

## **Guide to Transition, Further and higher education**

This guide contains information on:

- how funding works and how to get support at college or university
- how to apply for university Disabled Student Allowances
- contacts for local colleges and universities

### **What support can your local college offer?**

Your local college should be able to provide support to you if you require it so talk to the disability/special educational needs part of the college about what support you can access whilst you are studying.

Some young adults need more support than the college gets funding to provide. If you have considerable needs you may need an EHCP.

### **What is an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP)?**

The Children and Families Act 2014 introduced a new system of support for children and young adults with special educational needs.

Young people with considerable special educational (and health/social care) needs from birth to 25 years of age may be given an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP).

Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) have replaced Statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN).

An EHCP is a legal document that contains a written statement of all the support you require at school or college. The college must provide the support that is written in your EHCP.

An EHCP can last until you are 25 years old if you need it to last that long.

Those with EHCPs will be offered personal budgets to buy services.

EHCPs are only for schools and colleges – not university. If you need extra support at University you can apply for Disabled Student Allowances (see later section).

Not everyone with autism /Asperger syndrome gets an EHCP

To get an assessment of your education needs (called an EHCP or EHC assessment) you require to have considerable extra support needs that the college cannot provide without extra funding and a clear written plan to meet your needs. To get an EHCP you and the college usually have to provide evidence to your local council (eg Bristol City Council) that your needs are not being met by your school, sixth form, or college.

## How do I ask for an EHCP?

To make a formal request for an assessment for an EHCP write your letter to:

Special Educational Needs (SEN) Team  
City Hall, College Green, Bristol BS99 7EB  
[sen@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:sen@bristol.gov.uk)

0117 922 3700

In your letter you will need to outline the reasons why you think you require an EHCP.

## Where can I get more advice locally?

Talk to a Bristol Autism Spectrum Service member of staff on 01275 796 204.

Or contact - Supportive Parents for more info and advice

[www.supportiveparents.org.uk](http://www.supportiveparents.org.uk)

0117 989 7725

Or phone the National Autistic Society Education Rights Line on 0808 800 4102

## Further education - funding for course fees

- Funding for further education (FE) courses is through your local authority (via the Education Funding Agency)
- You can get free FE up to the age of 19
- If you are over 19 (and do not have a EHCP) and are in receipt of ESA/JSA you should be able to get help with fees for a FE course
- You can usually get your fees paid if you are studying up to a level 3 qualification (eg A level) until you are 25 years of age (there are a few exceptions check with your local college)
- Local authorities sometimes justify not continuing funding education provision up to 25 even if someone has a EHCP eg if they think the person is not progressing

## Further education - funding for disability support

- Colleges get money from local authority which is called Additional Learning Support (ALS)
- This could include audio recording equipment, scribe, reader, additional teaching, support worker, exam – access arrangements, staff training
- Talk to learning support/disability section of the college and find out what support is on offer

## Further education - funding for low income students

This could be help with travel costs, buying books or other course materials.

### If you are aged 16-19

- 16-19 Bursary Fund (apply to college, school or training provider)

- If you are 'vulnerable' you may get about £1200/year, for example, if you are getting both ESA and PIP.

### **If you are aged 19+**

- Discretionary Fund may be available (apply to college, school or training provider)

### **Further education - getting extra support because of disability**

- If you are struggling at local FE college, request more money through the college/local authority explaining that the alternatives are either you dropping out or going to an independent specialist college. Not a common route but worth making the argument if it applies to your situation. Talk to the college and the person in Bristol City Council who deals with these situations - Jackie.ong@bristol.gov.uk

### **Independent specialist provider colleges (ISPs)**

- Local authority will only consider a specialist college placement if they consider through the new EHCP identifies that a learner's needs cannot be met by any of the local further education colleges
- For example your son/daughter has high anxiety, requires very small teaching groups, help with care and medical needs that the local colleges cannot provide
- [www.natspec.org.uk](http://www.natspec.org.uk) for more details of specialist colleges
- [www.autism.org.uk/colleges](http://www.autism.org.uk/colleges) for more details of specialist autism colleges

### **Things to consider before starting university or college**

- **What to study?** (check the syllabus will suit you and the things you are interested in, do you have to take exams or do course work or both, will you be able to cope with having tutorials – find out in advance how tutorials work, will the course require you to do any group work – if so will you be able to manage this?)
- **Where to study?** (you may wish to move away from home and go to university but consider this very carefully. It may be better to stay local to family if possible; also consider Open University)
- **What preparation will be required before you start the course?** (visits to the campus, know where everything is, how to use the library, café, quiet room, counsellor, getting support set up early, can you cook for yourself and manage local transport links?- will you require a taxi or escort? Can you cope with lectures/tutorials in small groups? Do you tend to ignore emails? If so you may miss vital information about the course/campus?)
- **What level of social support is available so you don't feel isolated?** (what is offered to help deal with isolation? eg groups and societies, for example at Bristol and UWE there are various support groups so talk to the Disability Officers listed below)
- **What type of academic support will you require?** (for example, you may just need someone to meet you after lessons to tidy/ organize files and help prioritise work, or you may require someone to be with you during classes)
- **How many hours of academic support might you require?** (for example, 3 hours a week may be enough for some people)

- **Learning support/ Disability officer?** (make sure you have their contact telephone number and email) For a list of all disability officers in higher education (universities) see [www.dsa-qag.org.uk](http://www.dsa-qag.org.uk). Contacts for Local colleges and universities are listed below
- **Will you need help with transport in order to get to and from college or university?** (Talk to college early – they may be able to advise but Local authorities must publish a Transport Policy Statement – statutory guidance, phone 0117 903 7671 or 7672 for help)

## Applying for University

This is an increasingly popular choice for people with Asperger syndrome

Explain that you have a disability such as Asperger syndrome in the UCAS application form and tell the Disability Officer of the university you intend to go, as soon as possible.

You should apply for Disabled Students Allowances (DSA) when you apply for grants/loans. You must be doing a higher education (eg degree course) and have evidence of a diagnosis of autism /Asperger syndrome (eg letter from the person who diagnosed you or from Bristol Autism Spectrum Service if we diagnosed you).

To apply for money to pay for your course and living expenses you will need to apply for student loans and grants.

**Loans need to be paid back whereas grants don't.**

Apply for grants/loans/DSAs early as the process can take 14 weeks (phone dsa-qag for advice 0141 548 8006 or email [administration@dsa-qag.org.uk](mailto:administration@dsa-qag.org.uk). Their website is [www.dsa-qag.org.uk](http://www.dsa-qag.org.uk) and gives clear advice for students with a disability applying for DSA. You may also wish to get Bridging the Gap from Student Finances England. [www.gov.uk/studentfinance](http://www.gov.uk/studentfinance) 0845 300 5090.

Once Student Finances England have agreed to pay the DSA they will give you the go-ahead to have your learning and study needs assessed.

The next step is to book an assessment of your learning and study needs (this will determine how much support you require and therefore how much money you will get).

This assessment of your needs is likely to be at the local Access Centre - University of West of England [awe@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:awe@uwe.ac.uk) 0117 328 3396. But there are a few other local assessment centres- see Home page of [www.dsa-qag.org.uk](http://www.dsa-qag.org.uk) (enter your postcode and it will give you a list of assessment centres).

The assessment centre may decide that you need help with:

- studying skills (a mentor who can help you get your course work and study for exams effectively)
- equipment to record lectures/tutorials
- a non-medical helper – a mentor who can help with the social side of university (eg at UWE this is provided through the Well-being service)

Disabled Student Allowances do not need to be re-paid and are not means tested. You need to re-apply before each academic year. The Allowances could be for a general allowance, specialist equipment, non-medical helper and/or disability related travel costs.

DSA pays for the supplier of the equipment or service.

### **Special Support Grant**

You may be eligible for Special Support Grant of approximately £3000/year as well as the ordinary student maintenance loan. (if you get a Special Support Grant it won't reduce the amount of maintenance loan you can claim.)

### **Student debt**

Universities can charge tuition fees of up to £9000/year, though some will only be about £5000/year.

Consider student debt - though you don't pay back until earning £16,910 before tax per year. Once your income reaches this amount you pay 9% of your income each month (check the latest rules on paying back student loans, as they do change).

### **What happens if you cannot stay at university and need to take a year out?**

If you drop out after one year, it is may be possible to agree a one-year break.

If you drop out during the first year it should be possible to request that year's funding again either to continue the course or start another one (Student Finance England will usually pay for up to four years of higher education on an undergraduate course).

You might wish to request that you are given accommodation on campus for the duration of your course. This will be one less thing to worry about during your second and third year.

## Further information and help

[www.education.gov.uk/edubase](http://www.education.gov.uk/edubase) - gives listing of all schools and colleges in Bristol, South Glos... and rest of UK

## Contact details for local colleges and universities

### City of Bristol College

There are college sites at Ashley Down, College Green, and other places. This is the main college for Bristol and runs courses from Foundation level through to degree courses.

[Tony.leo@cityofbristol.ac.uk](mailto:Tony.leo@cityofbristol.ac.uk)

Ashley Down  
0117 312 5785

[Gary.Scott-Mullen@cityofbristol.ac.uk](mailto:Gary.Scott-Mullen@cityofbristol.ac.uk)

College Green  
0117 312 2801

[Annette.Spear@cityofbristol.ac.uk](mailto:Annette.Spear@cityofbristol.ac.uk)

South Bristol Skills Academy  
0117 312 5489

Bev Weekes/Bev [Weeks@cityofbristol.ac.uk](mailto:Weeks@cityofbristol.ac.uk)

Parkway Centre (engineering centre)  
0117 312 3412

[Denise.Dickens@cityofbristol.ac.uk](mailto:Denise.Dickens@cityofbristol.ac.uk)

Transitions Co-ordinator  
07500 105750

### South Glos and Stroud College (what was Filton College)

[www.sgscol.ac.uk/als](http://www.sgscol.ac.uk/als)

Additional Learning Support 0117 909 2293  
Disability support 0117 909 2307

### St Brendan's Sixth form college

Contact Learning Support Manager Bernice Weiss

[bw@stbrn.ac.uk](mailto:bw@stbrn.ac.uk) for more information.

Main college number is 0117 977 77 66.

### University of the West of England (UWE)

[www.uwe.ac.uk/disability](http://www.uwe.ac.uk/disability)

### Bristol University

Disability Advice

[disability-@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:disability-@bristol.ac.uk)

0117 331 0444

## **Bath Spa University**

01225 875521 or 01225 876 543  
[studentsupport@bathspa.ac.uk](mailto:studentsupport@bathspa.ac.uk)

## **Bath University**

Student Services  
01225 38 55 38  
[disabilityadvice@bath.ac.uk](mailto:disabilityadvice@bath.ac.uk)

## **WEA - Adult learning courses**

The WEA have about 190 courses /year for adults in Bristol. Courses have fees but are free to anyone on means tested benefits.

Carol Jones 0117 916 6500  
[cjones@wea.org.uk](mailto:cjones@wea.org.uk)  
[www.wea-sw.org.uk](http://www.wea-sw.org.uk)

## **National Careers Service**

0800 100 900

## **What if you want to study but need more support than the local college can offer?**

Some young people cannot cope with a campus environment with big class sizes and the social aspect of learning.

If they could learn but would require a lot of social and other support you might wish to discuss with Learning Partnership West about a Independent Specialist Provider such as Ruskin Mill college [www.rmt.org](http://www.rmt.org) or Priory colleges (such as Farleigh College in Frome and Swindon [www.priorygroup.com](http://www.priorygroup.com) ).

For a full list of Independent Specialist Providers look at [www.natspec.org.uk](http://www.natspec.org.uk)

For some young people who cannot cope with even a specialist college environment but can learn at home there appears to be a gap in funding. If you are not “on roll” at a school or college it is harder to access any funding.

However you should talk to local colleges and see if they can assist or else talk to Bristol City Council SEN Inclusion team 0117 922 3700 or email [jackie.ong@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:jackie.ong@bristol.gov.uk) about your options before paying for courses yourself especially if the young person is under 18.

If you cannot get any funding you can do GCSEs or A levels through National extension college [www.nec.ac.uk](http://www.nec.ac.uk) 0800 389 2839

Nisai is a college with experience of learners who have social anxiety related difficulties and prefer therefore to learn online.

[www.nisai.com](http://www.nisai.com)

## What if you want to study but prefer to learn online rather than at the local college?

There are a number of free higher education courses that do not have the pressure of deadlines and exams.

The following sites are essentially free and are supported with free software tools, or free temporary software licences. There are some options for paying and getting something back for it - but all are usable free and the additional value either comes from extra coaching or getting a full degree.

<https://www.coursera.org/>

Coursera Mission: "*Coursera is an education platform that partners with top universities and organizations worldwide, to offer courses online for anyone to take, for free.*"

<https://www.udacity.com/>

Udacity Mission: With Udacity they are looking to provide "*online education that bridges the gap between academic and real world skills. Taught by industry leaders excited to share their expertise from companies such as Google, Facebook, Cloudera, and MongoDB.*"

<https://www.edx.org/>

All of these three are consortia - including top universities. The first, Coursera, is led out of Stanford - the second, Udacity, is fronted by Google but includes consortia with companies such as Google, Nvidia, AT&T etc. and academic institutions too. With Udacity, when moving out of the free domain into paying, you can even get a masters degree from Georgia Tech. Finally, the later one of these three links above is led out of MIT and Harvard.

There is always the iTunes University as another portal solution to academic online courses is:

<https://www.apple.com/uk/education/ipad/itunes-u/>

<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/itunes-u/id490217893?mt=8>

Great for getting skills from university courses such as for programming iPhones and iPads etc.

Where this is a portal the universities themselves offer lots of courses, such as MIT's Open Course Ware or Stanford's online courses.

The UK is following on with a consortia led out of the Open University, but is much newer and less established.

<https://www.futurelearn.com/>

For younger audiences I would also suggest Khan Academy.

<https://www.khanacademy.org/>

Khan Academy is a non-profit educational organization created in 2006 by educator Salman Khan to provide "*a free, world-class education for anyone, anywhere.*"