

Supporting students with a visual impairment in further education.

When supporting young people with a visual impairment in their transition into further education there are some key organisations offering support and guidance to students. This guide aims to highlight the support available for students in this phase of their transition by offering advice on accessible admissions, information on funding as well as the legal responsibilities of the institutions in relation to meeting the support needs of students with a visual impairment.

Contents:

- Supporting disabled learners
- Creating an accessible application process.
- Accessing available funding
- Legal Responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010
- Disability Alliance

1. Supporting disabled learners

Colleges and sixth forms have to make 'reasonable adjustments' so that any learners with a disability or impairment are not disadvantaged. There are all sorts of support and equipment that a college might offer and the college will look at what works best for an individual. Some examples of support may include a support teacher or worker, or a sighted guide, materials in alternative formats such as Braille or large print, assistive computer technology eg closed-circuit television, computers with speech synthesisers and magnification etc. They may also be able to offer assistance during assessments or exams, so that all learners are assessed fairly. The type of support available varies between colleges and it is important that young people are encouraged to contact and visit any further education establishments as early as possible to discuss their requirements and confirm the college will meet their needs. Although there is no longer a legal requirement for colleges to produce a Disability Equality Statement, many colleges will still have a DES or a single equality scheme which

you may wish to review. This sets out how it plans to promote equal opportunities for disabled people.

The college's Learning Support Adviser or Special Education Needs Co-ordinator will be able to offer further details on the support offered within a specific college.

For further information on Disability Support in Further Education visit www.direct.gov.uk or follow this link: [Disability support in further education](#)

For further information on what support students are entitled to at college in relation to the Equality Act 2010 visit www.direct.gov.uk or follow this link: [Learning and your rights](#)

2. Creating an accessible application process.

Clear guidelines for admissions staff

In selecting students, institutions should ensure equitable consideration of all applicants. Procedures for admissions should be drawn up with clear guidelines as to any action to be taken when a person declares a disability. They should be communicated to those operating the Clearing system if this applies.

Disclosing a disability and other needs

Letters and forms for completion, which are sent to all prospective and future students, should provide an opportunity to encourage disclosure of a disability, any support needs or additional requirements.

Preferred medium for communications

On the initial letter, there should also be the opportunity for the student to indicate their preferred medium (eg large print, disk, BSL) for future communications. Any information received should be noted and acted upon (such as always using the preferred medium for future communications or arranging for an interpreter to be present at interview).

Enrolment and other forms should be designed to facilitate their completion by all students. Completion by electronic means, if possible in advance, should be considered. There should be the opportunity to declare a disability by means of carefully worded questions on the forms, together with explanation as to the advantages of declaration and how the information will be used.

Careful wording about disabilities

Some people do not consider themselves as having a disability, especially those with Specific Learning Difficulties. The wording of questions should therefore be considered as well as the nature of the provider's response once a loss of vision and/or health condition is declared. You should ensure that further opportunities exist for Specific Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities to be reported and/or detected through, for example, Personal Tutors, Learning Support, Open Days and course or provider documentation.

Advertise the available support and confidentiality

Publicising the support available, and re-iterating that confidentiality will be observed, are positive steps to encourage disclosure. This could be supported by making available information and advice about relevant legislation, so students are aware of their legal entitlements.

Stress the benefits of disclosure

The benefits of disclosure and how the information will be used must be clearly stated as well as the provider's position when known information is withheld, i.e. provision of 'reasonable adjustments' for students who do not disclose a disability. There should also be a statement assuring confidentiality at all points where disclosure could occur.

Using information systems

Institutional information systems should monitor the applications, admissions, academic progress and nature of impairment of disabled students.

If an applicant indicates they are blind or partially sighted on application, the provider should ensure that a system is in place to

inform the Disability Adviser (or named contact). The Disability Adviser or a designated representative should then contact the applicant directly to discuss any access arrangements or concerns they may have in relation to their studies.

Staff development

There should be specific and comprehensive staff development sessions relating to Part 6 Chapter 2 of the Equality Act 2010 for admissions tutors and administrative staff.

For more information on legal responsibilities including the Equality Act 2010, see legal responsibilities section in this guide.

3. Accessing available funding

Colleges receive funding in order to provide reasonable adjustments and make sure learners with a disability or impairment have the support they require. In colleges this is called Additional Learning Support (ALS).

In England there are two funding bodies;

- [Young Peoples Learning Agency \(YPLA\)](#) which funds young Learners between 16 and 19 years old or up to the age of 25 if the young learner has a Section 139a Learning Difficulty Assessment.
- [Skills Funding Agency \(SFA\)](#) which funds adult learners over 19 or 25 if they are not subject to an assessment

Local Authorities have a duty to provide appropriate education and training for young people up to 19 and up to 25 for those with a Section 139a Learning Difficulty Assessment.

Further information on Funding further education for disabled students in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland can be found through the [Disability Alliance website](#) in the 'publications' section or by contacting the [Skills Funding Agency \(SFA\)](#) and [Young Peoples Learning Agency \(YPLA\)](#) directly.

4. Legal responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010

It is unlawful for schools and other education providers to discriminate against disabled pupils, students and adult learners. Find out how the Equality Act 2010 has increased protection for disabled learners against unfair treatment.

To learn more about the Equality Act visit [RNIB: Equality Act 2010](#) or visit Direct.gov.uk: [Learning your rights: The Equality Act](#)

5. Disability Alliance

The disability charity Skill: National Bureau for Disabled Students closed in April 2011. Disability Alliance, in partnership with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, will follow on from Skill and will deliver a wider range of information and advice to ensure disabled students have specialist support in making decisions about their education, training and employment choices after leaving school.

You can download a variety of factsheets for disabled students and advisors including information on making Reasonable Adjustments to ensure disabled students can access opportunities; funding further and higher education for disabled students; and applying for Disabled Students' Allowances.

Visit www.disabilityalliance.org/skill.htm for further information.

6. Useful publications

- **Your future, your vision, your choice: Bridging the gap**
RNIB have produced a series of transition guidance for young blind or partially sighted people aged 14 to 25 years. These guides outline the support and services available to assist young people in England, Scotland, Wales and

Northern Ireland throughout their journey from school, through further and higher education and on into employment. The guide aims to empower young people, enabling them to make their own informed choices about their future. www.rnib.org.uk

- **Disability Alliance Publications**
Disability Alliance produces a range of information booklets that focus on issues that affect studying or looking for work as a disabled person. www.disabilityalliance.org
- **Placement Information: Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities at Independent Specialist Providers 2010/11** This publication is produced by the Young Peoples' Learning Agency and is available at on the [YPLA website Publications section](#).
- **Preparing for adult life and transition - England and Wales** This guide aims to bring together some of the main issues that parents and young people need to think about during this time. [Contact a Family website Publications Section](#)

7. Useful contacts

Benefits Enquiry Line for people with disabilities, carers and representatives

2nd Floor, Red Rose House, Lancaster Road, Preston
Lancashire PR1 1HB
England, Scotland, Wales:
Telephone: 0800 882 200
Textphone: 0800 243 355
Email: BEL-Customer-Services@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)

Castle View House, East Lane, Runcorn WA7 2GJ
Website: www.bis.gov.uk

The government department with overall responsibility for further education.

Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS)

3rd Floor, Pillar MO1/02, Welsh Assembly Government
Cathays Park, Cardiff CF10 3NQ
Email: Dcells.enquiries@wales.gsi.gov.uk
Website: www.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills

Department for Employment and Learning (Northern Ireland) (DELNI)

Adelaide House, 39-49 Adelaide Street, Belfast BT2 8FD
Telephone: 028 9025 7777
Email: del@nics.gov.uk
Website: www.delni.gov.uk

DirectGov

Website: www.direct.gov.uk
Information on a wide range of government services, including, education, training, employment and welfare benefits.

Directory of Social Change

24 Stephenson Way, London NW1 2DP
Tel: 0845 077 7707
Fax: 020 7391 4804
Email: publications@dsc.org.uk
Website: www.dsc.org.uk

Education and Library Boards (Northern Ireland)

Details of local education and library boards are available on the DELNI website at:
www.delni.gov.uk/index/further-and-higher-education/further-education/fe-education-and-library-boards.htm

Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)
www.equalityhumanrights.com

Contains a guide for FE providers in relation to the Equality Act 2010. Visit the EHRC website or follow this link: [Guidance for Further and Higher Education providers.](#)

Go Wales

Website: www.gowales.co.uk

Offers services to help students and graduates in Wales including work placements, work experience and funding for training.

Jobcentre Plus

Website: <http://jobseekers.direct.gov.uk>

Provides services to jobseekers including vacancy search, Access to Work and Disability Employment Advisers. 21

Learndirect Scotland

Telephone: 0808 100 9000

Website: www.learndirectscotland.com

Provides information and advice on learning, including help with finding a course.

Next Step

Telephone: 0800 100 900

Website: <http://nextstep.direct.gov.uk>

Information and advice on jobs, careers, learning and training for people 19 or over in England. 23

NI Direct

Website: www.nidirect.gov.uk

Information on a wide range of government services in Northern Ireland, including, education, training, employment and welfare benefits.

Scottish Funding Council

Donaldson House, 97 Haymarket Terrace

Edinburgh EH12 5HD

Tel: 0131 313 6500

Email: info@sfc.ac.uk

Website: www.sfc.ac.uk

Skills Funding Agency

Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road, Coventry CV1 2WT

Telephone: 0845 377 5000

Email: info@skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk

Website: <http://skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk>

Translink

Telephone: 0845 600 0049

Email: callcentre@translink.co.uk

Provide free and concessionary bus passes to disabled people in Northern Ireland.

The Young People's Learning Agency

Please note, subject to legislation the YPLA will become the Education Funding Agency.

Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road, Coventry CV1 2WT

Learner Support helpline

Tel: 0800 121 8989

Email: enquiries@ypla.gov.uk

Website: www.ypla.gov.uk

8. Further guides

The full **Further and Higher education** series of guides includes:

- Further Education
- Higher Education

In addition, you may also be interested in the following series of guides, all of which are relevant to children, young people and families:

- Supporting Early Years Education series
- Removing barriers to learning series
- Complex needs series
- Further and Higher education series

We also produce a Teaching National Curriculum guide, and a number of stand-alone guides, on a range of topics. Please contact us to find out what we have available.

All these guides can be found in electronic form at rnib.org.uk/educationprofessionals. For print, braille, large print or audio, please contact the RNIB Children, Young people and Families (CYPF) Team at cypf@rnib.org.uk

For further information about RNIB

Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), and its associate charity Action for Blind People, provide a range of services to support children with visual impairment, their families and the professionals who work with them.

RNIB Helpline can refer you to specialists for further advice and guidance relating to your situation. RNIB Helpline can also help you by providing information and advice on a range of topics, such as eye health, the latest products, leisure opportunities, benefits advice and emotional support.

Call the Helpline team on 0303 123 9999 or email helpline@rnib.org.uk

If you would like regular information to help your work with children who have vision impairment, why not subscribe to "Insight", RNIB's magazine for all who live or work with children and young people with VI.

Information Disclaimer

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activities should be done with the full knowledge of the medical condition of the child and with guidance from the QTVI and other professionals involved with the child. RNIB does not represent or warrant that the information accessible via the website, including Effective Practice Guidance is accurate, complete or up to date.

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