKE DECISIONS

A lack of confidence, depression and/or negative thinking can make decision making an even more difficult process and may result in a young person making uninformed and poor choices or disengaging from the process entirely.

Solution

The most important thing is to make sure the young person's wellbeing is addressed and that may mean postponing decisions till they are in a better position or mood. Try to limit any feelings of being overwhelmed by breaking decisions into small achievable goals e.g let's look at one college prospectus today. The website <https://youngminds.org.uk> has some really useful resources to help support young people and a phone line for parents and there are useful tips to share with young people about building confidence here www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/your-feelings/feelings-emotions/building-confidence-self-esteem/.



IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT THEIR CHOICES

Many adults question some of the choices young people make including the ones regarding future plans and in many cases this might be justified! However, it is very easy to jump to uninformed conclusions and make assumptions about various pathways. For example that apprenticeships are for less academic people, or that studying art doesn't lead anywhere.

Solution

Try and be objective about their decision. If it was someone else's child or a young person you did not know would you be as concerned? Ask questions to find out why they are making the decision, you may be surprised at how much they know and how considered their decision is. If it really is a worry then encouraging them to speak to a careers advisor would be very beneficial and will allow their ideas to be challenged objectively by someone not emotionally invested.

DECISION MAKING CASE STUDIES

As a parent/guardian and even teacher it can be almost impossible to be impartial about a young person you care for, especially when they are making decisions that can have a significant impact on their lives. Hormones, friends and the media can all have less than ideal influence on the decisions young people make and it is very likely you will have some opinions about these decisions. Below are real examples of common issues parents, guardians and school staff may need to deal with and recommendations of how to cope.



WE LET OUR CONCERNS OVER OUR DAUGHTER'S BEHAVIOUR AND CHOICES CLOUD OUR JUDGEMENT DAVID, PARENT

Our daughter was going through an emotional time, going out a lot, and as such did not put much effort into her GCSEs. We tried everything to encourage her including, I am afraid to say, blackmailing her. She wanted to go on to do Performing Arts at college which we were not very happy about as we were concerned where this would lead career wise. But we said if she did well we would allow it. So when she got her (as expected) poor results we were adamant she would do the subjects we thought suitable.

She started the courses we chose but she was miserable, her attendance waned, until she stopped going altogether. In the end she managed to get some work experience at a

local theatre and really enjoyed the technical work backstage. We had a chat with some of the staff and began to see the range of careers in performing arts and when our daughter was offered an apprenticeship which allowed her to learn while working we were fully behind her. Now in her 20s she is going to university as a mature student so she can gain more advanced skills in lighting design.

I think looking back it was not fair for us to use choices she was making about her life as a bargaining tool. What she needed was some time to learn from her own mistakes - and ours! It is ok if it takes some young people a bit longer to find their path.



I DIDN'T REALISE HOW MUCH EDUCATION, TRAINING AND WORK OPPORTUNITIES HAD CHANGED LUCY, FOSTER PARENT

When it came to our foster son making decisions about his next steps after year 11 I have to admit I was a bit unprepared. It has been a long time since I had to make any education and work choices as I am now retired and things have changed so much. I found myself advising Stuart based on what turned out to be very outdated beliefs.

Luckily his school has a careers advisor who was able to help him see the range of opportunities from vocational courses and academic ones at a college to

apprenticeships. Also how these connect with future options like university, apprenticeships and jobs. I didn't know that Degree Apprenticeships were possible or that you could study such a wide range of subjects.

The advisor also helped him take advantage of opportunities like careers fairs and university visits and helped him connect his interests (fixing bikes and electronics) with a possible career path of engineering. I find I am learning from him which is a great experience.



SEEING THINGS FROM A YOUNG PERSON'S PERSPECTIVE HANNAH, CAREERS ADVISOR

As an adult (even one very in tune with their younger self!) it is very easy to forget what being a teen is like. Even with all the information in the world, young people can find it very difficult to process and make informed decisions. In fact to some extent young people physically can't! There is evidence that the parts of the brain involved in making decisions about behaviour, as well as processing cause and effect, are not fully developed until adulthood. So even as someone whose job it is to offer impartial information, advice and guidance it did

take some time for me to grasp that 1. All the knowledge I take for granted and that seems obvious e.g. if you work hard you will likely do better than if you don't, is not necessarily common sense for teens and 2. Even equipped with knowledge teens will sometimes make decisions which are hard to comprehend. I now always try to remember to put myself in their shoes whether that is imagining the fear of too much choice or empathising with their experience of the world.



I NOW TAKE INTO ACCOUNT MENTAL HEALTH AND PERSONAL ISSUES WHEN HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE MAKING CHOICES

NADIYA, TEACHER

I had a very difficult time with one student. I had known him quite a few years through teaching him and being a form tutor. I knew he was academically able when he put some effort in but as he got into year 9 he started to misbehave and disengage. I was aware there were all sorts of reasons why this may be but after exploring them it did seem he was just playing up for attention. When he didn't hand in his GCSE choices form and said he 'didn't care' I was incredibly frustrated. It wasn't till I met with his mum and discovered his parents were going through a separation that it became clear he was struggling to cope. I was then able to explore with

him how he didn't feel he had any control over his life and as such putting effort in and making decisions about the future seemed pointless. I managed to pair him up with an older student who had been through a similar experience, and though it took time, it really helped. As adults we know how hard it is to make good decisions when we are stressed and I think we sometimes forget that while they might not have the same responsibilities we do, young people experience mental health issues just as often and sometimes more acutely. I now always consider this in the first instance when a young person is struggling.



WE WERE LETTING PERSONAL BIAS ABOUT THE LABOUR MARKET GET IN THE WAY

LIAM, STEPFATHER

Both my daughter's mother and I worked hard to achieve our career goals. I have a high level of education and my wife runs her own business. Our daughter however, is really interested in subjects that we don't know much about and was looking at apprenticeship routes which we felt would be less prestigious. We had imagined her becoming a doctor, a lawyer, an accountant - a career we understand and believed would be secure. We had a lot of arguments about our ideas for her A Levels (maths, history, English) versus hers (an apprenticeship, arts and science/maths or a vocational course).

Eventually we looked into some information about the careers she was mentioning and discovered that while they were less familiar to us they were equally if not more in demand and required highly skilled people. We also discovered that very few jobs are secure these days and what employers need are people with experience and skills as well as qualifications. While our intentions were good - we just want the best for our daughter - we now are a bit more flexible about what that might look like and the paths she may take to get there.



FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN LINDSAY, GRANDPARENT / GUARDIAN

No one in our family went to university so when our grandson mentioned he might be interested my first reaction was it wasn't for someone like us. I had no idea about the financial support he could access being the first in our family to go nor the range of courses at different universities. I was probably quite negative about the whole idea and distracted by his older sibling who was in trouble with the police.

Luckily my grandson is pretty strong willed so he got a teacher at school to help him apply. Eventually I went with him to an information day at a local university and was really surprised at what was on offer and there were lots of families there just like us - a bit unsure and confused by the whole process! That was four years ago and he has just graduated with a 2:1 and has been offered a junior position with the police force. I am really proud of him.



WHO CREATED THIS GUIDE?

**Sussex
Learning
Network**

The Sussex Learning Network (SLN) is a partnership of universities, colleges, training providers and local councils across East and West Sussex. SLN work with schools, further education colleges, universities, councils and industries across Sussex focusing on issues that affect learning opportunities.

► www.sussexlearningnetwork.org.uk



Elev8Careers is a careers education and guidance company based in Brighton. For the last ten years they have provided careers support to thousands of young people across Sussex helping them build the careers skills, knowledge and networks to successfully navigate their careers.

As part of funding secured through an initiative called the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP), SLN commissioned Elev8Careers to provide careers guides alongside a range of careers education, information, advice and guidance support across the county.

► www.elev8careers.org.uk