

Children become 'adults' at different ages for different purposes. It can be quite confusing for both the young person and their parents.

Education and training

Young people are expected to participate in education or training up to the age of 18, and in practice many continue to the end of the academic year in which they turn 18. There are a number of ways they can do this - at school, or college, on an apprenticeship or traineeship, or by a combination of work placement and formal learning.

Young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan can retain that until they are 25, as long as they are still in education or training and still require a high level of support.

Benefits

Children become 'adults' in the eyes of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) at the age of 16. Parents can choose to stop claiming Child Benefit but if the young person is still in full-time education they can continue to receive it. The young person will also receive benefits in their own right such as Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). A responsible adult, usually a parent, becomes their Appointee, taking responsibility for all social security benefits.



Health

Children transfer to the adult departments of health services at 18 years old. They should be provided with a Health Passport to take with them to all appointments and should be invited by their GP for a review of their health every year.

Social Care

Children transfer to adult Social Care teams at the age of 18. They may first come under a Transitions Team dealing with young people moving from school to college or to work, and considering the kind of support required under the Care Act 2015. There is likely to be an assessment of their needs to clarify what level and kind of support is required.

Mental Capacity

From the age of 16 a young person can be assessed for their capacity to make informed decisions. Usually no assessment is made until it is necessary eg where a major decision needs to be made and there is some disagreement about what is best for the young person. It is often a social worker who would make the assessment of capacity.



A guide to transitions between children's and adults' services for young people with special educational needs aged 16+

(This guide only applies to young people living in England.)

You can contact us for further information or advice by:



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When does a child become an adult?

