FURTHER EDUCATION AND WORK-BASED LEARNING FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

This section introduces the options for study in further education, explains the funding mechanisms and outlines the various grants and sources of funding available, both generic sources and those specifically for disabled learners.

By the end of this section you will:
- Understand the further education options for disabled learners
- Understand how disability support works in further education
- Have built up a bank of disability contacts in further education institutions
- Understand the different grants and loans available
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5.1 What are further education and work-based learning?

Further education
Further education is usually for people aged 16 years or over and does not involve studying at degree level or higher.

Further education includes:
- Work-related courses, for example National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), General NVQs and BTEC National Diplomas
- Vocational GCSEs and AVCEs (Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education)
- Academic courses up to A2 level standard, including GCSE and AS level
- 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 or called a Foundation Degree
- Access courses, which allow people who do not hold formal qualifications to go on to higher education
- Continuing or adult education courses
- Link courses for school pupils

Work-based learning
Work-based learning refers to any learning or training opportunities that are delivered mainly in the workplace, rather than in a college. This includes:
- Apprenticeships
- Entry to Employment (e2e)
- Jobcentre Plus programmes

5.2 Further education options

There are many options for FE and work-based learning, depending on the level of study, academic or vocational learning, and location.

Further education colleges
FE colleges offer a wide range of courses. These might include those mentioned above. Some FE colleges also offer HE courses, such as Higher National Diplomas or Foundation Degrees. Refer to Section 6: Higher Education for more information.
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Specialist colleges
Some disabled people may find that their support needs cannot be met at a local college or learning provider. If this is the case, there are specialist colleges, which have extensive experience of teaching both learners with particular disabilities or those with a range of disabilities. This provision is primarily for young people up to the age of 25, but there are some opportunities for adults to attend specialist colleges. These institutions are located around the country and recruit nationally, so someone may have to travel to get there. They are often residential and can help people learn to live away from home. They offer a range of education options, including those listed above.

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. You can also contact the Association of National Specialist Colleges (NATSPEC) for detailed information about their colleges. Refer to the ‘Resources and contacts’ section for contact information.

Some residential training for adults is available through Jobcentre Plus. This offers an opportunity for unemployed disabled adults to gain qualifications, work experience and specialist support from appropriately trained professionals. There are many different courses available in 14 colleges around the country. To access the courses, people need to contact their Disability Employment Adviser at their local Jobcentre Plus. Contacts of local Jobcentre Plus offices are available on the Internet at www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/Aboutus/Ouroffices/LocalOfficeSearch.aspx

Action: residential training
What residential training is available through your local Jobcentre Plus? Contact your Disability Employment Adviser to find out.

Open and distance learning
There may also be possibilities to study at home via open and distance learning. Refer to Section 4: Transition to post-16 education for more details.

5.3 Work-based learning options

Entry to Employment (e2e) provides work-based learning below NVQ Level 2 for young people who are not yet ready for an apprenticeship. e2e replaces NVQ Level 1 for people aged 16-18 years, and employment preparation schemes such as life skills training. It is also available to people aged 19-24, who are not eligible for New Deal and have gained agreement from the LSC.
Apprenticeship Programmes are the main route for work-based learning for young people aged 16–24.

Apprenticeships provide young people training up to NVQ Level 2 (roughly equivalent to 5 GCSEs at grades A-C).

Advanced Apprenticeships provide training towards at least NVQ Level 3 (equivalent to two A levels). The qualification may include a technical certificate and requires a young person to get some experience supervising other people.

To apply for an apprenticeship, people should either approach an employer who takes on apprentices and see if they are willing to offer a job, or their local Learning and Skills Council, who can put them in touch with a training provider who will try to match them with an employer. More information about apprenticeships is available at [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk).

The Learning and Skills Council is also working on developing the apprenticeship offer for adults over the age of 25. There are plans for a National Apprenticeship Service that will manage the apprenticeship programmes.

There are also a number of schemes available through Jobcentre Plus for disabled adults who are returning to work after a period of sickness or rehabilitation, or who face complex barriers to work:

- **Work-based learning for adults (WBLA)** is normally for people over the age of 25 who have been out of work for 6 months or more. However, if someone has a disability, they are exempted from the 6 months requirement. WBLA can involve working towards an NVQ, training for a specific job or work experience. People on WBLA receive an allowance equivalent to any benefit they are receiving, plus £10 per week, and they may also be eligible for travel and childcare expenses.

- **Work preparation** is for people who have been out of work after a long period of sickness, rehabilitation or unemployment and involves work experience, confidence building and updating skills.

Jobcentre Plus also offers two other programmes, New Deal for Disabled People and WORKSTEP, which helps disabled people move into employment by offering support and working closely with employers to ensure appropriate support is in place. For all of the Jobcentre Plus programmes, disabled people need to see a Disability Employment Adviser, based within their local Jobcentre Plus, to apply for the scheme.
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Action: contacts
Contact your DEA to find out about options for work-based learning through Jobcentre Plus.

5.4 How to apply
Colleges all operate their own application processes, so it is best to contact the college directly for information about applying.

5.5 Financial support

Course fees, reductions and waivers
In England, FE is free up to the age of 19.

Fee waivers are available for people who are aged 19 or over and are:
- Receiving an income-based benefit, such as Income Support, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, Income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) or Pension Credits (Guarantee credit only)
- Receiving, or their partner is receiving, Working Tax Credit (WTC) and their household income is less than £15,050
- Unemployed and receiving contribution-based Jobseeker’s Allowance
- Not receiving a wage and are a dependant of someone in receipt of an income-based benefit
- An offender and serving a sentence in the community
- Studying for a first Level 2 qualification
- Taking a course in adult basic skills or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- An asylum seeker, or a dependant of one, who is receiving a means-tested benefit

Funding for specialist college provision
If a learner’s disability-related needs can be met at a local sector college, then it is unlikely they will receive government funding for a place at a specialist college. However, the LSC has a duty to fund a specialist place for a learner 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 learner between the ages of 19 and 25 whose needs cannot be
met elsewhere. Social services may also pay for or contribute towards a place at a residential college when the provision includes a large care component. For adults undertaking residential training through Jobcentre Plus, this will be paid for via Jobcentre Plus.

**Learner Support Funds**
In England Learner Support Funds and the Residential Bursary Scheme are available from the college to help with various expenses, such as transport, childcare, books and equipment, travel expenses associated with course field trips, or accommodation costs if learners 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 learners should contact the Learner Support or Welfare Officer for advice if they are experiencing financial hardship or need help paying for the items mentioned above. Each college has its own policy for awarding the funds. If someone is still in financial hardship after receiving help from the Learner Support Fund, there may be additional assistance through sponsorships, bursaries, educational trusts, charities or LEA awards.

**Adult Learning Grants**
Grants are available to people who are 19 and doing their first Level 2 qualification or to people who are between 19 and 30 and doing a Level 3 qualification. The grant is means-tested, gives the learner up to £30 per week and in most cases will be paid for up to two years. Colleges and local LSCs will be able to provide more detailed information.

**Loans**
Student loans are not available for learners in FE although some colleges may offer a loan as part of learner support funds provision. Learners can also apply for a Career Development Loan or other bank loan.

### 5.6 Disability-related support and funding

Colleges and learning providers are covered by the Disability Discrimination Act (refer to Section 2: The DDA for more information), which means it is unlawful for them to discriminate against disabled people. Most colleges and learning providers have a named member of staff who is responsible for ensuring that the needs of disabled learners are met. This person may be called the Additional Learning Support Adviser, Inclusive Learning Coordinator or Disability Coordinator.
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Action: contacts

Build up a list of contacts in your local FE colleges and work-based learning providers with particular responsibility for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. You can use Skill’s Into FE searchable database as a good starting point. (www.skill.org.uk/page.aspx?c=41&p=136)

Colleges and work-based learning providers in England receive money from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to pay for additional support required for disabled learners. This is called additional learning support funding. The college can use these funds to provide general resources for use at the college, for example additional teaching for learners with dyslexia, an interpreter for deaf learners, materials in alternative formats, and specialist computer software. Therefore, a disabled learner can generally expect their disability-related needs to be met by the institution although the support available may vary between different providers. Section 4 gives examples of the types of support learners might expect.

If learners 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 learners will be unable to take these items home. In this situation, learners may wish to apply to a charitable trust (see below) for funding for specialist equipment that can be used at home.

If a disabled person is taking an HE course in an FE college, they may be eligible for a different type of support, called Disabled Students’ Allowances (DSAs). Refer to Section 6: Higher Education for more detailed information.

Activity: case studies

After reading the information about opportunities and support in further education, look at the case studies below. There are questions at the end of each case study to prompt you to think about what advice and information would have been appropriate.

There are suggested answers on page 97 to give you some pointers.

Esther

Esther is in her 50s and comes to see you because she would like to do an introductory course in computing. She lives in a rural area and has arthritis, so finds travel difficult. Esther doesn’t know where she would be able to do a computing course or how she
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would pay for this. She also mentions that when she has used a computer before, at her son’s house, she found the mouse very difficult to use, and thinks that the keyboard may also present some problems.

Where might Esther be able to do a course? Would she have to pay for this? What funding might be available?

What support might Esther have access to at college? Who should she contact about this? Where would funding for the support come from?

Ola

Ola is in his early 20s. He makes an appointment at the nextstep service because he has recently left his job as a kitchen assistant. He would really like to become a plumber, but doesn’t know how to go about getting the relevant experience or qualifications. When asked about his previous qualifications, he becomes very shy and says that he found school really difficult – that he has difficulty with reading and writing and ‘never really got the hang of it’. You suspect he might have dyslexia, but he has never been assessed for this.

If you suspect that Ola has dyslexia, is there any way you could help with getting an assessment? Where from?

How could Ola qualify as a plumber? What are the different options available to him?

Could Ola get some support with his reading and writing/study skills? Particularly if he does have dyslexia, where would this support come from? Who would you need to approach about this?

Answers to case studies

Esther

Where might Esther be able to do a course? Would she have to pay for this? What funding might be available?
There are a number of different locations that Esther could study at, a local FE College, a local outreach centre such as the local school or village hall, she may also like to consider the option of distance learning.

Fees are waived for people who are on means-tested benefits such as income support, housing benefit or jobseeker’s allowance. If Esther does not fall into these categories but still may have some difficulty in paying the fees then the college has discretion to waiver the fees.

If this is not possible Esther may be able to apply for a Learner Support Fund grant. Another source of financial support may be charitable trust support. To find out more about these options Esther would need to speak to the college awards officer, or she may be able to find a list of contact details for charitable trusts at the local library or via Skill’s information booklet on charitable trusts.

If Esther needs financial support for transport to and from her course there are a number of options, such as social services who can provide help with transport costs, the college could seek funding for transport from the Learning and Skills Council or if she does not already receive it, Esther could apply for the mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance.

What support might Esther have access to at college? Who should she contact about this? Where would funding for the support come from?

There are a range of different options for keyboard and mouse adaptations including ergonomic designs and voice recognition. Esther would need to try out a number of different options to decide the best equipment to meet her particular needs. To find out more about what support is available at her chosen place of study Esther will need to talk to the institution’s disability or additional learning support coordinator.

Funding for the support will come from the Learning and Skills Council who will pay the college directly to provide equipment and support for use at the college.

Ola

If you suspect that Ola has dyslexia, is there any way you could help with getting an assessment? Where from?
The local college may be able to organise for Ola to have a dyslexia assessment. Alternatively you could contact Dyslexia Action.
How could Ola qualify as a plumber? What are the different options available to him?
There are a number of options for Ola to study as a plumber. He could take up an NVQ course at the local FE college, take up an Apprenticeship or other work-based learning.

Could Ola get some support with his reading and writing/study skills? Particularly if he does have dyslexia, where would this support come from? Who would you need to approach?
Ola may like to take up an adult literacy class and depending upon his current level of English he may need to do this before he starts his training. When Ola starts his class they will assess his literacy skills and come up with an individual learning plan. If Ola is suspected to be dyslexic this will also be assessed.

The support depends upon the type of course Ola would like to pursue. All education providers should offer support for people who have dyslexia, and this might include specialist software, extra study skills tuition or extra time for assignments.

It would be best to contact the learning support coordinator or equivalent for further information.