



Developing young people  
for life and work



# A guide for parents and carers

of young people with  
additional needs

# A life-long adventure...

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) develops young people for life and work. It helps them to fulfil their potential and have a brighter future. For many young people, the impact can be life-changing.

## What is the DofE?

Anyone aged 14 to 24 can take part in three progressive levels of programmes leading to a Bronze, Silver or Gold DofE Award.

Whatever they choose to do for their DofE, they'll make friends for life, have amazing experiences and enhance their CV and college or university applications.

**Bronze** start in year 9 (13/14yrs)

**Silver** start in year 10 (14/15yrs)

**Gold** start at 16+ years old

Participants keep track of their progress and get their Awards approved by their Leaders through our online record keeping system, eDofE.

For young people with more complex needs they can be supported by their centre to use eDofE.

To achieve their Bronze DofE Award, young people need to complete their own programme of activities in these four sections:



### Volunteering

From helping at an after-school kids' club or running an awareness campaign to raising money for a charity or working on a recycling project, young people can get out and help others.

### Physical

From wheelchair sports to swimming, football or yoga, participants take part in a sport, dance or fitness activity, showing improvement over time.

### Skills

Participants learn a new skill or develop existing talents. From DJ'ing and science to drama and zoology, the sky's the limit!

### Expedition

Young people are supported with planning, training for and completing an adventurous journey. They get to choose how to travel – it can be by bike, boat, wheelchair, walking or horse riding. The DofE Leader will assess how young people can be supported to complete their expedition.

### Residential (Gold level only)

Participants take part in a shared activity away from home with people they don't know. E.g: a residential summer camp, joining a conservation project or a week away learning a new interest.

## Why should they do their DofE?

The flexible nature of the DofE means that every young person, regardless of any additional needs, can face their personal challenges to achieve their DofE Award.

It is important to remember that no young person is pushed beyond their limits and every programme is designed to reflect their individual starting point, abilities and interests. By participating in the DofE, core skills such as self-esteem, independence and the ability to adapt to new environments can be developed outside of the classroom. This is because every section of the DofE gives young people the opportunity to be independent, grow in confidence and be challenged as an individual.

One of the most exciting things about the DofE is that young people can achieve at the same level as their mainstream peers – an award which is recognised by potential employers across the country. So, when you support your child's pursuit of their Duke of Edinburgh's Award, you're investing in their development and future. You can expect to see them develop in the following areas as they work through their DofE programme:

- Initiative
- Organisation Skills
- New friendships
- Self-belief and self-confidence
- Leadership and teamworking skills
- A real awareness of their strengths
- A sense of identity and responsibility
- Problem solving, presentation and communication skills
- The ability to learn from and give to others in the community.

## How long does it take?

Each section must be done for a minimum period of time. Whilst timescales are given in months, participants need to give a regular commitment averaging at least an hour a week during this time. To achieve an Award young people must show persistence, commitment and personal development.

They may easily fit their DofE activities around their school, college or work commitments, carrying them out in their own personal time.

They may choose to use an activity they are already doing as a DofE activity – or go for something new.

- Bronze usually takes around 6-9 months to complete.
- Silver usually takes around 6-12 months to complete.
- Gold usually takes 12-18 months to complete.

Times are reduced if young people have achieved the previous level of Award.



Growing up with Down's Syndrome and diabetes meant that Jeremy wasn't always able to do the same exciting things as his three siblings. So when Jeremy was offered the chance to do his DofE, he jumped at the chance and achieved his Bronze Silver and Gold Awards.

## Costs

To take part in the DofE, participants pay a nominal fee for a Welcome Pack, which includes their DofE Participation Place. This fee is their contribution towards the charity's costs in running their DofE programme.

The fee represents only a proportion of the overall cost of participation/running the DofE, which is supported by the funds raised by the DofE charity. The current charge for participation can be found at [DofE.org/costs](https://DofE.org/costs).

Your Licensed Organisation and/or centre may add a small administration fee to this amount and they **must** explain this clearly to you. There will also be costs for the activities and expedition, depending on the choice.

## Supervision

### DofE Leaders and Expedition Supervisors

Supervisors undergo safeguarding and other checks and training through their Licensed Organisation to ensure young people have access to a high quality programme. For some young people it is recognised they may need variations and increased adult supervision when needed is permissible or a 'buddy' within the group.

## Can you help?

Whatever activities your child has chosen to pursue for their DofE programme, they will need your support and guidance to help them through. You may also need to encourage them to keep their eDofE pages up-to-date.

### Volunteer

You may feel that you have other skills to offer. In which case, why not volunteer with your local DofE group?

- Talk to your local DofE Leader/Co-ordinator
- Contact a Licensed Organisation via [DofE.org/where](https://DofE.org/where)
- Email us: [info@DofE.org](mailto:info@DofE.org)

“

I love seeing participants' smiles when they achieve something new. Small steps are huge achievements for our young people. DofE is accessible to all!”

Hannah, DofE leader

To find out where the DofE is run near you, ask your child's teacher or youth leader, or go to [DofE.org/where](https://DofE.org/where).

## Local contact

For more detailed information visit: [DofE.org/parents](https://DofE.org/parents) or ask for the Parent's guide



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