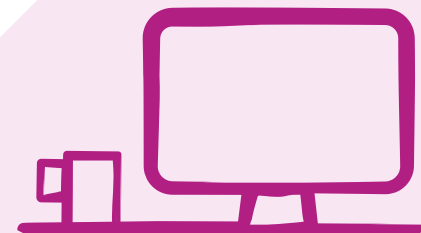


# Shaping My Future

A guide for people with  
physical disabilities in Essex

## Section 3: Learning and working



This is the third section of a six-part guide. For details about accessing the full guide and the other sections go to the back page.



**1. Planning for change:  
getting started**



**2. Family, friends  
and connections**



**3. Learning and working**



**4. My home**



**5. Health and wellbeing**



**6. Going out and about**

Delivered by:

**TOGETHER  
MATTERS**

Commissioned by:



Essex County Council

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## Why this section might be helpful

**In this section you will find information about learning new skills, exploring new interests and being in work. You will also find information about support available and sources of funding that may help with taking up education and employment opportunities.**

Finding new opportunities for learning and working are important at all times of life. You may be planning for leaving school in the next few years, starting out as a young adult, or looking to change direction during adult life in response to the impact of your condition, or simply for a challenge.



It may be helpful to know about your rights in relation to education and employment. As well as reading the information in this guide, it's worth looking at this factsheet from Disability Rights UK.



'Understanding the Equality Act: information for disabled students' (Factsheet 56). This covers rights in relation to both education and employment: [www.disabilityrightsuk.org/understanding-equality-act-information-disabled-students](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/understanding-equality-act-information-disabled-students).

This is the third section of a guide called Shaping My Future. It has five other sections but you do not need to look at them all. Choose the ones that you think might be useful to you at this point in time.

# Post-16 planning

**Between the ages of 16 and 25, you will usually need to make some significant decisions around education and employment as you plan for adult life. Many of the ideas and resources in this section will help with this planning.**

Essex County Council has a **Preparing for Adulthood** (PfA) service, delivered by teams in different areas of the county. Its advisers work with young people (aged 14 to 25), who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), and their families. They support people at key points during this time to help with deciding on education options, employment and community links (see page 72 for contact details).



The national **Preparing for Adulthood** website, funded by the Department for Education, has resources and ideas to help young people with disabilities to achieve paid employment, independent living, housing options, good health, friendships, relationships and community inclusion: [www.ndti.org.uk/resources/preparing-for-adulthood-all-tools-resources](http://www.ndti.org.uk/resources/preparing-for-adulthood-all-tools-resources)



Another resource that could be useful, if you are in secondary school or college, is Disability Rights UK's Get Ahead toolkit and resources, which are co-produced with and for disabled young people. You can sign up to receive the newsletters and magazines, which will help you to build up a picture of how things work and give lots of ideas about what is available across post-16 education, training and work. It is also a place where young people can contribute and share their ideas and talents. Here is the link to their information and signing-up form: [www.disabilityrightsuk.org/get-ahead](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/get-ahead)

One of the newsletters explains different routes into work for young people, such as apprenticeships, traineeships and supported internships: [www.disabilityrightsuk.org/sites/default/files/Get%20Ahead%20Magazine%20%20-%20issue%202\\_0.pdf](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/sites/default/files/Get%20Ahead%20Magazine%20%20-%20issue%202_0.pdf)



# Learning

**There is a huge variety of learning opportunities available for everyone, which can be tapped into at different times of life, depending on your interests and what you want to achieve.**

Wherever possible, information has been included about funding that may be available, as well as ideas for free, online ways to learn new things, whether for pleasure, to gain skills or for career development.

Online courses can help to reduce costs and remove concerns about physical accessibility.



**If you are choosing a college or other place of learning, make a visit to check you can access all the relevant areas of the buildings. If you are aged 16 to 25 and have an EHCP, you should be able to get support from a practitioner, such as an occupational therapist, to do this.**

## Further education

**Further education is post-16 education that is below degree level.**

It is offered by schools and academies with sixth forms, further education colleges, independent learning providers and special post-16 institutions. The Education and Skills Funding Agency provides funding for young people between the ages of 16 and 19 years and up to the age of 25 for those with an EHCP. After the age of 19, for funding to continue, the benefits of remaining in education needs to be stated in your EHCP.



**Disability Rights UK** has a leaflet with more information about funding for further education courses. Factsheet 26: [www.disabilityrightsuk.org/funding-further-education-disabled-students](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/funding-further-education-disabled-students)

# Apprenticeships

**Apprenticeships provide learning and training, as well as hands-on experience, in a specific area of work.**

The benefit is that you can gain a qualification while being in paid employment. You'll find more information here: [www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/apprentices/becoming-apprentice](http://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/apprentices/becoming-apprentice).

You can do an apprenticeship at any age and at different stages of your working life. The four levels of apprenticeship are set out below:

|              | Level       | Equivalent education level working for |
|--------------|-------------|--|
| Intermediate | 2           | GCSE                                   |
| Advanced     | 3           | A-level                                |
| Higher       | 4,5,6 and 7 | Foundation degree and above            |
| Degree       | 6 and 7     | Bachelor's or Master's degree          |



If you are thinking about apprenticeships, have a look at the Amazing Apprenticeships website: [www.amazingapprenticeships.com](http://www.amazingapprenticeships.com). It talks about the benefits of going down this route and provides a good range of resources that explain how apprenticeships work.



There is also information about apprenticeships at degree level on the UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) website: [www.ucas.com/understanding-apprenticeships](http://www.ucas.com/understanding-apprenticeships).



In Essex, there are a number of organisations who can help with finding apprenticeships. Adult Community Learning has a programme of apprenticeships for people between the ages of 16 and 18 and 19 or older: [www.aclessex.com/apprentices](http://www.aclessex.com/apprentices).

# Higher education

**Deciding whether to go to university or college to gain a higher education qualification can seem like a major step for anyone – and even more so for people living with a disability – but helpful information is available to support you to weigh things up and make choices.**

The main message we've heard from people who have studied at college or university is that it's important to plan early (at least the year before you might be going), collect as much information as you can and visit beforehand (this can sometimes be virtually but it's preferable to go in person). You could visit as part of an open day or arrange to go at a different time if that works better for you.



UCAS has a checklist to help you prepare for open days and suggests booking early as places can get filled up. It also recommends making an appointment with the Disability Support Team (DST):  
[www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/individual-needs/disabled-students/disabled-students-preparing-open-days-and-visits](http://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/individual-needs/disabled-students/disabled-students-preparing-open-days-and-visits).

On each university website, you should be able to find details of their DST and what is available within the university and from external agencies, such as paid supporters. As well as looking at this information, you should speak to the team before deciding to apply, as their response could help with making a decision.



There is information on the UCAS website about using DSTs:  
[www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/individual-needs/disabled-students/speaking-disability-support-team-or-mental-health-adviser](http://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/individual-needs/disabled-students/speaking-disability-support-team-or-mental-health-adviser).



**It's important to plan early, collect as much information as you can and visit beforehand.**

## Karen's experience of higher education



"I wanted to go to university because I realised this would be a good way for me to get my independence as a young person and to live the full human experience to the best of my abilities and opportunities. Little did I know how much planning this would need but, looking back, it turned out to be a decision that gave me what I was looking for.

During my studies, I stayed in halls of residence with a live-in carer. Achieving this wasn't easy as most of the buildings my mother and I visited prior to enrolment were inaccessible. Eventually we found a room with potential for adaptations and made the case for this to be done as reasonable adjustments to enable me to study. The university was in a neighbouring county which made sorting things out more complicated but my social care team didn't change and social workers and occupational therapists worked with Cambridge City Council regarding my needs. As part of my reasonable adjustments, the university recruited note takers to help me during lessons. This was funded by my Disabled Students' Allowance.

All of these arrangements meant that my start date was deferred by one year. Nevertheless, I made it to university, and I got to experience what it's like to be young, wild and free!

But even with all of that planning in place, I still faced many difficulties, mainly because higher education does not have enough experience of students with a physical impairment.

Being a young adult undertaking higher educational studies while dealing with social stigma and prejudice can all lead to high levels of stress. Making good use of the university's wellbeing services and the extensions programme helped me to get by and I would advise any disadvantaged minority to do the same. I'd also suggest putting energy into making friends as having supportive people around can be very helpful.

Over time, I began exploring and practising self-advocacy by letting people such as lecturers, librarians and canteen staff know about my needs. I went on to become a student rep to improve the situation for other disabled students."



**My message is that it's all worth it,  
and with tenacity it becomes possible!**



A more general resource, **Know Before You Go**, produced by **Student Minds**, is an e-guide intended for sixth-form students looking to go to university, as well as their families and education practitioners who support them, to help them think about and prepare for some of the changes that university life might bring: [www.studentminds.org.uk/knowbeforeyogo.html](http://www.studentminds.org.uk/knowbeforeyogo.html).

**Student Minds** has also produced **Transitions**, a guide to help people through university life and find their way round some of the difficulties. Both guides acknowledge the anxiety and stress going to university and college can cause, and point to sources of support to make it easier: [www.studentminds.org.uk/transitionintouniversity.html](http://www.studentminds.org.uk/transitionintouniversity.html).



The **Open University** (OU) provides a different option, with most learning taking place at home. The OU was set up to make higher education more accessible and, because of the flexibility it offers, it is the largest provider of higher education for disabled people – according to its website, 28,000 disabled students studied with the OU in 2020: [www.open.ac.uk/courses/do-it/disability](http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/do-it/disability).

There are also other colleges and universities that offer distance learning options. This website has a search function to find online courses: [www.distancelearningportal.com](http://www.distancelearningportal.com).



**28,000**  
disabled students  
studied with the  
OU in 2020



# Opportunities to keep on learning

**If you have been away from education for a while it may be worth thinking about teaming up with one or more people you already know to enrol on a course. This may give you more confidence and reduce the worry about starting something new.**



## Essex Adult Community Learning (ACL)

ACL provides lots of different online and face-to-face courses. On its website you will find a list of what is currently available. It also runs taster sessions so you can try out some new things.

Courses cover:

- English, maths, science and digital skills
- creative subjects, such as art, crafts, photography and jewellery making
- wellbeing
- qualifications and skills for employment

Adult education classes provide many benefits: meeting people who share your interests, building confidence, reducing stress and gaining qualifications.



**ACL has learning support co-ordinators in local areas who you can talk to before or during a course to find out what support might be available (such as study skills support if you have not undertaken formal learning for a while or specialist assistive or enabling software and resources).**



More information about learning support and the contact details of the co-ordinators can be found here: [aclessex.com/learning-support-information](https://www.aclessex.com/learning-support-information).



You can sign up for its newsletter to hear about new courses: [www.aclessex.com](https://www.aclessex.com).



A list of the different centres can be found here: [aclessex.com/centres](https://www.aclessex.com/centres).



## FutureLearn

FutureLearn is an online site where you can sign up to do free courses run by universities and organisations at your own pace. Most of the courses last 6-10 weeks but there are also short 2-3 week courses that can be a good starting point.

One of the good things about FutureLearn is that you can study at a time of day that works for you and do as much or as little at any one time. The courses are designed to be easy to follow and a fun way to learn, often with videos, quizzes, downloadable transcripts and chat rooms so you can share ideas with other students (often from around the world).

You need to be comfortable doing things online but apart from that the structure is very supportive. You could ask a friend or supporter to sign up for the same course and then support and motivate each other. As they are free, there's nothing to lose. You can upgrade to get additional features but there's no need to do so.



**There are courses that can help you get into work or move on in your career, help you think about what you might like to study at college or university or just learn about new things. Some are introductory taster courses while others are more in-depth or specialist.**

You can sign up for their newsletter to hear about new courses:  
[www.futurelearn.com](http://www.futurelearn.com).



## OpenLearn

OpenLearn is a website where you can find all the free courses available from the Open University. They have been developed for informal learners, as well as people who are wanting to build their confidence or knowledge to start more formal study. Some of the courses can also be found on FutureLearn.

[www.open.ac.uk/about/open-educational-resources/openlearn](http://www.open.ac.uk/about/open-educational-resources/openlearn)



# Financial help for studying

## Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)

DSA is support to cover study-related costs because of a disability, long-term illness or a mental health problem. You can receive this funding on its own or in addition to any student finance (see link below) that you get.

The level of DSA that is given is based on a person's needs. It is not affected by household income and does not need to be paid back. You can get help with:

- specialist equipment, for example a computer if you need one because of your disability
- non-medical helpers, for example a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter or specialist note taker
- extra travel costs to attend your course or placement because of your disability
- other disability-related study support, for example having to print additional copies of documents for proofreading.

You can find information about eligibility, funding levels and how to apply on the government's website: [www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowance-dsa](http://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowance-dsa).



Here is a link to a video of a young student talking about her experience of applying, with lots of practical tips: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pk8hyrfYsb8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pk8hyrfYsb8).

The more general costs of doing a higher education course at college or university can be off-putting but support is available. Also, tuition fees don't have to be paid in advance; you can obtain a loan from the government that only needs to be paid back once your earnings reach a certain level. There is more information at: [www.gov.uk/student-finance](http://www.gov.uk/student-finance).

Student finance and Disabled Students' Allowance are explained in this leaflet: [www.disabilityrightsuk.org/fundinghighereducation](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/fundinghighereducation).



## Funding from charitable trusts

If you can't get the money you need to do a course from statutory sources, such as the ones above, charitable trusts may be able to help you. Each trust has its own eligibility criteria, which you can check out on their websites before applying. Some trusts only help disabled students, while others help students more generally. Most trusts help young disabled students but some will also consider funding mature disabled students.

Trusts usually receive more applications than they can support so, even if you meet their criteria, you may not get funding, but it's worth trying. The **Disability Rights UK** factsheet about charitable trusts can help with your application: [www.disabilityrightsuk.org/funding-charitable-trusts](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/funding-charitable-trusts). Part A gives advice about how to apply, while Part B lists trusts that may help with funding, information about who they help and the amount they give.

The **Snowdon Trust** is an example of a charitable trust that gives grants to people with physical disabilities to support them in further or higher education or vocational training.



This video of a conversation with Tanni Grey-Thompson and Lord Snowdon gives examples of how the fund has helped people fulfil their aspirations: [www.snowdontrust.org/our-founder](http://www.snowdontrust.org/our-founder).

# Adjustments and support for learning

**Under the Equality Act, education and training providers have a duty to anticipate the adjustments that disabled students may need.**

But in order to make the most of your course, you may require more specific adjustments. To get adjustments in place, you will need to let the provider know of your impairment and maybe also share your thoughts about what you think would be helpful.

The **Disability Rights UK** guide (link below) has a comprehensive list of specific adjustments in relation to different conditions. This list can help you be aware of possible options and prepare for meetings about your needs. Remember: you are the expert in your condition and any information you share will be invaluable to others.

You could speak to a course organiser, tutor, the DST and the exam office. One of your concerns may be dealing with pain, fatigue or a fluctuating condition that can make it difficult to predict how your studies will be affected. You need to explain this to make sure it is taken into account, for example, in relation to organising your study, arrangements for delivering coursework and doing exams.



**Make sure the people you speak to put in writing the arrangements they have agreed and you can use this as a checklist to make sure it happens.**

More information is available here: [www.disabilityrightsuk.org/adjustments-disabled-students](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/adjustments-disabled-students).



**And finally, to help with learning-related queries, Disability Rights UK has a student helpline that may be able to help you.**



Advisers can advise and support disabled people who are studying or wish to study at any level on full-time or part-time education or training courses if:

- the course is in England and
- they are over 16 years old

The helpline can also be used by parents and/or carers of disabled students and professionals working with disabled students.

The student helpline is sponsored by the Snowdon Trust (see above).

Open: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11am to 1pm

Email: [students@disabilityrightsuk.org](mailto:students@disabilityrightsuk.org)



# Working

**Having work, whether through a job or self-employment, is an important part of many people's lives.**

Yet it can feel as though there are many barriers and hurdles to finding suitable work or remaining in work, particularly when living with pain, or with a progressive or fluctuating condition.

This section outlines some of the sources of support that are available. It includes links to leaflets and advice provided by organisations, such as **Citizens Advice**, **Disability Rights UK** and **Scope**, as well as details of helplines that may be able to answer more specific queries.

Some of the people involved in writing this guide felt they had had to be persistent as some agencies and schemes had not been able to help.



**They found it helpful to get support from family or friends when going to meetings and in thinking through options to find sustainable employment.**



# Self-employment

Much of the information in this guide focuses on being an employee but self-employment and having your own business can be a way of doing a job you like with more flexibility about how and when you work.

- Follow this link if you're interested in finding out more about working for yourself: [www.gov.uk/working-for-yourself](http://www.gov.uk/working-for-yourself).
- You'll also find information to help you think through the pros and cons of self-employment on Scope's website: [www.scope.org.uk/advice-and-support/self-employment-pros-cons](http://www.scope.org.uk/advice-and-support/self-employment-pros-cons).
- A good place to get information about business funding, support and guidance is your Local Growth Hub. The BEST Growth Hub covers Essex, Southend and Thurrock: [www.essexopportunities.co.uk/employers/best-growth-hub](http://www.essexopportunities.co.uk/employers/best-growth-hub).

## Karen's experience of self-employment on the internet



"As a teenager, I wanted to be like my peers who were earning money doing things like paper rounds. I began exploring jobs on the internet for me to do in the comfort and accessibility of my home. I was able to create products to sell within a virtual world and make real-life profit from the creating, designing and marketing of digital goods.

I still work for myself on the internet as a content creator, writer, producer, and spoken word and digital artist, while being a full-time postgraduate student.

Self-employment seems a helpful alternative to more traditional jobs that require travel and accessible workplaces and it enables more people with physical and sensory impairments to use their personal strengths and contribute to the economy."

## Emma's experience of exploring self-employment as a way back to work





"Although my newly acquired disabilities stopped me from returning to my previous career, I felt I still had much to offer – a decent brain that functions perfectly well, many adaptable skills and an abundance of enthusiasm!

Unfortunately for me, none of the numerous agencies and scheme organisers I saw were able to assist me in finding employment which took my physical needs into consideration. So, I began buying and selling on eBay as I could do this from home, taking my time with it and stopping if I was having a bad day. But there was so much work for very little reward.

Luckily, I then found a company who gave me work on a self-employed basis. I worked a couple of days a week for them, with extra days added when they needed more done. There was also flexibility if I needed to attend medical appointments. I learned how to make reading glasses, making and cutting

the lenses and putting them in frames, and I also did lots of admin work. Then COVID came along and that job came to an end.

So, I began making art and craft items. This has been highly therapeutic (and addictive!) and I have had a fair amount of success in selling my creations, though this needs to increase. I found that once Christmas fairs are over, there are few outlets, so I started hosting monthly craft and gift markets."

 I feel I've found the ability in my disability, which isn't always easy, but I'm now using my passion and talent, which has brought me income and feels extremely positive. 



# Your rights at work

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**Section 5 of the Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination in the workplace at all stages of employment, including recruitment and access to training and career development.**

Examples of discrimination could be:

- an employer withdrawing a job offer when they learn of your condition
- your employer firing you due to disability-related absences
- workplace bullying because you are disabled
- your employer not providing reasonable adjustments that would help you to do your job.

If you feel you are being discriminated against at work, there are places where you can seek independent advice to help you decide what to do about it. **Citizens Advice** has a guide you can go through to check if you are being discriminated against in your workplace and the steps you can take to address any issues: [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/work/discrimination-at-work](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/work/discrimination-at-work).

One of the dilemmas can be whether to tell an employer about a disability. **Scope** has a guide to help you think about the timing and how to go about it: [www.scope.org.uk/advice-and-support/talking-to-employer-about-disability](http://www.scope.org.uk/advice-and-support/talking-to-employer-about-disability). If you want adjustments to be made at work, you need to tell your employer about your impairment or condition and, once they know, they must consider your request for support.

Most organisations are positively keen for employees to be open with them about any disabilities or health conditions so that they can then put in place the necessary support to help them to do their job.

Organisations providing support around specific conditions may have information on their websites about approaching employers with suggestions for adjustments. For example, the **MS Society** provides templates and factsheets covering issues such as 'Telling your employer decision', 'Return to work after time off sick' and 'Understanding your work situation'. They could be useful to people with other conditions as well: [www.mssociety.org.uk/care-and-support/everyday-living/working-and-ms/work-toolkit](http://www.mssociety.org.uk/care-and-support/everyday-living/working-and-ms/work-toolkit).



# Reasonable adjustments at work

**It is useful to know about reasonable adjustments at work whether you are looking for a job or struggling in the one you currently have.**

In the Equality Act there is no set definition of what is 'reasonable' as it depends on the type of job and employer.

It could include:

- ✓ flexible working,
- ✓ different duties,
- ✓ changes to policies,
- ✓ working practices or physical layouts
- ✓ providing extra equipment or support.



**Don't be put off asking for adjustments as they may make a significant difference to your working life and yet be relatively easy to arrange.**

If something is easy and inexpensive to do, and your employer has not done it, this could amount to disability discrimination. (There is general information about reasonable adjustments and discrimination in Section 1: Planning for change: getting started, page 26.)



The following organisations have produced helpful information on reasonable adjustments at work:

**Citizens Advice** has information that takes you through the steps of approaching an employer about changes to help you at work: [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/work/discrimination-at-work/taking-action/asking-your-employer-for-changes-to-help-if-youre-disabled](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/work/discrimination-at-work/taking-action/asking-your-employer-for-changes-to-help-if-youre-disabled).



**Scope** provides a clear explanation of reasonable adjustments, including examples of what can be asked for and a template letter to send to your employer if they have not responded to your request: [www.scope.org.uk/advice-and-support/reasonable-adjustments-at-work](http://www.scope.org.uk/advice-and-support/reasonable-adjustments-at-work).

When talking to an employer or others about reasonable adjustments or discrimination, it is helpful to record details of the people you speak to, what you discuss, meetings you have had and actions you have taken in a notepad or computer folder.

**This will make it easier to keep track of what you have done and what needs following up.**



# Access to Work funding

## Another way to get practical support to carry out your job is through Access to Work.

This is a government grant scheme for people who are disabled or have a physical or mental health condition. Before you apply for the grant, you need to have talked to your employer about the reasonable adjustments they can make. The other conditions are that you are aged 16 or over and have a paid job or are about to start or return to one. You can also be self-employed, in an apprenticeship, internship, on a work trial or doing work experience (but not voluntary work).

The grant can pay for things such as:

- ✓ aids and equipment in your workplace, including a wheelchair
- ✓ money towards any extra travel costs to and from work if you can't use available public transport, or if you need help to adapt your vehicle
- ✓ an interpreter or other support at a job interview
- ✓ other practical help at work, such as a job coach or note taker


The funding can include support at home if you work from home, some or all of the time. It can also be used for practical support to move into self-employment or to set up a business (but not for business start-up costs). The grant is not means tested and does not need to be paid back.



All the details about Access to Work are on the government website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-work-factsheet/access-to-work-factsheet-for-customers](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-work-factsheet/access-to-work-factsheet-for-customers).

You can apply online at [www.gov.uk/access-to-work/apply](https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work/apply).

Access to Work helpline:

 Telephone: **0800 121 7479**

 Textphone: **0800 121 7579**



## Ben's story about adjustments and support in his job as a corporate tax assistant manager



"I joined a large, international accountancy firm as a graduate trainee after leaving university and during my first three years there I studied for my Chartered Accountancy qualification. I had always had an interest in accountancy, which was strengthened after speaking to careers advisers at university. The ethos of the firm towards their employees seemed to stand out and they showed a strong willingness to work with me in relation to issues associated with my disability.

Throughout my employment, I have had full-time support workers to assist me in the office with administrative tasks and some personal care that I require during the day. This is funded by the government's Access to Work scheme. My employer also purchased a few small pieces of equipment for me (for example a cordless telephone, which I find easier to use than a standard desk telephone).

They have established an internal disability network for employees in 2005, part of which I now lead. I feel that this has helped to change the organisational culture in relation to disability. I have consistently been provided with all the support I need in relation to my disability, which has been built on effective two-way communication between my managers and me: there has rarely been any misunderstandings on either side. One of the best examples of support and flexibility was the help I received during the process of transferring from the Southampton to the Cambridge office even though there was a lot of uncertainty around the timescales for my move.

My advice for others:

- **Don't have any preconceptions regarding a particular organisation or a particular job:** roles can often be adapted where necessary and potential hurdles overcome with methods that you may not even be aware of (for example the latest advances in technology).
- **Be open and honest with your employer about your disability,** but remain positive and focus on everything that you can do, as opposed to areas that you may find more difficult.
- **Don't be afraid to ask your employer for practical help where necessary.** Recognising that you need some assistance to be able to work more effectively should be viewed as a strength, rather than as a weakness."



Ben's blog on Purple Space (a networking and professional development hub for disabled employees, networks and allies) gives more information: [www.purplespace.org/home?myhub&selected=1749](http://www.purplespace.org/home?myhub&selected=1749).

# Getting individual employment advice

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There are a number of organisations that give individual advice on a wide range of issues, including work, over the phone or by email. These include Disability Rights UK and Scope, who are mentioned above with links to their websites. In addition, there are organisations that specialise in work issues.

**acas** working  
for everyone

**The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service** (ACAS) provides free, impartial advice on all workplace issues for both employers and employees. Its website includes information on disputes, redundancy, flexible working and reasonable adjustments: [www.acas.org.uk/advice](http://www.acas.org.uk/advice).

It also has a helpline:


 ACAS helpline: **0300 123 1100**

Monday to Friday, from 8am to 6pm

You can talk through your options without needing to give any personal details (ACAS is not able to give legal advice).

  
working families  
changing the way we live and work

**Working Families** is an organisation that provides free advice and information to parents and carers to support them with issues they may face in the workplace. If you are a parent, it can help with understanding your rights, for example to flexible working, which could enable you to juggle your different roles alongside your disability: <https://workingfamilies.org.uk/advice-information>.

 You can get support by phone: **0300 012 0312**  
(open Monday to Friday from 11am to 2pm)

Alternatively, fill in an online contact form:  
[workingfamilies.org.uk/contact-us-for-advice](https://workingfamilies.org.uk/contact-us-for-advice).

# Support with looking for work

There are national and local organisations that give support to people looking for a job, returning to work after a break, changing jobs or exploring different career pathways. Details of a number of these are given below.

## Finding disability-friendly employers

You should find that most large employers are aware of their duties under the Equality Act. However, you may want to look out for signs that an organisation has a particularly positive approach towards recruiting people with disabilities.

Disability Confident is a government scheme to encourage employers to recruit and retain disabled people through good practice. (It replaced the Positive about Disability 'Two Ticks' scheme.) When you're searching for work, look for the 'disability confident' symbol on adverts and applications.



This symbol means the employer is committed to employing disabled people and you'll be guaranteed an interview if you meet the minimum criteria for the job: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/disability-confident-guidance-for-levels-1-2-and-3/level-1-disability-confident-committed](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disability-confident-guidance-for-levels-1-2-and-3/level-1-disability-confident-committed).

There is also a list of employers who have signed up: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/disability-confident-employers-that-have-signed-up](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disability-confident-employers-that-have-signed-up).

**Evenbreak** is a social enterprise providing a platform that advertises work opportunities with employers who are actively aiming to attract disabled candidates. You can register for job alerts and also look on their website to get an idea of organisations who have signed up to use the platform, many of whom are household names: [www.evenbreak.co.uk](http://www.evenbreak.co.uk).

When you're searching for work, look for the 'disability confident' symbol on adverts and applications.

## Intensive Personalised Employment Support

This is a government-funded scheme that provides one-to-one support and training to help people into work. To apply you must have a disability or health condition that affects the work you can do, be unemployed and be between school leaving age and state pension age.

Under the scheme, a dedicated support worker helps with:

- identifying what work you're able to do
- matching skills to work that's available
- getting training to help with finding work
- building a personal support network
- managing work around your specific disability or health condition
- giving support during the first six months of work.

Intensive Personalised Employment Support is usually for 15 months but you can get an additional six months of on-the-job support if you find employment. If you have a job coach, they should be able to tell you if you're eligible. If you don't, you can go to your local Jobcentre Plus and ask to speak to a work coach about the scheme. Find out more here: [www.gov.uk/intensive-personalised-employment-support](https://www.gov.uk/intensive-personalised-employment-support).

## Supported employment

Supported Employment is an established model for supporting people with significant disabilities to secure and remain in paid employment. At its heart is the idea that anyone can be employed if they want to be, as long as sufficient support is provided. One of the key tools is 'vocational profiling', which means spending time finding out about a person's aspirations, learning needs, individual skills, former experiences and job preferences. It's accepted that someone may not have all the skills necessary to do a job but will learn them while at work, often with the help of a supporter through Access to Work. Less traditional recruitment methods, such as work trials or a working interview, are usually used to reflect this.



The website of the **British Association of Supported Employment** (BASE) has more information:

[www.base-uk.org/what-supported-employment](https://www.base-uk.org/what-supported-employment).


Although it is chiefly a member organisation for supported employment services, you can find out more about supported employment and search for BASE members in your area.

## Essex-based support



### Preparing for Adulthood service (PfA)

Support young people between the ages of 14 and 25, who have an Education Health and Care Plan, with planning for education, work, housing and connections.

 **Mid Essex** (Braintree, Chelmsford, Halstead and Maldon):  
**03330 131421**

 **North East Essex** (Colchester and Tendring): **03330 321641**

 **South Essex** (Basildon, Billericay, Brentwood, Castle Point, Rochford and Wickford): **03330 131424**

 **West Essex** (Epping, Harlow and Uttlesford): **03330 321984**

### Targeted Employment team

Help young jobseekers with Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) on their journey into employment through supported internships, inclusive apprenticeships, traineeships and social enterprise.

 [targetedemployment@essex.gov.uk](mailto:targetedemployment@essex.gov.uk)



### Papworth Trust

Provides a service called Community Connections that supports people with a disability, or long-term health condition to move into work, training or active job searching.

[www.papworthtrust.org.uk/work/community-connections](http://www.papworthtrust.org.uk/work/community-connections)



### Realise Futures

Offers personalised employment support to think about options, gain skills and take steps towards a job or training. Work and health programme to help people manage their health and wellbeing and get into employment.

[www.realisefutures.org/employment](http://www.realisefutures.org/employment)



# Benefits and work

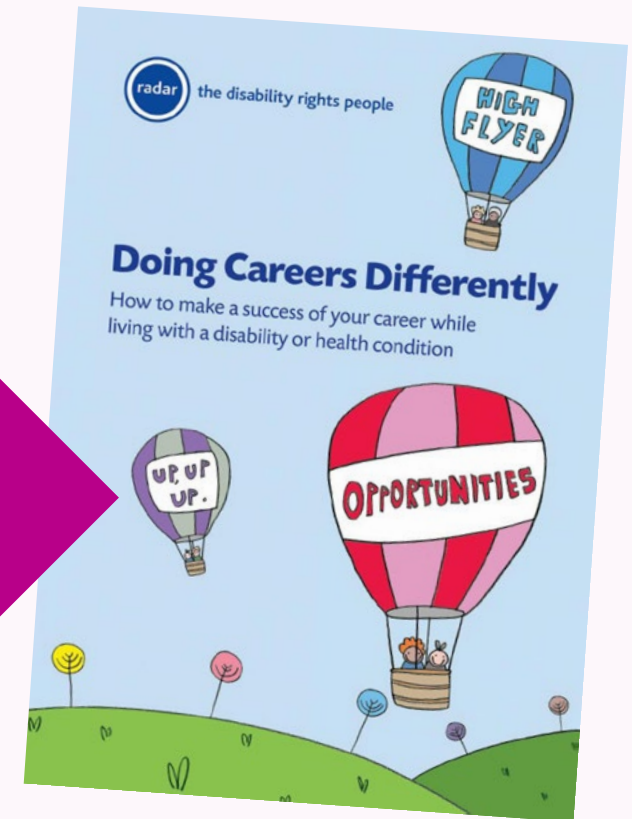
It may be helpful for you to know how working could affect your benefits.



This leaflet explains about 'permitted work': [www.scope.org.uk/advice-and-support/permitted-work](http://www.scope.org.uk/advice-and-support/permitted-work).



And finally,  
a guide from  
**Disability  
Rights UK** full of  
practical ideas:



**Doing Careers Differently: How to make a success of your career while living with a disability or health condition** is an informative and motivating guide, written by and for people with disabilities. It covers all stages of working life, from finding your first job to rethinking your career or simply wondering what to do next. It's presented in a question-and-answer format and includes lots of stories of personal experiences. It has a positive outlook and promotes the idea of turning your disability into an advantage in the world of work.

[www.disabilityrightsuk.org/how-we-can-help/publications/doing-life-differently-series/doing-careers-differently](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/how-we-can-help/publications/doing-life-differently-series/doing-careers-differently)



## My notes

Use this page to make a note of anything you're interested in following up from this section.  
Do this in whatever format works best for you to make sure your thoughts and ideas don't get lost.



# Information about Shaping My Future

**Shaping My Future should be helpful to anyone with a physical disability, impairment or long-term condition who would like ideas and information to help think through, and make decisions about, possible changes in their life.**

It has been written for people living in Essex, with links to both national and local services and organisations. In the introduction to the full version there are tips to get the most from using the guide.

The PDF versions of the guide contain fillable text boxes that you can type into to save your ideas. You will need to download and save to create an offline copy and then save each time you write more. The coloured tint in the text boxes will not appear if you choose to make a printed copy.

Go to: [www.essex.gov.uk/shaping-my-future](http://www.essex.gov.uk/shaping-my-future)

- to request a printed copy of the full guide
- to download the full guide and the six individual sections

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## Feedback

Please let us know how you have used the guide, ways in which it has been helpful and suggestions to improve it. We are also keen to hear people's stories about how it gave support with shaping the future so that stories, ideas and learning can be shared. Please send any feedback to [christine@togethertatters.org.uk](mailto:christine@togethertatters.org.uk).

## Disclaimer

Every effort has been made for the information in this guide to be as accurate and up-to-date as possible. If you see something that needs amending, please email [info@togethertatters.org.uk](mailto:info@togethertatters.org.uk).

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