

A guide to:

SEN Support in Further Education colleges



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SEN Support in Further Education (FE) colleges

Further education colleges receive a nationally agreed formula-based core budget for all their students. They also have additional funding to provide support for students with additional needs, including young people with SEN and disabilities (SEND).

A young person is considered to have SEND if he or she has a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. Special educational provision is support which is additional to or different from support usually available to young people of the same age in mainstream colleges.

Like mainstream schools, mainstream FE colleges are expected to provide appropriate, high quality SEN support using all available resources. They are expected to provide additional support which costs up to a nationally prescribed threshold per student per year without the need for an Education, Health and Care Plan. If a student has a learning difficulty or disability that calls for special educational provision, the college must use its 'best endeavours' to put appropriate support in place. They must fulfil this duty for students with SEN whether or not the students have EHC plans.

THE SEND CODE OF PRACTICE:

The Code tells FE colleges, schools, Local Authorities and others how to put the changes in SEN and Disability law in the Children & Families Act 2014 into practice.

It is statutory guidance and says what they must do and also what they should do. The difference between must and should is the 'musts' have to be done and 'should' means that they have to consider following the guidance and if they don't, have a good reason for not doing so.

The SEND Code of Practice says FE colleges should:

- be ambitious for young people with SEN, whatever their needs and whatever their level of study.
- support young people to participate in discussions about their aspirations, their needs, and the support that they think will help them best.
- focus on supporting young people so they can make progress and have positive outcomes in adult life, such as going on into higher education or further training or employment, independent living (which means having choice and control over the support they receive), having good health and being part of the community where they live.
- secure access to independent careers guidance for all students up to and including age 18 and for 19 to 25 year olds with EHC plans.
- Where a young person's needs come to light after they have started FE college, teaching staff should work with specialist support to identify whether the difficulty may be because of SEN.

Before transfer to Further Education (FE) College

Colleges should work with schools when a young person with identified SEND is transferring to their setting so that the FE college can prepare to meet the student's needs and ensure a smooth successful transition into college life.

It is important that information about any previous SEN provision is shared with the FE college before the young person takes up their place, preferably in the spring term prior to the new course. This gives the college time to develop a suitable study programme and prepare appropriate support.

In the period leading up to transition, schools should work with young people and their families, and the new college to ensure that their new setting has a good understanding of what the young person's hopes for the future are and how they would like to be supported. This will enable the new setting to plan support around the individual. Some young people will want a fresh start when leaving school to attend college and any sharing of information about their SEN should be sensitive to their concerns and done with their agreement.

Schools and colleges should work in partnership to provide opportunities such as taster courses, link programmes and mentoring which enable young people with SEN to see what it will be like at college. This might include visits and taster days so that young people can get used to the size of the college, and find their way around as well as how their studies will be structured and how many days a week their programme covers.

Schools and colleges should agree a 'tell us once' approach so that families and young people do not have to repeat the same information unnecessarily.

ASSESS...PLAN...PROVIDE... REVIEW

FE colleges should keep the needs of students with SEN or disabilities under regular review. Colleges should adopt a cycle of assessing need, planning and providing support, and reviewing and seeing how effective the support is so that it can be adjusted where necessary. They should involve the young person and, particularly for those aged 16 to 18, their parents, closely at all stages, planning around each individual student. They should ensure that staff have the skills to do this effectively.

Assessing what support is needed

Where a student is identified as having SEN and needing SEN support, colleges should gather all the relevant information from the school, from the student, from those working with the student and from any screening test or assessment the college has carried out. This information should be discussed with the young person who should be offered the opportunity to have someone at this meeting with them, perhaps a parent, advocate or other supporter. This discussion may identify the need to undertake a more specialist assessment from within the college or beyond.

Planning the right support

Where the college decides a student needs SEN support, the college should discuss with the student their hopes for the future, the nature of the support to be put in place and the progress it is aiming for as well as a date for reviewing the support. Plans should be developed with the student. The support and intervention provided should be matched to the young person's needs and what they hope to achieve. It should be based on reliable evidence of effectiveness and provided by staff with the relevant skills and knowledge.

Special educational support might include, for example:

- assistive technology
- personal care (or access to it)
- specialist tuition
- note takers
- interpreters
- one-to-one and small group learning support
- habilitation/independent living training
- accessible information such as symbol based materials
- access to therapies (for example, speech and language therapy)

Putting the provision in place

Colleges should ensure that the agreed support is put in place, and that appropriately qualified staff provide the support needed. The college should also assess and discuss with the young person whether the support is enabling them to make progress.

Keeping support under review

Support for all students with SEN should be regularly reviewed, whether or not a student has an EHC plan. The college should check whether the support is being effective and helping the young person make progress as well as making sure that the young person's hopes for the future and what they want to achieve haven't changed over time. The college and the student together should plan any changes in support and adapt it as necessary as the college get a clearer picture of the young person and their needs.

Colleges should also keep under review the reasonable adjustments they make under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure they have removed all the barriers to learning that they reasonably can. Colleges should also ensure that students with SEND know who to go to for support.

Expertise within and beyond the college

FE colleges should ensure that all staff know how to work with young people who have SEND and that they have appropriate expertise within their staff, including curriculum staff are able to develop their skills, are aware of effective practice and keep their knowledge up to date.

Colleges should make sure they have access to specialist skills and expertise to support the learning of students with SEN. This can be through partnerships with other agencies such as adult social care or health services, or specialist organisations, and/or by employing suitable staff directly.

They should ensure that there is a named person in the college with oversight of SEN provision to ensure co-ordination of support, similar to the role of the SEN Co-ordinator (SENCO) in schools. This person should contribute to the strategic and operational management of the college. Curriculum and support staff in a college should know who to go to if they need help in identifying a student's SEN, are concerned about their progress or need further advice.

Colleges should ensure they have access to external specialist services and expertise. These can include, for example, educational psychologists, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), specialist teachers and support services, supported employment services and therapists. They can be involved at any point for help or advice on the best way to support a student with SEN or a disability. Specialist help should be involved where the student's needs are not being met by the appropriate support provided by the college. Where, despite the college having taken relevant and purposeful action to identify, assess and meet the needs of the student, the student is still not making the expected progress, the college or young person should consider requesting an EHC needs assessment.

Record keeping

Colleges should keep a student's profile and record of support up to date to inform discussions with the young person about their progress and support. This should include accurate information to show the SEN support that has been provided over a student's time in college and the difference it has made. They should record details of what additional or different provision they make to meet a student's SEN and their progress towards the outcomes that have been agreed with the young person. This should include information about the student's SEN, interventions and the support of specialists. The information should be used as part of regular discussions with the student and, where appropriate, the family, about the young person's progress, the expected outcomes and planned next steps.

Colleges, like schools, can decide how best to record SEN support but should ensure that Individualised Learner Record (ILR) data is recorded accurately and in a timely manner in line with funding rules. Where a student has support from the local authority's high needs funding but does not have an EHC plan, colleges should also provide information on the student's progress to the local authority.

Where can I get more information, advice or support?

You can find out more about SEN Support by:

- looking at the SEN Information Report on the college website
- talking to the FE College, they may have a SENCo
- looking at the Local Offer.

You can also get in touch with SENDIASS Oxfordshire who can give you:

- information about SEN Support
- advice on what to do if you are not happy with the support the FE college is providing
- support at meetings at the FE College
- information about other organisations and support groups that could help
- information and advice about how to request an EHC needs assessment.

Sendiass Oxfordshire can offer:

- A telephone helpline: **01865 810516**
- Information, advice and support on matters to do with a young person's SEND
- Help with communication between you and the Local Authority
- Trained volunteer Independent Parental Supporters and Independent Supporters
- Advice about preventing and resolving disagreements
- Training events for parents and groups – see SENDIASS website
- An informal Drop In SEN Advice session, 'Talking Points', – see website for dates

**Contact us on: 01865 810516 or
text 07786 524294
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Confidentiality Code:

Everything you tell us will be treated in strict confidence. We will not disclose our records to, or discuss the case with, a third party outside SENDIASS Oxfordshire without your consent, except if we suspect a child is at risk.