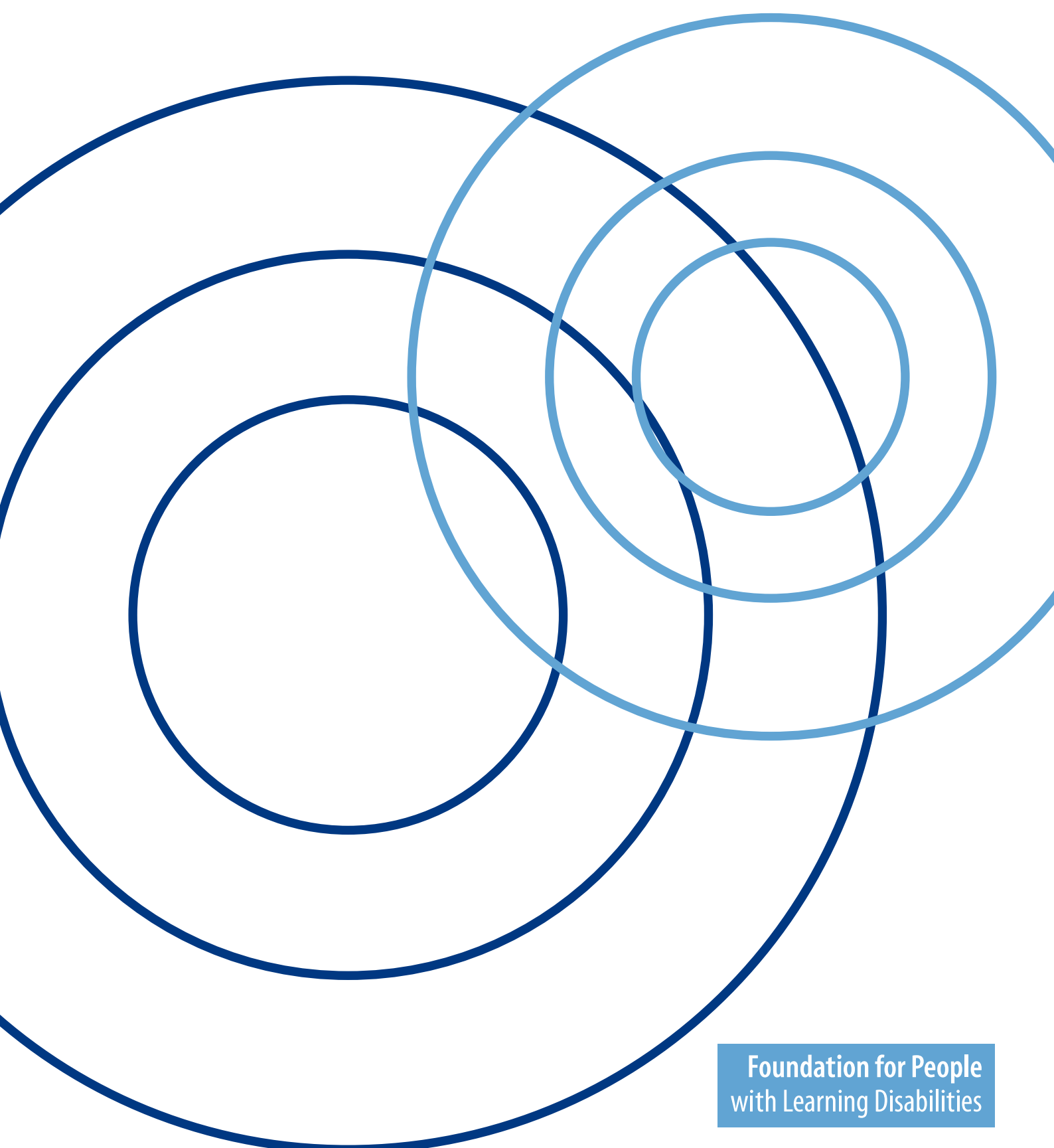


# Prepared for the future?

Information to prepare families when a young person with a learning disability is leaving school or college



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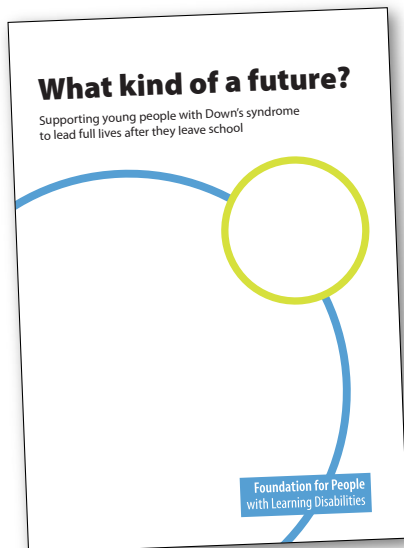
This project was funded through a legacy to improve the lives of people with Down's syndrome.

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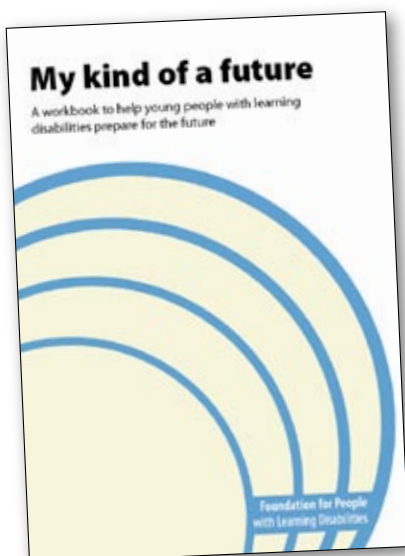
## Background

Leaving school or college and setting out on adult life is an exciting time for young people and their families. It also has its challenges and even more so if the young person has a learning disability. Through using this booklet we hope that families may find the process less daunting.



The Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities has done a lot of work in recent years to support young people and their families at this stage of their lives. In the first phase of the What Kind of a Future? project it talked with ten young people who have Down's syndrome and their families to find out what has enabled them to achieve fulfilling lives on leaving school. It produced a booklet in 2007, *What Kind of a Future?* for families and young people to look at together to get ideas about what the young person might do in their adult life.

In the second phase of the project we worked with young people with Down's syndrome because of the terms of the legacy that funded it. However, the project and these booklets are relevant to a lot of other young people. Based on what participants have told us about what is helpful to them, we have written this booklet specifically for parents, brothers and sisters and other family members who wish to help the young person to lead a fulfilling life on leaving school. We use quotes from some of the families who took part in the project and some examples from the Foundation's work. We also write about different aspects of UK Government policies about the transition from full time education to adult life, so that families can be informed about what they should expect. This booklet can either be read straight through or by using relevant sections as they are needed.



This booklet is accompanied by a workbook called *My Kind of a Future*. This easy read workbook helps young people to think through the issues they face as they leave school or college. These are available from the Foundation's website at: [www.learningdisabilities.org.uk/what-kind-of-a-future](http://www.learningdisabilities.org.uk/what-kind-of-a-future)

## Introduction



Parents, siblings and other relatives want the young person with learning disabilities in their family to have a fulfilling life as an adult, but sometimes finding out how to achieve this and what is available can be hard. This is where this booklet comes in. Sometimes professionals use jargon or technical language. We have put definitions of some of the terms they may use in boxes.

School has often provided a predictable and secure environment and there can be uncertainty about what the future holds. Some parents have fitted their own paid work around school hours and they wonder how they will be able to manage in the future.

*“As we’ve come towards the end of the educational system it’s all drying up, it’s the time when you need the input the most and it’s not there, there’s been nothing now from college in terms of transitional planning really, apart from that I did have this meeting with the social worker at Easter but that was it, you know.”*

There has been a big shift in recent years in the way things are done. In the past, following an assessment of what the young person needed they might have been offered a place in a service such as a day centre. They would have slotted into what was available. Now young peoples’ futures should be based on their individual needs and preferences.

Across the UK over recent years there have been policy documents that share similar values such as social inclusion and person centred approaches. Young people should be supported to think about whether they want to go to college, have a job, volunteer, go to a centre, participate in local sport, leisure and other community activities, where they want to live and about their health care. Practices vary across the four countries.

**In England** a 5 year strategy document, *Valuing People* was published in 2001. This has been followed by the three year strategy, *Valuing People Now* (2009).

**In Scotland** *The Same as You?* was published in 2000.

**In Wales** *Fulfilling the Promises in Wales* (2001) was followed up by a *Statement of Policy and Practice for Adults with a Learning Disability* in 2007.

**In Northern Ireland**, the independent Bamford review of services for people with learning disabilities and mental health problems included a specific report relating to people with learning disabilities, called *Equal Lives* (2005).

Parents and other family members may wonder what input they will have in planning for the future, now that the young person is becoming an adult. Recently there has been legislation about making decisions (Adults with Incapacity Act Scotland 2000 and the Mental Capacity Act 2005). Where a young person may be assessed as unable ('lacking capacity') to make a particular decision, such as where to live, then a decision must be made for their benefit in Scotland and in their 'best interests' in other parts of the UK. Family and friends must be consulted.

***Making Decisions: A guide for families, friends and other unpaid carers***  
[www.publicguardian.gov.uk/docs/making-decisions-opg602-1207.pdf](http://www.publicguardian.gov.uk/docs/making-decisions-opg602-1207.pdf)

***An Introduction to the Adults with Incapacity Act***  
[www.enable.org.uk/docs/An\\_Introduction\\_to\\_the\\_Adults\\_with\\_Incapacity\\_Act.pdf](http://www.enable.org.uk/docs/An_Introduction_to_the_Adults_with_Incapacity_Act.pdf)

Whether the young person has capacity or not for a particular decision, families will be involved in thinking with the young person about their future, as they would with other young people in their family.

The young person may also be eligible for additional benefits when they reach sixteen. You may want to check with the local benefits office or ring the Benefits helpline.

**Benefits helpline: telephone 0800 882200**