



My Choices



**YOUR GUIDE TO  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION**

# WHAT'S YOUR NEXT MOVE?

QUALIFICATION	DESCRIPTION	LENGTH OF TIME	ASSESSMENT	LEVEL OF STUDY	DOES IT AWARD UCAS POINTS?	ENTRY REQUIREMENTS	WORK EXPERIENCE	WHAT DOES IT LEAD TO?
<b>APPRENTICESHIPS</b>	A real job with training and a salary	1 Year minimum	Apprenticeship dependent (including demonstrations, presentations and/or exams)	2/3 With the possibility to progress to higher Apprenticeships up to level 7	No	- Employer dependent - Age 16+ - Evidence of interest and ability to complete	Yes. (Paid job with at least 20% off the job training)	- Higher level or degree Apprenticeship - University / College - Work
<b>A LEVELS</b>	An academic qualification, similar in style to GCSEs that prepares you for further study	2 years	Mostly exams at the end of the course	3	Yes	For individual schools and colleges to decide (commonly 5 GCSEs at grades 4 and above)	No	- Apprenticeship - University / College - Work
<b>T LEVELS</b>	A technical study programme, equivalent to 3 A levels, with an industry placement that makes up 20% of the course. T levels are designed to give you the skills that employers need	2 years	Exams, projects and practical assignments	3	Yes	Set by each school / college	Yes (80% classroom, 20% work)	- Apprenticeship - University / College - Work
<b>TECHNICAL / VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS</b>	Qualifications which teach you how to do tasks specifically related to the industry and role you want to be in	Course dependent	Course dependent (Coursework & exams)	1+	Some (course & awarding organisation dependent)	Course dependent	Course dependent	- Apprenticeship - College - Work
<b>APPLIED QUALIFICATIONS</b>	Qualifications that prepare you for further study by combining academic learning with practical skills to give you a broad overview of working in a sector	Course dependent	Course dependent (coursework & exams)	3	Yes	Set by each school / college	Course dependent	- Apprenticeship - University / College - Work
<b>TRAINEESHIPS</b>	A work focused study programme that prepares you for an Apprenticeship or work	6 weeks - 6 months	A formal job or exit interview with written feedback. Coursework and exams are course dependent	N/A	No	Have little to no work experience and qualified below Level 3	Yes	- Apprenticeship - Work

Levels are designed to indicate the complexity of qualifications and Apprenticeships, allowing people to draw comparisons and understand where they sit in relation to the other options which are available. There are 8 levels plus entry level, with the higher levels offering the highest difficulty.

Find out more about the different levels at [gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean](https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean)  
Visit [nationalcareers.service.gov.uk](https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk) for information about careers, training and work.

# INTRODUCTION

The end of Year 11 and Year 13, the build-up and immediate response to results days can be a challenging time.

Faced with sometimes difficult or scary decisions about next steps? You may like some help with your thinking, particularly if your plans are uncertain or may need to change. This guide is designed to support you after results days, with useful hints and tips, information about support in your local area and links to resources or videos to help you make the right decision for you.

Working with partners from across the Black Country we will be hosting a series of on-line events and webinars to help prepare you for your next steps, also keep an eye on our webpages for useful links from local Colleges and Training Providers [blackcountryskillsfactory.co.uk/schools/my-choice-support-post-16-18](http://blackcountryskillsfactory.co.uk/schools/my-choice-support-post-16-18).

If you are in need of individualised support visit your local area pages within the guide for information about how to contact your local Connexions or National Careers Service, still not sure? Head to our website and complete the simple on-line request form - we will get back to you [blackcountryskillsfactory.co.uk/schools/individual-support-and-guidance](http://blackcountryskillsfactory.co.uk/schools/individual-support-and-guidance).

Consider what is most useful to you right now: whether that is immediate sources of support to help you make the best choice for your immediate future or something to consider helping you make longer term decisions.

Look at the section headings and on our website and consider the webinars and events that are of most interest to you. Remember, don't limit yourself. Take the time to explore something you perhaps have not considered before. You never know, there could be a route into your ideal career that you have never considered before...

**From all of us at  
the Black Country  
Skills Team**



# FINANCE

There are other means of financial support for young people staying in approved education or training.

## Child Benefit

Your parents are usually only entitled to Child Benefit for you up to the Monday following 31 August after your 16th birthday, unless you stay on in full-time non-advanced education or approved training. They can continue to be entitled to Child Benefit for you at ages 16, 17, 18 or 19 if you are a 'qualifying young person'.

Full-time non-advanced education will usually be in a school or college but may also include education provided at home, if you were receiving this education before your 16th birthday and the home schooling had previously been approved.

Full-time, in this situation, means an average of more than 12 hours a week of supervised study during term time, not counting breaks for meals and homework.

This would also include a study programme that is for at least 540 hours in any 12-month period. It could also include a traineeship which could last between 6 weeks and 6 months.

## Travel

If you are aged 16-18 you can get reduced travel to your place of study and/or your Apprenticeship or Traineeship: [networkwestmidlands.com/tickets-and-passes/child/16-18-photocard](http://networkwestmidlands.com/tickets-and-passes/child/16-18-photocard)

## Other Benefits

Depending on your circumstances you may be entitled to additional benefits and support such as help with equipment costs, ask at your college, training provider or school appointment when you are enrolling.

Full details of financial support can be found on

[gov.uk](http://gov.uk)

# SIXTH FORM

The Sixth Form represents the final years of secondary school, for pupils aged 16 to 18. The Sixth Form provides the academic preparation needed for university, transitioning pupils from GCSEs to an undergraduate degree.

Sixth Forms are smaller and tend to offer an individualised approach to your learning. In most cases the standard of teaching will be high in academic subjects especially. Also, a disabled student will already know how their school accommodates disabled pupils.

Entry requirements for school and college sixth forms vary – ranging from four to five GCSEs at level 4 or 5, with perhaps GCSE level 6s in the subjects you want to study, through to at least six GCSEs at level 7 or above for the most selective colleges.

Most Schools Sixth Forms and Sixth Form colleges will offer a wide range of A levels and vocational courses. In addition to offering A-level courses, many sixth form colleges offer BTEC, T Levels, diplomas and other vocational courses too.

Most colleges and sixth forms within schools will start to open their application process in the autumn term of Year 11. This is the time when you should be visiting colleges and schools, going to open days, talking to former and current students and finding out more about the studying options available.

Check with your school (or the sixth form you want to attend if you're changing schools to study them) and ensure you know exactly what you need to get. You can take a maximum of five A Levels, although most universities are happy to offer you a place based on three subjects.

## TOP TIPS

- Visit open days/ evenings
- Do research into what else the school offers
- Book another tour during the day
- Don't listen to your friends
- Listen to your gut feeling



# APPRENTICESHIPS

Apprenticeships are work-based training programmes. Apprentices are employed by a business, whilst working towards relevant qualifications at the same time.

An Apprenticeship is a real job where you learn, gain experience and get paid.

You're an employee with a contract of employment and holiday leave. By the end of an Apprenticeship, you'll have the right skills and knowledge needed for your chosen career.

It can take between one and six years to complete an Apprenticeship depending on which one you choose, what level it is and your previous experience. It's funded from contributions made by the government and your employer.

### **To become an Apprentice, you must:**

- be 16 or over
- not already be in full time education
- spend at least 50% of your working hours in England

### **As an Apprentice you'll:**

- learn and gain hands-on experience in a real job
- get paid
- get training for a specific job role
- be on a career path with lots of future potential

You can find an Apprenticeship whether you're starting your career, want a change or are returning to work.

THE PRACTICAL BIT  
**SKILLS**  
+  
**KNOWLEDGE**  
THE THEORY BIT

# DUDLEY

## COLLEGES

Dudley Colleges recruit learners onto all levels of courses in lots of sectors, preparing you for the world of work. The Courses have good progression routes and pathways which lead to employment, Apprenticeships or University.

You can visit their websites to access information about their courses and opportunities such as Traineeships and Apprenticeships.

### Dudley College of Technology

For more information contact:  
T: 01384 363000  
W: dudleycol.ac.uk

### Halesowen College

For more information contact:  
T: 0121 602 7777  
W: halesowen.ac.uk

### King Edward VI College

For more information contact:  
T: 01384 398100  
W: kedst.ac.uk

## CONNEXIONS DUDLEY

Connexions Dudley works across mainstream schools, special schools, colleges, training providers as well as within the community supporting young people aged 13 – 19 (up to aged 25 for those with learning difficulties and or disabilities) with careers advice guidance, information and support to help prepare them for Post 16 options and beyond.

Information is provided on the Connexions website which serves as a tool and resource base for all young people, parents and professionals.

Throughout the year we will be partnering with schools, colleges, employer and training providers to offer a range of activities through the year for those who will be leaving school.

Additionally there will be a series of activities for those who are above school leaving age and need help to explore further options. All of these will be accessible on a range of our social media platforms that we continually will be developing.

To know about events or to find out about opportunities including vacancies, training opportunities and personal development or support options follow us:

twitter @cnxsdudley,  
facebook facebook.com/connexionsdudley  
Instagram @cnxsdudley

## Connexions Dudley

For more information contact:  
Tel: 01384 811400  
Email: Connexions@dudley.gov.uk  
connexionsdudley.org



# SANDWELL

## CONNEXIONS SANDWELL

Discuss your options with an independent impartial careers' adviser Contact us on [sandwell\\_connexions@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:sandwell_connexions@sandwell.gov.uk)

or Monday- Friday 9.30am – 4.30pm on 07917174735 or 0791717402 (Tues/Weds/Thurs). Appointments can be by Telephone, Skype or MS Teams.

Check out the website [connexionsandwell.co.uk](http://connexionsandwell.co.uk) for careers information, advice and guidance on your post 16 options and helping you choose the right career for you.

## SANDWELL COUNCIL'S EMPLOYMENT & SKILLS TEAM

Think Sandwell can provide support to find a job, including help with CV, completing application forms, interview practice and details of local vacancies are available at [sandwell.gov.uk/apprenticeships](http://sandwell.gov.uk/apprenticeships)

The Think Sandwell Employment team have a range of vacancies in the Construction and Social Care sectors [enquiries\\_recruitment@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries_recruitment@sandwell.gov.uk)

Vacancies can be found at [sandwell.gov.uk/thinksandwell](http://sandwell.gov.uk/thinksandwell)

## BLACK COUNTRY IMPACT PROJECT

If you are aged 16-29 and are currently not in education, employment or training, Dudley has the Black Country Impact programme. An experienced keyworker will provide custom intensive one-to-one support to help work out your next steps and fund the courses and equipment that will help you to succeed.

To know about events or to find out about opportunities including vacancies, training opportunities and personal development or support options follow us:

twitter [twitter.com/Connexion\\_Jobs](https://twitter.com/Connexion_Jobs)  
facebook [facebook.com/connexions.sandwell/](https://facebook.com/connexions.sandwell/)

## SANDWELL COLLEGE

Sandwell College recruit learners onto all levels of courses in lots of sectors, preparing you for the world of work. The Courses have good progression routes and pathways which lead to employment, Apprenticeships or University.

You can visit their websites to access information about their courses and opportunities such as Traineeships and Apprenticeships.

For more information contact:  
T: 0800 622006  
W: [sandwell.ac.uk/school-leaver-courses](http://sandwell.ac.uk/school-leaver-courses)

# WALSALL

## WALSALL COLLEGE

Walsall College recruit learners onto all levels of courses in lots of sectors, preparing you for the world of work. The Courses have good progression routes and pathways which lead to employment, Apprenticeships or University.

You can visit Walsall Colleges website to access information about their courses and opportunities such as Traineeships and Apprenticeships [walsallcollege.ac.uk/request-a-prospectus/thank-you-prospectus/](http://walsallcollege.ac.uk/request-a-prospectus/thank-you-prospectus/)

For more information contact:

T: 01922 657000

W: [walsallcollege.ac.uk](http://walsallcollege.ac.uk)

## WALSALL WORKS

When you register with Walsall Works, you will receive professional support from our Employment and Skills Team, who have the knowledge and expertise to improve your employability skills and find the right job, Apprenticeship or training opportunity for you. We can also help with finding volunteering opportunities.

Register with Walsall Works to receive help with:

- Preparing for your career
- Applying for Apprenticeships
- Accessing free training
- Finding employment
- Looking at academic options
- CV writing and job applications
- Interview support and work trials

For more information contact:

T: 01922 654353

E: [walsallworks@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:walsallworks@walsall.gov.uk)

W: [walsall.gov.uk/walsall\\_works](http://walsall.gov.uk/walsall_works)

## WALSALL IAG TEAM

The Walsall Information, Advice & Guidance Team work closely with schools and colleges to support the transition of all young people with post 16 options and the governments raising participation age - Young people who are identified as 'not in education, employment and training' are followed up and offered appropriate support to re-engage.

We offer support services for all young people aged 13-19 (up to 25 years old for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities). Advisers offer information, advice and practical help on a range of issues, including education, employment, work-based learning, and access to other specialist services.

The team are available and look forward to hearing from you, please call:  
T: 01922 636333 (answer phone message only)  
M: 07717 156947  
E: [iagteam@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:iagteam@walsall.gov.uk)

## BLACK COUNTRY IMPACT PROJECT

If you are currently not in education, employment or training, Walsall delivers the Black Country Impact programme to provide intensive one-to-one support with an experienced advisor to help work out your next steps and fund the courses and equipment that will help you to succeed. Offers free customised support to young people aged 16 - 29 looking for employment or training.

For more information contact:

T: 01922 654364

W: [walsall.gov.uk/blackcountryimpact](http://walsall.gov.uk/blackcountryimpact)

For more information on Walsall Council's Apprenticeship programme contact: **Helena Baxter** on 07767 615214 or email [Helena.baxter@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:Helena.baxter@walsall.gov.uk)



# WOLVERHAMPTON

## WOLVERHAMPTON COLLEGE

Wolverhampton College recruit learners onto all levels of courses in lots of sectors, preparing you for the world of work. The Courses have good progression routes and pathways which lead to employment, Apprenticeships or University.

You can visit Wolverhampton Colleges website to access information about their courses and opportunities such as Traineeships and Apprenticeships  
[wolvcoll.ac.uk/demographic/school-leavers](http://wolvcoll.ac.uk/demographic/school-leavers)

For more information contact:

T: 01902 836000

W: [mail@wolvcoll.ac.uk](mailto:mail@wolvcoll.ac.uk)

## CONNEXIONS WOLVERHAMPTON

Connexions is a free and impartial careers information, advice and guidance service for young people who live in Wolverhampton.

We are a person-centred service, meaning we tailor our support to your needs. We want every young person to have access to equal opportunities and achieve their very best in life.

Young people can access the service if they are a resident of Wolverhampton and are aged between 13 - 19 (up to the age of 25 if you have you have special education needs and/or a disability). If you have left school and are not in learning, working or training you will have your own personal adviser to support you with your next steps.

For more information contact us on:

T: 01902 554499

E: [connexions@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:connexions@wolverhampton.gov.uk)

Search for **Connexions Wolverhampton** on Facebook



## WE OFFER ADVICE ON

- Choosing and exploring careers that will suit your skills and interests.
- Finding out key facts about different careers. What do I need to learn? How much does it pay? What does the job involve? How many jobs are there in this field?
- Your options; from 6th form to college and from training providers to apprenticeships. We will advise you on what you can do and how you can access it.
- Support with applying for courses, jobs and apprenticeships. From how to write a professional application form and CV, to how to present yourself as the best candidate at a job interview.
- Need help? Connexions can offer support and make referrals to other organisations if you are experiencing barriers to achieving.

## WORKBOX

Connexions is part of the wider Skills team in the Local Authority in Wolverhampton, which comprises of Impact and Wolves at Work.

To find out more about these services visit: [www.wolvesworkbox.com](http://www.wolvesworkbox.com)

# & HEALTH WELLBEING

It is vital to maintain our health and wellbeing throughout life but never more so during teenage years when significant changes take place, including exam stresses and transition into further and higher education or into the world of work.

Better health has been shown to boost energy levels, lift your mood and lead to better sleep, all of which helps us to cope with stressful circumstances. The habits set during teenage years can really benefit through life in protecting our mental and physical health to ensure we are happier, stronger and healthier.

Simple steps can be taken to improve physical health which doesn't cost a lot of money ie walking and running in your local area. Low cost basic gym equipment and ropes for skipping can be good fun and taking the stairs where possible is an easy way to help keep fit and healthy.

## Pay attention to the present moment

Some people call this awareness "mindfulness" and it can help you enjoy life more and understand yourself better, positively changing the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges.

## Referral & Support Agencies

YoungMinds  
0808 802 5544

NSPCC  
0800 1111

Anxiety UK  
0344 4775 774

Mind  
0300 123 3393

Bereavement  
0808 808 1677

Samaritans  
116 123

There are many more on [nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk) You are not alone.



For more information on opportunities to be active across the Black Country check out the following links:

[activeblackcountry.co.uk](https://activeblackcountry.co.uk)

[nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/get-active-your-way/](https://nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/get-active-your-way/)

[bhf.org.uk/information-support/heart-matters-magazine/activity/8-ways-to-get-active-every-day](https://bhf.org.uk/information-support/heart-matters-magazine/activity/8-ways-to-get-active-every-day)



An integral part of our overall health, looking after our minds is a key component. Poor mental health can leave people feeling low in mood, unhappy and demotivated.

The natural ebb and flow of life has challenges for everyone, so to cope with these challenges a positive happy frame of mind makes it easier to deal with.

At some stage in everyone's life we will experience low moods and unhappiness which can last a very short time or even years, looking after your mental wellbeing at an early age can help prevent this.

## There are ways in which you can help improve your mental health and general wellbeing:

- Good relationships are important – connect with other people, share your positive experiences to provide emotional support to others as well as yourself
- Be physically active – setting goals and challenges
- Learn new skills – helps you build a sense of purpose
- All the above cause chemical changes in your brain to aid positive mood, raise your self-esteem and confidence

# WORKING FOR YOURSELF

## Do you have what it takes to set up a business?

The Princes Trust offer a 4 day training course called Explore Enterprise that allows you to explore if self-employment is right for you.

Eligible clients can choose either face to face or can do the programme online with an E-mentor attached to them. In some cases, grants of up to £1500 are available.

Alternatively contact the Black Country Growth Hub on 0300 770 2245 to be connected with the Princes Trust or explore other options that may be available to you.

# NATIONAL CAREERS SERVICE

The National Careers Service provides free, expert, impartial information, advice and guidance on careers, skills and the labour market in England.

To make decisions about your future, it's important to know what's out there and what's right for you. Whatever stage you are at in your career, we can help you understand what your skills are and what skills you might need to adapt to new jobs, circumstances and opportunities.

There are many options open to you when thinking about your next steps, and we provide information, advice and guidance to help you make the best decisions on learning, training and work.

## We'll help you to:

- explore different careers – our website has information on many different job roles with sections and covers how to get the job, what you'll do, career paths, progression, and training opportunities review your skills and develop new goals
- feel motivated to implement your plan of action
- make the best use of high-quality, career-related tools



## GET IN TOUCH

Give us a call on **0800 100 900**. Lines are open from 8am to 10pm, 7 days a week. Calls are free from landlines and most mobile numbers.

Text your name and the word **ADVICE** to **07766 413219** and an adviser will call you back for free. You can also text to ask for information like telephone numbers and addresses.

[nationalcareers.service.gov.uk](http://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk)

# YOUTH HUBS

Do you need support to overcome personal barriers to achieve your career goals? Mentor Me at The Youth Hub can help you overcome them.

Our mentors will support you to tackle your individual challenges and get you on the right track towards work, further education or an Apprenticeship.

## You'll receive:

- Dedicated 1-2-1 support from our mental health first aid trained mentors and Employment Advisors
- Support and guidance to move you closer or into work
- Support with managing appointments with external agencies, like GPs, housing associations, clinics and addiction support
- Workshops in topics such as money management, confidence & resilience building and health & wellbeing
- Valuable work experience in your sector of interest
- Opportunities to work towards Functional Skills qualifications in English and Maths
- Signposting to other providers for any other training and guidance you require.

Visit  
[skillstraininguk.com](http://skillstraininguk.com)  
for more details





I stayed on at 6th Form which enabled me to gain the additional qualifications I needed to apply to join the Police force

I left Thorns Academy to do a Level 3 Health & Social Care at Halesowen College, then went to University. I am now a Children's Nurse working as a Paediatric Sister at Russell's Hall Hospital. I manage the nursing team on shift, as well as clinical support workers and students.

Working in Childrens A&E I see a lot of head injuries, broken bones, foreign bodies but also treat a lot of poorly children that require extra oxygen, medication and lifesaving treatment.

I absolutely love my job and I can't imagine doing anything different.



Learn more at

[blackcountryskillsfactory.co.uk](http://blackcountryskillsfactory.co.uk)

Black Country Skills Factory

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