THROUGH THE NEXT MAZE

BRIGHTON AND HOVE

A handbook for parents of teenagers with special needs (aged 14+)

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Chapter 8

Employment options

There aren’t many full-time job vacancies for young people who want to work after they leave school at 16, so some may opt for a further education course and look for work after they finish. Others prefer to combine learning with part-time work, or opt for supported employment.

Young people can learn new skills, make friends and earn their own money in the workplace and although finding and keeping a job can be difficult for disabled people, there are opportunities out there.
This chapter provides information about organisations and employment schemes that may be able to help – but things can change, so make sure you do your own research.

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

GETTING THE INFORMATION YOU NEED

There are plenty of places where you can get information on employment options for your child.

Teachers at school, sixth form or college

Teachers may have good advice on how to find work or get work experience in their field of expertise, or may be able to suggest other sources of help.

LDD Advisers from the Youth Employability Service

Formerly known as Connexions PAs, LDD Advisers are a useful way of finding out more about work options (see page 13 for more information). Every young person with a statement has an adviser who can provide information about different careers and how to get into them. Call the Youth Employability Service to arrange an appointment with the adviser. It should be fine for you to go along with your child if you think it would help.

Jobcentre Plus

Jobcentre Plus is part of the government’s Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). It provides employment advice and information for people who are claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA); 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.
Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs)
Referrals to a Disability Employment Adviser (DEA) are usually made by Jobcentre Advisers. DEAs can provide details about government initiatives that help disabled 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 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 as being able to work can get vocational support (including support in the workplace) for up to two years. Two schemes provided through Job Centre Plus may also be useful to disabled people who want to find work: Work Choice and Access to Work. Advisers at Job Centre Plus can provide details and if they meet the criteria, refer the young person to programmes that provide the help they need.

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:
• A communicator to help 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 the 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

Access to Work can provide help for up to three years, after which the person’s needs are reassessed. You can contact Access to Work on 0208 426 3110, or talk to the DEA at Job Centre Plus about the scheme.

‘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.’

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

**The Supported Employment Team**

If a disabled person needs support to find a job and will need ongoing support in the workplace, 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 get 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’ and continue to claim
benefits. See pages 101 to 103 for organisations that can advise you about this.

The Supported Employment Team’s support can include:

- An initial assessment of a person’s skills and employment support needs
- Access to work tasters and work experience
- Help finding voluntary and paid job opportunities
- Intensive support in the workplace

Call 01273 295961 for more information and current eligibility criteria. A member of staff will be happy to talk to you about what the service offers.

PARENT TIP

- It’s a good idea to take along any paperwork that will help explain the young person’s special needs – a recent report from a doctor or educational psychologist for example

WHERE TO LOOK FOR WORK

There are many websites that list job vacancies – including the following.

- The Argus www.theargus.co.uk/jobs
- Gumtree www.gumtree.com/jobs/brighton
- Brighton & Hove City Council www.jobs.brighton-hove.gov.uk (council jobs)
- Community Base (jobs in the community and voluntary sector) www.communitybase.org
'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.'

**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 vital work experience.

The Volunteer Centre Brighton and Hove can help find suitable volunteering opportunities and the website www.i-volunteer.org.uk lists volunteer opportunities in the city. Community Base’s website also has volunteering opportunities at www.communitybase.org

'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)