

Options at 18

If your son or daughter stayed in education after 16 to do A levels or equivalent, their next major decision will be what to do at 18. For those without a particular career pathway in mind, there are likely to be some important decisions to make. These may set their career direction, future lifestyle and maybe determine whether they'll stay living locally or not!

How can you as a parent help?

By listening to your son or daughter and helping them talk through their options. However, parents often feel ill-equipped to do this, as they feel they don't know enough about the available choices.

What are the options?

Excluding the short-term options of taking a gap year or undertaking voluntary work, there are two basic choices:

- to stay in full-time education
- to enter employment

Continuing in full-time education

If your son or daughter is doing well in their studies, the idea of university will be in the air.

However, it can be easy to get carried along and apply for a degree without having thought it through properly.

- You don't have to go to university full-time to get a degree. It's possible to gain qualifications to degree level and beyond by **part-time** study while working – perhaps through a Degree Apprenticeship.
- University doesn't just mean getting a degree. **HNDs** and **foundation degrees** are two-year, work-related courses that might be more suitable.
- **Student debt** is obviously an issue, but students don't have to pay the fees up-front. There may be more financial support than you realise.
- Many students **live at home** while attending university. It will, however, be a different university experience.
- Attending university **open days** can be really valuable.
- Staying in full-time education doesn't necessarily mean university. There may be work-related courses of interest at a local **further education college**.

Employment

Could your son/daughter find a job? Or – more particularly – could they find a job with training and prospects? Do they know what sort of work they want? In the future, will they regret not going to university?

- Although it might take time to find one, there are jobs with training and prospects.
- You may not be fully aware of the wide range of available **Apprenticeships**, which include Higher and Degree Apprenticeships leading to qualifications at higher education level. For information, see the websites below.
- Some employers may offer training schemes with the opportunity to study part-time for further qualifications, such as those offered by professional bodies.

Questions for your son or daughter to consider

- If they have a career idea in mind, have they researched **all** the possible entry routes carefully?
- Is there a subject that interests them sufficiently to **want** to study it in depth at university level?
- Are they ready to leave the familiarity of full-time education for the very **different** world of the workplace?
- Have they researched the **local employment scene** for opportunities for entrants with their qualifications?
- If they get a job (or go to uni) but continue to **live at home** for the next few years, have you as a family considered how that will work?

Sources of advice and information

Encourage your son or daughter to get help from the careers adviser linked to their school/college.

Higher education (degrees etc):

- www.ucas.com (university courses and applications)
- www.unistats.ac.uk (course comparison site)
- www.gov.uk/student-finance (England); www.studentfinancewales.co.uk; www.saas.gov.uk (Scotland) and www.studentfinancenir.co.uk (Northern Ireland)
- www.opendays.com (university open days)

Employment and training:

- www.apprenticeships.gov.uk and www.careerswales.com (information about Apprenticeships and vacancies)
- www.notgoingtouni.co.uk
- www.ucas.com/apprenticeships-in-the-uk
- Check with school/college careers staff if there is a local job and training vacancy database for young people

For careers information:

- <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk> (England)
- www.careerswales.com
- Your son/daughter's school/college may subscribe to an online careers information system

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