

Help for Parents of Children with Special Needs or Disabilities

This article provides information on the changes to the SEN statement process and also signposts parents to some of the national organisations that can provide help with the transition from school into further education (FE), higher education (HE), training and employment.

One of the main current changes for parents of children with special needs and disabilities is the **Children and Families Act 2014**. This Act introduces the new **Education, Health and Care Plans** that will replace SEN statements from September 2014.

Education, Health and Care Plans will:

- span from birth to aged 25
- give children, young people and their parents greater choice and control over decisions regarding their future and ensure that their needs are properly met
- improve co-operation between all the services that support children and their families, especially local authorities and health authorities who will be required to work together.

Children, young people and their families will be at the centre of the assessment and planning process. The process will be person-centred and emphasise life beyond education. Each local authority will be responsible for ensuring that assessments are effectively co-ordinated. Education, Health and Care Plans will need to be completed in 20 weeks.

Two features of Education, Health and Care Plans will be:

- a **personal budget** to give parents and young people more control and choice over their health, education and social care needs
- a **local offer** from the local authority to provide clear, comprehensive and accessible information about the support and opportunities available locally. Services will be improved to ensure that they are more responsive to local needs and wishes.

Further information can be found at www.gov.uk.

Organisations offering advice and help with transition into work, training and FE or HE for those with special needs or disabilities

Jobcentre Plus offers a programme called **Work Choice** that provides help to disabled people of all ages to find suitable work and gives support within the workplace. The support varies according to individual need but can include training, confidence building, job search, interview coaching and skills development. The Disability Employment Adviser (DEA) at Jobcentre Plus can provide more information on this scheme and can also help identify suitable employers in your area. The DEA can also help with:

- **Access to Work** – this scheme pays for practical support in the workplace so that your son or daughter can start working, stay in work or run their own business
- **Residential Training** – advice about the nine specialist training providers in England for unemployed disabled people aged 18+. On www.gov.uk search for 'residential training for disabled adults'.

www.autism.org.uk – helps with transition and support with finding work and FE/HE courses.

www.cafamily.org.uk – provides a wide range of support for parents of disabled children and young people. Education advisers run a free phone line for advice and help with education including post-16 options: 0808 808 3555.

www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk – offers information and help on a wide range of issues including education and transition.

www.disabilityrightsuk.org - download the *Into Higher Education 2014* guide.

www.learningdisabilities.org.uk – for information and help with transition into FE, work and self-employment for those with learning disabilities. Download the free booklet *Getting a Job*.

www.natspec.org.uk – a network of 70 colleges that offer courses, many of them residential, for students with a range of disabilities.

www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk – offers support for young people with special needs and disabilities including help finding paid work. Offers **supported internships** - these last for a minimum of six months and offer young people the opportunity to develop skills and learn on the job..

www.mencap.org.uk – offers a wide range of services for those with learning disabilities, including help with finding work and learning.

www.princes-trust.org.uk – provides a range of programmes that offer practical and financial support to young people needing extra support to develop the skills and confidence they need to move into work, education or training.

www.reedinpartnership.co.uk – offers help (in certain parts of England) for those facing barriers to work. This includes help and support with job search, CVs and interview skills, training, Apprenticeships and in-work support.

www.remploy.co.uk – Remploy Employment Services has 64 branches and offices offering support and advice for disabled people looking for work. Help includes one-to-one support, group activities and mock interviews. Online support is also available, including the opportunity for live chat with an employment adviser, and help with CV writing and job search. Referral is via statutory organisations such as Jobcentre Plus.

www.ucas.com – look at the section for students with disabilities.

These are just some of the organisations that can help you – there may be more in your local area.

In addition, the National Careers Service can offer general advice on careers, FE and training. 0800 100 900. www.nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk. There may also be Connexions or careers advisers in your area who can help.

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