



Department for the  
**Economy**  
[www.economy-ni.gov.uk](http://www.economy-ni.gov.uk)

**SKILLS**  
TO SUCCEED

# A Guide for Parents

How to help your child  
with their future career plans



The aim of the  
Careers Service is:

**“To deliver an effective,  
impartial and professional  
careers service to help  
people realise their career  
aspirations, enabling them  
to contribute positively  
to their community and  
to the Northern Ireland  
economy.”**





**The purpose of this guide is to assist parents or guardians with their child’s future career plans and to provide information on the following:**

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# What careers are likely to be in demand in the future?

**In an ever changing economy, young people today face a number of challenges and decisions about their future. It is more important than ever that young people make their career choices wisely.**

It is very difficult to accurately forecast the job requirements of the future; which sector these will be based in and what qualifications will be required. However, it is accepted that the essential skills needed for the workplace are a good standard of literacy, numeracy, basic computer skills and effective communication skills. Young people need to look for ways to develop these skills through their studies and school based activities, sport, voluntary work and work experience.

While it is important for young people to study subjects that they enjoy, it is also advisable to consider the career opportunities which lie ahead.

The Northern Ireland Executive is working to rebuild and rebalance the economy. The following sectors have been identified as key to future economic success:

## **Rebalancing:**

- **Business Services**  
(specifically Information and Communication Technology – ICT)
- **Financial Services**
- **Manufacturing**  
(including food and drink processing, advanced manufacturing and advanced engineering)

## **Emerging:**

- **Life and Health sciences**
- **Creative Industries**

## Rebuilding:

- **Retail**
- **Hotels and Catering**  
(in support of tourism)

These sectors are expected to offer increasing opportunities for high quality employment. Many of these sectors require people with qualifications in science, technology, engineering or mathematics, often known as STEM subjects. Of course these are not the only career options available. The important issue is that young people research information about future employment opportunities and trends. They should then consider these against their own abilities and aspirations.

Having access to up-to-date and accurate information is a critical part of career planning.

For more information or to find details of your local careers office go to [www.nidirect.gov.uk/careers](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/careers)

What careers are likely to be in demand in the future?



# How can I help my child with their future career plans?

**As a parent there is a lot you can do to support your child and help them find the career that is right for them.**

## GENERAL TIPS

Encourage them to:

- Talk about their career ideas and future plans
- Research a wide range of careers
- Think about their Year 10, 12, 13 and post 14 options in good time and be aware of application deadlines
- Prepare for and make the most of their careers guidance interview with the careers adviser in school
- Find out about entry requirements for school, college, university courses or jobs they are interested in
- Develop their skills through school activities and other interests. This will help them when they are applying for courses or jobs
- Find out about the world of work through work experience opportunities
- Use the Careers Service website [www.nidirect.gov.uk/careers](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/careers) where they can:
  - Match their interests and abilities to jobs
  - Use the A-Z of jobs database for information on over 1500 jobs
- Contact a careers adviser if they require further help with their career decision making - see page 16 for contact details

In addition you can attend careers events at their school and talk to subject teachers at parents' evenings.

The support of parents is important when key decisions such as subject choices are being made. You may not always think it, but you greatly influence their decision making. However, keep in mind that your child's choices and decisions should be based on their aspirations, abilities and future employment opportunities. It should not just be what you as a parent may want for them.



# Subject Choices at Year 10

**During Year 10 your child will be asked to make a choice about some of the subjects or courses they will study in Years 11 and 12.**

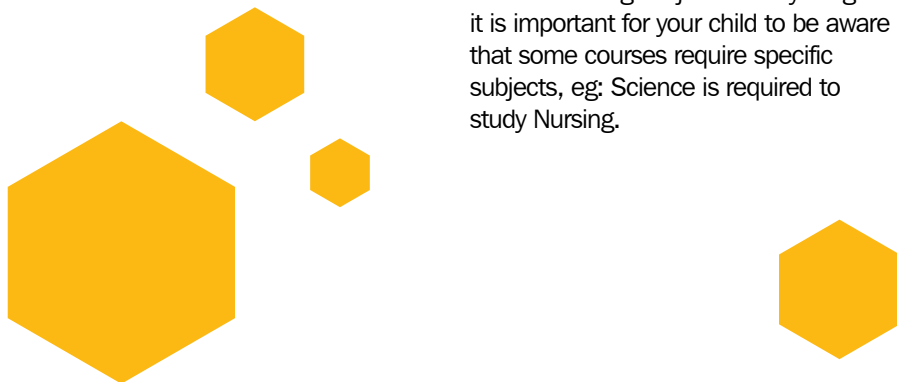
Schools must provide pupils with access to at least 24 courses; 1/3 of which must be applied; 1/3 general and 1/3 optional.

For more information on the areas of learning at Key Stage 4 (Years 11 & 12) check [www.ccea.org.uk/curriculum/key\\_stage\\_4/areas\\_learning](http://www.ccea.org.uk/curriculum/key_stage_4/areas_learning).

The process of choosing subjects will be organised by the school your child is attending and varies from school to school. With the introduction of the post 14 curriculum (the Entitlement Framework - refer to page 30) pupils have access to a much broader, more balanced range and choice of applied and general courses.

A general qualification is one where knowledge, understanding and skills are developed within a subject, e.g. GCSE Maths. An applied qualification is one where knowledge, understanding and skills can be developed through practical demonstration, eg: GCSE Construction.

When choosing subjects at Key Stage 4 it is important for your child to be aware that some courses require specific subjects, eg: Science is required to study Nursing.





In addition to the help from the careers teachers in schools, careers advisers provide careers information, advice and guidance to pupils. This is delivered through class talks, group work and individual interviews where appropriate.

To help your child decide what to study in Key Stage 4, they should start exploring what sort of person they are.

Get them to think about:

- Subjects they enjoy
- Subjects they are good at or find challenging
- Subjects that can link into career areas
- How they like to learn, (through coursework, exams or a combination of both)
- Hobbies/interests they enjoy
- The type of job they would like to do
- Researching jobs through the Careers Service website
- Talking to the careers adviser
- Talking to their subject teachers



# Understanding the different options after Year 12 and 13

**Year 12 marks the end of compulsory education for your child and they will have to make a decision on what they want to do next. Making a choice about the future isn't easy as there are lots of options to choose from.**

Options include:

- Full-time Education in their existing school or transferring to another school
- Further Education college
- On the job training through the Training for Success programme
- Employment opportunities
- Apprenticeships
- Self employment

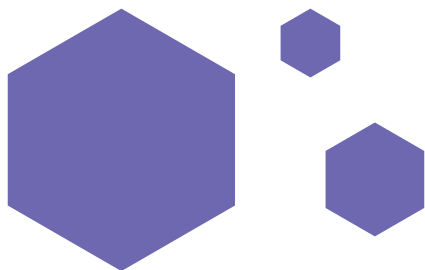
## Full-time education in their existing school or transferring to another school

Before thinking about embarking on further study discuss the following with your child:

- Do they enjoy studying?
- Do they need to study further for the type of job they want to do?

Some young people prefer to stay at school. Others may be keen to have a change and study somewhere new. There may be competition for some popular subjects and/or courses so encourage your child to apply in plenty of time.

If your child decides to continue in full-time education within school they can choose either to stay in their current school or move to a different school for Years 13 and 14. Post Year 12 pupils have a greater choice of a broader range of subjects to meet their needs, interests and aptitudes. Ensure that you find out about the range of subjects/courses available within your Area Learning Community.



### Further Education college

If your child decides to continue their studies at a further education college encourage them to attend open days to find out the subjects/courses on offer and the qualifications required. There may be competition for some popular subjects and/or courses so encourage your child to apply in plenty of time.

Northern Ireland currently has six Regional Colleges and an Agricultural College:

- Belfast Metropolitan College
- Northern Regional College
- North West Regional College
- South Eastern Regional College
- Southern Regional College
- South West College
- Cafre (College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise)

Further information can be found at:

- [www.collegesni.ac.uk](http://www.collegesni.ac.uk)  
Tel: 02890 682296
- [www.cafre.ac.uk](http://www.cafre.ac.uk)  
Tel: 0800 028 4291

### On the job training through the Training for Success programme

Training for Success is designed specifically for young people aged 16 to 17 years (up to 24 years for those requiring additional support) and provides training to give them the vocational qualifications, skills and experience they need to get a job. Participants receive a non-means tested training allowance. Training is delivered across a wide range of suppliers and colleges throughout Northern Ireland. This project is part financed by the European Social Fund.

For more information on Training for Success visit [www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/training-success](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/training-success)



### **Training Opportunities through the Northern Ireland European Social Fund (NIESF) Programme 2014-2020**

The programme funds project activity to enhance and extend employment opportunities, in particular, for those groups at a disadvantage in the labour market who are unemployed, including long term unemployed, or economically inactive.

There will also be a focus on supporting young people aged 16-24 who are not in employment, education or training and on people with a disability.

For details of projects funded by this programme, please speak with your local careers adviser.

### **Employment opportunities and Apprenticeships**

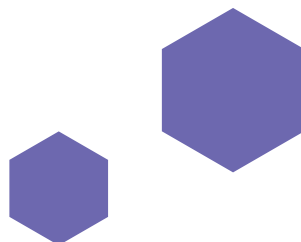
Your child may be keen to get out into the world of work when they leave school but remember that skills, experience and qualifications are important in a very competitive job market.

If your child is considering employment it is important to start looking before they leave school. They may be tempted to take a job where no training is provided – particularly if the wage is quite good, but training and qualifications are better for long term success. It is therefore better to look for a job that includes training opportunities.

### **Where to look for job vacancies**

- Online at [www.jobcentreonline.com](http://www.jobcentreonline.com)
- Newspapers
- Your local Jobs and Benefits office/JobCentre
- Recruitment agencies
- Careers and job fairs

For more information on finding a job go to [www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/finding-job](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/finding-job)



## Apprenticeships

If your child has a good idea of where they want to go with their career and like the idea of earning while they learn, an apprenticeship could be for them.

ApprenticeshipsNI is currently the main apprenticeship programme and is part financed by the European Social Fund. It offers training across a wide range of occupational areas to employees who earn a wage while working with experienced staff to learn and develop their skills. An apprentice also receives 'off-the-job' training to work towards achieving a competence based qualification, a knowledge based qualification and Essential Skills.

For more information on apprenticeship courses visit [www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/apprenticeships](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/apprenticeships) or speak with your local careers adviser.

Some employers, mainly large firms, offer their own apprenticeships such as British Telecom (BT), NI Water, Pricewaterhouse Cooper etc. Vacancies are advertised in local press, radio and websites.

## Self Employment

Your child may have a good idea for a business and could be thinking of self employment. Although this is not a common option for the majority of young people, working for themselves may be the right choice for them particularly if they have the right financial backing. Even if this is the case it is a big step and they will need good advice.

The following organisations provide support to help young people turn their business idea into a reality:

- Regional Start Initiative  
[www.goforitni.com](http://www.goforitni.com)
- Prince's Trust Enterprise programme  
[www.princes-trust.org.uk](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk)
- Advantage NI  
[www.advantage-ni.com](http://www.advantage-ni.com)
- NI Business Info  
[www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk](http://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk)



# Understanding the different options after Year 14

**After Year 14 there are lots of different routes and options for your child to move forward in their personal career journey. From apprenticeships to higher education, employment and gap years there are many opportunities to choose from.**

The choice your child makes will be affected by many things like their financial situation, interests, attitude to study, qualifications, the job market etc.

Options include:

- Higher Education (HE) – full-time/ part-time courses at university or a further education college
- Further Education (FE) – full-time/ part-time (refer to page 9)
- Employment opportunities and Apprenticeships (refer to page 10)
- Self employment (refer to page 11)
- Gap year
- Volunteering

## Higher Education at University

If your child is thinking about going to university it is important to understand the application process and research fully the range of universities, courses and methods of study/assessment. Time and money could be another consideration as to whether full-time or part-time study would best suit their circumstances.

For more information check out:

- [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) – Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS)

UCAS is the central organisation through which applications are processed for entry to higher education in the UK.

- [www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie) – Central Applications Office (CAO)

CAO is the central organisation through which applications are processed for entry to higher education institutions in the Republic of Ireland.

- [www.open.ac.uk](http://www.open.ac.uk) – Open University

The Open University's unique, world-leading style of distance learning enables you to study in your own time, at home or wherever you choose – reading, watching or listening to material supplied, doing course activities and assignments with regular support from your tutor.

- [unistats.direct.gov.uk](http://unistats.direct.gov.uk) - Unistats

Unistats is the official website for comparing data and information on university and college courses from across the UK.

### Higher Education at a Further Education College

Further education colleges accept direct applicants to higher education courses.

For more information check out:

- Belfast Metropolitan College  
[www.belfastmet.ac.uk](http://www.belfastmet.ac.uk)
- North West Regional College  
[www.nwrc.ac.uk](http://www.nwrc.ac.uk)
- Northern Regional College  
[www.nrc.ac.uk](http://www.nrc.ac.uk)
- Southern Regional College  
[www.src.ac.uk](http://www.src.ac.uk)

- South West College  
[www.swc.ac.uk](http://www.swc.ac.uk)

- South Eastern Regional College  
[www.serc.ac.uk](http://www.serc.ac.uk)

- College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise  
[www.cafre.ac.uk](http://www.cafre.ac.uk)

### Gap year

Your child may choose to take a gap year after they leave school and before they start university or college. This year out can be a great opportunity for them to have a break from their studies, earn some money, gain valuable experience, meet new people, increase independence and learn new skills. Universities, colleges and future employers support gap years as they see the value when students grow in confidence, have a more mature outlook and greater focus when they return to their studies.

A gap year does take planning and for this reason it is important they have a goal, rather than just taking a year off without any real direction or purpose.

For more information check - [www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/planning-gap-year](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/planning-gap-year)

# How can I help my child make the most of work experience?

**Most schools provide an opportunity for work experience. This is a good chance for your child to find out about the world of work and for them to understand the skills that are needed in the workplace.**

It can also be an opportunity for them to find out more about a career that interests them. For some courses or jobs relevant work experience is essential.

Making the most of work experience:

- Encourage your child to plan ahead and think carefully about where they would like to go
- They should keep a diary or record of what they did on work experience - this may be useful later when they are applying for courses or jobs
- Even if they don't get their chosen placement they can still learn a lot about the world of work and the type of skills that employers look for
- Use the long summer break to explore what type of work friends and family do
- Parents can also talk to schools to find out when work experience is due to take place. For more information go to [www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/work-experience-your-child](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/work-experience-your-child)



## Other activities to help your child find out about the world of work

Work experience isn't the only opportunity for your child to find out about the world of work. Other activities include:

- Attending careers fairs where students get the chance to talk to employers about work and training
- Talking with people who are doing the job they are interested in
- Visiting local companies
- Visiting your local Jobs and Benefits office/JobCentre
- Searching online at:  
[www.jobcentreonline.com](http://www.jobcentreonline.com)



# What is the Careers Service and what does it do?

**The Careers Service is an integral part of the Department for the Economy and provides a free and impartial careers information, advice and guidance service to clients of all ages and abilities throughout Northern Ireland.**

This service is available to everyone whether they are employed, unemployed, in training or in education, including students in schools and further and higher education. The Careers Service employs careers advisers who are professionally qualified and are based throughout Northern Ireland in Careers Resource Centres, JobCentres and Jobs and Benefits offices.

To contact the Careers Service:

- Log on to [www.nidirect.gov.uk/chat-with-a-careers-adviser](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/chat-with-a-careers-adviser)
- Phone **0300 200 7820** to speak with an adviser; or
- Go to [www.nidirect.gov.uk/careers](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/careers) for details of your nearest office.

The Careers Service assists young people and adults who are:

- Unsure what career might suit them
- Unsure of how to plan their next step
- Looking for information on a particular career
- Looking for education/training/employment opportunities
- Thinking of starting their own business
- Ready for a new career challenge

The Careers Service provides:

### Information

- on up-to-date and accurate employment trends and future job opportunities
- on further and higher education, training and post graduate opportunities
- on working overseas and vacation/ voluntary work

### Advice

- on career options
- on CVs, interviews and application forms

### Guidance

- individual careers guidance interviews to help develop personalised career plans



# How can the Careers Service help my child?

**Whether your child is at school, college, in training, employed or looking for work the Careers Service can help with their career decision making and planning.**

## Careers Adviser in school

While the Careers Service is separate and independent from schools, careers advisers work with post primary schools in Northern Ireland. The services they provide include:

- Individual career guidance interviews to help with choices from Year 10 onwards
- Class and group talks on careers options/topics
- Information about Further/Higher Education and Training Provision
- Advice on how to find out about different careers and the skills and qualifications needed
- Information about current and future job opportunities
- Help with CVs, application forms and interview techniques

Careers guidance helps young people to:

- Know more about their career options
- Become aware of the skills required to achieve their career goal and be better prepared to achieve them
- Feel more confident about making decisions regarding their career
- Understand the importance of considering current and future job opportunities in career decision making

Every Year 12 pupil is offered at least one face to face guidance interview with a professionally qualified careers adviser. This is usually organised through your child's school but you can also arrange an appointment at any one of our offices.

Further information is also available online [www.nidirect.gov.uk/careers](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/careers)

### Careers Teacher in school

Careers teachers play an important role by providing careers education. They help young people to develop self awareness, decision making skills and other appropriate skills.

Post primary schools are required to deliver a careers education programme which has six core components:

- Timetabled lessons
- Cross-curricular provision
- Individual careers guidance
- Careers information
- Experiences of work
- Personal career planning



# What is a Careers Guidance interview?

**A careers guidance interview is an impartial one-to-one meeting with a professionally qualified careers adviser. A guidance interview is available to all clients.**

In school the guidance interview normally occurs during the course of Year 12 (or Year 10/11 if appropriate). Before your child starts making career decisions they need to know about themselves, their career choices and other opportunities available to them. Encourage your child to find out the name of the careers adviser for their school. You can also contact the school to find out when a careers adviser will be talking to your child. If your child would like you to attend the interview, this can be arranged with the school and the careers adviser.

The careers guidance interview can increase your child's awareness, enhance decision making skills and maximize their potential to achieve their personal career goals.

## What can your child do to prepare for their interview?

Think about:

- Their skills and aptitudes e.g. good communicator, team player
- Their personal qualities e.g. friendly, outgoing, well organised
- Their likes and dislikes in terms of jobs, subjects and interests
- Their career ideas and plans
- Barriers they may have e.g. personal, financial
- Qualifications or experience they need for their chosen career

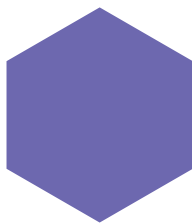
### What will be discussed?

The careers adviser will help your child explore their interests, how they are getting on in school, likes and dislikes, family influences, barriers, work experience and any careers ideas they may already have. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions. If your child is worried that they have no firm career ideas the careers adviser has a range of resources to help generate career ideas.

A careers action plan will be drawn up to help your child move towards a decision and will address the following issues:

- What stage your child is currently at
- Where your child wants to be
- How will they get there
- Who can help them achieve their goal
- Next steps

It is therefore important to ask your child about their action plan and encourage them to talk it through with you as it will help you see the type of support you will need to offer.



# My child has a learning and/or physical disability – how can the Careers Service help?

**The Careers Service aims to provide an impartial and professional careers service to clients of all ages and abilities.**

Careers advisers are trained to tailor support to meet individual needs and abilities. If your child has a learning and/or physical disability the Careers Service can help you and your child plan for the future by outlining appropriate options for education, training and employment and reviewing progress regularly.

The careers adviser will provide you and your child with the information and guidance needed to help with the decision making process.

## **If your child has a Statement of Special Educational Need (SEN)**

On or just after your child's 14th birthday your child's school will hold a transition plan meeting. This meeting is the first step to planning and preparing for your child's future and aims to ensure that they make a successful transition to adult life/learning and work.

After this first transition plan meeting your child's Statement of Special Educational Need is reviewed on an annual basis, drawing together information from a range of individuals within and beyond school to discuss and review the progress of your child.



To help you and your child make the best choices for these important years ahead one of our professional careers advisers will be invited to participate in this process.

For further advice you can contact the Careers Service through the Special Education Needs Co-ordinator and/or careers teacher at the school and your local careers office.

### After school

The Careers Service will continue to offer career services after your child has left school. You and your child can arrange to meet a careers adviser by contacting **0300 200 7820**.



# How can my child contact a careers adviser when they have left school?

## Accessing our services

In addition to the services offered to young people in school, careers advisers are available all year round. You can get in touch in a number of ways:

- By telephone: **0300 200 7820**
- By visiting one of our local offices - go to **[www.nidirect.gov.uk/careers](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/careers)** for details of your nearest office.
- Through the website: **[www.nidirect.gov.uk/careers](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/careers)**

The Careers Service recognises that parents are a key influence on the career decisions of young people. The support that you provide your child at all stages of their education will be invaluable to their eventual academic achievements and their long term outcomes.

We welcome contact from parents and can provide information and advice to help you support your child with their career decisions.

## Would careers advice help you?

The Careers Service offers careers information, advice and guidance to people of all ages. So if you feel you need help with your own career plans contact one of our professionally qualified careers advisers.



# What financial support is available when my child leaves school?

## Staying on at school or going to FE College

Students age 16 to 19 and in full-time education can apply for a means-tested Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). Further information is available at [www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/money-learn-education-maintenance-allowance-introduction](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/money-learn-education-maintenance-allowance-introduction) or contact EMA Customer Services Team on **0300 200 7089**.

## Further Education Awards

Further Education awards may be available to students who need assistance with buying books, transport and child care costs. Check with your local college or Education Authority for more information on what is available.

## Help with training

Participants on the Training for Success programme will automatically qualify for a non means tested allowance.

Further information is available at: [www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/training-success](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/training-success)

### Going to university (Higher Education)

Getting a degree can be costly but support is available for fees and living expenses. Further information is available at:

- [www.studentfinancenetwork.co.uk](http://www.studentfinancenetwork.co.uk)
- [www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/higher-education/student-finance](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/higher-education/student-finance)

### Other sources of funding

These include grants, bursaries, hardship loans and sponsorships. Information on these is available from individual universities and colleges.



# Checklist

## **Helping your child with their future career plans**

It is important to be aware of the influence you have on your child's career planning and to make that influence as positive as possible. The most valuable things parents can do to help their child with career planning is keep informed, listen, don't judge, be open to ideas and encourage them to explore all their options.

Here are ten ways you can help prepare and support your child with their future career plans:

- Encourage your child to prepare for and make the most of their careers guidance interview with the Careers Service
- Encourage them to participate in appropriate out of school activities
- Support your child to explore a range of careers
- Help your child plan their career once they have some ideas
- Encourage them to check university websites for the most up to date information and be aware of application deadlines

- Be aware that your child may change their career interest as they become aware of more options
- Encourage them to find out about the world of work
- Encourage your child to talk with adult relatives and friends about the kind of work that they do
- Help and encourage them to attend careers events
- Remember that career choice is a personal decision. Do not try to steer your child to a particular career because you think it is something you might like



# Did you know?

## **ALC – Area Learning Community**

is a partnership of schools who are working together to increase and develop curricular provision.

## **Apprenticeships**

The Northern Ireland Apprenticeships programme offers training to 16 year olds and over, who are employed across a wide range of jobs. It provides recognised training and qualifications to new and existing employees to help meet the demands of local employers.

## **CAO – Central Applications Office**

is the central organisation through which applications are processed for entry to higher education institutions in the Republic of Ireland.

## **EF – Entitlement Framework**

is a DE policy to encourage schools to enable pupils at Key Stage 4 and post 16 to access a broader range of courses. The emphasis is on providing access to applied (vocational) courses.

## **EMA – Educational Maintenance Allowance**

is means tested for 16 to 19 year olds who want to continue their education after school leaving age.

If your child goes into training through one of the components of Training for Success they will automatically qualify for a non means tested EMA.



**EA - The Education Authority**

is responsible for ensuring that efficient and effective primary and secondary education services are available to meet the needs of children and young people, and support for the provision of efficient and effective youth services.

**FE – Further Education**

is education which goes beyond what has been achieved in compulsory education, but which is not at degree level (Higher Education). Typically, further education includes A levels, AS levels and vocational qualifications.

**HE – Higher Education**

is an advanced level of study normally after you turn 18 years old. Higher education courses are usually studied at universities, university colleges and higher education institutions.

**JBO – Jobs and Benefits office**

provides services and programmes to help jobseekers, particularly people who are unemployed, individuals with disabilities and others who may need extra help in finding work.

**NEET – Not in Education, Employment or Training**

is an acronym for people currently “not in education, employment or training”.

**OU - Open University**

is a unique style of distance learning which enables individuals to learn in their own time, at home or wherever they choose – reading, watching or listening to material supplied, doing course activities and assignments with regular support from tutors.

**STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics**

is an acronym of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

**TfS – Training for Success**

provides a guaranteed training placement for young people aged 16 – 17 (up to 24 years for those requiring additional support) and provides training to give them the vocational qualifications, skills and experience they need to get a job.

### **UCAS – Universities and Colleges Admission Service**

is the central organisation through which applications are processed for entry to higher education in the UK.

### **Unistats**

is the official website for comparing data and information on university and college courses from across the UK.

### **Acknowledgements**

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**Produced by:**  
Department for the Economy  
Careers Service  
5th floor, Adelaide House  
39-49 Adelaide Street  
Belfast  
BT2 8FD

Tel: 0300 200 7820

Website: [www.nidirect.gov.uk/careers](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/careers)

Webchat: [www.nidirect.gov.uk/chat-with-a-careers-adviser](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/chat-with-a-careers-adviser)



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