



Post-16 SEND: A Comprehensive Guide for Young People and Families

RANi Need to Know Guides | Young person post 16 Advisory sheet 4

Updated: April 2025

As young people with SEND approach age 16 and beyond, they begin to make important choices about education, training, employment, and adult life. This guide sets out what support is available, the legal rights of young people, and how families can plan for successful transitions.

Education Options After 16

Young people must remain in education or training until age 18. This can include:

1. Staying at School

- Remain at a mainstream school sixth form or special school with a sixth form
- Continue support via the EHC plan or SEN support

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2. College

- Further Education (FE) colleges offer academic (A levels), vocational (BTECs, T Levels), or life skills programmes
- Colleges must follow the SEND Code of Practice and make reasonable adjustments

3. Traineeships and Supported Internships

- Traineeships: Short programmes with education and work placements to prepare for employment
- Supported Internships: Structured, work-based learning for young people with EHC plans

4. Apprenticeships

- Paid work with training (minimum 20% off-the-job)
- Reasonable adjustments and additional support should be provided if needed

Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans Post-16

What happens to the EHC plan after age 16?

- The plan can continue up to age 25 **if the young person still needs special educational provision** and is in education or training
- The local authority must review the plan **at least once a year**

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Key considerations:

- The **young person, not the parent**, has the legal right to make decisions from age 16 (unless they lack mental capacity)
- Transition planning should focus on **Preparing for Adulthood (PfA)** goals: employment, independent living, health, and community inclusion

Can the LA stop the plan?

- Yes, **but only if** the young person is no longer in education/training, or if outcomes have been met and support is no longer needed
- You can appeal a decision to cease the plan

SEN Support in Post-16 Education (Without an EHC Plan)

Colleges and training providers must:

- Use a graduated approach to identify and meet needs (Assess–Plan–Do–Review)
- Offer support such as in-class assistance, accessible materials, and assistive technology
- Work with the young person to create a **support plan or learner profile**
- Involve specialists where necessary

Post-16 providers do not receive a SEND notional budget like schools, but they are funded to meet additional needs.

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Local Authority Duties

Local Offer

Local authorities must publish a **Local Offer** that:

- Lists all post-16 SEND support services
- Includes education, health, and care options
- Covers transport, employment, housing, and leisure

Transport

Post-16 transport is **not automatically free**, but LAs must:

- Publish a transport policy statement
- Consider individual needs, distance, safety, and access
- Provide transport or financial support where necessary for those with EHC plans or significant needs

You can appeal post-16 transport decisions.

Preparing for Adulthood (PfA)

From **Year 9 onward**, EHC reviews must include planning for adulthood. This includes:

1. Education and Employment

- Exploring post-16 pathways
- Work experience, supported internships, apprenticeships

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2. Independent Living

- Skills for managing money, housing, and daily life
- Potential for supported living arrangements

3. Friends, Relationships and Community

- Access to leisure, social opportunities, and support groups

4. Health

- Transition to adult health services (e.g., CAMHS to adult mental health)
- Health support in education (e.g., medication, therapies)

Rights and Decision-Making at Age 16+

- At age 16, the **young person** holds the legal right to decisions under the Children and Families Act 2014
- This includes:
 - Requesting an EHC needs assessment
 - Naming a college or course in a plan
 - Appealing to the SEND Tribunal

Mental Capacity

If a young person lacks mental capacity, decisions must be made in their **best interests** under the **Mental Capacity Act 2005**

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Annual Reviews and Post-16 Changes

Annual Reviews

- Continue annually even after 16
- Must be person-centred and focus on PfA outcomes
- The young person's views must be central

Moving Between Settings

- If moving from school to college, the LA must consult the new setting and **name it in the EHC plan before 31 March** in the year of transfer
- You can appeal if the LA refuses to name your preferred setting

Tips for Families and Young People

- ✓ Start planning for post-16 by Year 9
- ✓ Attend open days and speak to college SEND coordinators
- ✓ Make sure the EHC plan is updated to reflect post-16 needs
- ✓ Ask for support with transition, mental health, and life skills
- ✓ Be involved in reviews and make your voice heard
- ✓ Know your rights to challenge decisions, appeal, or seek mediation

Support and Resources

You can get further support from:

- **RANi** – Help with advice, support and impartial information
- **Local Offer** - Help with advice, support and impartial information

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- **SENDIASS** – Local impartial information and advice service for parents and young people www.iasmanchester.org
- SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2015)
- Preparing for Adulthood – NDTi
- Disability Rights UK – Post-16 Education
- **IPSEA** – Independent Provider of Special Education Advice:
www.ipsea.org.uk
- **Contact** – A national charity supporting families with disabled children:
www.contact.org.uk

If you'd like help preparing your request or understanding your appeal options, RANi can provide guidance and templates.

Remember:

Always keep a copy of all correspondence you send, along with proof of postage or delivery. If you send documents by post, we recommend using a **signed-for** service. If sending by email, request a **read receipt** if possible.

Get in Touch

If you need more information or have a question, we're here to help.

Email us: info@rani.org.uk

Please include:

- Your name
- Your child's name
- Your child's date of birth
- Your query

Or, if you prefer, you can fill out our online **contact form** and we'll get back to you as soon as possible.

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