

Helping your teenager with higher education choices

Many young people choose to go into higher education (HE) when they finish school or college at 18. Some opt to go straightaway, others may decide to take a gap year in order to earn some money, travel or do voluntary work. These are all worthwhile options that will give them valuable life experience and enhance their CV when they come to apply to university or for a job. Research consistently shows that people with a higher education qualification are likely to earn around 50% more than someone without one. Going to university or college also teaches young people valuable lessons about becoming independent adults.

The decision to go to university or college is one that will affect your teenager's future significantly, not least in the financial sense! There is information to help you with any questions you may have about money issues further on in this booklet. If your son or daughter has chosen the higher education route, there are a number of ways in which you can help them:

- Share your own experiences of university or college life if you went into HE yourself.
- Look on university websites, send for prospectuses and course leaflets and discuss these with your teenager.
- Find out when open days are being held and encourage your teenager to attend if possible. Information is available on **www.opendays.com**
- Your son or daughter should have the opportunity to attend the local HE Superfair in year 12 – try to ensure they go along. They'll be able to talk to representatives of lots of universities and colleges, attend seminar talks and pick up useful information, all on one day and in one place. Information on the event is available from their school, college or Connexions Personal Adviser.
- Look on the UCAS website at **www.ucas.com** for everything your son or daughter needs to know about applying to university or college and for a complete list of courses and institutions.
- Find out more about Aimhigher, an initiative designed to increase the number of young people going to university from families and communities with little or no experience of higher education. Look on the website at **www.aimhigher.ac.uk/essex** or call **01206 874310**.
- Connexions produces a series of information leaflets about all aspects of higher education for students in years 12 and 13. Make sure your son or daughter obtains their copies from their school or college.

There's more than one way for your son or daughter to gain a higher education qualification. They could study full-time for an **honours degree**, which would last for three or four years, although some, such as architecture or veterinary medicine, last longer. All degree courses provide in-depth understanding of a subject and lead to the development of skills that are highly valued by employers. These skills include analysing and evaluating evidence, problem-solving, team work, report writing and presentation. However, there are other options, for example if they're put off by the thought of student debt and want to combine learning with earning, or want to study from home. Some of the possibilities are:

- **Foundation degrees** – these are designed and delivered in partnership with employers to equip students with the relevant knowledge and skills needed for the workplace. Students could also progress to relevant professional qualifications

and honours degrees. They can be studied full-time, part-time, from the workplace or through distance learning, so they represent a very flexible alternative for your teenager.

- **BTEC Higher National Diploma/Higher National Certificate (HND/HNC)** – these are available in a variety of work-related subjects and can be taken full or part-time. They can lead straight into a career and in some sectors they are a stepping-stone on the route to professional qualifications. With further study they can be converted into degrees.