

Factsheet

SEN Support – Further Education

The Children and Families Act extends a requirement to provide support for young people whose needs are not so significant as to require an EHC Plan to providers of further education.

This factsheet sets out the particular requirements and considerations for SEN support in further education under paragraphs 7.13 to 7.34 of the SEND Code of Practice.

Key Principles and Duties

Where a student has a learning difficulty or disability that calls for special educational provision, all institutions within the further education sector must use their best endeavours to put appropriate support in place to ensure those needs are met.

Young people should be supported to participate in discussions about their aspirations, their needs, and the support that they think will help them best. Support should be aimed at promoting student independence and enabling the young person to make good progress towards employment and/or higher education, independent living, good health and participating in the community.

Assessing what support is needed

Where a student is identified as having SEN and needing SEN support, colleges should bring together 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 student. The student should be offered support at this meeting and might be accompanied by a parent, advocate or other supporter. This discussion may identify the need for a more specialist assessment from within the college or beyond.

Where the college decides a student needs SEN support, the college should discuss with the student their ambitions, the nature of the support to be put in place, the expected impact on progress and a date for reviewing the support. Plans should be developed with the student. The support and intervention provided should be selected to meet the student's aspirations, and should be based on reliable evidence of effectiveness and provided by practitioners 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 in place and reviewing support

Colleges should ensure that the agreed support is put in place, and that appropriately qualified staff provide the support needed. The college should, in discussion with the student, assess the impact and success of the intervention.

The effectiveness of the support and its impact on the student's progress should be reviewed regularly, which may lead to changes in the type and level of their support. The college and the student together should plan any changes in support.

Colleges should revisit this cycle of action, refining and revising their decisions about support as they gain a richer understanding of the student, and what is most effective in helping them secure good outcomes.

Funding for SEN support

All school and academy sixth forms, sixth form colleges, further education colleges and 16-19 academies are provided with resources to support students with additional needs, including young people with SEN and disabilities.

These institutions receive an allocation based on a national funding formula for their core provision. They also have additional funding for students with additional needs, including those with SEN. This funding is not ring-fenced and is included in their main allocation in a 'single line' budget. Like mainstream schools, colleges are expected to provide appropriate, high quality SEN support using all available resources.

It is for colleges, as part of their normal budget planning, to determine their approach to using their resources to support the progress of young people with SEN. The principal or a senior leader should establish a clear picture of the resources available to the college and consider their strategic approach to meeting SEN in the context of the total resources available.

This will enable colleges to provide a clear description of the types of special educational provision they normally provide. This will help parents and others understand what they can normally expect the college to provide for young people with SEN.

Colleges are not expected to meet the full costs of more expensive support from their core and additional funding in their main allocation. They are expected to provide additional support which costs up to a nationally prescribed threshold per student per year. The responsible local authority, usually the authority where the young person lives, should provide additional top-up funding where the cost of the special educational provision required to meet the needs of an individual young person exceeds the nationally prescribed threshold. This should reflect the cost of providing the additional support that is in excess of the nationally prescribed threshold. There is no requirement for an EHC plan for a young person for whom a college receives additional top-up funding except in the case of a young person who is over 19. But where the local authority considers it is necessary for special educational provision to be made through an EHC plan it should carry out an EHC needs assessment. Local authorities should be transparent about how they will make decisions about high needs funding and education placements. They should share the principles and criteria which underpin those decisions with schools and colleges and with parents and young people.

It should be noted that colleges are funded by the Education Funding Agency (EFA) for all 16-18 year olds and for those aged 19-25 who have EHC plans, with support from the home local authority for students with high needs. Colleges cannot charge tuition fees for these students.

Colleges are funded by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) for all students aged 19 and over who do not have an EHC plan (including those who declare a learning difficulty or disability). Colleges are able to charge fees for these students. However, students who meet residency and eligibility criteria will have access to Government funding.