

CHAPTER 8

Employment and volunteering



'I just want my son to be included in the workplace as a member of the community and not in an exploitative way.'

Many of us hope to see our children getting a job one day. Now that young people have to stay in education or training until they're 18, they can't leave school at 16 and get a job as they might have done in the past, but you will still want to help them take the right steps towards employment. Some of us may not see a paid job as a realistic goal for our child but could imagine them volunteering. This chapter provides information about the various options available to young people including volunteering and employment.

WHERE TO LOOK FOR WORK

If your child is ready to look for a job, maybe a Saturday job would suit them before they leave school or college. There are many websites that list job vacancies for all:

- The Argus website at www.theargus.co.uk/jobs
- Jobs in Brighton and Hove at: www.brightonandhovejobs.com
- Gumtree at www.gumtree.com/jobs/brighton
- Brighton & Hove City Council at 222.jobs.brighton-hove.gov.uk (council jobs)
- www.jobsinsussex.com
- Community Base (jobs in the community and voluntary sector) www.communitybase.org/communityjobsearch

BEACH is a website designed and run with young people to help them job hunt locally with lots of employability advice. Visit www.beach.brightonandhovejobs.com. Or your son or daughter could visit their local JobCentre Plus which provides employment advice and information for people who are claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). Jobcentre Plus helps employers fill vacancies; and provides help and benefits for people who can't work. There are two Jobcentre Plus offices in Brighton and Hove – one on Edward Street in Brighton, the other on Boundary Road in Hove. They also have specialist Disability Employment Advisers – read more about these below.

If your young person is looking for work, it often makes sense to approach any contacts and friends you have. Some of us have persuaded a local shop or business to give our child a few hours' work experience and this has led to paid work. But most of our children will need some extra support to be ready for and find employment. We've found that it's always a good idea to talk to other people like parents and professionals to get some

ideas and pick up tips about things. For example, teachers may have good advice on how to find voluntary work, get work experience or may be able to suggest other sources of help.

Nowadays, schools are responsible for providing careers guidance to young people – ask who the person responsible for this is at your child’s school. Your child’s SEN Casework Officer/LDD Adviser may also be able to help with information about traineeships, supported internships, apprenticeships, volunteering and work opportunities. The Youth Employability Service will be able to help if your child is not in employment, education or training.

SUPPORTED INTERNSHIPS, TRAINEESHIPS AND APPRENTICESHIPS

Supported internships

Supported internships are government funded initiatives that offer specialised employment-focused study programmes for young people aged 16 to 24 with complex learning difficulties and disabilities. Supported Internships are run through further education colleges and the idea is that they will help trainees learn from expert career coaches while doing real jobs for a minimum of five months. Employers will also receive support from the coaches, increasing their confidence of working with disabled young people and helping them to understand the business case for employing a diverse workforce. However, there are very few supported internships in the city.

Traineeships

The traineeships programme aims to give 16 to 24 year olds the workplace experience and job skills that employers require and will be open to disabled young people with less complex needs. The aim is to get young people into work or onto an

apprenticeship. The programme covers things like work research and preparation training as well as English and maths training and a work placement.

Apprenticeships

As employees, apprentices earn a wage and work alongside experienced staff to gain job-specific skills. Off the job, usually on a day-release basis, apprentices receive training to work towards nationally recognised qualifications. Young people over 16 and not in full time education can undertake an apprenticeship. They can take between one and four years to complete depending on the level of the apprenticeship, the apprentice's ability and the industry sector. Find out more on the BEACH site above or www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills/apprenticeships

To find out more about supported internships, traineeships or apprenticeships, speak to your child's SEN Casework Officer/LDD adviser or any of the local FE Colleges.

VOLUNTARY WORK

Unpaid voluntary work can be a stepping stone into work. Young people can work voluntarily without it affecting their benefits and, even if it doesn't lead to a job, it's a way of meeting new people, gaining new skills and getting experience of the working world.

'I have noticed that after Simon has done his volunteering at the Link College he is a different person: he walks with his head held up high and is chuffed about his experience of the day in helping others. He's so much more confident. It's great that he's able to be independent and is respected for his knowledge and abilities.'

'By doing voluntary work it gets me out of the house and gives me more confidence at being independent and doing stuff on my own.'

(Simon, 23)

Young people can gain volunteering experience through the Duke of Edinburgh Award. It offers all young people aged between 14-25 the opportunity to help others, acquire new skills, experience adventure and make new friends, while at the same time working towards a nationally recognised award. Find out more from www.brightonandhovedofe.org.uk (local) or www.dofe.org (national).

The National Citizenship Service (NCS) is open to all 16 and 17 year olds and up to 25 for young people with SEND. The aim is to help young people build their skills for work and life, take on new challenges and meet new friends. It runs in the spring, summer and autumn and includes a short time away from home as well as a team project to help the local community. To register, call 0800 027 9111 or visit their website at www.ncsy.es.co.uk. The nearest local organisation who offers the NCS will then make contact with you or the young person. Albion in the Community (Brighton and Hove Football Club) is one local organisation doing this.

The Volunteer Centre Brighton and Hove can help find suitable volunteering opportunities and they have a website www.youngvolunteersbh.org specifically for young people or you can look at their Facebook page www.facebook.com/volunteeringBH. Community Base's website also has volunteering opportunities at www.communitybase.org

Some parents find volunteering opportunities for their young people through their own network of friends and family. It's always worth asking as you never know what might work out.

And think creatively about where their strengths and interests lie.

'Joe loves trains and transport. We found he could volunteer to look after the flower planters on some station platforms in the area and this means he gets to travel between them by train with his support worker.'

DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT ADVISERS (DEAS)

Disability Employment Advisers or DEAs work in your local Jobcentre Plus. A referral to a DEA is usually made by a Jobcentre Adviser. DEAs can provide details about government initiatives that help disabled young people get work and provide referrals to suitable schemes (see Work Choice and Access to Work below). They also provide advice on suitable job vacancies and can approach the employer on the young person's behalf if necessary and conduct an 'Employment Assessment' to identify the young person's abilities and suitability for work or work-related training.

After making initial contact, the DEA will arrange an in-depth interview with the young person to establish their interests, previous work experience and education and any concerns they have about work. It can be useful for parents to attend, although it's not always necessary.

People claiming Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) who are assessed in the Work Related Activity Group can be supported by ESA Advisers within the Jobcentre. At some stage they will also be referred to the work programme which offers up to two years of support. Two schemes provided through Jobcentre Plus may also be useful to disabled people who want to find work: Work Choice and Access to Work. Advisers at Jobcentre Plus can provide details and if the young person

meets the criteria, they will be referred to a relevant programme that provides the help they need.

'I thought there was no way that James was going to get a job given how many people are unemployed these days. He couldn't have competed really, he needed extra help because college didn't really prepare him for work.'

Work Choice is run locally by Scope for people with complex needs who want to work more than 16 hours a week. The programme is also available to people who are at risk of losing their job because of their disability. Work Choice provides a full range of support – from help with personal skills, to support in the workplace and help in developing a career in the longer term.

Access to Work is a scheme that can provide practical and financial support to help people with disabilities into work. The programme can help to pay for:

- Someone to provide support with communication at interviews for deaf people or those with a hearing impairment
- A reader to help people at work if they're blind or have a visual impairment
- Special equipment (or alterations to existing equipment)
- Alterations to premises or working environment to make it accessible
- A support worker to provide practical help at work or getting to work
- Help towards the cost of getting to and from work if a person can't use a car or public transport because of their disability

To find out more about Access to Work and to check your eligibility, you can get further details on www.gov.uk/acces-to-work or call 0345 268 8489.

Useful information regarding employment and benefits can be obtained from www.gov.uk

'She finished this course at City College but it didn't really mean she was ready to do a job. She needed much more experience and she didn't have a clue about what she wanted to do.'

THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT TEAM

If a disabled person wants support to find a job, the Supported Employment Team – part of Adult Social Care at Brighton & Hove City Council may be able to help. By providing support, the team can help people search for work, develop job skills and overcome workplace difficulties.

If the young person is claiming Incapacity Benefit (IB) or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and can only work up to 16 hours a week, they may be able to do 'Permitted Work' for 52 weeks or 'Supported Permitted Work' longer-term and continue to claim benefits. See page 89 for organisations that can advise you about this.

The Supported Employment Team's support can include:

- Talking about realistic work options
- Help searching for voluntary and paid job opportunities
- Support to access work related training courses
- Co-ordinating and supporting work experience
- Creating a winning CV
- Helping people complete application forms
- Practising interview skills
- Supporting people at job interviews

Once a person starts work the team can help both them and the employer with:

- Starting a job and learning the role
- Information on reasonable adjustments
- Job coaching support with improving work skills

See the Brighton & Hove website at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/supportedemployment for more information about supported employment and current eligibility criteria or call 01273 295961 or email set@brighton-hove.gov.uk A member of staff will be happy to talk to you about what the service offers.

PARENT TIPS

- ☺ If they are going to places like Jobcentre Plus, it's a good idea to take along any paperwork that will help explain their special educational needs or disability – a recent report from a doctor or educational psychologist for example
- ☺ Volunteering in a charity shop, for example, can help them get paid shop work and then they have someone to give them a reference when they leave college
- ☺ If they want to work with children, see if they can help out now at somewhere like Cubs, Brownies or Wood Craft Folk clubs.