

A Parent's Guide – What do you need to know?

As a parent, you are incredibly influential when it comes to the decisions your child makes in all areas of their lives and that is especially true when it comes to their education and careers. We know that the choices which are open to your child today may be very different from when you were in their position and you may feel as if you're unsure about what advice to offer.

With that in mind, we want to try and make it as easy as possible for you to talk to your child about their options confidently; knowing that the information you have is as accurate and as up to date as possible.

The National Careers Service is available for anyone aged 13+ providing advice and information on a range of topics including careers, education and employment and training/apprenticeships. Our free helpline – **0800 100 900** - is open from 8am to 10pm every day and you are more than welcome to get in touch with our trained advisers to ask any questions you may have about your children's education or career opportunities.

Our [website](#) has a range of contact channels which are accessible to all, we offer a free online chat with an adviser, you can send us email, text, arrange a call-back and we also have minicom.

Your child can complete a free Skills Health Check test throughout website which will suggest specific job sectors they may be suited to, based on their skills and strengths. They can also research their career ideas using our popular job profiles.



General Advice

You don't need to become a qualified careers adviser to be able to offer your child advice and support with their education and career decisions. The most important thing you can offer is the knowledge of where to find the right information, so you can do the research into their options together.

To begin with, it's important your child knows what their strengths are and their skills and abilities. You will undoubtedly know what they are good at but it's difficult to recognise your own skills and strengths. You can use the Skills Health Check test on our website to help your child become more aware of their strengths, weakness and career sectors they may be suited to.

The Skills Health Check is a great starting point and can help your child with researching specific career sectors and understanding more about themselves as an individual. It's important to remember that any careers related test you take is purely meant as a guide.

The career choices which the test may offer up can be researched further on the 'Job Profile' pages. These are a range of almost 800 different types of job, from gardener to graphic designer and everything in between! Each one explains which skills and qualifications you need to get into that job. You can also read about what the work would be like, the average salary you could expect and what the career prospects might be.

One of the most popular search methods for the Job profiles is through the 'Job Families' list/ This groups similar jobs into one area so you can browse all the different jobs within this field. For example, if your child knows they want to work with animals but isn't sure what jobs are available, you can look through the profiles for a vet, a kennel worker, a Police dog handler, a farm worker or even a beekeeper!

Year 9 Choices

GCSE Choices

One of the first instances of your child making a firm decision about their future may come with them choosing their GCSE options. Up to this point, they have been learning the same subjects as most secondary students but now they will be asked to make a number of choices to ensure their learning is more individual and suited to their interests and skills.

To make sure you can offer the best support, it's good to know a little bit about what subjects their school considers 'compulsory', which subjects the school classes as 'option choices' and what ideas your child may be considering.

Each school is different, compulsory subjects may include; English language & literature, maths and science (physics, chemistry and biology) Some also class subjects such as; modern foreign languages such as German, Spanish, Italian and French, a Design and Technology option such as graphics or Textiles, a religious studies qualification and an ICT qualification.

It's also possible that there will be a number of subject options available which your child may not have studied before, such as Business Studies, Health and Social care, Travel and Tourism, so it's worthwhile talking through all the choices they may be considering, not just the ones they are familiar with.

Option choices are normally set out in 'option blocks' the below image is an EXAMPLE of how schools can set out option choices:

Current Option choices in YR 11

Options	Subjects
Option 1	Geography, History, Business Studies, Resistant Materials and IT
Option 2	Drama, Geography, History, Music, PE and Art
Option 3	Food Technology, French, German, Spanish, Business Studies, Sociology and Performing Arts
Option 4	French, Spanish, German, Business Studies, Graphics, Textiles, Food Technology and IT

BTEC qualification

There may also be the option of taking a BTEC qualification. BTEC stands for Business and Technology Education Council and they offer vocational qualifications in areas such as engineering, health and social care, travel and tourism plus many more. You can do a BTEC, equivalent to one or two GCSEs, alongside other GCSEs.

As BTEC's are offered in more vocational, hands-on subjects, taking these qualifications can affect the routes available to your child in the future so it's worth making sure they speak to their teachers or a careers adviser about what career path they might be thinking about taking, just to make sure all options are open to them.

Not every school will be set up to offer a BTEC option, but if it's something that might seem a good fit for your child, it's worth speaking to the school to find out more. Different BTEC subjects will become available after GCSE's and these tend to be studied at college rather than through Sixth Form.

Benefits of Parental Involvement

- Children have better self-esteem, are more self-disciplined, and show higher aspirations and motivation toward school.
- Children tend to achieve more, regardless of ethnic or racial background, socioeconomic status, or parents' education level.
- Children generally achieve better grades, test scores, and have better attendance.
- Research indicates that when students feel supported and loved by their parents, they have more confidence in their own ability to research careers and to choose a career that would be interesting and exciting.

Choices after GCSE

The choices which your child makes after completing their GCSEs or BTEC qualifications are dependent on a number of different factors including their own ambitions, the opportunities offered locally and the grades they have achieved. These choices will really allow your child to tailor their own education and study towards subjects they feel passionate about and allow them to gain the knowledge and experience needed to progress into their desired career path.

When thinking about steps after compulsory education, it's important to keep in mind that there is no one size fits all style of education and that everyone learns in different ways. There is no right or wrong or better or worse but with the raising of the participation age coming into effect, this now means your child needs to stay in some form of education or training till their 18th birthday.

Education till their 18th birthday isn't quite what it sounds; in-fact school leavers have a range of choices:

1. To stay in full time education working towards, A-levels, BTEC, NVQ or an alternative level 1/2/3 qualification at a local college or sixth form.
2. An apprenticeship
3. A traineeship with the idea of progressing onto an apprenticeship or education
4. Employment or Volunteering of 20 hours a week whilst working towards an accredited qualification part time with the study hours adding up to 280 guided learning hours over the course of a year.

Sixth Form

Young people who feel they work and learn best in a classroom environment are likely to be interested in moving into Sixth Form where the most common qualifications are A-levels. A-levels are offered in a wide range of subjects – from academic subjects like English, maths, history, biology etc. to more work-based subjects like Health and Social Care, sport and exercise and business studies. They are most likely to be studied at a Sixth Form but can be offered at further education colleges as well.

Entry requirements for A-levels are usually at least 5 GCSEs at C grade or above which include subjects, Maths, English and sometimes Science. Your child will be asked to pick 3-4 A-level subjects, at this point in their education their choices begin to narrow so it may be worthwhile talking through their options with one of our advisers to keep them on track for the future. If your child doesn't know exactly what they want to do in the future, they can still study a combination of different subjects to allow them to keep as many options open as possible.

Some careers need a person to have specific A-level qualifications as these qualifications directly influence what university courses could be available. If your son/daughter is thinking about a particular subject at university, it's best to make sure the A-level choices they make are acceptable for entry and you can do this by checking the entry requirements through UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service).

For example, in order to become a doctor, it requires a student to take biology and usually chemistry at A-level. If a student doesn't have a qualification in these subjects, they wouldn't be able to apply successfully for a medical degree at university.

However some degrees do not have any subject specific entry requirements but ask that you achieve specific grades which are then converted into UCAS points for entry onto a degree. The UCAS tariff table for A-levels are detailed in the table below. Full details of UCAS tariff tables can be found online at <https://www.ucas.com/advisers/guides-and-resources/tariff-2017>

Grade	Tariff points
A*	56
A	48
B	40
C	32
D	24
E	16

UCAS

College

The teachers at your child's school are likely to have a lot more information about A-Level options than other areas; this is simply because it is the route they will most likely have taken to get into teaching and can draw on their own experiences when offering advice. However, for a lot of young people, staying in a school environment is not the best thing for them, as their abilities may lie with more practical or vocational learning.

There are a wide range of college courses your child can choose from and it will all depend upon the grades they receive at school in their GCSEs. Further Education College Qualifications are listed below:

Entry level Qualifications – Designed to support students who received no GCSE grades and need support with basic Maths and English.

Level 1 NVQ – Designed to support students who may have left with some GCSE grades but at a low level (E- G), student likely to focus on one specific subject

Level 2 NVQ – Likely to be offered to students who achieved grades D/E and as above students will focus on one specific subject.

Level 1 BTEC Introductory Diplomas and Certificates - This gives you basic knowledge and skills to show you can do a certain job.

Level 2 BTEC First Diplomas and Certificates - Equivalent to GCSEs in a specific subject and are generally offered to students who achieve C/D/E's at GCSE.

Level 3 BTEC National Diploma – Equivalent to two a-levels and can be used as a pathway to university. It is likely to be in one specific subject

Level 3 BTEC Extended National Diploma – Equivalent to 3 full A-levels and widely accepted by universities as an alternative to A-levels for degree courses, again likely to be in one solid subject.

Functional/Key Skills- Can be a mandatory part of your course at college and are generally levels 1-3 in Numeracy, Literacy and ICT.

Both Sixth Forms and colleges will hold open days where students can visit and look around, speak to current students and teachers, check out the resources and facilities; basically see if they can picture themselves there in the future.

Visit - www.opendays.com/ to find out more.

[Apprenticeship/Traineeship](#)

Apprenticeships and Traineeships are becoming a real alternative route for those leaving school as it allows them to gain real life work experience, study towards a relevant qualification in that industry field and receive a wage for their work. There has never been a better time to consider an apprenticeship.

Apprenticeships are stereotyped as a 'second rate' option but this couldn't be more misguided; there are many subject options which allow an apprentice to study to degree level, same as what they would receive at university and get the benefit of combining these qualifications with years of practical experience.

Apprenticeships take between 1 and 5 years to complete, and cover 1,500 job roles in a wide range of industries, from engineering to accountancy, public relations to veterinary nursing.

The [parent's guide to apprenticeships](#) on GOV.UK offers useful downloads as well as more information on the benefits of an apprenticeship and the entry requirements.

We would recommend all young people start their research and vacancy searches using the following website - www.getingofar.gov.uk



Facts about Apprenticeships

- The National Minimum Wage for an apprentice is £3.40ph (as of October 2016) with apprentices aged 16-18 taking home around £127.50-£130 per week.
- After finishing, the majority of apprentices (90%) will stay in employment (including 2% self-employed), with seven in ten (71%) staying with the same employer.
- A quarter of former apprentices had received a promotion (23%) within 12 months of finishing, and for intermediate and advance apprentices, three quarters reported taking on more responsibility in their job after completing their apprenticeship.
- All apprentices work towards an accredited qualification which could include – NVQ, BTEC, HND/HNC, Foundation Degree, and Undergraduate Degree and in some industries Masters Degrees.
- Most apprenticeships will support individuals with their Maths and English if they were not able to achieve a C grade at GCSE level.

Facts about Traineeships

- A traineeship is an education and training programme with work experience that unlocks the great potential of young people and prepares them for their future careers by helping them to become 'work ready'.
- Designed to help young people aged 16 to 24 who don't yet have the appropriate skills or experience, traineeships provide the essential work preparation training, English, maths and work experience needed to secure an apprenticeship or employment.

- You will not be paid a training wage on a traineeship however young people should be aiming to progress onto an apprenticeship upon completion of a traineeship.
- It's important that young people speak to their employers on the traineeship as they may be able to offer financial support with transport or equipment costs.

University

While there is a lot of information available, it can seem overwhelming, with so many things that students need to take into account when making what is probably their most important decision so far!

Your child's teachers are usually the main source of information about applying for university as it's something they deal with year in, year out but there are plenty of instances where your son or daughter will need a bit of extra support from home.

For example, their teacher will have a good idea about their academic ability, what sort of grades they are likely to achieve and if a particular set of subjects would be suited to them. However, you are much more likely to know more about their personal and emotional needs. Gaining an impartial perspective from a service such as The National Careers Service can help your child make a well-rounded and realistic decision.

UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) is a great source of information for both students and parents. Most students will be applying for their university places through UCAS so it's certainly worth becoming familiar with; UCAS actually provide a useful '[Parents and Guardians](#)' guide which you can look through.

One of the main things you may be worried about is the cost of university and over the past few years, these costs have been significantly increased. University tuition costs can be set at around £9,000 so finding the funds to ensure your child is able to move forward towards university can seem daunting. However, there are a number of financial aids on offer depending on your situation which you might be able to take advantage of.

Facts about Student Finance

- It's important to know that everyone is eligible for the financial support in the form of the 'Tuition Fee Loan' from the Government which is offered regardless of household income for their first undergraduate degree.
- Everyone is eligible for 4 years' worth of student finance for an undergraduate degree.
- As well as a tuition loan, you can also apply for maintenance loans (means tested) and maintenance grants (non-repayable) the university you choose to go may also offer bursaries and grants to support students which you do not need to pay back.
- As the threshold for tuition fees is now £9000 with many universities charging the full amount allowed, student finance have raised the threshold for which you start making re-payments which is now £22,000pa.
- Once you are earning over £22,000 a year, you will automatically start making re-payments through the tax system. Student Finance will take 9% of your taxable earnings. For example if your monthly earning was £1,833 you would pay back £7 to Student Finance each month.

The [Gov.uk website](https://www.gov.uk) has more information about applying for student finance and the [Which? University guide](https://www.which.ac.uk) can help you make more sense of the information.

studentfinance **england**

How can you get involved?

You may be struggling to figure out how you can best help your son or daughter so we've created a short checklist of ideas that might prove useful.

- **Try to speak with your child as soon as possible about what type of career or job they might enjoy** - This doesn't need to be an in depth conversation at first, just enough to allow them to be aware that they can come to you to ask about anything they aren't sure about.
- **Encourage your child to speak with their career adviser at school**- Every school has a responsibility to provide **impartial** careers advice for their students; which means the school can't just promote their own offers, such as Sixth Form for students whom it may not be best suited for
- **Get in touch with an adviser yourself** - When your child comes to you to ask any questions, you'll want to make sure the information you have is as up to date as possible. Try speaking with our advisers to find out more about how you can best help.
- **Have a look through the online resources together** - The National Careers Service website is an excellent starting point no matter which stage of education your child is currently in.
- **Seek impartial advice and guidance** – Knowing all of your options and not just 1 or 2 is really important to ensure that your child takes the right next steps in their education and career. The National Careers Service is dedicated to offering young people and adults the right advice at the right time and we are free to contact on 0800 100 900, online through our webchat, via email or text, 7 days a week from 8am till 10pm.

Useful Terminology

NVQ – National Vocational Qualification

GCSE – General Certificate of Secondary Education

UCAS – University and Colleges Admissions Service

BTEC – Business and Technology Education Council

A-level – Advanced Levels

FE Colleges – Further Education Colleges

LA's – Local Authorities

PRU – Pupil Referral Unit

SEN – Special Educational Needs

AQA – Assessment and Qualifications Alliance

HE – Higher Education

DfE – Department for Education

Dip – Diploma

HND/HNC – Higher National Diploma/Certificate