



Returning to education after brain injury

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Please help us to continue to provide free information to people affected by brain injury by making a donation at www.headway.org.uk/donate. Thank you.

Introduction

Returning to education after brain injury can be an excellent way of acquiring the skills and qualifications necessary for future employment. Studying can also provide pleasure and a sense of purpose, even for those who might not be able to return to work.

Reasons for returning to education include:

- Improving knowledge and skills
- Gaining qualifications
- Increasing your confidence
- Meeting new people
- Finding out what you can do and what you need support with

Returning to full-time education after brain injury can be a challenge. Intensive studying may exacerbate effects of brain injury such as fatigue or emotional problems. Difficulties with memory, attention and concentration, or executive dysfunction might also make it difficult to commit to full-time education. However, many people can still find a return to education to be a very rewarding experience, and there are ways in which it can be made easier. This factsheet has been written to offer you information on the services and schemes that are in place to support you with returning to education after brain injury.

Sources of support

Family and friends

If you are thinking about returning to education, you might wish to start off by discussing this idea with your family and friends. People who are close to you will be able to offer honest advice, as they will likely have an understanding of how your brain injury has affected you and whether returning to education is an achievable undertaking.

Local college Learning Support Advisor

If you are considering a course at a local college, ask to be put in touch with the Learning Support Advisor. The advisor's job is to help people who may experience difficulties with studying, and they are often knowledgeable about strategies that can help. They can also advise on suitable courses and any additional support that is available within the college.

Helpline: 0808 800 2244

Email: helpline@headway.org.uk

Website: www.headway.org.uk



Tutors

You will usually be allocated a tutor when enrolling in education. When first starting a course it can be useful to meet with the tutor and tell them about your injury and how it has affected you. They will often be able to provide extra help, such as providing handouts so you don't have to take notes, giving you advanced preparation for future study and allowing extra time for assignments.

Finding education opportunities

When enrolling in a course it is important to choose something that you will enjoy. You may also wish to consider a course that will help with finding a job later on. There are a number of online search tools and advisors that can help you with finding something suitable; some of these are listed below.

Learn Direct

This website can help you with searching for an online course that you can partake in through distance learning. This can be a particularly suitable option if you want to partake in education from home and work at your own pace. For more information, visit www.learndirect.com/.

The Open University

This is another organisation that offers a wide range of online courses that you can enrol on through distance learning. It also offers vocational qualifications, and has a full website section on supporting students with a disability. For more information visit www.open.ac.uk/courses/do-it/disability.

National Careers Service

This is a government led service that offers lots of online advice about how to find a course that is suitable for you, as well as offering telephone and face-to-face support. There is also a specific section on the website with advice for students with disabilities. For more information visit nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/advice/planning/Pages/disabilities.aspx.

College and University websites

You might decide that you wish to browse through courses on specific college or university websites. Many colleges and Universities will also offer information on their website about the support that they provide to disabled students.

Financial support for returning to education

There are a number of options available to get help with the costs of studying. Colleges often have discretionary funds that you can apply for and your local college will be able to tell you about any help they can provide. There are a number of additional forms of



financial support that you might wish to consider. These are outlined below:

Disabled Students Allowance

The UK government offers financial support to disabled students through the Disabled Students Allowance. You will usually need to undergo a needs assessment which will identify what you need financial support with and whether you are eligible for the allowance. For more information, visit www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas/what-youll-get.

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

This is a weekly allowance that is available to students in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

Grants

Some disciplines will offer their own grants, such as if you are applying for a NHS course or training to become a teacher. Family-action also have an Educational Grant Programme for people over the age of 14 who wish to participate in further education and are in financial hardship. For more information, visit www.family-action.org.uk/what-we-do/grants/educational-grants/.

Care to Learn

If you are considering returning to education and you have a child, Care to Learn can offer financial support with childcare costs while you are studying. For more information, visit www.gov.uk/care-to-learn/overview.

Residential support scheme

If you are considering moving away from home for education, you might be able to access financial support for the cost of term-time accommodation. Entitlement will depend on the qualification that you are undertaking and your personal circumstances. For more information, visit www.gov.uk/residential-support-scheme/overview.

Learner Support helpline

This helpline service can offer information and advice about financial support while studying. You can contact the helpline on 0800 121 8989.

The Directory of Social Change

An Educational Grants Directory is published by the Directory of Social Change and it is updated every year. The directory contains over 1,000 sources of financial help for students. It can be purchased online from the following website: www.dsc.org.uk/publication/the-guide-to-educational-grants-201617/.



General suggestions for returning to education after brain injury

- Remember that completing a course can take several months or years, and will likely be a long term and ongoing commitment. Moreover, many courses charge considerable fees, so you should do plenty of research beforehand about the support that will be available to you to assist you through the course.
- Take time with considering what kind of course you would be interested in doing, how much time you would be able to commit and what topics interest you. Try to pick something that you have a genuine interest in or something that could help with any future prospects. This can help to keep you motivated through the duration of the course.
- Consider enrolling in part-time education rather than full-time, as this will make workloads less demanding and will allow you to pace yourself with work.
- Consider distance learning, as this will allow you to study in the comfort of your own home rather than travelling to a college or university.
- If you have a particular college or university in mind, consider attending an open day. These are days that allow you to visit and explore the college or university buildings and meet tutors, and can therefore be very useful in getting a 'feel' of the environment.
- You might wish to also consider attending a 'taster session', in which you can try out a course, sometimes for a day or for a weekend, before you formally apply. You can search for taster sessions on the UCAS website at the following link: www.ucas.com/events/exploring-university/learn-about-uni-taster-course.
- Use coping strategies to manage workloads. For suggestions on coping strategies for different effects of brain injury, visit the Headway Information library at www.headway.org.uk/about-brain-injury/individuals/information-library/.
- Many courses nowadays require a considerable amount of computer use, so research adaptive technologies that can make working long hours on a computer easier for you.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help from a tutor, friends or family. It is particularly important to be open about any challenges that you are experiencing with a tutor, as they will be able to discuss ways in which you can be supported such as granting additional time for exams or extending deadlines.



Conclusion

Returning to education can be a rewarding alternative to returning to work, or can enhance your skills set if you are considering returning to work in the future. There is support available to help individuals with a disability with enrolling in and undertaking education and it is hoped that the information in this factsheet has been helpful to you with understanding what kind of support is available.

To discuss any issues raised in this factsheet, or to find details of our local groups and branches, please contact the Headway helpline free of charge on 0808 800 2244 (Monday - Friday, 9am-5pm) or by email at helpline@headway.org.uk.

You can also find out more information and contact details of groups and branches on our website at www.headway.org.uk/supporting-you.

First published 2010. Last reviewed 2016.

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