



Education

Factsheet No. 3

The Disability Foundation is a Registered Charity Number 1076761

Education is key to full inclusion in today's society, especially for people with disabilities. This factsheet is divided into five parts and focuses on providing a quick overview of the different options and opportunities that you or your child has:

- Primary & Secondary Education
- Further Education
- Higher Education
- Access & the DDA
- Money Matters

Primary and Secondary Education

Making sure your child gets the best education available is a way to improve his or her chances later in life.

Inclusive Education?

One issue you might want to consider before choosing a school for your child, is whether you would want them to go to a mainstream school or a special school.

Many parents feel that their child will benefit the most from playing and learning alongside non-disabled children and that non-disabled children might also benefit from the experience. Other parents are worried about how good the understanding of and provisions for their child's disability will be in mainstream schools and so choose to place their child in a special school.

When considering a mainstream school for your child it is important that you consider their understanding of Special Educational Needs (SEN). Do they have any experience? How well are other disabled children doing in this school? How is access in the school, and does the school seem willing to work towards fully including your child in all aspects of school life, such as field trips and school plays? Communication is the key, whether you choose a mainstream or a special school.

Statement of Special Educational Need

A child is considered having Special Educational Needs (SEN) if he/she has greater difficulty in learning than other children of the same age or if the child has a disability that prevents or hinders access to usual educational facilities. If you think that your child might have such needs you should ask for your Local Education Authority (LEA) to assess your child and have them write a Statement of Special Educational Needs. It is important that this is done as early as possible and if you already know before school age that your child has SEN you can ask for an assessment as early as the age of three.

A SEN Statement outlines all the additional support needed to meet your child's SEN and comes into force as soon as it is produced. The LEA must provide the additional resources needed and the school governors must ensure your child receives all the support detailed in the statement.

When putting together the statement with your LEA remember that you and your child are the 'expert witnesses' and your input is absolutely vital to the successful outcome of the whole process.

Getting Support

The Parent Partnership Services are financed by local councils and work to promote partnerships between parents and carers of children with special educational needs and those who provide services that can support them. They can offer support in the process of getting your child a Statement of SEN and often hold workshops or events for parents. You can find your local service on the National Parent Partnership Network website:

www.parentpartnership.org.uk

or by calling them on **020 7843 6000**

Further Education

What is Further Education?

Further education (FE) refers to post 16 education that is not at degree level or higher. It can include: A levels and GCSEs, NVQs, General NVQs, basic skills courses

More about SEN & Statement of SEN

Contact a Family publishes "**When your child has additional needs**" which you can access for free on their website:

www.cafamily.org.uk

or you can contact their helpline on

Tel: **0808 808 3555**

Textphone:

0808 808 3556

E-mail:

info@cafamily.org.uk

The Department for Education and Skills has a special website about SEN called Teachernet: www.dfes.gov.uk/sen

Here you can view a number of publications such as

"Special Educational Needs - a guide for parents and carers".

You can order them online if you register with the site.

SKILL

National Bureau for Students with Disabilities is a charity that provides information and advice for disabled students in further and higher education.

They produce a wide range of information publications and you can also call their information service

They have the contact details for the disability officers at most of the Universities across the UK on their website.

Chapter House, 18-20 Crucifix Lane,
London SE1 3JW
Tel: **0800 328 5050**
Fax: **020 7450 0650**
Email:
skill@skill.org.uk
Website:
www.skill.org.uk

and courses that do not necessarily give you a qualification, like Independent Living Skills courses.

Why and How to Study?

If you are turning 16 and would like to continue your education or you are older and would like to get back into education, but not higher education, the different options in further education might be the right solution for you.

If you want to take your A levels or a work based course such as a GNVQ you might be able to stay at your current school. If you think you could get a better course or more support with your disability then you could also choose to change schools or go to a local FE college. There might be a wider range of courses available at a FE college. If you feel that the support you need with your disability is not available at your school or local FE College there are also specialist colleges that are set up to teach students either with a specific disability or a range of disabilities. You can find information on these colleges in the **COPE Directory: Compendium of post-16 education and training in residential establishments for young people with special needs.**

Your local careers service or Connexions Service should have a copy and be able to help you find the best solution.

The last option is to go into work-based learning. The options within this are:

Modern Apprenticeships which provide training within an industry.

Entry to Employment provides high quality training to young people at the pre-apprenticeship stage

Employment Preparation which does not necessarily lead to a specific qualification (eg independent living skills training).

For all these different options the most important thing to remember is to choose the option that will best suit you and your individual interests and needs.

Advice & Support

Just as in higher education, you can find more information about a college in their prospectus and

their Disability Statements. You should also visit the college(s) you are considering and talk to the person who is responsible for the disabled students.

If you have a Statement of Special Education Need (SEN), when you are 14 you should be involved in making a transition plan that will help you think about what to do when you reach 16.

Your local social services must provide certain services to you as well. If you have a SEN your LEA must liaise with social services to meet your needs both when your transition plan has been written and again when you leave school.

Higher Education

When considering higher education (i.e. college and/or university) there are a number of things you must consider:

What to study?

When deciding on what course to study you should think about:

- whether you are already set on a specific career
- which courses would give you the best qualifications
- whether you want to study part-time or full-time
- what level of course you want to do

You can find information on the many different courses, either in the prospectus of different institutions, or in course directories such as the UCAS Directory and 'University and College entrance: the Official Guide', both of which should be available in your school's careers library. The UCAS website also has a searchable database: www.ucas.ac.uk

Which University/College to apply to?

When you have resolved some of the above questions, you can then start looking around to find the right university/college for you.

You can apply to six institutions and it is important that you choose the universities/colleges where you feel you will get the best academic and personal outcome. Some of the things to consider here are: the

Open University

Open University (OU) offers great flexibility and the possibility of studying from home and in your own time -part time or full time.

They offer a range of support measures for students with disabilities such as: Learning materials in alternative formats, home-based examinations, loan of equipment and British Sign Language interpreters

To find out more contact OU on:
The Open University
PO Box 724
Milton Keynes
MK7 6ZS
Tel: **01908 653231**
Fax: **01908 654806**

Or go to the website
www.open.ac.uk

Connexions

This is a government service that provides independent advice and support about your education. This service is open to all young people aged 13-19 and to 25 if you have a disability. Each young person has access to a personal advisor (PA), based in schools, colleges and Connexions Services. The PA's support young people at all times, especially during transitions: choosing subjects at 14 and 16; looking for work or deciding whether to go into further education.

Connexions Services can also help you look for volunteering opportunities and can offer support and advice on personal issues that affect your studies and/or home life. To find your local Connexions Service you can either look in the local phone directory or go on to their website on www.connexions.gov.uk

academic reputation and facilities, location, access, disability support and facilities for disabled students, accommodation, student community and recreational facilities.

You can find information on each institution in their prospectus or website. Most schools also have a Disability Statement and the publication from SKILL 'Into Higher Education' includes short profiles of many higher education institutions and the support which they can provide for disabled students. Most importantly, make contact with the University/College and arrange for a visit where you can get a first hand impression of the place, both its physical facilities and the 'atmosphere'.

Access and the DDA

From September 2002 Part 4 of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) came into force. It expands the legislation so that it also applies to pre-16 and post-16 education. That means schools, colleges and universities all have duties under DDA Part 4.

These duties fall in 2 parts:

1. Responsible bodies must not treat a disabled person 'less favourably' than a non-disabled person for reasons related to his/her disability without 'justification'.

2. Responsible bodies are required by law to make 'reasonable adjustments' to ensure that a disabled student is not placed at a 'substantial disadvantage'.

This means that a college or university cannot refuse a place to, for example, a dyslexic student on an English literature course or a student in a wheelchair for a massage therapist course on the grounds of their disability.

The 'reasonable adjustments' mentioned might mean making changes in the following areas where a student with a disability would otherwise be disadvantaged:

- Admissions Procedures
- Course content

- Physical environment
- Formats of materials used in courses and other information
- Communication and support services
- Staff training
- Work Placements

What is deemed 'reasonable' depends on cost and effectiveness of academic standards, but the duty is a general one and so the institution should think ahead and plan for general changes that will benefit a variety of disabled people.

In addition, it is important that you disclose your disability. The providers or institutions have a duty to provide a good service and if necessary make changes, but if you do not disclose your disability then the service provider cannot be blamed for not making the necessary changes.

The duties under the DDA Part 4 to make reasonable adjustments came into force in September 2002. However, where additional auxiliary aids and services are required, the deadline was extended to 1 September 2003. Adjustments to the physical environment must have been made by 1 September 2005.

Money Matters

Further Education

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland you are able to get free education up to the age of 19. If you are over 19 you might be eligible for a fee waiver if you are receiving a means tested benefit or JSA, if you or your partner are receiving Working Tax Credit and your household income is under a certain level or if you are not making any wages and are dependent on someone fulfilling the first condition.

Colleges also have the discretion to waiver fees/tuition for students who don't meet the criteria above, but find it difficult to pay for their courses.

For support with practical issues connected to your

Disability Rights Commission (DRC)

If you feel you have been discriminated against, first try to talk to the appropriate contact at your institution: your tutor, the disability co-ordinator or student union welfare officer. If none of these can help, you could take your complaint to the DRC.

The DRC offers legal advice in cases of discrimination, can mediate between provider and user and if necessary may take the case to court, especially to establish precedence.

DRC Helpline

Tel 08457 622 633

Txt 08457 622 644

FREEPOST MID02164
Stratford upon Avon
CV37 9BR

www.drc-gb.org

disability you should be covered by your SEN Statement up till the age of 19 and in some cases up till the age of 25.

If you need other funding (for example for additional equipment) SKILL produces a very thorough information booklet on funding for Further Education

Higher Education

To make sure you have funding from the start of your course you must remember to apply for funding as soon as you have applied for your course and no later than 4 months in to the course. Funding splits into 3 main areas:

Tuition fees: These will be regulated on the basis of your income or, if you are dependent on it, your parents income. If the relevant income is less than £20,970 you will not have to pay any fees.

Student loans: These are calculated on the basis of where you live and partly what your income is. If you have extra costs because of your disability, the loan administrator may delay the start of your repayment. They may also allow you a longer period to repay.

Disabled Students Allowances (DSA):

To be eligible for DSA you need to have a disability and receive some financial maintenance support. The amount you will receive is the same for all and is solely based on the support you need. There are four types of allowances available:

Specialist equipment (computers, computer programs, a braille printer, a portable loop or a radio aid)

Non-medical helpers (note-takers for lectures, sign language interpreters, but they will not pay any money towards a carer you may already have for your medical or social needs)

Other/general expenditure (books, photocopying, extra braille paper)

Disability related travel costs (taxi fare to get between lectures if needed)

To obtain an application form for the DSA you should contact your Local Education Authority. After an application has been made you should have

an assessment to find out what equipment or help you need whilst at University. For more information on this grant go to the Student Support section on the Department for Education and Skills, www.dfes.gov.uk

There are a number of other avenues for funding and again SKILL is the best place to go for further information. They have booklets on funding for Higher Education, Funding from Charitable Trusts, Students and Housing Benefits.

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