

# Councils may get duty to help disabled children learn until 18

By Sarah Cooper  
Children & Young People Now  
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Councils could be required by law to help disabled children stay on in education until 18.

The government is considering the move after pressure from disability campaigners, who fear disabled young people could be overlooked in plans to raise the education leaving age to 18.

The plans, due to take effect in 2015, will see councils take control of planning and funding for post-16 education provision from the Learning and Skills Council. But the Every Disabled Child Matters campaign said there is a danger that councils may overlook the need to help disabled young people stay on in education because many, such as those with Asperger's syndrome, are excluded from school before they reach 16.

In a meeting last week, officials from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) told Every Disabled Child Matters that it may introduce a duty on councils to take account of disabled children's needs when planning post-16 education services.

However, the officials also said the duty would not be included in the Education and Skills Bill, the legislation going through Parliament that would increase the education leaving age.

Instead, the government is looking at introducing the duty once councils take over control of planning post-16 education, which is expected to come into force by September 2010.



Steve Broach, campaign manager at Every Disabled Child Matters, said: "It is reasonable to wait until the funding moves over to councils. We support the principle of raising the education leaving age, but want to make sure this has the best possible impact on disabled children and young people. Having a duty would ensure local authorities increase the range of participation opportunities that would be available to disabled children after the age of 16."

A spokeswoman for the DCSF said the department accepted that disabled children need the right support and will continue to keep its policy under review as plans to raise the education leaving age go forward.

