

CHOICES AFTER SIXTEEN

Now that you've reached fourth year you have some important decisions to make about your future.

The time has come for some serious thinking about your options after school.

Even if you've already decided to stay on at school you still need to plan ahead. The subjects and courses you choose now will have an impact on the options open to you when you do leave.

Read on for some information and advice to help you explore your options and decide what suits you best.

WHAT ARE YOUR MAIN OPTIONS?

- 1 **Staying on at school**
- 2 **Going to college**
- 3 **Going into a Modern Apprenticeship**
- 4 **Going straight into a job**
- 5 **Doing a training or employability programme.**

Or, like some school leavers you could go on to do voluntary work.

As you go through these options and consider them one by one, remember to:

- **Think about the financial implications of each option**
- **Talk your ideas over with your parents or carers**
- **Work out the options that fit best with your skills and interests, and your attitude to studying**
- **Think about your long term career plans (if you have any yet): what's going to help you to achieve them?**

1 STAYING ON AT SCHOOL

Staying on at school for a fifth, and often a sixth year, is a popular choice, as in general the longer you stay on the better your chances are of getting into work, training or full time education.



Here are some figures showing the percentages of Scottish school leavers in 2017 who got into positive destinations (eg college, work or training), according to when they left school:

- **96.8% of S6 leavers**
- **89.5% of S5 leavers**
- **86.6% of S4 leavers**



SOME OF THE BENEFITS OF STAYING ON AT SCHOOL

- You have the chance to carry on with subjects you have developed a strong interest in (which should help you to get more qualifications).
- You'll have more time to think about what you want to do after school and find out about the careers and courses open to you.
- You might be able to get involved in your school's S5/S6 Vocational Programme and get the chance to study part time at a local college, and get a job-related qualification such as a Foundation Apprenticeship or Skills for Work course.
- You might also have the opportunity to take part in other activities that will help to prepare you for further study or the world of work, including youth awards, flexible work placements or voluntary work.

HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF STAYING ON AT SCHOOL

- You will have to think carefully about your subject choice for S5, and possibly also S6.
- To get more qualifications you have to be prepared to put the work in.
- Taking your time and exploring the options is one thing; just putting the decision off indefinitely won't help!
- You still need to put the time in constructively, using the careers library, using career related software, visiting careers and job fairs and going to college and university open days.
- You will have to do plenty of research on courses, and plan ahead, if you are thinking of applying to university or college next year.
- When you're ready to get to a decision point, talk over your plans with the careers adviser who visits your school and work out your career development plan.

FINANCE

Once you reach your 16th birthday you can apply for an Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) of £30 a week during term time if you are staying on at school, or college, and your family has a low income. Your school will be able to give you an EMA application form.

There are conditions attached. You can find out more by reading the information in the funding articles on Planit or going direct to the EMA website at www.mygov.scot/ema

2 GOING TO COLLEGE

Benefits of full time study

- **You can learn new skills, preparing you for a job or area of work.**
- **You can develop your interest or skills in a specific career area.**
- **You can get the qualifications you need to take you into a more advanced course like a Higher National Diploma or a degree.**
- **You can dip your toe in the water; find out if you have the potential for going further with studying the subject.**

You get the chance to:

- **be independent**
- **meet new and different people**
- **expand your social life.**

You'll have to get used to new ways of learning and thinking. You will have to make adjustments too. Study and assessment methods are likely to be different, often less exam focused, more practical or 'hands on'.

Independence means taking responsibility for:

- **managing your own time - organising your work schedule, organising your free time, and handing work in on time**
- **managing your 'work life balance'- making the most of being a student, enjoying the freedom that comes with it, but putting the work in because that's how you get results.**

If you go to college straight from S4 to do a full time non advanced course like a National Certificate (NC), National Qualification (NQ) or Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) you can apply for either an EMA or a college bursary to finance your studies.

You should check the financial allowances you are entitled to before you decide what to claim. Read the information in 'Funding full time further education' on Planit.

And another thing to bear in mind is that you'll probably have to learn to combine work and college: If you are interested in college remember to apply early, in January or February of the year you want to start the course.



In 2016 - 2017, 49.4% of S4 school leavers went into further education.

3 GOING INTO A MODERN APPRENTICESHIP

Modern Apprenticeships are now the main route to employment for people straight from school. In 2017-18 27,145 young people started a Modern Apprenticeship in Scotland.¹

They give you the opportunity to start a job with guaranteed training towards a recognised work based qualification.

- You can train as a Modern Apprentice in over eighty different jobs, from accounting technician to plumber.
- Most apprenticeships don't have formal entry requirements but for some you will need some relevant subjects at National 4 or 5, and for technician level jobs you may need some Highers.
- You may have to take an 'aptitude' test for some Modern Apprenticeships, particularly for craft level apprenticeships in construction and engineering.
- How long it takes to complete your training depends on the type of job you go into, it ranges from two to four years.
- You are an employee earning a wage. The National Minimum Wage rate for Modern Apprentices is £3.70 an hour from April 2018.
- You train part time towards a recognised qualification, such as a Scottish Vocational Qualification. These range from SCQF Level 5 up to SCQF Level 7. A Higher or Technical Apprenticeship is at SCQF Levels 8 and 9, while Graduate or Professional Apprenticeships start at SCQF Level 9 up to SCQF Level 11.

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Not all types of Modern Apprenticeship are available in all areas, for example, the chances of getting an apprenticeship as a forest worker in Glasgow are pretty remote.

You can get more information from your careers adviser and from the Apprenticeships section of Planit

¹ Modern Apprenticeship Statistics, Full Year Report 2017/18, Skills Development Scotland.

4 GOING STRAIGHT INTO A JOB

You could decide to look for a job. Opportunities are out there for school leavers, but the current economic situation means that they are limited. So, it's really important that your job search skills are good.

To give yourself the best chance of finding a suitable job you should:

- **prepare your CV**
- **get ready to take the initiative, get networking and contact employers that you think might have suitable vacancies**
- **brush up on your interview technique.**

And make sure you contact your local Skills Development Scotland centre for information on local opportunities and for help with the skills involved in looking for a job. Contact the Skills Development Scotland Helpline at 0800 917 8000 for information on your nearest centre.

Hopefully, as well as getting into paid work you'll also get the chance to do on-the-job training – even if it doesn't lead to a recognised qualification.



In 2016 - 2017, 25% of S4 school leavers went into employment (including Modern Apprenticeships).

5 THE EMPLOYABILITY FUND TRAINING COURSES AND PROGRAMMES

If you don't feel ready to move on to work, training or further education by the time you leave school, you could take part in a personal development or employability programme to help you to build up your confidence and skills.

There is a wide range of programmes, which vary depending on the area you live in. Some are national training programmes; others may be run by local community groups or employment initiatives. Some may even give you the chance to do voluntary or community work.



In 2016 - 2017, 6.5% of S4 school leavers went into training programmes.

ACTIVITY AGREEMENTS

An activity agreement is for young people aged 16-19 who have left school and aren't on a college course, in work, training or volunteering.

Basically, it's an agreement you reach with an adviser that you'll take part in a programme of learning and activity that will help you become ready for formal learning, work or training.

You agree to finish your personal programme and get regular support and advice from your adviser, which will help you develop your skills, confidence and career prospects. You can even apply for an EMA payment of £30 per week if you're eligible.

Your personal programme of learning and activity could include a wide range of activities from work placements to music, arts, sport and outdoor activities. You can also take part in group activities and get involved in community projects.

Your school or career adviser will be able to give you more information.



In 2016 - 2017, 7.1% of young people in Scotland took part in an Activity Agreement.

VOLUNTEERING

Young people get a lot out of volunteering, from work related skills to being part of something that makes a difference to their local community.

At the moment fewer than 1% of school leavers go into voluntary work when they leave school.

This has mainly been because so many volunteering opportunities were only open to people aged 18 or over. However, things are starting to change.

More volunteering opportunities for young people aged 16 and above are planned.

You can find out more by taking a look at the article 'Volunteering: What's in it for me?' on the Planit website at www.planitplus.net. Or visit the Project Scotland website at www.projectscotland.co.uk

SCHOOL LEAVING DATES

In Scotland you can only legally leave school at one of the two official school leaving dates that apply to all pupils:

- **31 May if your 16th birthday falls between March and September**
- **the last day of term in December if your 16th birthday falls between 1 October and the end of February.**

However, it is sometimes possible for pupils who are due to leave in December to spend their last term (August to December) at college or on work experience. Your head teacher must give you permission before this can happen.

KEEPING YOUR PARENTS OR CARERS INFORMED

It's important to remember that you can help your parents or carers to support you by talking with them about your options.

They may not be aware of all the different options open to you at this stage, or the types of career advice and support that are available in school or through your career adviser.

Make sure that they see the S5 Options information from school, and are aware of any options or career-related events you take part in.

- **Good luck with your future plans!**