



FUTURE STEPS

For students in Year 11

The
Ultimate
Handbook

School leavers Essential Guide

You might be feeling uncertain, confused, or even overwhelmed by the range of choices available. This guide will walk you through the main options in a simple and clear way, helping students feel more confident in making the decisions that are right for them.

SCHOOL LEAVING AGE

Before we explore the available options, it's important to first understand the legal requirements around when a person can leave school and when they are allowed to leave education altogether.

Your local authority has a duty to make sure you are offered a suitable place by the end of September (of the year you've left school). This is known as the **SEPTEMBER GUARANTEE**.



England:

You can leave school on the last Friday in June if you turn 16 by the end of the summer holidays. However, until you're 18, you must do one of the following:

- Stay in full-time education, such as at a college
- Start an apprenticeship or traineeship
- Work or volunteer for 20 hours or more a week while also taking part in part-time education or training

LEVELS OF QUALIFICATIONS

Before we go through in more detail the options that are available for after you leave school, it is important that you understand what qualification levels are and what they mean.

In **England**, there are **9 levels** of qualifications.

There are many qualifications that fall within each level of study, and if you want a complete list, do visit the **gov.uk** website - but here is a summary, as a guide, to help you with deciding on your next steps:



Entry Level 1, 2 and 3

are below level 1 (GCSE, lower grade level), with Entry Level 3 being the highest here.

Level 1

is the equivalent of GCSE grades 3, 2, 1 or grades D, E, F, G

Level 2

is the equivalent of GCSE grades 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4 or grades A*, A, B, C and Intermediate Apprenticeship level. Includes BTEC Firsts.

Level 3

is A Level & T Level standard and Advanced Apprenticeship level. Includes BTEC Nationals.

Level 4

Higher National Certificate (HNC) / Higher Apprenticeship level.

Level 5

Foundation Degree / Higher National Diploma (HND) level.

Level 6

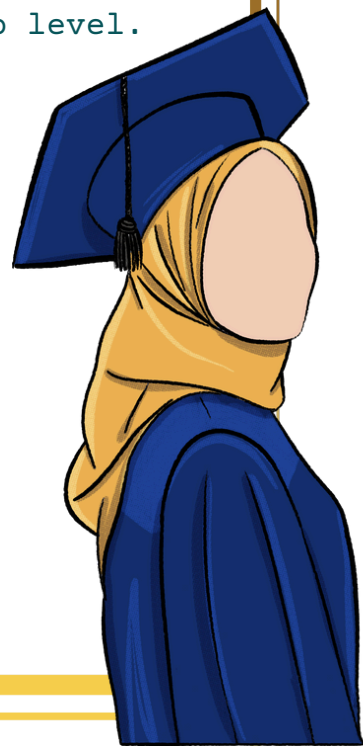
Degree & Degree Apprenticeship level.

Level 7

Post Graduate / Masters level.

Level 8

Doctorate / PhD level.



NEXT STEP OPTIONS FOR YEAR 11s



When you leave school, you can either:

- continue in full-time education
- combine work and study
- combine volunteering and study

Here are the individual options you can follow:

**A Levels /
Level 3
Subjects
(incl: BTEC
Level 3)**

OR:

**T Level
or
T Level
Foundation**

OR:

**Vocational
/ Work
Related
Course**

OR:

**Apprenticeship
or Traineeship**

OR

**International
Baccalaureate
Programmes**

(Only a small number
of UK Colleges /
Sixth Forms
offer these)

OR:

**Spend 20 hours or more a week working or
volunteering alongside part time education**

OR:

**Foundation Learning Programmes, Life Skills Programmes &
Supported Internships**

*(For young people with learning difficulties or learning
disabilities, who need extra support)*

**SEE THE FOLLOWING PAGES FOR EACH OPTION IN
MORE DETAIL...**



Full-time study options

What are they?

Advanced Levels (known as A Levels) are subject-based qualifications, where you can carry on studying GCSE subjects to a higher level (level 3) or even choose new subjects you may not have studied before - such as: Economics, Law or Psychology - to name but a few. Most students study three A Level subjects but some do study four.

A Levels are offered at sixth form colleges, as well as some more general colleges of further education - but all centres will vary on subjects offered, course content and entry requirements. You need to check on their individual websites.

Many sixth forms / colleges offer a combination of A Level subjects and Level 3 vocational subjects as part of a students programme of study. The latter, generally, are an equivalent of 'one A Level' and many of these are BTEC qualifications.

The level 3 more vocational subjects, tend to be more course work based, whereas A Levels are mainly assessed by exam - (although there may still be elements of course work and exams for both options).

Who are they for?

If you're thinking about going to university: A Levels (and Level 3 equivalent subjects) are the traditional route for this.

If you're not sure what career or job you want to do: studying a selection of A Levels can be a good way of keeping your options open.

How are they assessed?

- A Level assessment is mostly exam based, but may have some coursework.
- Level 3 vocational subjects, are mostly coursework based, but may still have some exams.



A Levels / Level 3 Subjects (continued)

How to decide what subjects to study

If you have a career area in mind:

- Choose subjects that are closely related / useful to move forwards into the career area of interest.

To help with this, you can go onto the **National Careers Service** website, in the '**Explore Careers**' section and check what the entry requirements are for that profession and if there are any particular subjects you may be required to study as your next steps. -

nationalcareers.service.gov.uk

Once you have done this, go on to the **UCAS** website - ucas.com and go into the '**Discover**' tab. Here, you can click into '**subject guides**' and browse those of interest / the relevant one(s) to your possible course / subject area after level 3 studies. These will give you a general sense of what subjects you need to study after year 11, along with general grades that are needed at level 3 in order to study that subject at this higher / degree level.

Some higher education / university courses will have some very specific requirements, whereas for some courses, the subjects chosen at A Level doesn't always matter.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO CHECK THOUGH!

If you don't have a particular career in mind:

- Choose subjects that you feel you will enjoy the most / be good at.

Think about subjects you enjoy NOW at GCSE. Would you want to continue studying any of those at a higher level?

Think about possible courses that you may not have studied before and whether these interest you.

Read through the course outlines on the sixth form / college websites and visit open days and ask the staff / teachers any questions you have.



A Levels / Level 3 Subjects (continued)

What grades do I need to take A Levels?

You normally need:

- . at least five GCSEs at grades 9 to 4/A* to C (usually including maths and english language).
- . at least grade 5 in the specific subject(s) you want to study (although for some subjects, a grade 6 or 7 is needed - such as for science subjects and maths).

However, the specific requirements needed to study A Levels will vary across schools and colleges. It's important to check what you will need with the school or college you are looking to study at.

Duration of study

2 years

Next steps (after completion)

University or College course, Higher and/or Degree
Apprenticeship or Employment.

Find out more

ucas.com/further-education/post-16-qualifications/qualifications-you-can-take/levels

International Baccalaureate Programmes

What are they?

There are two different kinds:

- **The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP)**
- **The International Baccalaureate Career-Related Programme (IBCP)**

They are the international equivalents to A Levels and some level 3 vocational (work-related) study, and there are many countries around the world that offer these; including some parts of the UK.

They do have some differences though (to say, A Levels) and tend to be more broader in terms of what you study.

UK universities, generally, will accept these qualifications as an alternative to A Levels, but you would need to check your university of interest. You can do this via [ucas.com](https://www.ukcas.com).

The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme

Is similar to A Levels. However, with A Levels, students generally study 3-4 subjects in depth over two years and for the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme, students study 6 subjects from 6 subject groups - including: Language and Literature, Language Acquisition, Maths, Science, Individual & Societies and the Arts. There are also some core elements too (Including an extended essay and demonstration of service to the community).

The International Baccalaureate Career-Related Programme

Students study 2 subjects and the core elements from the Diploma Programme (as above), as well as career-related studies - that includes working with employers in their field of career interest.



International Baccalaureate Programmes (continued)

Where you can study them

The most local colleges and sixth forms to us (detailed towards the back of this booklet), **do not** currently offer these programmes of study. In fact, there are relatively few state funded colleges / sixth forms in this country that offer them.

Private schools / sixth forms (where you would pay fees), tend to be more likely to offer these programmes of study. They often offer A Levels or the International Baccalaureate (or a choice / combination of both).

Where you can find out more

Read all the details here: www.ibo.org

Also look at the website / speak to your college / sixth form of interest.



T Level

What is a T Level?

A 'T Level' (Technical Level), is the 'technical' equivalent to studying A Levels. Students study **ONE** T Level and this is the equivalent of studying three A' Levels.

T Levels are designed in partnership with employers to give young people the skills and knowledge to get on in the workplace.

The list of T Level industry areas grows each year, but you can do T Levels in areas such as Education & Childcare, Health, Design & Development for Engineering & Manufacturing, Construction, Media and Management & Administration (to name but a few). Check your local vocational college for details on what they offer.

A T Level (Technical Level) combines classroom learning with real work placements. Students go out on at least 45 days industrial placement. 80% of the course is at the training provider / college, and 20% of the course is within a workplace.

Level of study

Level 3

Duration

2 years

How is it assessed?

A mixture of exams, projects and practical assignments.



T Level (continued)

Entry requirements

Course dependent, but generally you need 5 GCSEs Grade 9-4 (usually including maths and english language).

Next steps (after completion)

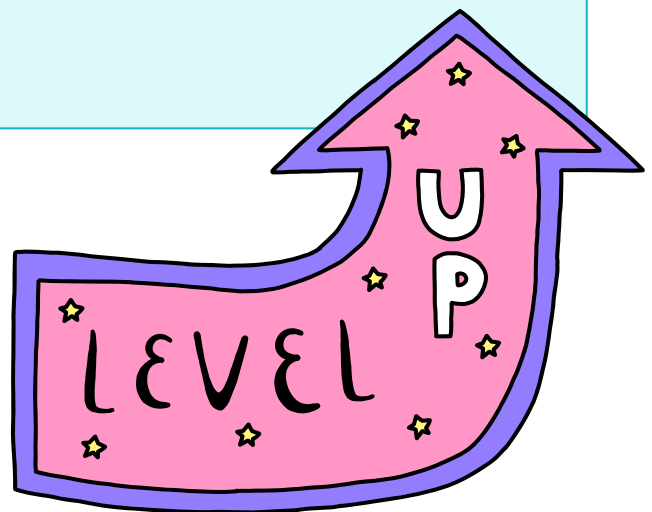
Higher and/or Degree Apprenticeship, College / University courses, or Employment (Entry level skilled job).

If you plan to go to University / Higher Education

Like with A Levels and most Level 3 vocational subjects (in previous section), a T Level carries **UCAS points**. These are used by University / Higher Education providers to assess whether you meet their entry requirements for a particular course. You can find out more about applying for higher level / degree courses, and UCAS points and how they work, by visiting: [ucas.com](https://www.ucas.com)

Find out more

By visiting - tlevels.gov.uk
and looking on your local colleges websites for details of the T Levels they provide and their entry requirements.



T Level Foundation

What are they?

The T Level Foundation year provides a high-quality route for students who would benefit from additional study time and preparation before they start their T Level.

The T Level Foundation year was formerly known as the T Level Transition Programme.

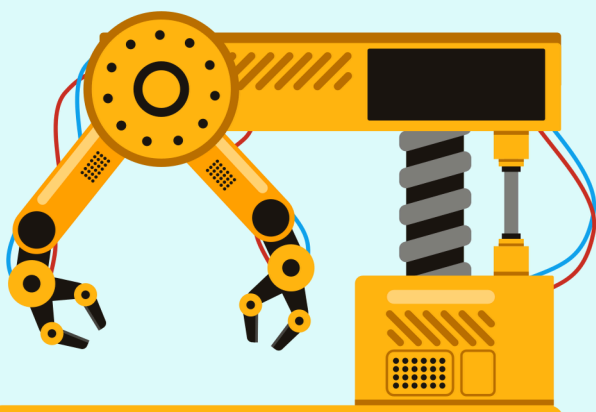
The T Level Foundation year is a preparatory programme for level 2 students who plan to progress onto a T Level. The programme is for people aged 16 to 19 and for those with education, health and care (EHC) plans up to age 24.

Not all T Level subjects have this foundation year as an option, but it is worth checking with your local college if you were interested.

North Warwickshire & South Leicestershire College do offer this foundation year for some of their T Level subjects (including 'Engineering')

It can be a great option that may be offered if you don't quite get the required grades at GCSE to immediately begin the T Level course.

You would then progress onto the T Level 2 year programme after completing this.



Vocational Course

What is a Vocational Course?

These courses teach you the practical skills and knowledge for a particular area of employment. They can prepare you for a broad employment sector, like engineering or travel and tourism, or for a specific job like a chef or a hairdresser. The course teaches you how to do tasks specifically related to the industry and role you want to be involved in.

Level of study

Various - school leavers can study from entry level to level 3 courses. Check the college website on what is available and they will be able to advise you on the right level for you.

Entry requirements

Various - depending on course and level of course. Check each course entry requirements on the college website and get advice from them directly if needed.

Duration of study

Various - but usually 1-2 years in length
For some courses, there is an opportunity to study the next level of the course after completion of the first one.

How are vocational courses assessed?

Various - usually a combination of coursework, skills tests and exams.



Vocational Course (continued)

Next steps (after completion of your course)

Apprenticeship, Employment, College or University.

If you plan to go to University / Higher Education

If your course is level 3 standard, your qualification *may* carry what are known as '**UCAS points**'. These are used by University / Higher Education providers to assess whether you meet their entry requirements for a particular course. Check with the training provider if your course carries UCAS points.

You can find out more about applying for higher level / degree courses, and UCAS points and how they work, by visiting: ucas.com

Find out more...

By visiting the website(s) of your local further education college(s) or local training providers and attend open days.

If you are looking to study part time alongside employment or voluntary work: look at the range of part time programmes at your local vocational college or training centre.

(see overleaf for info. on specialist vocational colleges and academies...)



Specialist Vocational Colleges

For some areas of interest, you may be able to apply to and attend a specialist college or an academy.

Examples include:

- a Performing Arts College or Academy (perhaps specialising in dance, acting and / or music)
- a Design / Fashion College
- a Land Based College (perhaps specialising in horticulture / agriculture and/or animal care)
- a Sports College
- an Army Foundation College
- ***and many more!***

This can be a great option if you are already pretty sure you want to pursue a career in this area and may already have experiences / skills in your area of choice that could strengthen your application.

Do some research on specialist colleges / academies that you may want to apply to and ask those around you for help and advice. Speak to your school subject teachers, your school career adviser and also teachers and professionals outside of school too. For example, if you already attend a dance school or an acting group - there will be professionals there who can give you some really good advice.

For any application to a specialist college, the more you can demonstrate in your application your passion for the area of study, along with previous experiences - the more this will MASSIVELY improve your chances of being offered a place.

Sports Academies

Many local colleges / sixth forms, now offer a SPORTS ACADEMY as an option for school leavers.

Some colleges offer this as a stand alone level 2 or level 3 full time programme, or something students can do alongside other subjects (ie/ GCSEs or A Levels, or equivalents).

Some Sports Academies specialise in a particular sport - ie/ football, rugby or boxing - and the applicants are expected to have a good standard of skill already in the particular sport.

This option is fantastic for those who hope to have a career in the sports industry in the future - including as a professional player, coach or further sports study.

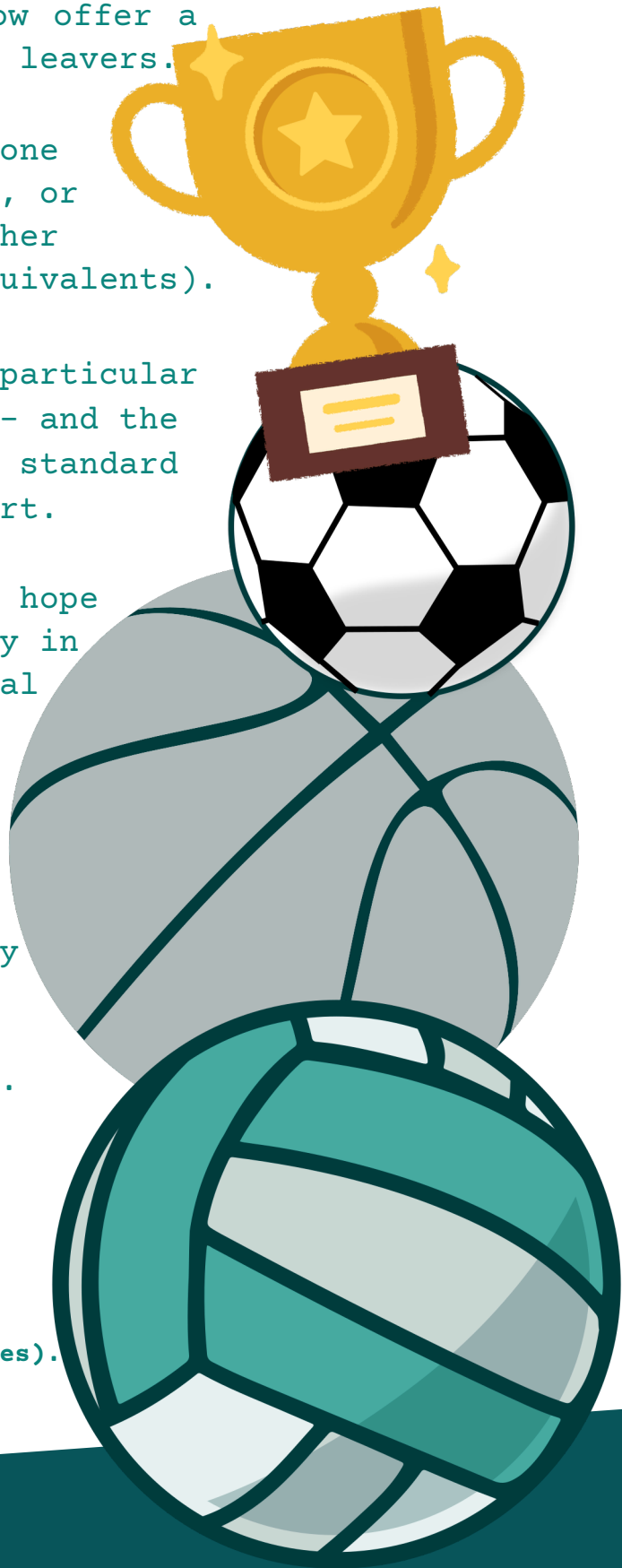
An alternative to the Sports Academy, would be to study a full-time sports course at college (available at various entry levels), or you can study sports or physical education as an A level or a level 3 equivalent qualification alongside other subjects.

There may also be apprenticeship opportunities for some roles too.

(see later, 'Apprenticeship' section for more details on how to research for vacancies).



If you are already playing sports at a high level, there may also be opportunities to get a scholarship with a team / club straight after leaving school. Have a look at the websites of clubs / professional sporting bodies of interest for more information.



Uniformed Public Services

Thinking about a career in the Armed Forces/ Military?
The Police Force? Ambulance / Health Services? Fire Services?
Rescue Services? Prison / Probation Service?
Or similar?

If so, there are various routes you can take - either straight after leaving school, or later on in your studies or training.

The important thing to do is check per career area what your options are and the route that will suit you the best.

As a starting point, you can go onto the
'National Careers Service' website -
nationalcareers.service.gov.uk
and click into the 'Explore Careers' section.



Here you can search the various roles you can do under the various 'job categories', or you can type in a particular career area of interest. It will go through all the entry requirements and different routes into them. It will also give you links to the specific websites that will give you more information -
(ie/ the Royal Navy, NHS Careers, etc...)

For some careers in the uniformed services / public services, you can become a 'Cadet' or an 'Apprentice' straight from leaving school. This is a great option if you are really clear that this is a career you want to pursue.



Uniformed Public Services (continued)

Another route would be to join the profession, or even become an Apprentice at a later stage - post 18. You could either do A Levels (or Level 3 equivalent) study first and then join or become an Apprentice at a higher level, OR you could do a more vocational course first and then join.

An alternative, and a great option if you think you may want to join the uniformed services, but either not quite ready after leaving school and / or want to develop some really relevant skills and qualifications first, is to study a programme called '**Uniformed Public Services**' (or '**Uniformed Protective Services**' as it's sometimes known).

Check out your local colleges / sixth forms for these programmes. You can either study it as a full time programme after leaving school (levels 1-3), **OR** you can study it as one of your subjects at college / sixth form - perhaps alongside A Levels (or equivalents).

These courses carry **UCAS points** at level 3, and so you can use the qualification to gain entry onto some University / Higher Education courses also.

This can be a useful qualification if you are unable to join the profession until you are aged 18 (which is the case for the Fire Service). In this case, sports and fitness courses are also useful things to study in preparation for such a role.

As we said before, there are also further education training colleges for some uniformed services too (ie/ the Army Foundation College in Harrogate).

Combining work, study & volunteering options



Apprenticeship

What is an Apprenticeship?

An Apprenticeship combines practical on-the-job skills training with off-the-job learning. You'll get training that is relevant to your job and be employed by an organisation and paid a salary.

Location

You spend 80% of your time in the workplace and 20% off-the-job with some study in a college, training centre or Institute of Technology (IoT).

Levels of Apprenticeships

Straight from leaving school, you can either:

- Do an **Intermediate Apprenticeship** (which is level 2 / GCSE level).
- Do an **Advanced Apprenticeship** (which is level 3 / A Level equivalent).

The important thing is that you start at a level that suits you and apply for vacancies accordingly.

Length of an Apprenticeship

A minimum of 1 year (depends of level of apprenticeship).



Apprenticeship (Continued)

Entry requirements

Depends on the industry, job role and apprenticeship level. Many do ask for GCSE passes in Maths and English Language - but each apprenticeship has different requirements. Check on the vacancy.

Qualifications you would achieve

Various - depending on level of apprenticeship.

Leads to

Employment, the next level of an Apprenticeship, Further Education, or Higher Education / University.

If you plan to go to University / Higher Education

If you are doing an **Advanced Apprenticeship (level 3)**, your qualification may carry what are known as '**UCAS points**'. These are used by University / Higher Education providers to assess whether you meet their entry requirements for a particular course. You can find out more about applying for higher level / degree courses, and UCAS points and how they work, by visiting: ucas.com

Where to find out more

Visit: gov.uk for information about Apprenticeships.

**PLEASE SEE OVERLEAF FOR HOW YOU CAN SEARCH FOR AN
APPRENTICESHIP OPPORTUNITY...**

TURN

Where to look for Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships - apprenticeships.gov.uk

(the national website for apprenticeship information, support & vacancies)

(NB/ 'Find Me An Apprenticeship', takes you to the same gov.uk listings)

Rate My Apprenticeship - ratemyapprenticeship.co.uk

(for information, vacancies & industry guides)

Amazing Apprenticeships - amazingapprenticeships.com

(lots of information & resources)

Get My First Job - getmyfirstjob.co.uk

(can search Apprenticeships, Work Experience & other useful career information)

Assessment Day - assessmentday.co.uk

(advice and online practice tests for assessments. General & specific major company ones are on there too)

Other things you can do...

- Many further education colleges have a designated 'Apprenticeship' team, that can help people find placements. Check your local college website and contact them with any questions.
 - Google search for apprenticeship training providers & colleges in your local area. Some training providers specialise in apprenticeships in particular industry areas (such as Engineering).
-
- Google search and look directly on company websites for details of vacancies / programmes they have (within industry of interest).
 - Use friends / family / teachers & other professionals to get advice and contacts they may know.

Traineeship

What is it?

A Traineeship is a course that includes a work placement that will get you ready for an apprenticeship or a job. You can also improve your maths and english skills. You'll get work experience and some help to apply for your next steps.

Location of Traineeship

You'll spend a minimum of 70 hours in a work placement with the rest of your time in college or a training centre.

How long do they last?

6 weeks to 1 year.

Entry requirements

You need to be aged between 16 to 24 or up to 25 with an **Education Health and Care Plan** with no higher than a level 3 qualification.

What qualifications would you gain?

Various - including English, Maths, Digital and work-related qualifications.

Next steps after a Traineeship

Apprenticeship, Further Education, or Employment.

Find out more

- ask your local college or training provider.
- speak to your school career adviser.
- speak to your Jobcentre Plus adviser if you receive benefits.
- search for Traineeships in your area.

Employment

Get advice on where to look for employment - as well as help with putting together your CV and cover letter, completing application forms, and preparing for interviews by clicking on the following link:

nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/careers-advice#getting-a-job

Volunteering

Volunteering can help you make career decisions. You can test out different jobs to find out what you prefer. You also gain experience and develop skills that are useful in all career areas.

Benefits

Through volunteering you can:

- find out what's involved in a job to see if it's for you.
- try out different career ideas.
- learn new skills or build on ones you already have.
- meet new people and develop your network of contacts.
- boost your confidence.
- give back to your community.

Choosing a volunteering position

You may have to take small steps to get to your perfect volunteering opportunity. It can be very competitive and for some volunteering opportunities, you might need to be over 18.

Applying for volunteer positions

You'll need a CV and a cover letter to apply for most volunteering positions.

Whether you apply for an advertised role or approach organisations directly, you should show you are:

- eager to help and put your skills to good use.
- hardworking, trustworthy and reliable.
- able to commit to the time the organisation needs.

There are several organisations that can help you find a way to volunteer that suits you:

Do-it.org is a database of UK volunteering opportunities. You can search more than a million volunteering opportunities by interest, activity or location and then apply online.

You can also contact National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), Volunteering Matters, & Search Out Warwickshire to find opportunities in your area.

Or contact your charity of interest directly.

**Options for young
people with learning
difficulties or
learning
disabilities**



Foundation Learning Programmes, Life Skills Programmes & Supported Internships

What are these programmes?

They are for young people with learning difficulties or learning disabilities, who need extra support to get qualifications and employment experience; as well as develop life skills.

Entry requirements

You need to be aged 16-24 with an Education Health and Care Plan.

Qualifications you can gain

Various. Your college or training provider will be able to give you advice on this, depending on what programme you are studying.

What you can do after this

These programmes are good preparation for further study, a Traineeship, Apprenticeship or going into employment.

Who can help you with this

- Your school or local college
- Your social worker or transition worker
- Your Jobcentre Plus adviser
-

If you have an **Education Health and Care (EHC) plan**, you can get support to choose your next steps and extra help when you are in education, training or work.

**Those are your options
for after Year 11.**

**The following pages may
help you make your
decisions clearer...**



IMPORTANT THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Some careers may ask for specific qualifications, so do some research into this before making your choice. You can visit the **National Careers Service** website, in the 'Explore Careers' section as a starting point (nationalcareers.service.gov.uk).
- Likewise, if you plan to go on to Higher Education / University post 18, and already have a specific course subject in mind to study, you need to ensure you pick the subjects / qualifications needed post 16. You can look on the **UCAS** website to check on this (ucas.com)
- Consider how you learn best - **classroom? practical? workplace? mostly exams? mostly coursework?**
- If you are not sure what you would like to do as a career, pick subject(s) / a course area that you think you will enjoy best - in the style of learning that will suit you best.

HAVE A BACK UP PLAN!

You can apply for more than one option and more than one college / training provider. In fact, it's good to apply for more than one in case you can't get a place at your first choice, and also, to keep your options open should you change your mind in the coming months. For most opportunities, you don't need to make your FINAL DECISION, until you have received your GCSE results.

Local Colleges / Sixth Forms for IGHS students

Provider	Location	Course Types Offered
Blackburn Sixth Form (Blackburn College)	Blackburn	A-Levels
St Wilfrid's C of E Academy	Blackburn	A-Levels, Vocational
Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School (QEGS)	Blackburn	A-Levels
Darwen Aldridge Sixth Form (D6)	Darwen	A-Levels, BTECs, T-Levels
Darwen Aldridge Enterprise Studio (DAES)	Darwen	A-Levels, BTECs, Vocational (Creative, Health & Business)
Clitheroe Royal Grammar School	Clitheroe	A-Levels
Stonyhurst College (Higher Line)	Near Clitheroe	A-Levels, IB Diploma, Cambridge Technicals (Business/Sport)
Nelson & Colne College	Nelson/Colne	A-Levels, BTECs, NVQs, Apprenticeships, Traineeships
Accrington Academy	Accrington	A-Levels, Vocational
Alder Grange Sixth Form	Rawtenstall	A-Levels, Vocational
Haslingden High Sixth Form	Haslingden	A-Levels, Vocational
Bacup & Rawtenstall Grammar School	Waterfoot	A-Levels
Burnley College	Burnley	A-Levels, BTECs, Vocational
Cardinal Newman College	Preston	A-Levels, BTECs, T-Levels, Foundation Year, HE* Programme
Newman College (Fitzwilliam)	Wakefield area	A-Levels, EPQ, Enrichment (Faith- based school)
Training 2000	Blackburn / North West	Apprenticeships (Levels 2–7), including Degree Apprenticeships
North Lancashire Training Group (NLTG)	Accrington / North Lancs	Apprenticeships
Myerscough College	Bilsborrow (Blackburn/Burnley centres)	Level 3 Diplomas (A-Level equivalent), Vocational, Apprenticeships, HE Degrees