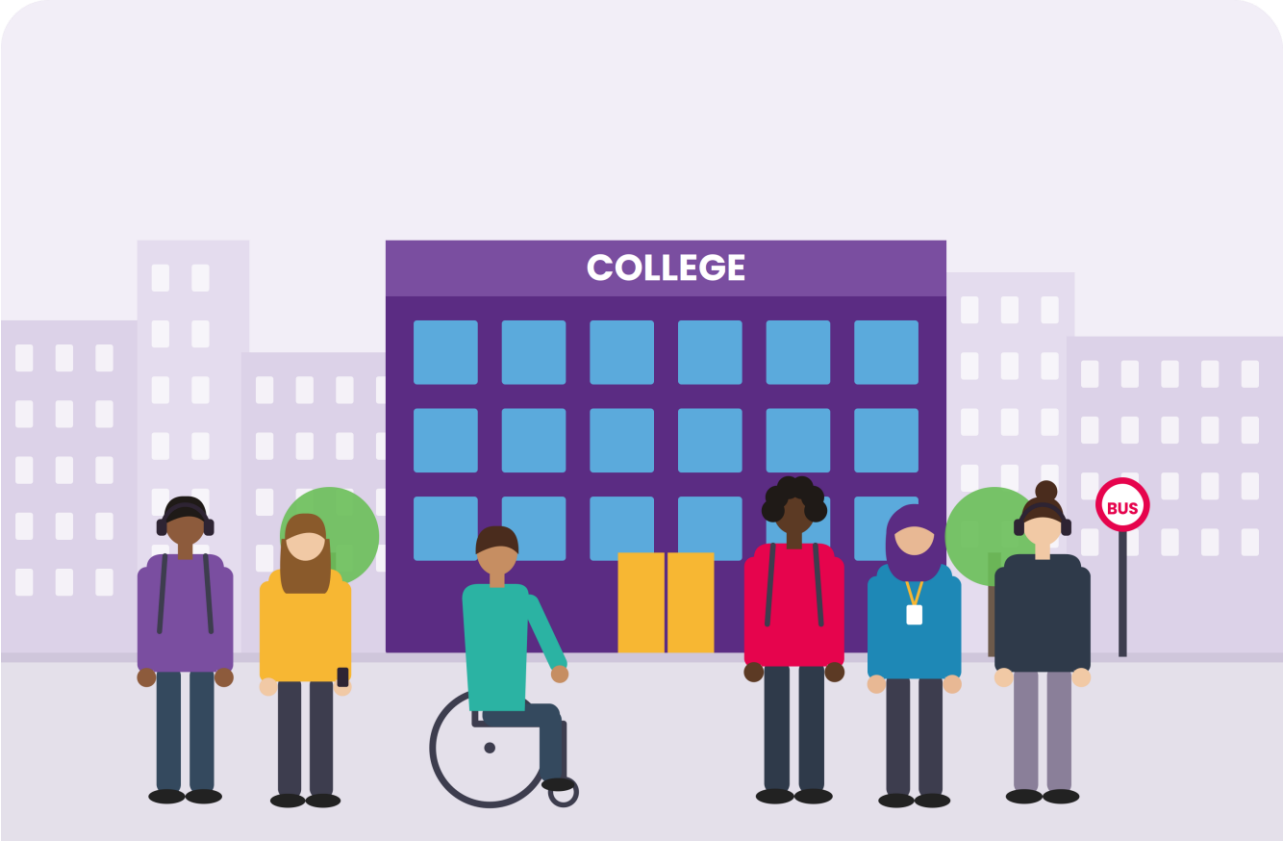
Post-16
Toolkit

For neurodivergent young people and their families

Education, work, money, independence, health and local support in Barking & Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge



Barking & Dagenham | **Havering** | **Redbridge**

Welcome

Planning for life after school

Turning 16 is a big milestone. It brings new choices about education and work, changes to benefits and health services, and more say for young people over their own lives. For neurodivergent young people — including autistic young people and those with ADHD, learning disabilities and other differences — good planning makes a real difference.

This toolkit is for **young people** and for the **parents and carers** who support them. It explains what changes, the options available, and where to get help locally in **Barking & Dagenham**, **Havering** and **Redbridge**. Every link can be clicked.

> **Nothing about me without me**
>
> Young people should be at the centre of every plan and decision about their future. Parents and carers still have an important role in supporting them, but the young person's own views, hopes and choices come first.

What's inside

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1 What changes at 16

More choices, and more say

Young people have more say

From the end of the school year in which they turn 16, young people can make their own decisions about their EHCP, such as asking for an assessment, choosing a college or appealing a decision, as long as they have the mental capacity to do so.

Parents and carers can still help, and many young people want them involved.

Learning continues to 18

In England, young people must stay in education or training until they are 18. This can be:

- full-time education, such as school, sixth form or college
- an apprenticeship or supported internship
- working or volunteering for 20 hours or more a week, with part-time education or training

Benefits change

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for children stops at 16. Young people are invited to apply for **Personal Independence Payment (PIP)** instead. See Section 6.

Services start to change

Between 16 and 18, many children's services, such as CAMHS and children's social care, start planning the move to adult services. Planning early helps avoid gaps. See Section 8.

Find out more: GOV.UK – School leaving age

2 Your journey, age by age

What to think about, and when

14

Age 14

Year 9 — Start planning

- From Year 9, every EHCP annual review must focus on **preparing for adulthood**: work, independent living, friends and community, and good health.
- Talk about hopes, interests and strengths. What does a good life look like for this young person?
- If the young person has a learning disability, ask the GP about joining the learning disability register and having a free **annual health check** (available from age 14).

15

Age 15

Year 10 — Explore options

- Visit colleges, sixth forms and training providers. Go to open days and taster days.
- Ask for specialist careers advice at school.
- Try out work experience, volunteering or clubs to build confidence and skills.

16

Age 16

Year 11 — Make choices

- Apply for sixth form, college, an apprenticeship or a supported internship.
- **If the young person has an EHCP:** the plan must be amended to name the post-16 placement by **31 March** of the year they move on.
- Watch out for the **PIP letter** from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) around the 16th birthday and reply by the deadline.
- Ask your local authority about **travel assistance** for college and apply early.

17

Age 17

Post-16 — Build independence

- Practise travel, money, cooking and self-care skills. Ask your local authority about independent travel training.
- If the young person is likely to need adult social care, ask for a **transition assessment** before they turn 18.
- Plan the move from CAMHS or children's health services to adult services.
- Get ID, a bank account and a National Insurance number letter sorted.

18

Age 18

Becoming an adult

- Adult services take over from children's services.
- Parents no longer have an automatic right to make decisions. Think about how the young person will be **supported to make decisions** (see Section 8).
- Young people can register to vote and may need an **appointee** if they cannot manage their benefits.

19–25

Age 19–25

Next steps

- An EHCP can continue up to age 25 if the young person is still in education or training and still needs it.
- Keep reviewing goals: work, further learning, independent living and friendships.

Top tip: keep a transition folder

Keep the EHCP, annual review notes, reports, benefit letters, college information and a list of key contacts together in one place. Add the young person's one-page profile and update it each year together.

3 Options after 16

There is no single right path

The best option depends on the young person's interests, strengths, needs and goals. Many young people try more than one route.

Sixth form

A-levels, BTECs or other courses in a school sixth form. Often a familiar setting, which can help some neurodivergent young people.

Further education college

A wide choice of vocational and academic courses, including foundation and life-skills courses. Colleges usually have a learning support team.

Specialist college

For young people with more complex needs. Places are usually agreed through the EHCP.

Supported internship

For **16–24-year-olds with an EHCP** who want to work. Usually a year long, with most time spent learning in a real workplace, supported by a job coach.

Apprenticeship

A paid job with training. Apprentices with an EHCP may be able to achieve **Entry Level 3** English and maths instead of Level 2.

Foundation apprenticeship

A new, paid 8-month programme (since August 2025) for 16–21-year-olds, or up to 24 with an EHCP, in sectors such as construction, digital, engineering and care.

T Levels

Two-year technical courses, equal to three A-levels, including a long industry placement.

University

Disabled students can apply for **Disabled Students' Allowance** for extra support. An EHCP usually ends when a young person starts university.

Work or volunteering

Paid work or volunteering for 20+ hours a week, with part-time learning until 18. **Access to Work** can fund support in a job.

Questions to ask colleges and providers

- How do you support autistic and neurodivergent students? What does learning support look like day to day?
- Is there a quiet space, and support at break and lunchtimes?
- How will you make sure the support in my EHCP is provided?
- Can I visit several times before I start, and meet my key contact?
- What happens if things are not going well — who do I talk to?

Search for apprenticeships: Find an apprenticeship (GOV.UK)

Careers advice for all ages: National Careers Service

4 EHCPs after 16

Education, Health and Care Plans up to 25

An EHCP can last until 25

An EHCP can continue up to age 25 while the young person is in education or training and still needs it. It does not stop automatically at 16, 18 or 19.

Reviews focus on adulthood

From Year 9, reviews must look at preparing for adulthood. The young person's views should be at the heart of every review.

31 March deadline

When moving into post-16 education, the local authority must amend the EHCP to name the new setting by **31 March** of that year.

When can an EHCP end?

It may end if the young person starts university, gets a paid job (not an apprenticeship), leaves education or training, or no longer needs it. You can challenge a decision to end a plan.

Young people's rights

After the end of compulsory school age, young people can request an EHC needs assessment, ask for a particular college or placement, and appeal to the SEND Tribunal themselves. Their local SENDIASS service can give free, impartial advice to young people as well as parents. Contact details are in Section 10.

5 Preparing for adulthood

Four areas to plan for

Employment

- What jobs or interests excite you?
- Try work experience, volunteering or a supported internship
- Learn about reasonable adjustments at work

Independent living

- Everyday skills: cooking, money, shopping, laundry
- Where do you want to live in the future?
- What support would help?

Friends and community

- Clubs, groups and hobbies
- Keeping safe online and in relationships
- Getting around the local area

Good health

- Knowing how to book and attend GP and dentist appointments
- Managing medication, sleep and wellbeing
- Moving to adult health services

6 Money and benefits

What changes and what help is available

From age 16

Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

DLA for children stops when a young person turns 16. The DWP sends a letter inviting them to apply for PIP. If they do not apply by the date in the letter, DLA payments will stop. After registering, there are usually 28 days to return the form.

Tips:

- Collect evidence from school, college, GP and professionals
- Keep a diary of daily difficulties and support needed
- Describe a bad day as well as a typical day
- Get help from a benefits adviser or charity

Visit website ›

gov.uk/pip

Appointee

If a young person cannot manage their own benefit claim, a parent or carer can apply to the DWP to become their **appointee**.

GOV.UK – Become an appointee

16 to 19 Bursary Fund

Help with costs such as travel, books and equipment. Some disabled students who get DLA or PIP **and** ESA or Universal Credit in their own name may get up to **£1,200** a year. Ask the college.

GOV.UK – 16 to 19 Bursary Fund

Access to Work

A grant to pay for practical support in paid work or an apprenticeship, such as a job coach, equipment or travel.

GOV.UK – Access to Work

Disabled Students' Allowance

Extra support for disabled students in higher education, such as study skills support or equipment.

GOV.UK – DSA

Good to know

Other benefits, such as Universal Credit and the parent's Carer's Allowance, can also change when a young person turns 16 or leaves education. Benefit rules are complex, so get personalised advice from a benefits adviser, Contact's helpline (0808 808 3555) or Sycamore Trust's Family Services team (020 8517 9317).

7 Independence and life skills

Small steps build confidence

Travel

- Practise routes together, then step back gradually
- Ask the council about **independent travel training**
- Use travel apps, and keep a card with key contacts

Money

- Open a bank account and practise using a bank card safely
- Budget for travel, food and phone
- Learn about scams and staying safe online

Everyday living

- Simple cooking, shopping and laundry
- Using visual checklists and phone reminders
- Managing time and routines

Speaking up

- Knowing your needs and what helps
- Asking for reasonable adjustments at college or work
- Deciding if and when to tell people about your diagnosis

Useful documents to get ready

- Photo ID, such as a provisional driving licence or a proof-of-age card
- National Insurance number (sent by letter shortly before the 16th birthday)
- A bank account in the young person's own name
- A one-page profile the young person can share with college, employers and health staff

8 Health, social care and decisions

Moving to adult services

Health

- Children's services such as CAMHS usually end at 18. Ask early how the move to adult services will be planned.
- People aged 14+ on their GP's learning disability register can have a free annual health check.
- Ask the GP to record any reasonable adjustments the young person needs.

Social care

- If a young person is likely to need care and support as an adult, the council should carry out a **transition assessment** before they turn 18.
- Parent carers can also ask for a carer's assessment.
- Contact details for each borough's adult social care team are in Section 10.

Making decisions: the Mental Capacity Act

The Mental Capacity Act applies from age 16. Everyone is assumed to have capacity to make their own decisions unless it is shown otherwise, and they must be given all practical help to make a decision before anyone decides they cannot.

- People can make decisions that others think are unwise.
- If a young person lacks capacity for a particular decision, it must be made in their **best interests**, involving them as much as possible.
- From 18, a young person with capacity can choose someone to make decisions for them in the future (**Lasting Power of Attorney**). If they lack capacity, family members may need to apply to the **Court of Protection** for some decisions, such as managing money.

Find out more: GOV.UK – Mental Capacity Act: making decisions

9 Wellbeing

For young people and their families

For young people

- Change is tiring. Plan rest and quiet time.
- Masking all day can lead to exhaustion or burnout. Find places where you can be yourself.
- Keep doing the things you love.
- Tell someone you trust if you are struggling.

For parents and carers

- Letting go, bit by bit, can feel hard. That is normal.
- Connect with other parents going through the same thing.
- Ask for a carer's assessment and look after your own health.
- You do not have to have all the answers.

If you need help now

Call **NHS 111** and choose the mental health option, call **Samaritans** free on **116 123**, or text **SHOUT** to **85258**. In an emergency, call **999**.

Sycamore Trust UK

We run youth groups for autistic young people aged, including life-skills groups and a Girls Project, plus services for adults. We also offer parent support groups, workshops and one-to-one guidance.

020 8517 9317 | Home - Sycamore Trust

10 Local support

Organisation	How they can help	Website and contact
SEND Local Offer: Preparing for Adulthood (16–25)	Post-16 education, employment, independent living and the move to adult services.	B&D Local Offer – Post-16 education
Barking & Dagenham College	Foundation learning, the REACH supported internship and RISE pre-internship programmes for young people with an EHCP.	B&D College – Supported internships 020 8090 3020
Apprenticeships and supported internships	Local information on routes into work.	B&D Local Offer – Apprenticeships
Adult Intake Team	Transition to adult social care, including care needs assessments.	B&D Local Offer – Adult services 020 8227 2915 | IntakeTeam@lbbd.gov.uk
SEN travel assistance	Travel support, including independent travel training for Year 7 and above.	lbbd.gov.uk – SEN travel assistance transport.request@lbbd.gov.uk
Barking & Dagenham SENDIASS	Free, impartial SEND advice for young people and parents.	carerscentre.org.uk/iassinfo 020 8593 4422
B&D CAMHS (NELFT)	Mental health support for young people, usually by referral.	nelft.nhs.uk/barking-and-dagenham-camhs
JUST SAY / Carers of B&D	Parent carer forum, and support for unpaid carers.	justsayforum.online carerscentre.org.uk

Havering

Local support for families

Organisation	How they can help	Website and contact
Local Offer 16–25: Preparing for Adulthood	Havering's directory of post-16 education, employment and adult services.	Havering Local Offer – 16–25
Havering Adult College	Supported internships for 16–24 year olds with an EHCP.	Havering Adult College – Supported internships
New City College (Havering campuses)	Foundation learning and SEND courses.	NCC – Foundation learning SEND
Adult Social Care	Adult social care, including assessments for young people moving to adult services.	havering.gov.uk – Contact us 01708 432000
School and post-16 travel assistance	Havering's travel assistance policy for school and post-16 students.	Havering – travel assistance policy cadtransport@havering.gov.uk
Havering SENDIASS	Free, impartial SEND advice for young people and parents.	haveringsendiass.co.uk 01708 433885
Havering CAMHS (NELFT)	Mental health support for young people, usually by referral.	nelft.nhs.uk/havering-camhs
Havering SEND Family Voice	Parent carer forum, and support for unpaid carers.	Havering SEND Family Voice

Redbridge

Local support for families

Organisation	How they can help	Website and contact
Redbridge SEND Advisory & Training Service	Redbridge FiND pages on preparing for adulthood.	Redbridge FSD & Local Offer | Redbridge SEND Advisory and Training Service (previously SEaTSS)
Post-16 education	Redbridge education support.	Redbridge FSD & Local Offer | Redbridge Connexions
New City College Redbridge	SEND courses and a supported internship programme for 16–24-year-olds with an EHCP.	NCC – Supported internship programme
Adult Social Care	Make an adult social care referral online.	adultcare.redbridge.gov.uk/contact
Home to college transport	Application form for post-16 travel assistance.	Redbridge – Home to college transport form
RIASS (Redbridge SENDIASS)	Free, impartial SEND advice for young people and parents, aged 0–25.	redbridgeiass.org.uk 020 8708 8922
Redbridge CAMHS (NELFT)	Mental health support for young people, usually by referral.	nelft.nhs.uk/redbridge-camhs
EPT / Redbridge Carers Support Service	Parent carer forum, and support for unpaid carers.	EPT on Redbridge FiND rcss.org.uk

11 National links

Trusted information and support

Organisation	How they can help	Website and contact
National Careers Service	Free careers advice for young people and adults.	nationalcareers.service.gov.uk
Find an apprenticeship	Search for apprenticeships in England.	findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk
DFN Project SEARCH	Supported internship programmes for young people with learning disabilities and autistic young people.	dfnprojectsearch.org
Ambitious about Autism	Information for autistic young people and families, including employment support.	ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk
National Autistic Society	Information and advice about autism for all ages.	autism.org.uk
Mencap	Advice for people with a learning disability and their families.	mencap.org.uk
Contact	Advice for families with disabled children, including benefits at 16.	contact.org.uk 0808 808 3555
IPSEA	Free legal advice on EHCPs and SEND law, including for young people.	ipsea.org.uk
Disability Rights UK	Information on benefits, rights and further and higher education.	disabilityrightsuk.org
Scope	Practical and emotional support for disabled people and families.	scope.org.uk
YoungMinds	Mental health support for young people and parents.	youngminds.org.uk Parents helpline: 0808 802 5544

12 Checklists

Tick them off as you go

Ages 14–15

- ☐ Talked about hopes and goals at the Year 9 annual review
- ☐ Joined the GP learning disability register and booked an annual health check (if relevant)
- ☐ Had specialist careers advice
- ☐ Visited colleges, sixth forms or training providers
- ☐ Tried work experience, volunteering or a new club

Age 16

- ☐ Applied for a post-16 place, apprenticeship or supported internship
- ☐ Checked the EHCP names the new placement by 31 March (if relevant)
- ☐ Replied to the DWP letter and applied for PIP
- ☐ Applied for travel assistance and asked about travel training
- ☐ Asked the college about the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund

Age 17

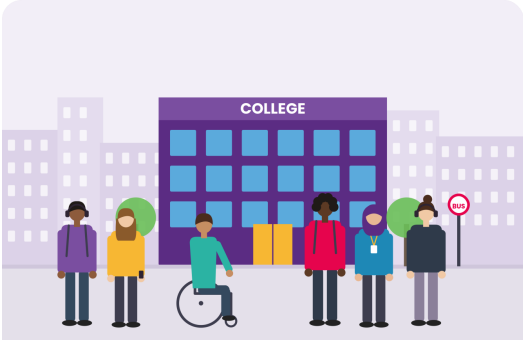
- ☐ Asked for a transition assessment for adult social care (if likely to be needed)
- ☐ Made a plan for moving from CAMHS or children's health services
- ☐ Opened a bank account and got photo ID
- ☐ Practised travel, money and everyday living skills
- ☐ Created a one-page profile the young person can share

Age 18 and beyond	
☐	Thought about how decisions will be supported (Mental Capacity Act)
☐	Applied to become an appointee, if needed
☐	Registered to vote
☐	Reviewed the EHCP goals for work, independent living and friendships
☐	Parent carer has asked for a carer's assessment

Thank you for reading

Sycamore Trust UK is a registered charity supporting autistic children, young people, adults and their families across Barking & Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge.

Call us	Visit us	Find us online
020 8517 9317	27–29 Woodward Road, Dagenham RM9 4SJ	Home - Sycamore Trust



Disclaimer

This toolkit gives **general information only**. It does not replace professional, legal or financial advice. For advice about an individual situation, please contact your local SENDIASS service, IPSEA, a benefits adviser or another qualified professional.

Benefit rules, funding amounts, deadlines and services can change. Information was checked in **September 2026**, so please check the latest details with GOV.UK, your local council and each service directly.

Colleges, providers and organisations are included to help young people and families explore their options and do not mean that Sycamore Trust UK recommends any particular provider. Links to external websites are provided for information. Sycamore Trust UK is not responsible for their content or availability and cannot accept responsibility for any loss or harm arising from the use of this toolkit.