



Further Education – sixth form, college & university after ABI

Here is the good news! As you grow older, adjust to your ABI, and re-learn things, there is a chance you will be able to go on and do more education after your GCSEs. That is only if you really want to, of course. When you first hurt your head, it is hard to believe that you will ever achieve any qualifications but the reality is that there are people with an ABI who do go on to do more learning.

It is important to keep your goals realistic and not stress yourself out. If you are finding schoolwork too difficult you may not want to put yourself through the stress of higher education. You may actually be tired of learning and just want to take time out.

Going into the sixth form

Some schools have a sixth form. Sixth form students are usually studying for A levels or AS levels. There are all sorts of subjects from mathematics, foreign languages, IT courses and economics. It all depends on what sort of courses your sixth form runs.

It is worth looking around at other colleges too as they may have a course that your sixth form does not offer.

Staying on at the sixth form has some benefits for you:

- Some of your friends might be staying on in the sixth form too
- You know the teachers
- You know the building
- You can stay at home
- It gives you extra time to adjust to your ABI whilst being around your friends and family until you have decided what else you want to do
- Your parents might like it as they feel you will be close and can make sure you get the support you need
- You might like your school and feel safe, secure and happy there.

Staying on in the sixth form can work well but the government does not fund any special learning units at schools for sixth form students. The best thing you can do is to approach the headmaster of your school as early as possible. They may be able to make arrangements to support you if you decide to stay on.





Any arrangements that you come to with the school will have to be agreed with the Local Authority (LA) as they need to decide if the sixth form is the best place for you. You can contact an organisation called Connexions www.connexions-direct.com for advice; they may even be able to help sort things out with your school and the Local Education Authority.

If you seem to have problems getting the Local Education Authority to let you stay on, you should consider going to another college if further education is something you really want to do.

Finding a college

Going to college can be a big step. It is very different to school as at college you are classed as an 'adult learner'. You get to wear your own casual clothes and the teachers are more laidback!

If you do decide to go onto college, you should speak to your teachers or educational psychologist to talk about if it is a good idea for you at this time. You may all decide that it is perhaps best to wait a bit before doing more college work or you may decide that it is for you.

There are a couple of different colleges you can go to:

- Mainstream Further Education College
- Residential colleges for young people with disabilities.

There are good and bad things with both; it is something that you and your family will have to consider. Here are some things to think about:

- Do you definitely want to go to college?
- What sort of course do you want to do?
- Do you want to live away from home?
- What sort of support will you need?
- How will it work out financially?





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anna**

Going to a mainstream college

One of the advantages of going to a mainstream college is that there are so many courses on offer. Finding a really good one can sometimes require you to do your homework. Also, some mainstream colleges have a really good reputation and it can look good on your CV when you go for jobs.

Any further or higher education college or university are legally required to support students with disabilities. That said, sometimes the support they can give is only as good as the funding they receive to support the students with disabilities. This is very complicated and something your college will have to agree with the Local Education Authority and Learning Skills Council.

As a potential student, the best thing you can do is contact the Student Support Services at the college. Every college and university will have one. They will ask you to go in for a chat to discuss your needs as a student and see how they can help.

Sometimes there are other things to consider too. Maybe the building is old and doesn't have wheelchair access or maybe the public transport is too far away or difficult to use. You should also think about how you can manage crowds of people and how big the college is. How will you find your way around or manage the stairs?

Before going for your chat with the Student Support Services you should think of some questions you would like to ask. Your parents can help too. Having the answers to these questions can make going to mainstream college less frightening.

Here's an exercise that can help: think of the advantages of going to a mainstream college and write them down:





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Residential colleges for young people with disabilities

These places are great but the only problem is that there aren't many of them in the country. If you choose to go to one of these colleges it will usually mean that you have to live away from home. Some people may get lucky and have one of these schools not so far away.

First thing's first, you shouldn't be put off by it being a college for students with disabilities. There are still lots of courses you can do in a variety of different subjects.

For instance, Treloars is a school for young people with disabilities in Alton. It is a great place that offers a variety of courses: Certificates, BTEC courses, AS and A Levels. You can start getting qualifications you really want and train to do something like 'Health and Social Care' or 'Art & Design'.

The school is residential which means you can stay there in comfortable surroundings with people who understand what it is like to have a disability. The college focuses on ways to help you become independent which is great for helping you to adjust.

The really good thing about these schools is that they are designed and built with disabled people in mind. They have good wheelchair and lift access with good facilities and support on hand if you need it.

It is also good being around other young people who know what it is like to have a disability. There will be other people there with an ABI and so you can feel like people understand you for a change! This can be a really good thing.

There are a few colleges around the country like this and you should contact 'Connexions' for more advice on where to start looking.

Think of the advantages of going to a residential college and write them down:





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Going to university

After you've finished college you may decide to go onto a university. This is a bit different from college as there are no special universities for young people with disabilities.

Every university will help disabled students study and they also have Student Support Services to guide you. The same sort of things apply as looking for a college, though you should consider access and how you will cope in a big building with lots of people.

There are many different universities up and down the country but you may choose to do an open university course which means you can study from home.

The courses at university are a lot harder so you should have a good think about how you will cope if you choose to go on.

Have a think, do you really want to go to university? Write down your thoughts:

Paying to go to college or university

This is something that Connexions will be able to give you advice on - how to apply for money to fund your education. Each case is judged individually so it is worth speaking to someone who can help. Connexions will be able to help you apply for funding from the Learning Skills Council and you may also be entitled to additional benefits to help you pay for things like travel expenses. Find out more at:

www.connexions-direct.com

