

Leaving School – What are my options

A Guide to Transitioning to Adulthood

The transition from secondary school to adulthood is a pivotal time in the lives of all students. For an autistic person change of any kind can be challenging.

The purpose of transition planning is to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them pathways and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment and or independent/assisted living.

It is important to emphasise that your young person with additional needs should have as much choice and options as any other person. Their likes, strengths and interests should be taken into account as well as their support needs. Think about their areas of strength and their interests. Think about their challenges and how these can be accommodated.

Early planning leads to a successful transition period. In practical terms, the earlier the transition process starts with thoughtful planning, good information and open communication with a “transition team” the more successful this transition will be, thereby reducing anxiety on everyone involved.

Preparation for leaving school should ideally start 2 years before leaving. Talk to your school leaver about the options available and give them as much information and choice as possible taking their preferences into account.

Talk to other parents who have been through this transition and contact the relevant agencies (see below).

Effective transition requires an individual detailed plan that includes some or all of the following:

- Establish a Transition Team for your young adult. The transitioning period works best if it is a collaborative process. Team members will include: parent/guardian, teacher, principal, psychologist, social worker, occupational guidance officer (HSE), social worker, OT, Speech and Language therapist

etc and anybody that you feel is relevant. - In reality this the team will most likely consist of family members and school staff.

- Assessment of your young adults needs, interests and abilities
- Statement of preferences for education, employment and adult living
- Identify responsible people or agencies to help with achieving your young adult's goals
- Outline the steps needed to be taken in order to achieve the above goals
- Clarification of how roles will be co-ordinated
- A plan for identifying and obtaining the necessary funding
- Timeline to evaluate and review transition progress

Post School Options :

- **Third Level Courses – DARE**
- **Institutes of Further Education**
- **Specialised Courses – eg Trinity / DKIT**
- **Day Services**
- **Combination of some of the above**

The policy document which governs all Day Services is called New Directions.

New Directions is one of the key policy documents contained in the HSE “Transforming Lives” programme. It sets out 12 supports that should be available to people with disabilities using day services. New Directions is based on individualised outcome focused supports. The key priority is for adults with disabilities to be a part of their local communities and to live a life of their own choosing in accordance with their own wishes, needs and aspirations.

www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/disability/newdirections/new%20directions%20report.pdf

[The HSE Funded Adult Disability Day Service Locations - Midlands Louth Meath Community Healthcare Organisation](#)

Third Level Courses – DARE

Increasing number of people with disabilities are graduating with higher education qualifications. This is because more support and services are now provided in line with student's needs.

The Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) aims to improve access to college for school-leavers with a disability or specific learning difficulty by allocating a number of third-level places to them on a reduced points basis.

<https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/third-level-admissions-scheme-for-students-with-disabilities/#:~:text=Education%20%D%20see%20below.-,How%20the%20DARE%20scheme%20works,on%20a%20reduced%20points%20basis.>

How to access supports once you are actually in college

<https://asiam.ie/accessing-supports-in-higher-education/>

Institutes of Further Education

DIFE welcomes applications from all prospective students and is committed to supporting those with disabilities, learning difficulties, specific medical conditions and special needs. The college is committed to providing the advice, information and support to assist learners succeed in their studies in the college. It is the responsibility of each learner to disclose their educational needs as early as possible so applications can be processed, and the required supports put in place where possible.

Funding is provided by the Higher Education Authority (HEA)/SOLAS under the Fund for Students With Disabilities (FSD). The purpose of the FSD is to assist further and higher education institutions in ensuring students with disabilities have the necessary assistance and equipment to enable them access, fully participate in and successfully complete their chosen course of study.

<https://www.dife.ie/student-supports/>

Specialised Courses – eg Trinity / DKIT

DKIT – Certificate in Skills for Independent Living

This 2 year part-time course is specifically developed for adults with intellectual disabilities with the aim that learners will develop a lifelong learning ethos with the promotion of inclusion to third level education. The purpose of this award is to enable the learners develop relevant knowledge and competence to be able to take his/her place in society.

<https://www.dkit.ie/courses/school-of-health-and-science/nursing,-midwifery-and-early-years/certificate-in-skills-for-independent-living.html>

Trinity - Certificate in Arts, Science and Inclusive Applied Practice

The Certificate in Arts, Science and Inclusive Applied Practice is highly innovative in Irish and international terms, pioneering an exciting approach that opens up specially designed third level study opportunities for persons with intellectual disabilities. The programme is aimed at transforming possibilities open to people with intellectual disability as they make transitions towards adult life and the workforce. Ultimately, the goal is to achieve a roll-out of this model of provision across other interested third level institutions in Ireland and elsewhere.

Course Duration: 2 year full-time course

<https://www.tcd.ie/tcpid/courses/certificate/>

Adult Autism Services/Day Services –

Many autistic school leavers from both special schools and special classes will attend a Day Service when they leave school.

This process usually starts in the Autumn of the final school year. The HSE Occupational Guidance Officer for your area should contact you to make an appointment to complete a short assessment of your child's needs. If you have not heard from them by November we would suggest contacting the Occupational Guidance Officer for your area. They will also talk to your child's school placement. The purpose of these meetings is to (a) complete the paperwork necessary to apply for a Day Services Budget for your child and (b) talk to you about some of the available options in your area.

You can defer your place in adult day services for up to 3 years while you pursue other avenues. You can also attend adult day service part time alongside further education.

Speak to other parents about their experiences in local services and visit the services in the year before your school leaver graduates.

The below booklet from the NCSE outlines these pathways in detail. It is important for parents/carers and individuals with a disability to make themselves fully informed and aware of all the choices in order to make the most suitable choice for post school options.

<https://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/NCSE-Post-School-Education-Training.pdf>

The following are some of the organisations that offer Day Service options to people with disabilities in Co. Louth and Co. Meath

- National Learning Network (Dundalk and Navan) — www.nln.ie
- Talbot Group
- IWA
- Malta Services
- Praxiscare
- Embrace
- SJOG
- Rehab - O'Carroll Village
- Prosper Meath
- Inspire

HSE Occupational Guidance Officer for Co. Louth and Co. Meath

Louth - Sandra McGuill Email: Sandra.mcquill@hse.ie Tel: 087 380 1410

Meath - Briege Devine Email: briege.devine@hse.ie Tel:087 689 1173

Adult Respite Services

There is not an automatic transfer from the Children's Disability Team to the Adult Disability Team. When your child is 17 you should contact your key worker/social worker and confirm that they have made a referral for your child to the Adult Disability Team. If possible, get the name of who the referral was made to and follow up with them. A new application needs to be made for Adult Respite even if you were in receipt of Children's Respite. Nationally the budget for children and adults with mild intellectual disability with non-complex needs is in Primary Care, therefore specialist disability teams meet the needs of children and adults with moderate, severe and profound intellectual disability.

In respect of Day Service young adults are profiled in school as part of the school leaver process. Many adults attending day service currently do not receive any other disability services.

Adult Residential Services

All residential services are funded by the HSE. There are a variety of different service providers who are subcontracted by the HSE to provide residential services. If your school leaver requires adult residential services you should contact your social worker or key worker in the Adult Disability Team. If you do not have either of these you can contact the Disability Manager.

To even start this conversation is extremely difficult for all families. Some may feel they are not there yet but some may have need of the additional support. There is also a time where it is important for all young people to leave home and live a more independent life. Residential services are all now based in houses in the community. It should be looked at that the young person is living in a shared house which is treated as his home and that the staff and service provider are there to support them to live their best life.

It can be very difficult to secure a suitable residential place so it is good to start having the conversation sooner rather than later.

There are slight variations in the ways different service providers operate but overall they are similar and all have to operate under HIQA.

Service Providers of Day, Residential, Respite and Assisted Living in Co. Louth and Co. Meath

- The Talbot Group — www.talbotgroup.ie
- Prosper Meath — www.prospermeath.ie
- Praxis Care — www.praxisprovides.com
- Inspire — www.inspirewellbeing.org
- St. John of God — www.sjogfoundation.ie
- Malta Services — www.maltaservicesdrogheda.ie
- REHAB — www.rehabcare.ie
- Gheel Autism Services — www.gheel.ie
- Nua Healthcare — www.nuahealthcare.ie
- Moorehall Living — www.moorehallliving.ie
- Three Steps – Private Residential Service — www.threesteps.ie

Autism Support Louth & Meath host an annual Post 18 School Options Expo for People with Special Needs. – Nov 2023

Autism Support Louth & Meath host an annual Post 18 School Options Expo for People with Special Needs. This event is aimed at giving parents and young adults an opportunity to find out more about service providers and educational institutes, meet with key staff members, discuss transitioning and have any questions or concerns answered. By attending this event and other service provider's open days, you can help to alleviate some of the anxiety that parents and students experience around transitioning from school to the next stage in their adult life.

Useful contacts and information sources:

AHEAD – Association for Higher Education Access and Disability – www.ahead.ie

DARE – Disability Access Route to Education – www.accesscollege.ie/dare

National Learning Network (Dundalk & Navan) – www.nln.ie

Youth Reach – www.youthreach.ie

WALK PEER Louth – www.walk.ie

LMETB – Louth Meath Education Training Board – www.lmetb.ie

DIFE – Drogheda Institute of Further Education – www.dife.ie

O'Fiach College Dundalk – kcawley.ofi@lmetb.ie

Further Education & Training Centre – sfearon@lmetb.ie

Irish Wheelchair Association – sara,mckeown@iwa.ie

DKIT- Dundalk Institute of Technology – geradline.kneel@dkit.ie

diarmuidcahill@dkit.ie

DCFE – Dunboyne College of Further Education – C.Joyce.dbc@lmetb.ie