

# Help yourself... if you're 16 or 17

If you are about to leave school, you will have to decide what to do next. This leaflet goes through some of your options and outlines the help you may be able to get.



# 1 Staying on at school or college

The official school leaving date is the last Friday in June after your 16th birthday. If you want to stay in education and need help deciding what course would be best for you, in England, ask your local council about your nearest careers advice service. Or visit [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) for a 14–19 prospectus showing courses in your area. In Wales, contact Careers Wales ☎ 0800 100 900 or visit [www.careerswales.com](http://www.careerswales.com).

If you decide to stay in full-time education, you may be able to get:

- education maintenance allowance (EMA) of up to £30 a week if you are studying in Wales. Phone Student Finance Wales: ☎ 0845 602 8845 or visit [www.studentfinancewales.co.uk](http://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk)

The EMA scheme ended in England for new applicants on 1 January 2011. If you are already getting EMA, this can continue until the end of the school year (summer 2011)

- benefits – most 16 and 17 year olds cannot claim benefits. But ask at your local Jobcentre Plus office if you are a lone parent, cannot live with your parents, are disabled or a refugee learning English
- free prescriptions, dental treatment and eye tests
- help with travel costs, ask your local council. In London, the 16+ Oyster photocard entitles you to free bus and tram travel and other reduced fares – Directgov has more information
- help with childcare costs if you have a child – ask your college
- extra help if you are facing hardship – ask your school or college
- if you can't get benefit for yourself, your parents can continue to get child benefit and child tax credit for you while you are in full-time education and aged between 16 and 19. Phone the child benefit helpline: ☎ 0845 302 1444.

The information in this leaflet is subject to change. Get the latest information from [www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk) or [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

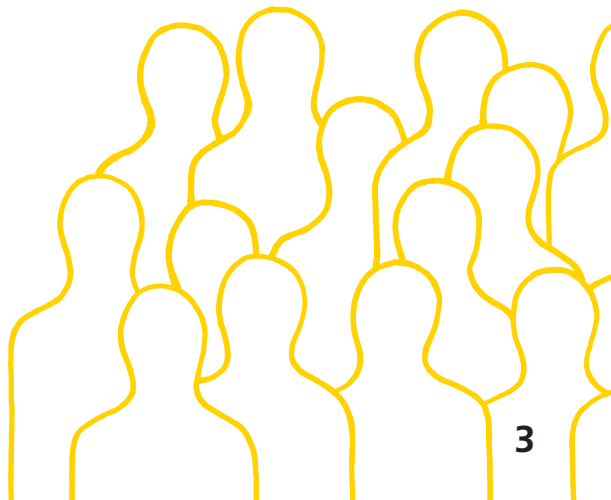
## 2 Earn while you learn

If you decide to leave education, your local Jobcentre Plus office can tell you about different schemes to help you find a job. In England, your local council can tell you about careers advice in your area. In Wales, contact Careers Wales ☎ 0800 100 900 or visit [www.careerswales.com](http://www.careerswales.com).

Work-based learning allows you to get qualifications while you're working:

- Apprenticeships train you for a specific career with a mixture of learning on the job and attendance at college. Find out more at [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk) in England, [www.careerswales.com](http://www.careerswales.com) in Wales.
- You have the right to paid time off for study or training if you left school without many qualifications and your job has few opportunities for training. The amount of time off you get will depend on your and your employer's circumstances. Find out more from [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

While you're combining learning with working, you're entitled to the normal work-related benefits such as pension and paid leave.



## 3 Your rights at work

If you are over school leaving age and under 18, you are known as a young worker. You have a legal right to:

- an assessment from your employer of the possible risks to your health and safety and what they will do to protect you
- be paid the national minimum wage. Phone the Pay and work rights helpline on ☎ 0800 917 2368 or visit [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)
- not work more than eight hours a day or 40 hours a week
- at least twelve hours rest between each working day and two rest days a week. Plus a 30 minute break when you work longer than four and a half hours
- paid annual leave of 5.6 weeks, this works out as 28 days if you work 5 days a week (5.6 multiplied by 5)
- join a trade union
- not be discriminated against because of your sex, disability, race, sexual orientation, religion or belief, or age. See Adviceguide for information on the Equality Act, 2010.

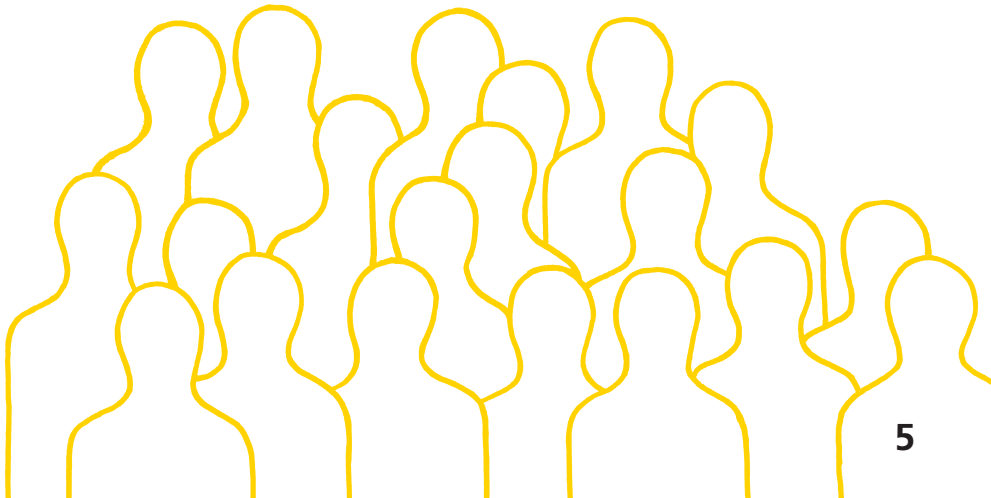
Adviceguide has further information about your rights at work at [www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk) or visit [www.thesite.org](http://www.thesite.org)

## 4 Volunteering

You may want to consider volunteering to help you get new skills, build your confidence and get useful work experience.

If you are interested in volunteering for your local Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), visit [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) or phone ☎ 08451 264 264.

Other useful volunteering websites for young people are [vinspired.com](http://vinspired.com) and [www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk)



## 5 If you are disabled

If you are disabled, a Disability Employment Adviser at the local Jobcentre Plus office can help you with any barriers you have to starting work.

At 16, you can claim:

- disability living allowance (DLA) for help with getting around and taking care of yourself. To claim, phone ☎ 0800 882 200
- employment and support allowance (ESA) if you are too ill to work. To claim, phone ☎ 0800 055 6688
- working tax credit if you work more than 16 hours a week and your disability made it more difficult for you to get a job – contact HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) for more information
- Social Fund grants and loans to help with one-off expenses if you get certain benefits.

If you are caring for someone who is disabled you may be able to get carer's allowance and income support.

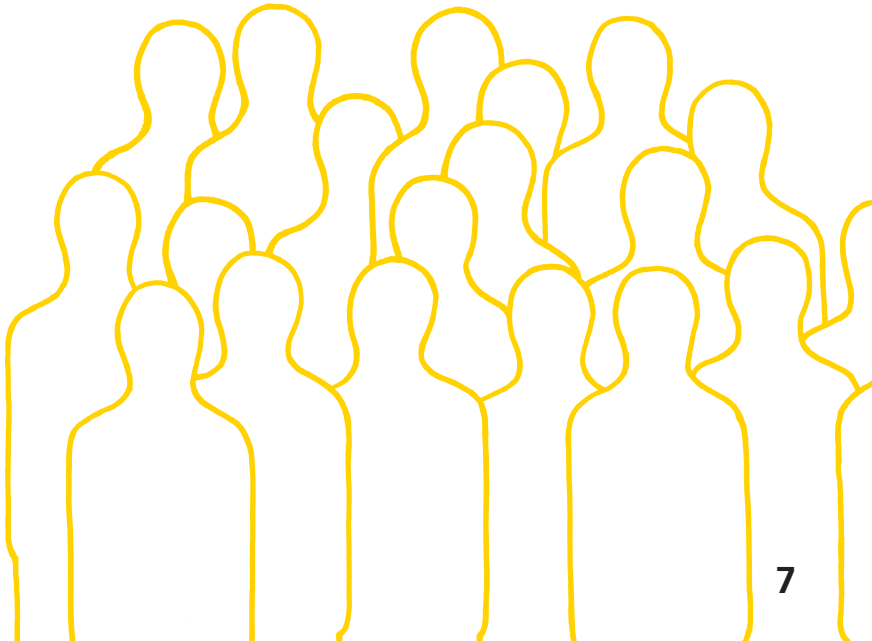
For help claiming or advice if you are turned down, find your nearest bureau at [www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk)

## 6 If you are pregnant or have a child

If you are pregnant or have a child, you may be able to get:

- income support, Sure Start maternity grant, Social Fund loans and grants to help with one-off expenses – check with Jobcentre Plus
- child benefit, child tax credit – check with HMRC
- housing benefit from your local council
- Healthy Start vouchers – phone ☎ 0845 607 6823 or visit [www.healthystart.nhs.uk](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk)
- help with childcare costs if you are studying or training – ask your college
- child maintenance from an absent parent. For help, phone the Child Support Agency: ☎ 0845 713 3133 or visit [www.csa.gov.uk](http://www.csa.gov.uk)

For help claiming or advice if you are turned down, find your nearest bureau at [www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk)



## 7 If you can't live at home

It is the best interests of most 16 and 17 year olds to live at home. However, if you have been asked to leave or your safety is at risk, your local council may have a duty to re-house you if you have nowhere to stay.

You may get help from social services rather than the council's housing department. This can include accommodation, financial support, help to find training or a job, and support with any problems you have.

If you are re-housed without the support of social services, get advice to see if you can claim:

- housing benefit – the amount may be restricted to the cost of a single room in a shared house, so it may not cover all your rent
- a discretionary housing payment if your full rent isn't covered by housing benefit and you are struggling to manage
- jobseeker's allowance if you can't live with your family and would otherwise suffer hardship. Contact your local Jobcentre Plus office.

The law about housing 16 and 17 year olds can be complicated, if you are unsure what to do, get advice from your local CAB.

In an emergency, contact Shelter on ☎ 0808 800 4444 in England, ☎ 0845 075 5005 in Wales or visit [www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk)

## 8 Looking after your money

Whatever you do, you will need a bank account to help you manage your money. When choosing:

- shop around – don't just go for the account offering a free gift or cash back
- think about what services you need – do you need a branch nearby, access to cash machines, telephone or online banking?

To keep on top of your finances:

- know where your money is going
- work out a budget and stick to it – try out the budgeting tool on Adviceguide
- try to put aside some money for unexpected expenses
- If you start getting into debt, don't ignore it – get advice.

For free, impartial information on money and financial matters, visit [www.whataboutmoney.info](http://www.whataboutmoney.info)

## 9 Get help

Adviceguide has lots more information on young people's rights including factsheets on benefits you can claim – see [www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk)

You can also find your nearest CAB if you need further help or advice.

See useful contacts for other organisations that may be able to help.

## 10 Useful contacts (Check call rates before dialling)

**www.thesite.org** support and guidance for young people on a wide range of topics. Includes podcasts, video and your questions answered

**www.lifetracks.com** advice and information to help you make decisions about work, study or training

**www.whataboutmoney.info** free impartial information on money and financial matters for 16–24 year olds. Includes voxpops and interactive tools

**www.moneymadeclear.org.uk** interactive tools for budgeting and borrowing, information and leaflets

**Careers Wales** [www.careerswales.com](http://www.careerswales.com)  
bilingual careers information and advice  
Helpline: ☎ 0800 100 900

**Community Legal Advice** [www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk](http://www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk)  
free legal help, adviser search in England and Wales  
Helpline: ☎ 0845 345 4345  
Minicom: 0845 609 6677 (if you have difficulty hearing or speaking clearly)

**Department for Work and Pensions** [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)  
Disability benefit enquiry line: ☎ 0800 882 200 (DLA)  
Textphone: 0800 243 355 (if you have difficulty hearing or speaking clearly)  
Carer's allowance unit: ☎ 0845 608 4321  
Textphone: 0845 604 5312 (if you have difficulty hearing or speaking clearly)

**Directgov** [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)  
options after 16, work and careers, money to learn, online benefits adviser, how to claim benefits

**HM Revenue and Customs** [www.hmrc.gov.uk](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk)

income tax, national insurance, tax credits, child benefit

Tax credits helpline: ☎ 0845 300 3900

Textphone: 0845 300 3909 (if you have difficulty hearing or speaking clearly)

Child benefit helpline: ☎ 0845 302 1444

Textphone: 0845 302 1474 (if you have difficulty hearing or speaking clearly)

**Jobcentre Plus** [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

benefits for people of working age. For Social Fund payments, contact your local Jobcentre Plus office

Benefit claim line: ☎ 0800 055 6688 (IS, JSA, ESA)

Textphone: 0800 023 4888 (if you have difficulty hearing or speaking clearly)

**National Debtline** [www.nationaldebtline.co.uk](http://www.nationaldebtline.co.uk)

free independent debt advice line: ☎ 0808 808 4000

**Prince's Trust** [www.princes-trust.org.uk](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk)

practical and financial support for young people including help to start a business. Helpline: ☎ 0800 842842

**Shell LiveWIRE** <http://shell-livewire.org> (no www)

online community for young entrepreneurs starting or running their own business

**Shelter** [www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk)

housing advice for young people

Helpline: ☎ 0808 800 4444 (England) ☎ 0845 075 5005 (Wales)

**v** <http://vinspired.com> (no www)

connects young people with volunteering opportunities in England.

# Our principles

The Citizens Advice service provides free, independent, impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. We value diversity, promote equality and challenge discrimination.

# Our aims

- Provide the advice people need for the problems they face.
- Improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives.

## **Produced by Citizens Advice**

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[www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk)

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

Bilingual version (Welsh/English) also available

Further copies of this leaflet are available to order from:  
[www.citizensadvice.org.uk/publicity\\_materials\\_order](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/publicity_materials_order)

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