

Self-employment

Is your son or daughter thinking of working for themselves? Are you wanting to support them, but wondering how feasible self-employment is for them at their age? While self-employment is never an easy option, some young people can, and do, make a success of it. But your son or daughter needs to be realistic about what working for themselves involves, and must think their ideas through thoroughly. To improve their chances of making a go of it, they also need to take advantage of all the help and support that is available.

This article provides a starting point for you to help your son or daughter explore the possibility of self-employment.

Do they have a feasible idea?

Or do they have an idea at all?! They may just be drawn to the notion of being their own boss and the freedom they feel that will offer. That's good, but their first step will need to be to think about their skills and interests in order to find a service they could offer, or decide on a product they could make and/or sell. There are many different possibilities. If your son or daughter already has a business idea, that's a good start.

Once an idea is settled on, your son or daughter will need to do some market research, to answer questions such as:

- how much demand is there for their product/service?
- how much competition is there?
- what can they offer that the competition doesn't?
- can they price their product/service at a level people will pay but which will also provide enough profit to make them a living?

The practicalities

Yet more questions need to be answered, including:

- where will their business be based?
- what will their set-up costs be and where will they get the finance?
- do they understand how to deal with income tax, National Insurance and so on?
- what insurance will they need?
- have they thought through health and safety issues?
- what other rules and regulations may apply to their area of business?

Do they have what it takes?

However brilliant their idea, unless your son or daughter has at least some of the personal qualities and skills listed below, they might battle to make a success of self-employment. Talk these through with them:

- determination and persistence
- self-motivation
- good organisational skills
- self-confidence
- good time management skills
- independence
- to be prepared to work long hours when necessary
- sufficient work-related skills in the area of work they will be operating in – do they need to undertake further vocational training?
- last, but certainly not least, business skills – to be able to keep accurate accounts and records, and keep track of their money.

If your son or daughter is still in education, they should check if their school or college runs a Young Enterprise programme, which will help them learn what running a business is all about. www.young-enterprise.org.uk

Create a business plan

An important step in the process is to create a business plan, which will set out their business aims, marketing, finances etc. Some of the organisations and agencies listed below can help with the development of such a plan.

Advice and information

Below are the main organisations/agencies offering information and advice and, in some cases, funding.

National Careers Service (England) – <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>

Careers Wales www.careerswales.com

Skills Development Scotland – www.myworldofwork.co.uk

Northern Ireland – www.nidirect.gov.uk/careers

Business Support helpline (England): 0300 456 3565. www.gov.uk/set-up-business

National Enterprise Network (England): search for your local Network member providing business start-up advice on www.nationalenterprisenetwork.org

Business Wales helpline: 03000 6 03000. <https://businesswales.gov.wales>

Business Gateway (Scotland): 0300 013 4753. www.bgateway.com

nibusinessinfo.co.uk (Northern Ireland): 0800 181 4422. www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk

Start Up Loan scheme, for those aged 18+. www.startuploans.co.uk

New Enterprise Allowance scheme, for those aged 18+ who receive certain benefits, offering mentoring, a weekly allowance and access to a loan. www.gov.uk/new-enterprise-allowance

The Prince's Trust – business start-up advice and support, and financial help for eligible young people aged 18-30. www.princes-trust.org.uk

Shell LiveWIRE – online advice and support for young people considering starting a business, including funding for entrepreneurs aged 16-30. www.shell-livewire.org

Disabled Entrepreneurs – provides business inspiration, collective mentoring and networking opportunities for disabled entrepreneurs. www.disabledentrepreneurs.co.uk

The Peter Jones Enterprise Academy - full-time courses in enterprise and entrepreneurship aimed at those aged 16-19. Operates through various colleges nationwide, listed at: www.ucasprogress.com/provider/81621/the-peter-jones-enterprise-academy

High Street banks can provide advice and might be prepared to offer a loan.

Wish your son or daughter good luck!

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