

Information

Funding for disabled students in further education

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Funding for disabled students in further education

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1. Introduction

This information booklet contains funding information for disabled students who are studying at the further education (FE) level. FE refers to post-16 education, which is not taught in a school and does not lead to a degree. FE includes:

- work related courses, like those which lead to National or Scottish Vocational Qualifications (NVQs or SVQs), General NVQs and BTEC National Diplomas;
- academic courses up to A level standard;
- courses which are levels 1-6 on Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
- basic skills courses, such as literacy and numeracy;
- courses that do not lead to a formal qualification, such as independent living skills courses;
- foundation courses that are not an integral part of a degree course; and
- continuing or adult education courses.

2. How colleges are funded

Local FE and sixth form colleges in England, Wales and Scotland are independently run, and are sometimes referred to as ‘sector’ or ‘maintained’ colleges. They receive most of their funding from government agencies.

In **England**, FE colleges receive the majority of their funding from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Prior to allocating funding to a particular college, the LSC inspects the college to make sure the college has regard for the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The funding body for FE in **Wales** works in a similar way and is known as the National Council for Education and Training.

In **Scotland**, FE colleges receive funding from the Scottish Further Education Funding Council (SFEFC). The SFEFC must have regard for the needs of disabled students, and college management boards have a duty to ensure adequate local provisions are made.

In **Northern Ireland**, colleges manage their own budgets, but are expected to present development plans to the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL). Colleges are required to identify strengths and weaknesses in current provisions for disabled students and to make proposals for improvements. An Additional Support Fund is available to meet the additional needs of individual students.

Specialist colleges: Some independent colleges provide FE courses specifically for disabled students. These might be referred to as ‘non-sector’ or ‘specialist’ colleges and are often run by charities. Refer to page 12 for additional information.

3. Funding arrangements for individuals

Fees

- In **England, Wales and Northern Ireland** you are able to get free education up to the age of 19.
- In **Scotland**, you are able to get free education up to the age of 18.

Fee reductions or fee waivers

You should be eligible for a fee waiver (ie you will not have to pay tuition fees), if you are aged 19 or over and fall into one of the following categories:

- you are receiving a means-tested state benefit, such as Income Support, Housing Benefit or Jobseekers' Allowance (JSA);
- you or your partner are receiving Working Tax Credit (WTC) and your household income is less than £14,200;
- you are receiving Child Tax Credit and are in receipt of another means-tested benefit or your partner is receiving WTC;
- you do not receive a wage and are a dependent on someone who meets condition 1 or 2 above; or
- you are taking a course which teaches adult basic skills or the course is English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL);
- you are an asylum seeker, or a dependent of one, who is receiving the equivalent of a means-tested benefit;
- you lose your job while on a course;
- in certain cases, if you are participating in a council funded project.

Sometimes individual colleges will waive or reduce the fees for students who do not meet the above conditions but who find it difficult to afford their course fees. This is discretionary so you should speak with the Student or Learning Support Co-ordinator at your college to see if you might be eligible.

4. Disability-related support and funding

Colleges in **England** and **Wales** receive money from their funding bodies to pay for additional support needed by disabled students. The college can use these funds to provide general resources for use at the college, for example additional teaching for dyslexic students, an interpreter for deaf students, materials in alternative formats, and specialist computer software. Therefore, a disabled student can generally expect their disability-related needs to be met by the institution.

If students request specific equipment, such as a personal or laptop computer, they may be supplied one for use at the college but this equipment will remain the property of the college and students will be unable to take these items home. In this situation, you may wish to apply to a charitable trust (refer to section 6, 'Other funding') for funding for specialist equipment that can be used at home.

In **Scotland**, the SFEFC allocates extra money to colleges that need to provide additional support to their disabled students.

In **Northern Ireland**, the Additional Support Fund is intended to enhance provisions already made by colleges for disabled students.

Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs)

Students studying on FE courses are **not** eligible to apply for the Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs). However, some FE colleges also run higher education (HE) courses, so if you are taking an HE course, you may be eligible for the DSAs. Please refer to Skill's information booklet [Applying for Disabled Students' Allowances](#) for more detailed information.

FE courses at HE institutions

Some FE courses take place at universities rather than at FE colleges. Universities can access additional funding for disabled FE students in exactly the same way as FE colleges; therefore, if you are taking an FE course at an HE institution you are still eligible for disability-related support.

Disability-related support: the legal situation

The Learning and Skills Act 2000 (which covers England and Wales) has increased the powers of the state to meet the needs of disabled students in FE. In the last year of compulsory education, an assessment (sometimes known as a transitional review) *must* be carried out for all those under 19 who have a Statement of Special Educational Needs and who are likely to undertake an FE course. This will set out the student's learning needs and the provisions required to meet those needs. Students between the ages of 19 and 25 *may* also have an assessment whilst they are undertaking an FE course or if they are likely to start one, regardless of whether or not they have had a Statement in the past. According to the Act, the LSC must 'have regard' to the outcome of these assessments and to the needs of disabled students.

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA), which became Part 4 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, came into force in England, Wales and Scotland in September 2002. This means it is now unlawful for education providers to treat disabled people 'less favourably' than non-disabled people. Colleges are also required to make reasonable adjustments to ensure a disabled student is not placed at a 'substantial disadvantage'. Please refer to Skill's information booklet [The Disability Discrimination Act \(1995\) A guide for disabled people](#) for further information.

5. Transport to and from college

Although there is currently no legislation in place to ensure the provision of transport to college for all FE students who need it, there are several bodies that have the power to provide this type of support.

England and Wales

- During 2002/2003 there were many changes made to legislation regarding the provision of transport for students 16 to 19 years old. Good practice encourages local education authorities (LEAs) and their partners to provide transportation support to disabled students who have been identified as needing this type of support until at least the age of 21, and ideally up to 25. LEAs are required to publish information about their transportation policies, including services, discounts and possible concessions available in the area. To search for your local transportation policy, visit the following website: **www.dfes.gov.uk/16-19transport/leatransport**. LEAs cannot refuse to help with transport costs on policy grounds without considering your individual circumstances.
- Social Services also has the power to pay for transport to and from college. This is stated in Section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. However, Social Services are allowed to take their resources into account when deciding whether to provide services, including transport.
- The college may be able to apply to the LSC to fund transport or to provide financial assistance to help meet transportation costs. When considering whether or not to provide financial assistance, the LSC must take the needs of disabled people and how their disability might affect their ability to attend a course into account.

The Student Support Officer at your college may also be able to help organise travel or pay for travel expenses through the college's Learner Support Fund (refer to page 9).

Scotland

You need to contact your college to see if you can receive help with travel costs through a bursary. College staff should be able to advise you about their specific arrangements as arrangements vary among institutions. Colleges are allowed to take into account the income of the student and/or their parents when working out how much bursary to give.

Northern Ireland

Every case regarding transport to and from college will be considered on an individual basis. Further information is available from your local Education and Library Board (ELB). Refer to section 11 for contact information.

Future developments

The government is aware there is a gap in the provision of transport to and from college for disabled students. With Part 4 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, institutions are required to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled students can study at the same level as non-disabled students. In the Code of Practice that accompanies the Act, the provision of transport has been cited as one of the adjustments that could be considered to be reasonable in certain situations.

6. Other Funding

Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs)

The EMA is a weekly allowance that aims to encourage more young people to stay in FE once their compulsory schooling ends. From September 2004, the allowance will be available throughout England, Scotland and Northern Ireland to young people who are starting year 12 or are 16 years old.

The amount you receive depends on your parents' income. In most areas the maximum weekly amount is £30 per week. You might also be eligible for a bonus of £100 if you remain on your course and make good progress with your learning. Once you have been approved for an EMA, you will be sent a Learning Agreement to be completed by you and the school or college you are attending. This agreement will ensure you attend your course regularly and turn in assignments on time. If you do not fulfil the agreement, your EMA can be stopped. To find out more about the EMA visit www.dfes.gov.uk/ema or www.emani.gov.uk. For details of whether or not you are eligible for an EMA, contact your local school, college, Connexions/careers service, LEA or jobcentre (in Northern Ireland).

Learner Support Funds

The Learner Support Fund in England and Wales consists of five funds: Access Funds (also known as Hardship Funds), Childcare Support, Childcare Pilot Scheme, Residential Bursary Scheme and Residential Pilot Scheme. These funds are available from your college to help with various expenses, such as transport to and from your college if you experience difficulties in getting from one place to the other, childcare and related transport costs, books and equipment, travel expenses associated with course field trips, or accommodation costs if you have to take a course that is a considerable distance from home.

Each college has a certain amount of money available in these funds, so if you are experiencing financial hardship or need help paying for the items mentioned above you should contact your Student Support or Welfare Officer for advice and/or help in applying. Each college has its own policy for awarding the funds. If you are still unable to meet your needs after receiving help from the Learner Support Fund, you might be able to receive additional assistance through sponsorships, bursaries, educational trusts, charities or LEA awards.

Access/ Hardship Funds (and Young Student Retention Fund in Scotland)

These funds are to help individuals engage in or remain on FE courses by providing financial assistance. The funds can be used to help with course fees, books and equipment, in addition to transportation costs.

Assembly Learning Grant (Wales)

If you are from Wales you may qualify for an Assembly Learning Grant of up to £1,500 to help pay for books, equipment, travel and possibly childcare. To qualify, your course must be at least 275 hours per year, and you or your family's residual income must be less than £15,000 per year. You must also be over the age of 18 and taking an FE course that leads to a nationally recognised qualification. If you receive this grant on or after November 2002, it will not affect any means-tested benefits that you receive. Contact your LEA for further information and to apply.

Individual Learning Accounts (Wales)

This is a grant for individuals from Wales who are 18 and over with no or low qualifications, regardless if they are unemployed or employed. Depending on the cost of your course and personal circumstances, you might be eligible to receive £100 to £200. For more information on how to qualify and/or to apply, contact Learn Direct on 0800 100 900.

Adult Learning Grant

Young students will be eligible for a means-tested allowance of up to £30 per week if they are studying full time for a first full level 2 qualification or for a first level 3 qualification. This new grant is being piloted in ten areas, with plans for the grant to become a national programme once the pilot project has been evaluated. To see if your area is one of those participating in the pilot or to see if you are eligible and to apply, contact your local college or LearnDirect on 0800 100 900. You must be no younger than 19 and no older than 30 years old as of 1 September 2003.

Loans

Students in FE are **not** eligible for loans under the Student Loan Scheme. Some colleges may offer a loan as part of their Access Fund provision or their own student support funds. You could also apply for a loan from your own bank or building society, but it is wise to consider repayment arrangements very carefully before doing this.

Career Development Loans

These are available for job-related courses that last up to two years (plus an additional year if the course includes practical work experience). You can borrow between £300 and £8,000 to pay for fees and/or other course-related expenses. Repayments begin one month after the course has ended or up to six months after the course has ended if you are unemployed. More details are available by contacting the Career Development Information Line on 0800 585 505 or visiting www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/cdl/

Trusts and charitable support

Some colleges have special funds available to support students, so it is important to discuss your particular circumstances with the college awards officer to see if other help might be available. In addition, some national and local organisations, including charities, might offer grants to students studying a particular subject or who have a particular disability. Your local library may hold a list of trusts or your college may be able to give you details. Skill also produces an information booklet called Funding from charitable trusts, which lists a select number of trusts and gives advice on how to apply.

You could also contact the Educational Grants Advisory Service. To use the service, students must write to EGAS to request an information form and they must enclose a self-addressed envelope. EGAS replies to all letters.

EGAS, 501-505 Kingsland Road, London E8 4AU

Tel: 0207 254 6251.

7. Independent specialist colleges and funding

If the type of education or support you need is not available at your local FE college, it may be possible for you to go to a specialist or residential college. You need to approach your personal adviser (PA) from Connexions or Careers Scotland for further assistance on applying. Information on specialist residential colleges is given in the COPE Directory: Compendium of post-16 education and training in residential establishments for young people with special needs. Your local careers/Connexions Service should have a copy and they should be able to help you find the best option. You can also contact the Association of National Specialist Colleges (NATSPEC) for detailed information about their colleges (refer to the 'Contacts' section).

Who pays for a place at a specialist college?

There is sometimes confusion about which agency should pay for places for people over 16 in specialist schools and colleges.

England and Wales

If your disability-related needs can be met at a local 'sector' college or school, then it is unlikely you will receive government funding for a place at a specialist college. However, the **LSC** has a *duty* to fund a specialist place for a student under the age of 19 whose needs *cannot* be met in a 'sector' college or school. It also has the *power* to fund a specialist place for a student between the ages of 19 and 25 whose needs cannot be met elsewhere. The **LEA** will fund a place for a student who stays on at a special school between the ages of 16 and 19, where this is set out in their transition plan.

Social Services may pay or contribute towards a place at a residential college in cases where the provision includes a large care component.

Scotland

You may be able to get funding for a placement in an independent specialist college through a bursary from the education department of your local council.

Northern Ireland

You may be able to get funding for a placement in an independent specialist college elsewhere in the British Isles if your needs cannot be met at an FE college. The funding for a placement would come from your local ELB.

8. Social Security Benefits

If you receive benefits, you will need to notify the benefits agency when you begin a course as this is considered a change of circumstance. In addition, it might be a good idea to consult with a benefits advisor to ensure you are receiving all the benefits for which you are eligible.

Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

Generally speaking, study should not affect your Disability Living Allowance (DLA) as it is a benefit that meets your home needs, and therefore, is not related to your study pattern. Two exceptions to this are as follows: 1) if you are attending a residential college where care is provided as part of the service, then the care component of your DLA may be stopped; 2) the care component may also be stopped if you have been assessed as being unable to do something (eg you are following a catering course, but have previously been assessed as being unable to prepare a meal).

Income Support

Generally, full-time students cannot receive Income Support. However, certain disabled students may claim this if they qualify for a disability premium or if they have been incapable of work for a continuous period of at least 28 weeks. If you are in receipt of Income Support and are attending a residential college you may be asked to contribute part or all of your benefits. This generally depends on who is paying for your residential placement.

For more detailed information about how to qualify for this benefit as a disabled student, please refer to Skill's information booklet [Income Support for disabled students](#).

Housing Benefit

You can claim Housing Benefit and study full or part time. For full-time study, the main ways of claiming are if you qualify for a disability premium, or if you receive Income Support or Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance. You cannot receive Housing

Benefit if you live in accommodation owned by the college, for example Halls of Residence.

For more detailed information about how to qualify for this benefit as a disabled student, please refer to Skill's information booklet Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit for disabled students.

Receiving benefits as 'incapable of work'

Students who are under 19 and receive Incapacity Benefit are only allowed to do up to 21 hours of mainstream education per week. (This does not include any specialist support or study time involved.) Aside from this, there is no rule stating you are not able to receive Incapacity Benefit while you are studying. However, once the Benefits Agency has been told you are studying or are planning to study, they may think that because you can study then you may no longer be 'incapable of work'. Clearly, this is not automatically the case. Many people are able to undertake a course, but are not able to work. This may be due to a flexible study environment and/or support arrangements that can be made at college. Also, some people go into education as part of what they see as a rehabilitation process to prepare them to return to work after the course. Therefore, although education may trigger a review of your claim, it cannot, in itself, be used to decide you are capable of work.

If you are in receipt of Incapacity Benefit and you are attending a residential college you may be asked to contribute part or all of your benefits. This generally depends on who is paying for your residential placement.

For more detailed information, please refer to Skill's information booklet Studying and claiming benefits as 'incapable of work'.

9. Further information from Skill

Financial assistance for students with disabilities in further education can be purchased for £2.50 for individual students and £6.50 for professionals.

Skill produces a number of information booklets. These are available on the Internet at **www.skill.org.uk** or from Skill's Information Service. Disabled students can receive up to 5 booklets free of charge, with a charge of £2.50 per booklet thereafter. There is also a charge of £2.50 per booklet for professionals. To receive a full set of information booklets, you can join the subscription service which costs £30 for members of Skill and £60 for non-members.

10. Other information sources

Refer to the relevant organisation in the 'Contacts' section for contact information for the following publications.

The Educational Grants Directory This directory is published by and available from The Directory of Social Change. It provides information on funding from charities and companies.

Financial help for students This leaflet is published for students by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). You can visit **www.connexionscard.com/financialhelp** to view the information online.

Guidance to the Learning and Skills Council on Meeting the Needs of Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities This guidance is produced by the DfES and is available on Skill's website at **www.skill.org.uk/news/policy/idd.asp**.

Money to Learn: Financial Help for Adults in Further Education and Training This leaflet is published by the DfES.

Specialist/Residential Colleges

The Association of National Specialist Colleges Directory

Published by and available from NATSPEC.

COPE Directory: Compendium of post 16 education and training in residential establishments for young people with special needs

Published by Lifetime Careers (Wiltshire) and available from Orca Book Services.

Specialist College Placements. Arrangements for placements at specialist colleges: learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities for 2002-03 (Circular 02/01) This publication is produced by the LSC.

11. Contacts

Benefits Enquiry Line for people with disabilities

England, Scotland, Wales

Tel: 0800 882 200 (8:30am to 6:30pm weekdays, 8:30am to 1pm Saturdays)

Textphone: 0800 243 355

They do not have a website, but you can find benefits-related information on the Department for Work and Pensions website at www.dwp.gov.uk.

Northern Ireland

Tel: 0800 220 674

Textphone: 0800 243 787

Website: www.ssani.gov.uk

Career Development Loans

Information Line: 0800 585 505 (8am to 10 pm 7 days per week, excluding Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day)

Website: www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/cdl/front.htm

Department for Education and Skills (DfES)

Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, Westminster, London SW1P 3BT

Student Support Tel: 0800 731 9133

Textphone: 0800 210 280

Publications Tel: 0845 602 2260

Publications Fax: 020 7925 6000

E-mail: info@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.dfes.gov.uk

**Department of Employment and Learning
(DEL, Northern Ireland)**

Adelaide House, 39-49 Adelaide Street, Belfast BT2 8FD

Student Support Tel: 028 9025 7710

Fax: 028 9025 7747

E-mail: mail@delni.gov.uk or Studentsupport@delni.gov.uk

Website: www.delni.gov.uk/studentsupport

Directory of Social Change

Publications Department, 24 Stephenson Way, London NW1 2DP

Tel: 020 7209 5151

Fax: 020 7391 4804

E-mail: books@dsc.org.uk

**Education and Library Boards
Belfast**

40 Academy Street, Belfast BT1 2NQ

Tel: 028 9056 4000

Fax: 028 9033 1714

Website: www.belb.org.uk

North Eastern

County Hall, 182 Galgorm Road, Ballymena BT42 1HN

Tel: 028 2565 5025

Fax: 028 2564 3674

Website: www.neelb.org.uk

South Eastern

Grahamsbridge Road, Dundonald, Belfast BT16 2HS

Tel: 028 9056 6200

Fax: 028 9056 6267

Website: www.seelb.org.uk

Southern

3 Charlemont Place, The Mall, Armagh BT61 9AX

Tel: 028 3751 2432

E-mail: selb.hq@selb.org

Website: www.selb.org

Western

Campsie House, 1 Hospital Road, Omagh BT79 0AW

Tel: 028 8241 1499

Fax: 028 8241 1400

E-mail: info@welbni.org

Website: www.welbni.org

Learning and Skills Council (LSC)

Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road, Coventry CV1 2WT

Tel: 0845 019 4170

Fax: 024 7649 3600

General enquiries: 0870 900 6800

E-mail: info@lsc.gov.uk

Website: www.lsc.gov.uk

The funding body for FE colleges in England. You can find details for your local LSC by contacting the general enquiries number or by visiting their website.

NATSPEC

For a copy of [The Association of National Specialist Colleges Directory](#) during term time contact:

The Ian Karten Centre, Treloar College, Alton

Hampshire GU34 4EN

Tel: 01420 87640

Fax: 01420 547434

E-mail: iankartencentre@treloar.org.uk

Website: www.natspec.org.uk

For a copy of the Directory during holiday periods contact Janice Faldo, Administration Officer, NATSPEC, 36 Gresham Road, East Ham, London E6 6DS
Tel: 020 8471 3284
E-mail: janicefaldo.natspec@btinternet.com

National Council for Education and Training for Wales

Linden Court, The Orchards, Ilex Close, Llanishen
Cardiff CF14 5DZ
Tel: 029 2076 1861
Fax: 029 2076 3163
Website: www.elwa.org.uk

Orca Book Services

Stanley House, 3 Fleets Lane, Poole BH15 3AJ

Further Education Funding Council (Scotland)

Donaldson House, 97 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh EH12 5HD
Tel: 0131 313 6500
Fax: 0131 313 6501
E-mail: info@sfc.ac.uk
Further education website: www.sfefc.ac.uk
The funding body for further education institutions in Scotland.

Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities

Chapter House, 18-20 Crucifix Lane, London SE1 3JW
Information Service
Tel: 0800 328 5050 (Tuesday 11.30am-1.30pm, Thursday 1.30pm-3.30pm)
Text: 0800 068 2422
Fax: 020 7450 0650
E-mail: info@skill.org.uk
Website: www.skill.org.uk

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