

# Parents and Carers of Year 9 Students

Information you need to help your teenager make subject choices in year 9 and career and learning choices in year 11

What is Key Stage 4?

Your guide to qualifications

What happens at 16+?

What is personal development?

How can you help?

Problems – where to turn

Financial help – where to go

What next?

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# Introduction

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A young person's learning between the ages of 14 and 19 is of great importance in preparing them for life and work. Your teenager is now at the point where they need to consider the range of options available to them for their 14–19 phase of learning and choose the subjects and qualifications they want to take in years 10 and 11.

Many young people do not know what they want to do when they leave full time education but decisions on which subjects to study will shape what direction they might take later in life. One thing is certain, young people will need to learn continuously throughout their working lives.

This booklet aims to provide you with up to date information and advice on how best to help your teenager. Subjects, qualifications, personal development opportunities and post 16 choices of further education, higher education, work and training are all included and most of all what support you can give to your teenager and where you can turn to for advice.

*"I wish I'd had this information when my teenager was at this stage."*

Parent – South Yorkshire

# Where do you start?

Your teenager's school should provide information to guide them in considering their subject options. The school may have given them a copy of a Connexions publication, *Which Way Now?* aimed specifically at year 9 choices, if not you can find a copy on the web at: [www.connexions-direct.com/whichwaynow](http://www.connexions-direct.com/whichwaynow) or order a copy from: 0845 6022260 (option 2).

*Which Way Now?* takes a young person through the process of making subject choices starting with likes, subjects they do well in, plus how to find further information.

Whatever the method used by the school, young people need to start the first stage of the journey into making careers choices. If your teenager does not know what they want to do when leaving school do not worry, it is quite usual. But they should keep their options open by taking a variety of subjects.

## Careers information

There are many products available to help with careers choices which may be available at your school. Connexions produces Jobs4u, and the Working in series which you will find on the Connexions Direct website – [www.connexions-direct.com](http://www.connexions-direct.com) and in Connexions Resource Centres. These give ideas for careers based on skills, interests, salary and qualifications.

## What is changing?

There is now increased flexibility for 14 – 19 year olds in how, what and where they study, including:

- Studying off-site at a college or with a training provider for one or two days a week throughout Key Stage 4.
- Working towards worthwhile vocational and work-related qualifications.

More information about the Government's reforms for the 14 – 19 phase of education, can be found at: [www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19) or call 0845 602 2260 for copies of the consultation documents.

**Information in this booklet often directs you to websites. If you do not have access to the internet at home or work, it should be available in your local public library or in Connexions resource centres.**

## Where to go for help?

Connexions offers help to all young people in making the right choices about courses, training and careers. Through Connexions your teenager can also access impartial advice, guidance and support about anything that might be stopping them getting on with life, for example health or sexual problems, a disability, problems with drink or drugs. A Connexions personal adviser may be based at your teenager's school or college or can be reached at a local Connexions centre. Parents are welcome to go along and talk to a personal adviser. See your telephone directory for your nearest office or log on to [www.connexions-direct.com](http://www.connexions-direct.com).

Your teenager's school has a number of professionals who can help. The careers teacher, Year 9 form tutors, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) and heads of pastoral support, all know your teenager and can offer advice and support. The section on Advice and Guidance offers much more information – see page 14.

Read on to have some of the terms explained and get some tips and ideas on supporting your teenager through the next few years.

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# Under 16 choices

## What are Key Stages 3 & 4?

In **Key Stage 3**, at age 14, Year 9, students take tests in English, maths, mental arithmetic and science so that teachers can learn more about the strengths and weaknesses of each individual student. This point in their education is crucial to their future qualifications. Evidence suggests that if young people do well in tests when they're 14, they will also do well in their GCSEs.

Students who are in Years 10 and 11 are usually between the ages of 14 and 16. They are now in **Key Stage 4** and at the end of this stage they will normally sit national exams including GCSEs.

New School Year	Key Stage	Old School Year	Age during school year
13		Upper 6th	18
12		Lower 6th	17
<b>End of Compulsory Education</b>			
11	4	5th year	16
10	4	4th year	15
9	3	3rd year	14
8	3	2nd year	13
7	3	1st year	12

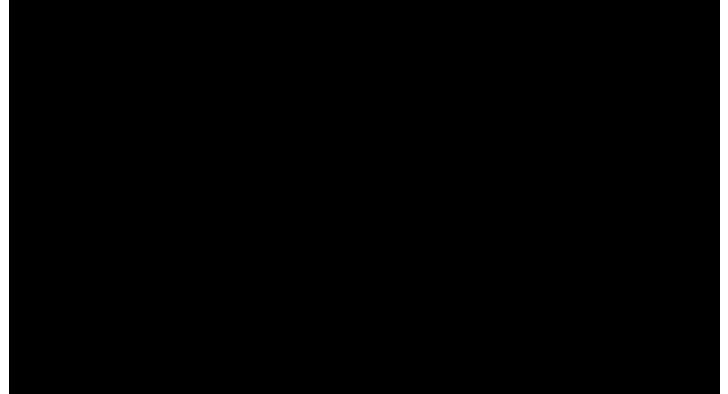
## Making choices

Young people must study a small core of **compulsory** subjects between the ages of 14 and 16. There are also some **optional** subjects they might choose. Your school will tell you the options they offer. See **Annex 2** for more information.

Most courses lead to a qualification, but some do not, such as:

- **Compulsory subjects** such as PE, citizenship and religious studies (although there are GCSEs in these subjects), careers education, sex and relationship education, and drugs education.
- **Work experience.**
- **Optional courses** such as Young Enterprise, courses with community groups or a course that builds students' basic skills to help with their other courses.

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## Individual Learning Plan

Your teenager's school should offer them an interview with their form tutor or other member of staff during Key Stage 3 to help them decide their subject choices for Key Stage 4. The results should be recorded in an **Individual Learning Plan** which can be regularly revised. They will be able to use the plan to make sure they are on track to achieve their subject and career goals. Ask what happens at your school.

### What is the Progress File?

The Progress File is replacing the National Record of Achievement. It is a useful tool to help plan how to move on at 16, made up of:

- magazine-style materials that help young people think about their achievements
- a ring-binder to store qualifications, achievements and experiences
- a 'presenter' that can be used to take selected evidence to an interview.

More details can be found at:  
[www.dfes.gov.uk/progfile](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/progfile) or  
 ☎ 0114 259 3871.

## So what does your teenager need to consider?

When they are choosing subjects for Year 10 it is useful to think about:

- **Likes and what are they good at** – It is easier for your teenager to build their subject choices around what they like doing and what they succeed in. Whilst this might give a general direction of where your teenager's strengths lie e.g. in the arts, sciences, technical subjects or business studies, you also need to consider any subjects that might be required in their future career.
- **Interests** – What kind of person is your teenager? Do they like writing projects, helping people, being outdoors or designing something? These and others should be thought about when deciding the type of work that they might enjoy.
- **Course content and assessment** – Coursework is part of most GCSEs, involving work over an extended period, which could include; essays, field work reports, art work, making things and investigations. How your teenager learns is important and needs considering, the mix of coursework and final exams varies from course to course and could be important to your teenager. See **Annex 2** for more information.
- **Post 16** – Knowing which type of career might best suit your teenager will arm you both with information on qualifications and training routes. Some jobs and learning require specific qualifications at GCSE and at certain grades e.g. a Modern Apprenticeship, others require no qualifications and some require degrees e.g. a medical doctor. This will help you consider the subjects that your teenager needs to study and others which may broaden their experience.

## Parents and carers help with students' subject choices

*"My parents helped me a lot when I was trying to choose subjects. They read all the booklets, turned up at parents' evenings and talked to the teachers and careers people. They kept asking me what I wanted to do. I had some vague ideas but didn't know much about what subjects and qualifications I'd need. They told me to use the internet to find out. I got tons of useful stuff. Some mentioned what kind of person would do the job well. I hadn't thought about that so we talked about what I like doing and what I'd be good and bad at. I still don't know what job I want so I've chosen subjects that I enjoy.*

*I'm keeping my options open*

*and I think I'll pass the exams."*

Sam is studying AS in Ancient History, English Literature, Media Studies and Psychology at York College.

### Jobs4u [www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u](http://www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u)

Search over 600 jobs to find out what the job is like, qualifications required, salary information, training requirements and much more. Search on subjects, interests, job families and qualification levels to get some careers ideas.



# Your guide to qualifications

## The National Qualifications Framework (NQF)

Whatever your teenager wants to do with their life; there's no doubt that the right qualifications can help them achieve their goals. The National Qualifications Framework shows how qualifications relate to each other see **Annex 1** for **Qualifications at a glance**.

Qualifications in the national framework are arranged into levels from entry level awards to higher level qualifications and degrees. The higher the level the greater the depth and breadth of knowledge, skills and understanding you have to show to get the qualifications.

## Qualifications at Key Stage 4

There's a variety of qualifications that young people can begin studying for in Years 10 and 11. These range from GCSEs (traditionally academic but now available work-related too) to courses with a more practical and vocational emphasis. They can choose a combination of academic and vocational qualifications along with non-examined courses.

## Post 16 qualifications

Year 11 is another time of choices as your teenager starts to make decisions about their next steps. They might decide to stay in education, either at school or at college or find employment with training. Whatever they choose it is important that they continue learning and take further qualifications such as:

- AS and A levels.
- AEs (Advanced Extension Awards).
- Vocational AS and A levels (AVCEs).
- Key Skills.
- Vocational qualifications such as NVQs, BTEC Nationals, City & Guilds qualifications and other certificates and diplomas.

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## Key Skills

All young people in full-time education or work-based learning now learn Key Skills, to develop the essential skills that are needed to succeed at work and in life. They include:

- Communication.
- Application of Number.
- IT.
- Working with Others.
- Improving own Learning and Performance.
- Problem Solving.

To find out more, contact the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) on 020 7037 5400 or at [www.qca.org.uk/keyskills](http://www.qca.org.uk/keyskills).

Increasing numbers of universities are stressing the importance of Key Skills as part of their admission policies. They are developing statements on the skills, aptitudes and qualifications that candidates will need for particular courses.

### Contribution of school and teachers to students' subject choices

*"We want our students to make the decisions that are right for them. We work hard to ensure that they think through both their options and the possible outcomes. All students have an interview with a member of staff and/or a personal adviser. Parents are welcome to attend these interviews."*

John Fletcher, Head of Careers and Business Links,  
Burnholme Community College, York

# What happens at 16+?

Knowing about the options available when your teenager reaches the age of 16 will help you to guide them through the **choices in year 9** on which subjects they should study. There are many different directions your teenager could take some of which are listed below.

## Year 11 choices

- staying in the 6th form at school or college
- attend a FE or sixth form college
- start a Modern Apprenticeship
- start Entry to Employment (e2e)
- become self employed
- do voluntary work

But most students tend to choose either:

- Continuing with full time education.
- Going to work with training or as work based learning.

## Continuing education

Many young people decide that full time education is the right option for their career. They can enter the sixth form either at school or college or enter a specialist college such as art & design, agriculture, dance and drama. However, you need to think about the subjects your teenager will be studying and the grades which must be achieved when making subject choices in year 9. This is particularly important if your teenager plans to go into higher education or take a career requiring specific qualifications.

## Higher education

When it comes to higher education, it is never too late to encourage your teenager to go for it. Research shows that graduates go on to earn on average 50% more than people who haven't got a degree, so even though they're not

earning straight from school, that extra study is worth it in the end. University also teaches them valuable lessons about becoming independent and responsible for themselves.

There's more than one way to get a degree. The route depends on the qualifications taken after year 11 – and the course your teenager wants to do at university. They could study for:

- **An honours degree** – taken full-time or part-time, most degrees last three or four years. Some degrees involve vocational training alongside study and sandwich degrees combine work placements with study.
- **Foundation degree** – covers specialist technical and transferable skills, plus academic knowledge. Can be studied full-time (around two years) or part time, whilst working. With a further year's study, can be converted to an honours degree. Advanced Modern Apprenticeship can be a progression route into a Foundation Degree or HND/HNC while still in full time employment.
- **BTEC Higher National Diploma/Higher National Certificate (HND/HNC)** Covers a variety of work-related subjects. part-time or full-time. Lasts two years or three with a year in industry.
- **DipHE (Diploma of Higher Education)**  
– Normally lasts two years and can be taken full time or part time combined with professional or vocational qualifications. Can often be converted to a degree with further study.

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## Applying to university – how's it done?

Before applying, it is important to research thoroughly both the courses and the institutions where they are held. Information is available through the university prospectus; on their website, at open days and from careers teachers and Connexions personal advisers.

Although most applications are made from school or college, it is never too late to go to university. A levels remain the usual method for entry, though universities are increasingly using a range of other ways to help them make admissions decisions. Many colleges and universities offer Access courses for those who need further qualifications to get them on the degree course they want to do. Further information is available from LearnDirect on 0800 100 900.

Most applications to degree courses have to be made through **UCAS** (the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service). Applications can be made on a paper application form, or online. Help is available on the UCAS website or your teenager's school or college, or Connexions personal advisor will help with the process. See: [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

### Aimhigher!

Aimhigher is a Government-backed initiative that aims to increase the number of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who apply for – and go into – higher education (HE).

To find out more visit  
[www.dfes.gov.uk/aimhigherprogramme](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/aimhigherprogramme).

## What about studying abroad?

Studying abroad can add value to your teenager's CV. And there are more and more opportunities, such as:

- on a short course, perhaps before university in the UK.
- for all or part of a course at a European college or university.
- on a student exchange, usually organised through a student's university or college over here.

For more information, contact:

- [www.connectyouthinternational.com](http://www.connectyouthinternational.com)  
☎ 020 7389 4030.
- [www.eurodesk.org](http://www.eurodesk.org)  
☎ Eurodesk on 0131 313 2488.
- [www.eurochoice.org.uk](http://www.eurochoice.org.uk)
- [www.esn.org](http://www.esn.org)

## Learning and earning

If employment is the decision taken by your teenager you need to ensure that it includes training. The choice should be either earning and training at the same time or work based learning with a training allowance. Two main work based routes taken by young people are:

- **Modern Apprenticeships**
- **entry 2 employment (e2e)**

### Modern Apprenticeships (MA)

A Modern Apprenticeship is a structured programme of training leading to a recognised qualification. It gives young people the opportunity to work for an employer, learn on the job, build up knowledge and skills and gain qualifications. A wide range of occupations are available, from IT to animal care and construction to business administration. Young people are encouraged to enter the industry that is right for them regardless of traditional ideas about male/female roles.

There are Foundation Modern Apprenticeships and Advanced Level Modern Apprenticeships available. Please see **Annex 1** for more information. An Advanced MA will usually need a



minimum of four GCSEs at grade C or an equivalent qualification such as NVQ Level 2.

To be a Modern Apprentice young people need to show they have the ability to complete the programme and, start before their 25th birthday. Careers teachers or Connexions personal advisers can help on which type of apprenticeship would suit your teenager. See [www.realworkrealpay.info](http://www.realworkrealpay.info) – or call 0800 0150 600 for a free information pack.

## entry 2 employment (e2e)

entry 2 employment (e2e) is a flexible and individually focused programme for 16 – 18 year olds. e2e helps young people to progress onto Foundation Modern Apprenticeships, employment or further training and education.

It includes:

- Advice and support from a Connexions personal adviser to work out the best next step for each individual.
- Agreeing an individual plan to help the young person reach their goals.
- An opportunity to try out different jobs and find out which suits them best.
- A chance to take more qualifications.
- Extra help with reading, writing, numeracy and computer skills.
- A training allowance and expenses.

Further information about e2e is available online at: [www.isda.org.uk/programmes/e2e](http://www.isda.org.uk/programmes/e2e), from your local Connexions centre or Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or you can call the Connexions Helpline on 0800 652 9900.

## Time Off for Study or Training

A young person who leaves school or college at age 16 or 17 and finds a job but is not yet qualified to Level 2 (e.g. 5 GCSE grades A\*– C or equivalent) is legally entitled to reasonable paid time off during normal working hours to study or train up to a Level 2 qualification (e.g. an NVQ Level 2 as part of a Foundation Modern Apprenticeship).

**Now that sixteen year old Anthony is doing so well on a Foundation Modern Apprenticeship in motor vehicle engineering his carers – Colin and Maureen – look back and feel a strong sense of pride in what he has achieved through his hard work and determination.**

From the age of nine, Anthony attended a special school so that he could get extra support to help him with his learning difficulties and he has gone from strength to strength. While at school he did work experience placements in two garages which he “really enjoyed because I’m good at practical work and enjoy working with cars.”

Anthony made the most of the help he was given by his teachers at school and by his Connexions personal adviser. His PA talked about the different ways he could achieve his ambitions and advised him on what to do next. She also made sure that the option he chose had the right training for him.

*“My Connexions personal adviser has helped me a lot.”*

When Colin and Maureen heard that it would really help Anthony if he could find a local garage that would be willing to train him, they immediately pitched in to help. Maureen rang local garages to find out if any of them were looking for apprentices that

year. If they were, Anthony went on his own for an interview to see if they would be interested in employing him. This really paid off; when a local garage was so impressed with him that they offered him his apprenticeship.

# What about financial support Post 16?

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Cost can be a factor in making a decision on whether or not to stay in education, but there is support available for families and young people at different stages.

'Financial Help for Students' is a booklet that gives all the information you need on financial support for 16 – 19 year olds. It is available free from your Local Education Authority, school, college, Connexions office and DfES Publications on 0845 602 2260, email [dfes@prolog.uk.com](mailto:dfes@prolog.uk.com), or download the information from [www.connexionscard.com/financialhelp](http://www.connexionscard.com/financialhelp)

## Modern Apprenticeships

If your teenager starts a Modern Apprenticeship or training:

- They will be paid a wage if they start as an employee.
- If they do not get a job straight away, they get a training allowance of £40 – £50 a week.
- Many training providers top up the national minimum wage allowance.
- Employed apprentices over 19 who have completed the first year of their apprenticeship must be paid the national minimum wage.

## entry 2 employment (e2e)

If e2e is the best progression route for your teenager:

- They will get a training allowance of £40.00 per week for attending 16 hours or more.
- If they attend part time (8 – 16 hours) they will get £20.00 per week.

## Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

EMA is a weekly payment to young people to encourage participation and achievement in Further Education.

EMA will:

- Be paid to young people entering Year 12 in Further Education from September 2004 who meet certain criteria which includes household income of around £30,000 or less.
- Be paid to young people in Years 12, 13 and 14 in existing pilot areas but under new criteria from September 2004.
- Be available for two or three years for some young people.
- Include periodic bonuses paid to the student as long as they keep to the terms of a 'learning agreement' signed with their school or college.
- Be paid in addition to other support and benefits provided by the Government, for example, the new Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit.

To find out more, visit: [www.dfes.gov.uk/ema](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/ema)

## Learner Support Funds

If you or your teenager are having financial difficulties, Learner Support Funds can help them to stay on at college. Students aged 16 and over can get help with transport, books, equipment, childcare provision and residential costs.

Ask your Local Education Authority (LEA), school or college for details.

## Care to Learn? – child care for young learners

This is a new financial support scheme to meet childcare and additional travel costs of young parents. From September 2004 Care to Learn? will be extended to include all young parents in learning under 19 years of

age. Call Care to Learn? on 0845 600 2809, log on at [www.dfes.gov.uk/caretolearn](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/caretolearn) or ask your local Connexions office for more information.

## Funding for higher education

The Government helps students in two main ways to make sure they are not prevented from entering or staying in higher education because of the cost:

- 1. Support towards the costs of tuition fees, loans, grants and other funding to help with living costs.** Students from families with low incomes do not pay tuition fees, but those whose family income is over £20,970 a year, have to make a contribution. The exact level of the contribution is means tested.
- 2. Students can also apply for a student loan.** Repayable through the tax system, borrowers are liable to make repayments from the April after they leave or finish their course and will begin once the borrower has a gross income of more than £10,000 (£15,000 from April 2005).

## Changes to funding higher education students

The Government is planning to make changes over the next few years to the ways higher education students are funded (some of these plans are waiting approval from parliament).

- From autumn 2004 a new grant of up to £1,000 a year for students from families with incomes around £20,000.
- From April 2005 students repay loans when they reach earnings of £15,000.
- From 2006, universities can charge different fees for different courses, up to £3,000. Extra financial help will be on offer for families on low incomes, to help them afford the fees.
- From 2006, fees can be paid back through the tax system.

Find out more in the annual booklet 'Financial Support for higher education students', available free from LEAs and the DfES student support help line 0800 731 9133, or check out the web site: [www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport/](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport/)

**Nathan's parents didn't go to university, so although he decided that it would be the best choice for him he admits that even in year 12 he still:**

***"Didn't know anything about university or even that you had to pay to go."***

When he found out that he would have to take out a loan to go to university it did discourage him, but then he started to think about ways of reducing his costs. Deciding to do a course at a local university and to live at home has been a brilliant way of keeping his level of debt as low as possible.

Nathan knows from experience how helpful it can be to have advice, support and information. It was his Mum who encouraged him to go to the talk in year 9 about Religious Studies as an option when he didn't know which subjects to choose – if she hadn't, he would have missed out on the subject that he is now so passionate about that he is studying it to degree level.

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## Post 16 financial support for people with special needs

You can discuss with your teenager's Connexions personal adviser all the extra financial support they may be entitled to, if they have special needs – whatever they decide to do next.

### Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)

The DSA is designed to pay for the extra costs of attending a higher education course because of a disability. They do not depend on income or the income of your family. This covers three areas:

- specialist equipment allowance.
- non-medical helper's allowance.
- a general allowance for miscellaneous expenditure.

For more information contact SKILL: the National Bureau for Students with Disabilities on 0800 328 5050, text 0800 068 2422, email [info@skill.org.uk](mailto:info@skill.org.uk) or visit [www.skill.org.uk](http://www.skill.org.uk)

There are also telephone numbers you can ring and websites you can visit if you want to investigate extra financial support your teenager may be entitled to. Check out:

- The **Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)**. They have a leaflet called Special Educational Needs: Sources of Help, which lists organisations providing support for students. Get your own copy, which costs £1.50, by telephoning 0808 800 5793 or read it on the web at: [www.ace-ed.org.uk](http://www.ace-ed.org.uk).
- **DIAL UK**. The Disability Information and Advice Line can put you in touch with a local organisation, call 01302 310123 or log on to [www.dialuk.org.uk](http://www.dialuk.org.uk).
- **Family Fund Trust (FFT)** provides grants and help to young disabled people up to 16, exceptionally 19, and their families. Their book 'After 16 – What's New? Choices and Challenges for Young disabled people' is available at [www.after16.org.uk](http://www.after16.org.uk). You can contact the FFT on 01904 621115 or log on to: [www.familyfundtrust.org.uk](http://www.familyfundtrust.org.uk).

## What's an Opportunity Bursary?

Set up by the Government and worth £2000, Opportunity Bursaries help students from families with an annual income of less than £20,000 to study at higher education level. To qualify, a student must be studying in an Education Action Zone or an Excellence in Cities area.

Ask your school or college for details – or speak to someone in Admissions in the college or university.

## Dance and Drama Awards: for students age 16+

The Dance and Drama Awards are DfES – funded scholarships which offer greatly reduced tuition fees and help with living and learning costs at some of the leading Dance and Drama training providers in England.

The Awards are for individuals who want to become professional actors, dancers and stage managers.

For an information booklet about the Dance and Drama Awards call 0845 6022260 or visit the web site:

[www.dfes.gov.uk/dancedrama](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/dancedrama).

## The Connexions Card

The Connexions Card is a secure 'smartcard' which allows young people to collect reward points for learning, work-based training and voluntary activities. The points can be exchanged for discounted and free goods and services and other rewards.

The Connexions Card is available free to all 16 – 19 year olds in England. For more information, ring the helpline free on 0808 172 4444 or visit the website at [www.connexionscard.com](http://www.connexionscard.com)

# Personal development – growing as an individual

It is not just qualifications that employers are asking for from their workers, it is personal skills as well – such as communication skills, team work, motivation, IT ability and the basic skills for life including words and numbers.

The main Key Skills young people learn at school help provide evidence of communication, numeracy and IT skills. But the best way to prove the others and show evidence of employability skills is by getting out there to gain life and work experience.

Outside school, the youth service also provides personal and social development opportunities for young people.

## Work experience

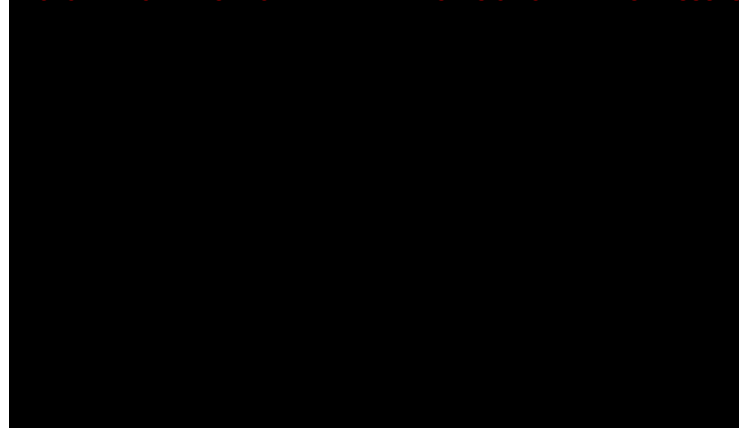
Many schools organise and offer work experience in years 10 or 11. Work experience gives young people a chance to experience a working environment possibly in a job in which they are interested.

Schools, colleges and training organisations use other work-related activities to broaden young people's knowledge such as:

- Workplace visits.
- Enterprise activities.
- Mock interviews.
- Work shadowing.
- Talks from employers.

Your school will have details of what is on offer for your teenager, or visit the website [www.connexions-direct.com](http://www.connexions-direct.com)

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## What about volunteering?

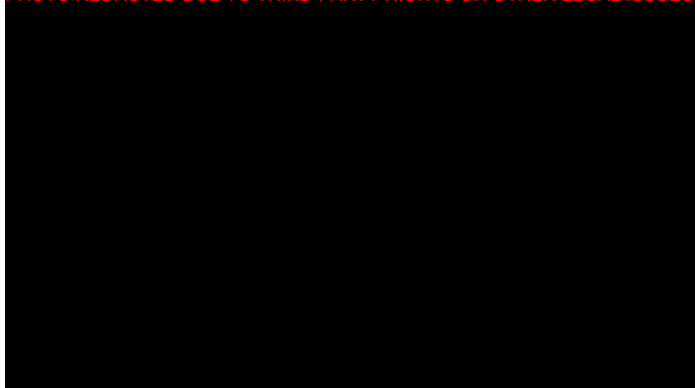
Thousands of young people have already discovered that volunteering is a great way to get involved, to give something back to their community and to give them something worthwhile and interesting to do. It is also a very effective way of increasing self confidence and feeling good about what they're doing. It is an important element on their CV when they come to apply for college, university, training or employment. There are all kinds of volunteering opportunities available, some are shown in **Annex 3**, or visit the Youthnet database at: [www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk) or [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)

## What about taking a gap year?

The possibility of a gap year between school and university is a long way off if your teenager is in Year 9 but it is something to think about before they apply for university. More and more young people are taking advantage of gap years. Not only do they provide a break from study, but they also offer an excellent opportunity to develop some invaluable skills prized by recruiters, such as self-reliance and problem-solving.

There are plenty of websites with gap year information – such as [www.gapyear.com](http://www.gapyear.com), [www.gap.org.uk](http://www.gap.org.uk) or [www.connexions-direct.com](http://www.connexions-direct.com) or telephone 080 800 13219.

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# Advice and guidance

There are a number of people who you can approach for advice and guidance in helping your teenager reach decisions. These include teachers, Connexions personal advisers and others such as learning mentors.

## Teachers

The careers teacher at school or college is there to help your teenager talk through their next steps. They will advise on subjects to choose, qualifications to take and education and training that will open doors for them and help them reach their potential.

**Year 9 Form Tutors** and **Heads of Pastoral Support** can advise you and offer useful support, as they know your teenager and how they are getting on at school.

## Connexions – connecting with young people

All areas of England now have a local Connexions Partnership, part of a network of 47 across England, which specialise in giving 13 – 19 year olds advice on getting to where they want to be in life. Connexions continues to support those with special needs up to the age of 25.

Connexions personal advisers give information, advice and practical help with all sorts of things, like choosing subjects at school, mapping out future career options, relationships, finance,

housing and health – and filling spare time in a sociable, positive way. In fact they can help with anything which might be affecting young people at school, college, work or in their personal or family life.

The personal adviser will agree with the young person, or their parent/carer, what information is needed to provide this help.

**Connexions** recognises the key role that parents and carers play in supporting their teenager through these years and is happy to help you with queries too.

You can get in touch with Connexions personal advisers in your teenager's school, college, or through Connexions centres on the high street. To find your local office look on the Connexions website at

[www.connexions.gov.uk/partnerships](http://www.connexions.gov.uk/partnerships)

## What about Connexions Direct?

Connexions Direct is a new service for 13 – 19 year olds that offers quick access to information and advice on a wide range of topics through one easy-to-use website.

In a similar way to Connexions personal advisers, Connexions Direct advisers can help with information and advice on a wide range of issues from careers and learning to health and money – and tell young people about activities they can get involved in.

Parents and young people can speak to a Connexions Direct adviser by telephone, webchat, email or text message. Connexions Direct take calls from 8.00 am to 2.00 am seven days a week. Call them on 080 800

**The Parent Centre** is an online 'one-stop shop' of information for all parents and carers. It has information on Department for Education and Skills (DfES) policies relating to parents and links to other invaluable websites.

Visit the Parent Centre at [www.parentcentre.gov.uk](http://www.parentcentre.gov.uk)



13219, text on 07766 413219 and webchat or email from the website at [www.connexions-direct.com](http://www.connexions-direct.com)

## Volunteer or learning mentor?

Your school may be in one of the Excellence in Cities (EIC) areas, where learning mentors are employed to help students overcome any problems getting in the way of their learning. Across the country, there are 58 Local Education Authorities (LEAs) running EICs.

## Learning Support Units

Some schools also have Learning Support Units, where students can take time out if they're getting into difficulties.

Ask your teenager's school for details.

## Help for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

The challenge of raising a teenager with a special need or disability can seem overwhelming, with so many issues involved. Young people with statements of special educational needs must, by law, have their transition through the rest of their school careers and on to adult life set out in a plan.

The plan is written after the year 9 annual review with the help of the Connexions personal adviser and you and your teenager will have the chance to say what you want in the transition plan. For more information see the **Parents and Carers Guide to SEN**. (see below)

The **Parents and Carers Guide to SEN** lists many of the support groups for different types of SEN and disability.

[www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/sen](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/sen).

**The Parents and School magazine is filled with helpful articles and features. You can order a copy free by ringing 0800 389 3899.**

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There are networks of support and organisations which you can access including:

- Your **Connexions personal adviser** will offer help and support and for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. They can provide ongoing support up to your teenager's 25th birthday.
- **Parent Partnership Service** offers information, advice and support for parents of children with special educational needs and can put you in touch with other local organisations. Contact your local service via the National Parent Partnership Network on 020 7843 6058 or [www.parentpartnership.org.uk](http://www.parentpartnership.org.uk)
- **Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs)** provide advice on SEN and put you in touch with your local education authority's SEN support and the local parent partnership service.
- **Contact-a-Family** offers support and advice and can put you in touch with similar families. Ring free on 0808 808 3555 (10am– 4pm, Mon– Fri) or visit their website at [www.cafamily.org.uk](http://www.cafamily.org.uk)
- **The Disability Rights Commission** has an information line which can be contacted about the rights of disabled people on 08457 622633, or on the web at: [www.disability.gov.uk](http://www.disability.gov.uk). You can also contact the Benefit Enquiry Line for people with a disability on 0800 882200 text phone 0800 243355.
- **The Shaw Trust** provides help for young disabled people seeking jobs and training. You can contact them on 01225 716 350 or [www.shaw-trust.org.uk](http://www.shaw-trust.org.uk)
- **SKILL** provides information about education, training and work for students with disabilities. Ring them on 0800 328 5050, text 0800 068 2422, email [info@skill.org.uk](mailto:info@skill.org.uk) or web at [www.skill.org.uk](http://www.skill.org.uk)

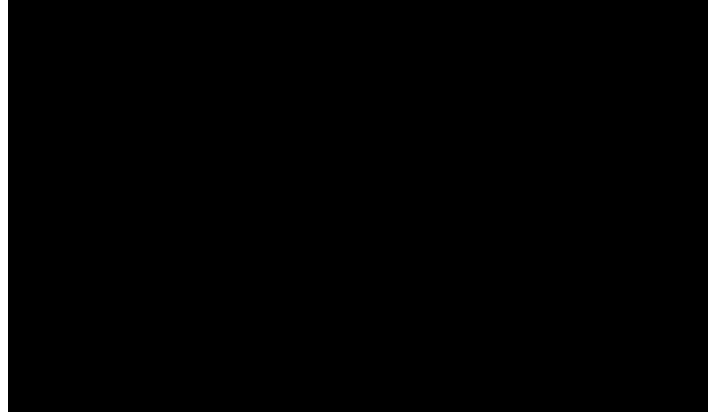
**Susan's dyslexia is so severe that she was identified as in need of extra help and support with her learning before year nine. Her advice to anyone with a learning difficulty who is aiming to go to university is; "not to dismiss the idea, and if you are really interested in going to university go for it. There are lots of people you can go to for support and help both before you go, and while you are there."**

Although her dyslexia has influenced the subjects she has chosen to study in the past, she is now in her third year at university and Susan says that; "because of my determination and the help and support I have had, my dyslexia hasn't stopped me doing well at degree level."

Susan is determined to continue to do well in her environmental biology degree so that she can achieve her career ambitions to work as an environmental consultant, researcher or lecturer. But she also says:

*"For me university isn't just about academic learning, it's about having fun and broadening yourself as a person – living, learning and mixing with other people."*

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## need2know

A new internet portal for young people has recently been launched. It's aimed at 13-19 year olds and provides a single point of access to a huge range of information and services that young people want and need to know about.

The portal currently covers 5 topics - Health, Relationships, Money, Travel and You and the Law. Plans for future topics include Learning, Work, Housing, Environment, Government, Multicultural Britain, Internet Safety, Animal Welfare and much more.

[www.need2know.co.uk](http://www.need2know.co.uk)

## The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)

Learning providers such as schools and colleges cannot stop disabled students having access to educational opportunities just because of their disability. For a copy of either the Code of Practice for schools or for Post-16 Education explaining the laws on this, phone 08457 622633 or view these publications on the DDA website:

[www.disability.gov.uk](http://www.disability.gov.uk)

# Problems – where to turn?

## Problems – where to turn?

As a parent or carer you know only too well that your teenager's life isn't just about learning and earning. Unfortunately, there are sometimes problems to cope with – and that can be hard for the family too.

**Connexions** offers you someone to talk to, someone to listen and share your concerns but most of all it is your gateway to securing expert advice and support for your teenager.

Below are other suggestions, which you might use to gather information and seek support.

## Health advice

If your teenager needs any medical advice they can contact their GP's surgery or call **NHS Direct's confidential helpline** on 0845 4647.

Information about health issues can be found on the web on:

- [www.connexions-direct.com](http://www.connexions-direct.com)
- [www.channel4.co.uk/health](http://www.channel4.co.uk/health)
- [www.mindbodiesoul.gov.uk](http://www.mindbodiesoul.gov.uk)

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## Problems with drugs and alcohol

Drugs and alcohol are an increasing part of youth culture. It is important that your teenager is aware of the risks and effects of drugs and alcohol physically, mentally, socially and legally.

Information about drugs and their effects can be found on the web:

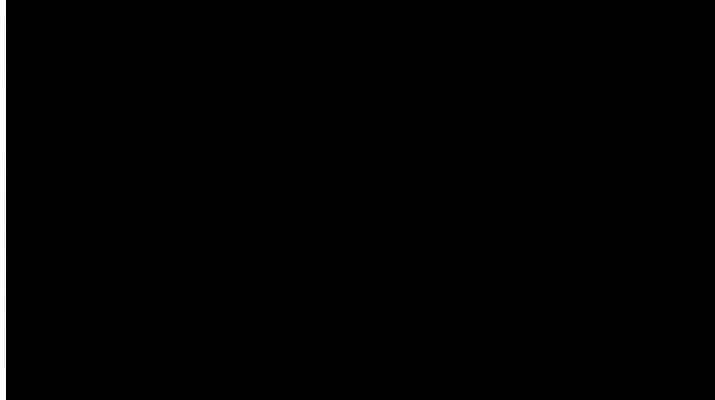
- [www.connexions-direct.com](http://www.connexions-direct.com)
- [www.drugscope.org.uk](http://www.drugscope.org.uk)
- [www.cascade-drugs.org.uk](http://www.cascade-drugs.org.uk)
- [www.freevibe.com](http://www.freevibe.com)
- [www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)
- [www.turning-point.co.uk](http://www.turning-point.co.uk)

Below are some confidential helplines if you have concerns about drugs or alcohol:

- **Connexions Direct helpline** 080 800 13219 or web-chat, e-mail or text [www.connexions-direct.com](http://www.connexions-direct.com)
- **FRANK** (free 24 hr helpline) 0800 77 66 00 – specifically for parents and carers.
- **Family Drug Support Service** 01981 251155 or email [familydrug.support@virginnet](mailto:familydrug.support@virginnet)
- **National Drink Helpline** 0800 917 8282
- **Narcotics Anonymous helpline** 02077 300009
- **Re-solve** (solvent abuse) 01785 817885

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## What about mental health?

One in four of us experiences mental health problems at some time in our life. Young people are no exception. You can contact those listed below for information and advice.

- **Connexions Direct** on 080 800 13219 or [www.connexions-direct.com](http://www.connexions-direct.com)
- **Young Minds** – adolescent mental health on 0800 0182138 – for parents and carers or [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)
- **Mind** mental health information service on 08457 660163 or [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)
- **The Samaritans** on 08457 90 90 90 or [www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)

## Teenage pregnancy

The Connexions personal adviser is an important link to existing services and sources of support for teenagers who discover they are pregnant. These include GPs, family planning clinics, pharmacies, mobile outreach projects, Brook and other youth clinics, school nurses, health visitors, as well as teachers, social workers and youth workers.

Financial support is now available for young parents in learning through Care to Learn? See page 8

Further information is available from:

- **Sexwise** helpline on 0800 28 29 30
- [www.connexions-direct.com](http://www.connexions-direct.com)
- [www.brook.org.uk](http://www.brook.org.uk)
- [www.ruthinking.co.uk](http://www.ruthinking.co.uk)
- [www.teenagepregnancyunit.gov.uk](http://www.teenagepregnancyunit.gov.uk)

## In trouble with the law

Most young people do not break the law. If they do, it usually only happens once. However repeated brushes with the law may reflect wider problems. Connexions personal advisers can provide support and if necessary link to the help and information available from other agencies, such as the police, youth offending teams, and social services, and to the advice available from the community legal service.

Useful links for information, help and support on matters relating to the law

- [www.rizer.co.uk](http://www.rizer.co.uk)
- [www.connexions-direct.com](http://www.connexions-direct.com)
- [www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk)
- [www.youth-justice-board.gov.uk](http://www.youth-justice-board.gov.uk)

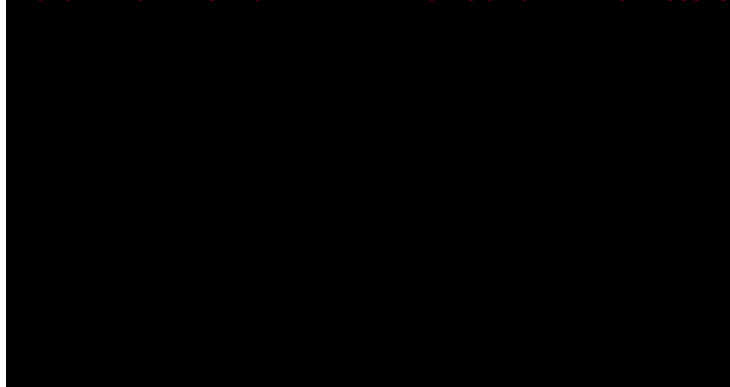
## Help with bereavement

Bereavement can be difficult to deal with at any time in life, but can be particularly stressful for a teenager, especially if they lose someone close to them.

Connexions personal advisers are there to listen to any of your teenagers concerns, including bereavement issues. The organisations below also provide support.

- **The Youth Involvement Project** supports young people (aged 12-18), their helpline is 0808 808 1677.
- [www.rd4u.org.uk](http://www.rd4u.org.uk) shows how other teenagers in this situation have coped.
- **Cruse** the national bereavement organisation 0845 758 5565.
- **The Samaritans** 08457 90 90 90.
- **Childline** 0800 11 11.

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## Help with relationships

Friends, family, girlfriends, boyfriends ... handling relationships is a difficult part of growing up. It can be very confusing and it can be embarrassing to talk about sex and relationships for both teenagers and their parents. It's not easy working out what feelings are when you haven't had much experience. Connexions Direct and Connexions personal advisers provide someone to talk to who won't judge and can give confidential advice.

The following websites and helplines also provide help

**www.ruthinking.co.uk** - Information about anything to do with sex, relationships, contraception or sexual health.

The **Sexwise** helpline has advisers available giving free advice call 0800 28 29 30.

## What about bullying?

The emotional distress caused by bullying can have a negative effect on school achievement and lead to lateness or truancy. Your teenager's school must have an anti-bullying policy, which sets out how it deals with incidents of bullying. Ask your school for details.

More information and advice on how you can deal with bullying, is available from:

- **www.dfes.gov.uk/bullying**
- **www.bullying.co.uk**
- **Connexions Direct** on 080 800 13219 every day between 8am and 2am, 7 days a week.  
**www.connexions-direct.com**
- **www.parentlineplus.org.uk**

## Bullying

Thirteen-year-old Claire was a clever student but she obviously had things on her mind, although it was not clear what it was.

The standard of her work had started to drop and she had become quiet and withdrawn.

Claire had seen Tim, the Connexions personal adviser based at her school, on a couple of

occasions to discuss career options. After a few meetings, Claire was able to talk openly to Tim about the bullying. They looked at ways of tackling the issues and what plan of action would be best for her.

Claire has become a lot more confident in approaching others for help in the school and discussing how things are affecting her. In turn this has meant that the bullying has stopped and the students involved have become aware of the effects their bullying had.

*"Connexions helped me tackle the bullying and build up my confidence and now I am a lot happier and my grades are improving."*

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# Qualifications

## ENTRY LEVEL

### Certificate of (educational) Achievement

Entry Level certificates are for students who would find GCSEs difficult.

- They're the first level of the National Qualifications Framework and can be a stepping stone to GCSEs or NVQ Level 1.
- The certificates are available in a wide range of academic, work-based and skills-based subjects and are at three different levels.

## LEVELS 1 AND 2

### General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSEs)

- The courses generally last two years.
- GCSEs are graded A\*– G.
- The grade each student gets depends on a mix of coursework and exam marks.

### GCSEs in vocational subjects

- Eight GCSEs are available in Applied Art & Design, Applied Business, Engineering, Health and Social Care, Applied ICT, Leisure and Tourism, Manufacturing and Applied Science.
- They offer a more hands-on approach to learning and emphasise practical skills.
- GCSEs in vocational subjects consist of three equal units (except ICT). Two units include a portfolio of coursework. The assessment for the third unit varies, it may be assessed by a one and a half hour test paper or by a 10 hour externally set assignment which is assessed by the school.

### Vocationally Related Qualifications (VRQs)

- Normally taken through an FE college
- They include technical certificates and other qualifications which are often known by the 'brand' name of the awarding body, such as **Edexcel** (soon to be London Qualifications), **City & Guilds**, **OCR**, **LCCI** and many more.

- Includes industry based subjects e.g., engineering, IT and business management

### National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs)

- NVQs are work related, competence based qualifications which relate to specific jobs.
- They are available at five levels, ranging from Level 1 (foundation skills) to Level 5 (chartered, professional or senior management).
- Students can do a work-based placement course in the workplace.

### Foundation Modern Apprenticeships

- A Foundation Modern Apprenticeship (FMA) lasts at least 12 months.
- FMAs offer training leading to NVQ Level 2 and a technical certificate.
- Most trainees are employed and earn a wage; others are not employed and receive a training allowance instead.
- If an Apprentice completes their training successfully, they can move on to an Advanced Modern Apprenticeship or continue their education and training in other ways to move their career forward.

## LEVEL 3

### Advanced Modern Apprenticeships

- An Advanced Modern Apprenticeship (AMA) lasts at least 24 months.
- AMA training leads to NVQ Level 3 and a technical certificate and gives the skills and qualifications needed to become a future technician and manager.
- Apprentices are employed and earn a wage set by their employer.
- If the AMA is completed successfully, with qualifications at Level 3, a young person can then move onto a higher education course such as a higher level NVQ, foundation degree or related vocational degree course



# at a glance

Level	Type	Academic	Vocationally – related qualifications	National Vocational Qualifications (Occupational)
4	(Chartered/ Professional/ Management)	Higher-level qualifications (degree, HNC, HND)		E.g. NVQ Level 4 and 5
3	(Advanced/ Technician/Skilled/ Supervisory)	A level GCE AS/A levels	VRQ Level 3 VCE AS/A levels	NVQ Level 3 Advanced Modern Apprenticeship
2	(Intermediate/ Operative/ Semi skilled)	GCSE grade A*-C	VRQ Level 2	NVQ Level 2 Foundation Modern Apprenticeship
1	(Foundation/Skills)	GCSE grade D-G	VRQ Level 1	NVQ Level 1
	Entry Level	Certificate of (educational) achievement		

## A levels

- A levels are made up of two parts: **AS (Advanced Subsidiary)** – the first half of the A level) and **A2s** (the second half of the A level).
- In Year 12 your teenager can choose from a wide choice of AS levels, then in Year 13 specialise in three or four of those subjects at A2 to make up the full A level or take more AS courses instead.
- **Vocational A levels (VCEs)** are designed to develop knowledge and skills needed for jobs in particular work areas such as hospitality and catering, leisure and tourism or engineering.
- **AEAs (Advanced Extension Awards)** – are world class tests, designed to stretch the most able students. They replace the old 'special papers' and to start with are available in the 17 main A level subjects.

## LEVEL 4

### Higher Level Qualifications

- See information on page 5

*For a full of list of qualifications in the framework, visit*

**[www.dfes.gov.uk/section96](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/section96) or [www.qca.org.uk/openquals](http://www.qca.org.uk/openquals)**

*The NQF is currently under review. A revised framework is expected to be published by Spring 2004.*

# Key stage 4 subjects

**NB** You will need to check which subjects are offered as an option at your school.

## Art and Design –

Entry Level: 100% Coursework.

GCSEs: All courses have 60% coursework and 40% is examined.

## Business Studies –

Entry Level: 100% Coursework.

GCSEs: Applied business studies, a mix of 70% coursework and 30% exam. Other courses up to 25% can be coursework and the rest exam or 100% examined.

## Citizenship Studies –

GCSE: 40% coursework and 60% examined.

## Design and Technology -

Entry Level: 100% Coursework.

GCSEs: 40% to 60% will be based on coursework.

## Drama –

Entry Level: 100% Coursework.

GCSE: A mixture of at least one performance, up to 60% coursework and a written exam.

## Engineering –

GCSE: 70% coursework and 30% examined.

NVQ: 100% continuous assessment.

## English –

Entry Level: 100% Coursework.

GCSEs: Coursework counts for up to 40%, the rest is examined.

## Geography –

Entry Level: 100% Coursework.

GCSEs: There is an exam but 20 – 25% of the result is based on a geographical investigation involving fieldwork.

## Health and Social Care –

GCSE: 70% coursework and 30% examined.

## History –

Entry Level: 100% Coursework.

GCSEs: This tends to be from 20 – 25% coursework with the rest of the grade being examined.

## Home Economics –

Entry Level: 100% Coursework.

GCSEs: 50% coursework and 50% examination.

## Information and Communication Technology –

Entry Level: 100% Coursework.

GCSEs: Applied ICT 60% is coursework and 40% written

test. ICT is between 40 and 60% coursework and the rest is a written exam.

## Leisure and Tourism –

GCSE: 70% coursework and 30% examined.

## Manufacturing –

GCSE: 70% coursework and 30% exam.

NVQ: 100% continuous assessment.

## Mathematics –

Entry Level: 100% Coursework.

GCSE: Up to 20% is assessed on coursework the rest is an exam.

## Modern Foreign Languages –

Entry Level: 100% Coursework.

GCSEs: The coursework can count up to 30% and there are tests in listening, reading, and speaking. Some boards do a written test instead of coursework.

## Music –

Entry Level: 100% Coursework.

GCSE: Up to 60% of this is based on practical work – composing and performing with an exam making up the rest of the marks.

## Physical Education –

Entry Level: 100% Coursework.

GCSE: Short course is assessed 70% coursework and 30% exam. Full course 60% coursework and 40% examined. The coursework includes assessment of sports performance in two chosen activities.

## Religious Studies –

Entry Level: 100% Coursework.

GCSEs: This tends to be 20% coursework with the rest of the grade being examined.

## Science –

Entry Level: 100% Coursework.

GCSEs: Applied science 70% coursework and 30% examined. Other sciences up to 30% coursework and 70% examined.

## Skills for Working Life and Lifeskills –

Entry Level: 100% Coursework.

## Social Sciences –

GCSEs: Coursework counts for up to 20% the rest is an exam

# Volunteering opportunities

## Millennium Volunteers

Young people aged between 16 and 24 can sign up as a Millennium Volunteer (MV). MV gives young people national awards for volunteering – something employers really rate. For an information pack, call 0800 085 1624 or visit the website: [www.mv-online.gov.uk](http://www.mv-online.gov.uk)

## CSV

CSV is a UK charity dedicated to giving people the chance to play an active part in their community through volunteering, training, education and the media. You can also volunteer if you have a history of homelessness, substance use, offending or have a disability. Local Action volunteers receive out-of-pocket expenses plus the regular support of a CSV member of staff to ensure they get the most from their volunteering experience. To find out more, visit the CSV website at [www.csv.org.uk](http://www.csv.org.uk) or call 0207 278 6601

## Young Volunteer Challenge

The Young Volunteer Challenge is for young people aged 18 – 19 (extended to 21 for young people with special needs or disabilities). The Pilot is running in 9 areas throughout England. Participation in the Pilot will allow young people to develop their personal and work-related skills. Young volunteers will be paid an allowance of £45 per week and a lump sum of £750 on completion of 9 months full-time volunteering.

## The Prince's Trust

The Prince's Trust has a range of personal development programmes for 14 – 30 year olds, aimed at boosting confidence, motivation, and team-building skills. Young people can pick courses of between 4 and 24 weeks, tackling local projects or choosing activity weeks further afield. For more details phone 0800 842842 or look them up on [www.princes-trust.org.uk](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk).

## The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme

Open to all 14 – 25 year olds, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award is a programme of activities through which young people plan and achieve personal goals. Many employers

see the Award as an extra qualification. It can be done almost anywhere – perhaps run by a school or college, a uniformed youth organisation such as Scouts, Girlguiding, or Girls' Brigade, or a local youth club. Ask locally, or visit the website at [www.theaward.org/youth](http://www.theaward.org/youth)

## The United Kingdom Youth Parliament (UKYP)

UKYP gives 11– 18 year olds a 'national' voice that will be listened to by politicians. With 400+ members, it works in the same way as parliament but its selling point is that it is run by young people for young people. Phone 01252 844241 or 0121 202 2355 or check out the web site: [www.ukyp.org.uk](http://www.ukyp.org.uk).

## Young Enterprise

Young Enterprise is a national educational charity with a mission to inspire and equip young people to learn and succeed through enterprise. There are six Young Enterprise programmes, each for a different age-group from 5 to 25+. These are run on a 'learning by doing' principle. Ask your teenager's school or college for details.

### Millennium Volunteering

*"My name is Gemma (22) and I am a Millennium Volunteer working for Hospital Radio. I saw an MV poster on a bus and thought volunteering would be a good thing to do in my spare time. I volunteered at my local hospital because they had helped my family recently. Being a Millennium Volunteer is a great asset to your CV, as volunteering is rated highly by employers as well as being highly rewarding. I feel that I am not only helping the hospital but I am also helping myself. The time spent volunteering is only a small price to pay compared to the immense satisfaction I gain from being a volunteer in a service so widely valued in the community and exciting to work for."*

You can get more copies of this booklet from:

DfES Publications  
P.O. Box 99  
Sudbury  
Suffolk  
CO10 2SN

Phone: 0845 602 2260 (option 2)

Fax: 01787 375920

Website:

[www.connexions-direct.com/parentcarer](http://www.connexions-direct.com/parentcarer)

Copies of the wording of this text are available in the following languages: Arabic, Somali, Gujarati, Bengali, Vietnamese, Punjabi, Chinese, Urdu.

Các bản sao của tờ truyền đơn này có thể có sẵn bằng tiếng Việt. Xin liên lạc ☎ 0845 60 222 60

اس انٹیلیٹ کے مضمون کی اردو زبان میں کاپیاں دستیاب کی جاسکتی ہیں۔ برائے مہربانی ٹیلیفون نمبر پر رابطہ کریں۔ 0845 60 222 60 ☎

Nuqulo waxa ku qoran xaashidaan ah ayaa lagu diyaarin karaa af Soomaali. Fadlan la xiriir ☎ 0845 60 222 60

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