

Preparing for life beyond school

Ted Moore suggests a guidance for parents of deaf* children and young people on further education (FE), careers, apprenticeships, access to work and independent living

*In this article 'deaf' denotes all levels; mild-profound bilateral and unilateral, congenital and acquired deafness.

Future careers for all deaf children are determined by their awareness of the world of work, general knowledge, qualifications, linguistic ability, and degree of deafness.

Once a child moves from primary to secondary education, many parents come to realise that the educational focus from then on is about the future and adulthood.

Please be aware that there may be slightly different issues for those in mainstream from those who are in units and schools for the deaf.

What is ahead? The child is no longer a pupil but a student who has to contend with different timetables, different subjects, moving from one classroom to another, new teachers, new friends (or bullies) and the fact that the whole education programme is becoming geared to what happens Post-16.

Questions you may ask and further information

1. Does the school have a careers policy? It may be of help to ask for a copy at the first opportunity when your child is in Year 7. (There seems little attention paid to Post-16 education in primary schools.)

The statutory framework (2018) requires every school to secure independent careers guidance for all Years 8 to 13 pupils. This makes sure that all pupils have access to external sources of information on the full range of education and training options.

So, the school **must have** a careers policy.

For many adolescent children who are deaf it may seem somewhat irrelevant to talk about 'careers' so early on, but what is important is to look at what the timetable is doing to ensure that the work covered is geared to encouraging independence, making choices and forming appropriate relationships.

What does your child know about the world of work? What sort of understanding does your child have of the complexities of which choices will have to be made in the next few years?

2. Does the Policy cover the questions you might ask, eg:
 - What happens in Year 8? Is 'careers' a subject on the timetable? Is it integral to PSHE (personal, social, health and economic) lessons? How many sessions per week are there?
 - Who is the careers teacher?
 - Is expertise sought from outside the school?
 - Are students individually interviewed? If so, when do the interviews start?
 - Is 'careers' a subject that can be discussed at review meetings?

- There are particular points in the secondary school calendar when choices have to be made.
- For those in mainstream schools will a Qualified Teacher of the Deaf (QToD) be available to help and advise about local provision? Will the support be available Post-16?
- In most schools Year 9 is a year in which decisions have to be made in relation to curriculum options. Who decides which ones the child ought to take?
- Then what happens in Year 11? What options are there, eg continue at school? Go to an FE college (possibly a residential one)? Start work? Supported employment/living? Supported internships/apprenticeships? Go to university?
- Is 'work experience' mentioned in the policy? If not, why not? When does work experience happen? How long does it last? To what extent does it affect normal lessons?
- When your child leaves school will you have to meet the cost of transport? Who will support them?
- Are there independent careers advisors who you could talk to?
- Most secondary schools and special schools have a careers policy on their websites, so it would be useful to go through it before meetings with staff. You can then ask questions or seek clarification. If you cannot find the relevant information, phone the school and ask for a copy.
- You can also ask staff in which subjects they think your child shows strengths/weaknesses.
- Ask too, whether staff get feedback from students who have gone on to FE or higher education (HE).

More guidance

Gatsby benchmarks are not a statutory framework but by adopting them, schools can be confident that they are fulfilling their legal duties:

The eight Gatsby benchmarks of Good Career Guidance are:

- A stable careers programme
- Learning from careers and labour market information
- Addressing the needs of each pupil
- Linking curriculum learning to careers
- Encounters with employers and employees
- Experiences of workplaces
- Encounters with further and higher education
- Personal guidance

Most special schools have geared their curriculum to prepare children and young people (CYP) for adult life and as a comprehensive guide to Post-16 education and employment.

Log on to the school's website for more information.

Links to other policies that schools ought to have.

- PSHE curriculum
- Post-16 curriculum
- Teaching and learning policy
- Equal Opportunities policy
- Experience in work policy

Access to work

- Funding from the government used to cover the costs of any support needs or adaptations in the workplace and for support at job interviews.
- Access to Work funding is available to people with a disability already in or about to start paid employment (at or above the minimum wage), those who are self-employed, and those on apprenticeships, traineeships and supported internships.
- It is a discretionary scheme and young people may need help when applying for the first time as they may be asked to justify their support needs and provide quotes for support worker fees.

For further details visit

www.gov.uk/access-to-work/overview

Also, there is quite a lot of very useful guidance on the internet, eg the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) and Deaf Unity.

NDCS

- **The Buzz:** Website for deaf young people with lots of information on topics such as college, university, relationships and future options:
www.buzz.org.uk/category/yourfuture
- **Pages for deaf young adults on a range of topics:**
www.ndcs.org.uk/our-services/deafyoung-adults-19-25
- **Examples of deaf adults in a range of jobs:**
www.ndcs.org.uk/role-models

Finally, provide opportunities to talk with your young person about Post-16 options, encourage interests, explore possibilities, and early on, don't shoot down ideas that your child puts forward that seem beyond them. If they react negatively, it may shut down the whole exploration process.

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Ted Moore is a former president of BATOD and former Head of Oxfordshire Sensory Support Service.

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The BATOD mentoring scheme is delighted to share that it will be ready to receive applications from BATOD members seeking mentoring support from January 2022.

Are you interested in becoming a BATOD mentor? Following the first BATOD mentoring training day on 12/11/2021 we will be welcoming applications again with a training date to be set for Spring 2022.

Please email mentoring@batod.org.uk for further information and to request an application form.



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