

Supporting young people engage in vocational opportunities.

Purpose of document

A resource for supporting young people with brain injury to engage in vocational opportunities. It has been designed for brain injury rehabilitation clinicians working with young people who have sustained a brain injury.

The resource content brings together clinician perspectives and evidence from existing relevant literature. However, there is limited literature that explores the experiences of young people with brain injury transitioning from school to vocational options. Subsequently, the literature search was widened to include young people with disabilities as a diagnostic group. Despite there being more literature regarding adults with brain injury and work outcomes, young people have different needs and experiences that need consideration.

This resource includes links to:

- websites that provide pertinent information about young people transitioning into adulthood
- state and federal funded vocational supports and programs for young people with a disability.

Cognitive strategies that clinicians employ when working with adolescents with brain injury are not part of this resource.

Introduction

Behavioural, cognitive and physical changes following brain injury can impact school and education completion, and entry into the workforce. As young people have a potentially long career ahead of them, supporting them during their education and transition into the workforce increases their independence, builds individual financial security, and improves their mental health.

Young people may experience vulnerable periods and challenges when transitioning from childhood to adulthood. Sustaining a brain injury can add another layer of complexity to challenging times.

Common symptoms of a brain injury that can impact school and work are:

- Headaches
- Cognitive fatigue
- Reduced memory
- Difficulties with planning, organising and problem solving
- Reduced attention and concentration.

Young people with brain injury often need tailored support to return to school and transition to work-related roles. Work-related roles involve a commitment or responsibility, and examples include part-time work, volunteering and student responsibilities.

Transitioning into work-related roles may be challenging for young people with a brain injury because they may have had less access to opportunities to build their work skills compared to their peers without brain injury.

Working with young people with disability

The literature suggests young people with disabilities value:

- Age-appropriate and respectful communication
- Respect for their opinions and experiences
- Supports and resources that are relevant to their circumstances.
- Inclusion
- Accepting diversity
- Acknowledging and recognising their disability
- Transparency regarding language
- Equal power sharing between themselves and service providers

Young people with disabilities also identified barriers to accessing health care services including:

- Cost and transport
- Negative attitudes and assumptions made based on their age
- Fear of embarrassment
- Poor understanding of systems and services e.g Medicare, Centrelink, and funding agencies.

Additional barriers exist for young people with brain injury from priority populations. Priority populations can include those living in rural and remote areas, sexuality and/or gender-diverse people, those experiencing homelessness, refugees and asylum seekers, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders young people. Using a holistic approach is beneficial in supporting young people, particularly from priority populations.

Having a well-established positive social support network is important for young people with brain injury.

Supporting transition for young people with brain injury

Like transitioning from the paediatric system into the adult health system, transitioning from school for young people with brain injury can be complex. Effective transition planning as young people prepare to exit secondary education can address common barriers and improve post-school outcomes.

Supporting this transition may require interagency collaboration with schools, health services, vocational providers, other community organisations and families.

The table below contains strategies to support the successful transition of young people with brain injury from secondary education into vocational opportunities.

The 'student' in this table refers to a young person with a brain injury.

Strategy	Description and examples
Start the transition process early This involves educating and working with the student, student, family, school, other clinicians.	Link with the school careers adviser and or school counselling services to apply for relevant support for the student to complete their schooling.
	Involve parents and the school in discussions as well as the student.
	Discuss 'all the options' available to the student in preparation for when they complete their schooling.

Encourage and support the student to develop goals as they prepare to finish school.	Provide information and resources to students to help them make better-informed decisions.
	Share positive stories of other students' experiences who successfully transitioned from school.
The student's brain injury doesn't need to define their journey post-school.	Link the student and family with other students who have transitioned into other vocational opportunities.
Foster student choice and risk	Support the student to engage in independent and supported decision-making
	Provide the student with skills to advocate for themselves and provide details about their brain injury to other people.
Promote student inclusion. Isolation can be part of the 'disability experience'.	Encourage the student to remain involved in mainstream activities
	Focus on the student's abilities
	Teach social and self-regulation skills by providing community-based learning opportunities.
	Promote social engagement experiences to expand the student's opportunities and skills.
Support parents to be involved in the transition	Provide information to parents about available services and support to enhance the student's outcomes
	Provide parents with strategies to support the student's transition to further education and or work.

High school supports

School counsellor

School counselling staff support students by providing psychological counselling, assessment and intervention services.

School career and transition advisers

Career advisers help students explore their education and career options. They liaise with parents, teachers, employers, community agencies, as well as education and training providers to deliver career education programs and activities to students.

The transition adviser works in the following areas:

- Collaborates with school staff and students to develop programs for important transition points in and out of school
- Develops partnerships between schools, industry, business, government and non-government organisations, to provide identified students with authentic career learning opportunities.

[NSW Government Education Career Learning and Vocational Education](#)

Vocational Education and Training (VET)

Vocational Education and Training (VET) is a key stakeholder in student education. VET courses can help students prepare for further education, training, employment and lifelong learning.

Students in NSW have the option of studying VET courses at school or through TAFE NSW or other training providers.

[VET NSW Education Standards](#)

Work experience

Work experience for students with brain injury is valuable. Work experience provides an opportunity for the student to gain skills and experience and confirm whether they are suited to similar work-related roles. Work experience opportunities can determine whether the student's brain injury symptoms would impact their ability to perform the role, and which work-related roles best reflected and suited their capabilities.

Volunteering can help increase self-esteem, build social networks, and participation in society, develop new skills, and prepare for future employment.

A structured and collaborative approach to work experience opportunities ensures the work experience runs smoothly and efficiently, and students gain the most from their placement.

Vocational services

Vocational rehabilitation providers can offer vocational services to support a young person with a brain injury transition to work. Partnering with vocational providers can improve the young person's vocational program success. Consider referring to a vocational provider that has experience working with young people with brain injury.

Vocational services may include:

Vocational assessment

- Identifies suitable employment goals for the young person after leaving school. Their education, interests, work potential and personality are considered at the same time as their physical, psychological, and cognitive abilities.
- May recommend the young person completes further education including short courses, TAFE course, or university course to achieve their goal.
- May recommend job-seeking assistance and or vocational counselling.

Vocational counselling

- Assists a young person in adjusting to changing their work goal after their brain injury. It can prepare them for transitioning from school to a workplace and work role.
- Identifies new employment pathways that align with the young person's strengths, values, and interests.

Job seeking assistance

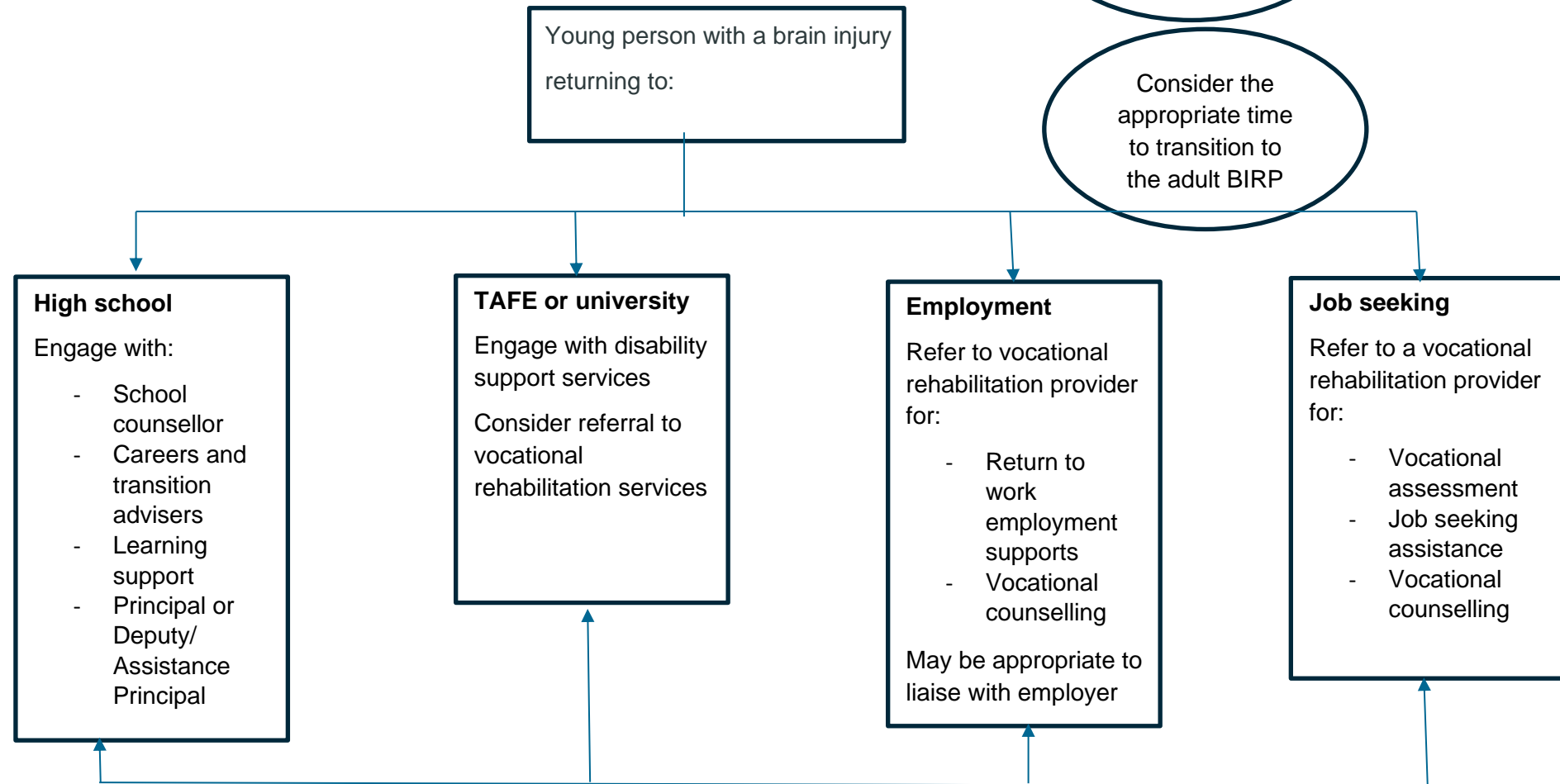
Increases employment-related skills through:

- Resume development
- Canvassing possible employers.
- Facilitating work experience opportunities

Employment supports

- Job customisation
- On-the-job training
- Managing complex needs at work
- Assessments related to the impact of brain injury on work e.g workplace assessment.

Vocational referral pathway



Flexible transition as the young person progresses through their vocational pathway.

Injury Disclosure

A young person starting a new job may need advice about whether to tell a prospective employer about their brain injury. Injury disclosure is a personal decision and there is no legal requirement for people to disclose their injury. However, if the young person's brain injury impacts their ability to complete their work tasks or if it impacts other people's safety in the workplace, they should be encouraged to disclose their injury.

When disclosing their injury the young person can decide how much information to disclose and how to disclose. Clinicians can provide strategies to young people about injury disclosure.

Refer to 'Talking about my brain injury' in the [client toolkit](#) which clinicians can use to guide the young person about injury disclosure.

Resources

ACI Brain Injury Rehabilitation Network

As part of the Vocational Intervention Program (VIP), toolkits have been developed to support clinicians, clients, employers, and vocational rehabilitation providers to successfully achieve return-to-work outcomes for people following a brain injury.

The toolkits include videos, client stories, checklists and other tools to facilitate effective partnerships in coordinating vocational rehabilitation.

[Vocational Intervention Program](#)

Trapeze

A partnership between ACI transition care network and the Sydney Children's Hospital Network.

<http://www.trapeze.org.au/>

Trapeze supports young people living with a complex chronic illness (such as brain injury) who are transitioning from the Sydney Children's Hospitals Network to the adult healthcare system. They deliver support and provide opportunities for advocacy and empowerment.

The website contains information for young people, parents and carers, and clinicians. Whilst this service is focused on transitioning in the healthcare system, they have fact sheets that provide information that is relevant for transitioning from school. Useful tips can be applied to this context.

Peer support

Chronic illness peer support (ChIPS) program

<https://www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/our-hospitals/kids-teenagers/services-for-teens/chronic-illness-peer-support-chips>

This service is **run by young people for young people** and offers psychosocial support through peer engagement for young people aged 12-25, living with a chronic health condition(s).

This program supports young people to build a community centered on shared experiences, delivered through a variety of peer-led content and projects including art exhibitions, music projects, magazine publications and social events. ChIPS also supports a platform for young people to access opportunities for youth and health advocacy through leadership initiatives.

Youth Health Resource Kit

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/kidsfamilies/youth/Pages/youth-health-resource-kit.aspx>

Whilst this resource kit is not brain injury specific, it assists workers in delivering effective and youth-friendly health services. The kit contains up-to-date and comprehensive information about youth health needs for young people (aged 12-24), including those who are most vulnerable. This kit also provides skills and practical steps people can use to respond effectively to young people.

Pre-planning Toolkit for people with an Acquired Brain Injury entering Higher Education or Vocational Education and Training

<https://www.adcet.edu.au/resource/9826/pre-planning-toolkit-acquired-brain-injury-entering-higher-education-or-vocational-education-and-training>

This toolkit is for people with an acquired brain injury entering Higher Education or Vocational Education and Training. It helps identify the supports a person may need, who is responsible for providing them, and how they can be accessed.

Supports for young people with brain injury

<https://www.brainline.org/children-tbi/teens-tbi>

They have resources specific for teens that include vocational services. But include services that are US specific.

<https://childbraininjurytrust.org.uk/factsheets/>

They have factsheets for working with young people with brain injury but don't include vocational supports

http://www.tbistafftraining.info/ToolkitA/S_24.html

The TBI staff training website has information about employment, training and tertiary education for people with brain injury.

Ticket to work

'Ticket to Work' purpose is to improve employment opportunities and outcomes for young people with disability. The initiative grew out of research that showed participation in work and career experience during secondary school, delivered via a collaborative approach, are key indicators of employment success for young people with disability.

<https://tickettowork.org.au/>

Provides support and strategies that improve the transition from work to school for students with disability.

Everyone can Work

<https://www.everyonecanwork.org.au/?s=adolescents>

Everyone can Work provides employment pathways for people with an intellectual disability. They have relevant information about the role of family and friends influencing employment outcomes.

NSW Government supports

- VET courses for students with a disability

<https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/k-10/diversity-in-learning/special-education/vet-courses-and-students-with-disability>

Federal Government supports

- School Leaver Employment Supports (SLES) is available to Year 12 school leavers who are eligible for the NDIS

<https://www.ndis.gov.au/providers/working-provider/school-leaver-employment-supports>

<https://www.afford.com.au/services/school-leaver-employment-supports/>

<https://breakthru.org.au/services/ndis-support/sles/>

- Supported employment opportunities – Australian Disability Enterprise (ADE)
<https://www.sunnyfield.org.au/services/employment/school-work-experience/>
They offer work experience programs for youth aged 16-18 years
- Youth Advisory Sessions
<https://www.workforceaustralia.gov.au/individuals/training/activities/youth-advisory>
- Transition to work
<https://www.workforceaustralia.gov.au/individuals/coaching/assistance/transition-to-work>
- Eligible school leaver guidelines
<https://www.dss.gov.au/freedom-of-information-operational-information-disability-employment-and-carers-group/des-eligible-school-leaver-guidelines>
- Apprenticeship support for a person with a disability
<https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/search/site/DAAWS>

References

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