



Supporting You at College

A guide for people with additional support needs in Scotland's colleges

Leaving school and going to college is an exciting time. It is a chance to develop interests in new subjects and experience learning in a different environment.

If you have additional support needs, you will need to think about the support you might need to help you take part in learning. The support you will receive in college might be different to the support you are used to at school.

This guide will help you understand:

- What kind of support is available to you while at college
- Who has responsibility for providing the support you need
- Who to contact if you need advice and support

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Leaving School

How is college different from school?

At school, you might have been in a class with others who were in the same age group as you. Because of this, many things would have been decided for you by the school, your teachers, or your parents. However, college is different as it provides education for people of all ages. So, young people and adults of all ages and from different backgrounds might be at the same college or even in the same class. The college therefore must provide its education in an adult environment, allowing learners to be independent, responsible and make their own choices.

Your parents may still be your carers at home and have a concern for your well-being, but when you go to college you will be expected to be responsible for things that you might be used to your parents, teachers or carers organising for you. However, depending on your needs, staff in the college may sometimes involve your parents in certain decisions. Remember though, staff in the college are there to guide and support you, so you can ask them for any help that you need.

What support is available when I'm planning to leave school?

When you are planning to leave school, your school and other agencies have certain duties to help you get ready for post-school opportunities. A law called the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 means your school needs to start planning what support you will need no later than one year before you expect to leave school. If you have more complex needs this planning process may need to be started earlier. For example, this might include arranging a meeting with college staff, early assessment of your needs, arranging a place on a school-college link course, or additional work experience.

How can I prepare for leaving school?

The law also says that your school needs to ask your views about what you want to do when you leave school. It also needs to ask for information (with your permission) from any agency that you might be involved with after you leave school. This might include the college you want to go to, Skills Development Scotland (the national careers advice service), or your local health and social work department. The reason for getting this information is so the school can plan for any additional support you might need when you make the move to college. It also helps them to put in place the support you need while you are still at school.

You can ask your school to get information about anything you think you might need help with. For example, you might want information about:

- The courses available at the colleges in your local area
- Careers advice if you're unsure what you want to do when you leave school
- What additional support is available
- Financial help
- Arrangements for meeting your personal care needs

You and your parents or carer may also find it useful to look at the [Talking about Tomorrow](#) website, which is all about preparing to move on from school into adult life.

Going to college

Where can I go?

There are many colleges in towns, cities and rural areas across Scotland. They offer a wide range of courses, in various subjects and levels of study. You can view a full list of public colleges in Scotland on the [Colleges Scotland website here](#), and be aware each college has multiple campuses across a region. You can also search for college courses on the [My World of Work's Learn and Train search engine here](#).

Many colleges also offer the option of studying through flexible or distance learning courses. These courses allow you to study at times that suit you, often without having to go to the college campus. The college prospectus or website will give details of courses offered through flexible or distance learning and you can also filter results on My World of Work to view distance learning courses.

Can I go to a college outside Scotland?

Most colleges in Scotland provide a broad range of courses, including courses which are specifically designed for learners with additional support needs.

However, it may be that because of your impairment, you might prefer to go to a specialist college which is just for learners with additional support needs. While there are no specialist public colleges in Scotland, [Cantraybridge College](#) in Inverness does provide day, vocational and residential learning and development for people with additional support needs.

Although there are no specialist public colleges in Scotland, you might choose to attend one of these colleges in other parts of the UK. As these colleges are likely to be far away from your home, they are usually able to offer accommodation to save you travelling to and from college every day. You can get information about specialist residential colleges from the [Association of National Specialist Colleges](#). This website also includes a directory of specialist colleges in the UK, including information on how to apply to them.

Be aware it is very expensive to attend one of these specialist colleges and it is very unlikely you will receive public funding to do so. Any decision regarding funding to undertake further education outside of Scotland is a matter for each local authority. You should ask your local council for details of local funding arrangements for specialist provision. You can also look for other funding sources in our [guide to charitable trusts providing educational grants to individuals here](#).

What will it be like at college?

Colleges are much bigger than schools and often have campuses or buildings in more than one area of the town or city. There are a lot more students at college, and because of this it can be much noisier and busier than you may have been used to at school. You will have the chance to mix with young people and adults from a wide variety of backgrounds and who may have had very different life experiences from you. Some will have just left school, while others will be returning to education after working or taking care of family. Some students will attend college on a full-time basis while others will be part-time.

If you have not yet visited the college that you might like to go to, speak to your guidance teacher at school or the student advice centre at the college to arrange a visit. You can also check the college's website to see when their next open day is.

What will I be able to study?

Colleges offer many different types of courses at different levels, ranging from general educational courses to vocational (work-related) courses. Many of these courses allow you to study for qualifications that help you go on to further study or get a job.

As well as mainstream courses, most colleges also have courses that are specifically designed for learners who need additional support to help their learning, including Life Skills and Independent Living courses. These courses have less students than a mainstream class and all the students in the class will need additional support to help their learning.

The table below shows you the different types of courses you can take in colleges (courses at higher levels tend to be more difficult):

Level	Types of courses	What is this?
Pre-entry	Pre-entry level courses	This might include Life Skills, school-college link courses, or taster courses to help you move on to other courses.
2	National 2	National 2 is assessed through Unit assessments only. The Unit assessments are marked internally by the teacher or lecturer and assessed as pass or fail. Learners need to pass all Units to achieve the qualification. You might also be able to take Life Skills courses, or taster courses in a range of subjects.

3	National 3	National 3 is assessed through Unit assessments only. The Unit assessments are marked internally by the teacher or lecturer and assessed as pass or fail. Learners need to pass all Units to achieve the qualification.
4	National 4	<p>National 4 Courses are assessed through Unit assessments, including an Added Value Unit assessment that assesses the course as a whole. The unit assessments, including the Added Value Unit assessment, are marked internally by the teacher or lecturer and assessed as pass or fail. To achieve a National 4 qualification, learners need to pass all Unit assessments in the course, including the Added Value Unit assessment.</p> <p>There is no external assessment at this level (i.e. there are no exams).</p> <p>You may want to take National 4 exams after taking a National 3.</p>
	Scottish Vocational Qualifications 1	These are work-related qualifications which give you the skills and knowledge you need for particular jobs.
5	National 5	National 5 courses will be a combination of course assessment assessed by teaching staff and quality assured by the SQA. National 5 will consist of an exam. The National 5 qualification will be graded to help learners to progress to higher qualifications and other areas of learning and employment.
	Scottish Vocational Qualifications 2	Work-related qualifications.
6	Highers	You might want to take Highers after you have completed National 5 courses. You usually need Highers to get in to university.
7	Scottish Vocational Qualifications 3	Work-related qualifications.

7	Advanced Highers	These are for students who have completed Highers.
	Higher National Certificates (HNCs)	These are higher level work-related qualifications in a range of subjects.
8	Scottish Vocational Qualifications 4	Work-related qualifications.
9	Higher National Diplomas (HNDs)	HNDs are the next level after HNCs, and often allow you to progress on to the second year of a degree course.

If you are taking a course which is in levels 1 to 6, this will be known as **‘further education’**. Courses which are higher than level 6 are known as **‘higher education’**. The financial support you might get will be different depending on whether you are taking a further or higher education course.

For some courses you will need certain qualifications to get in, while for others there may be no entry requirements. The college prospectus or website will give detailed information about the courses on offer and entry requirements. Each college will have staff available to speak to about the options available.

When should I apply?

When you decide which course you would like to take, it is best to apply to the college as early as possible, for two reasons. Firstly, it gives the college time to consider your support needs and secondly, because certain courses are very popular and spaces in these courses are filled quickly. The earlier you apply, the better chance you have of getting a place on the course you want.

How do I apply?

Most college courses will offer an online application form process. Look out for an ‘Apply now’ box to click on and go through the process. Just ask the college if you require a paper application form though and they should be able to post one out to you. The application form may ask you if you have a disability or additional support needs. The college asks for this information to make sure they know what support you need. Information on your support needs will be kept private and will not be passed on to anyone else unless you have given your permission for this to happen.

By letting the college know about your support needs at an early stage, you are giving the college time to think about what changes, if any, would need to be made to help you if you are offered a place. If you do not tell the college about

your support needs before you start the course, these changes might not be in place for you at the beginning of term or it may not be possible to make the changes at all. All information given to the college about your support needs is private and will not be used to discriminate against your application, as that is against the law. If you are still feeling nervous about disclosing an impairment or support needs, have a read of our [‘Tick the box’ blog here](#) to find out why it’s so important.

When you apply, you might find it helpful to arrange a visit to the college and meet with a member of the support staff. You can talk with them about the kind of support you might need and ask them questions.

Can I go to college if I am still at school?

You might find it easier to start a college course by making a gradual move from school to college. Many schools have opportunities for pupils to take part in college courses while they are still at school. This might mean attending college for one or more days a week until you are ready to attend college on a full-time or part-time basis.

You might also be able to take a qualification, for example a Skills for Work qualification or a Foundation Apprenticeship at college, as part of your usual school week. These qualifications offer a broader range of subjects than available at school and are designed to give you the skills you need for the world of work in a range of different jobs. They may also include an opportunity to complete a work placement. Subject specific courses are generally available at SCQF levels 4-6, while the access and introduction to college courses are available at levels 1-4. Look for the college’s ‘senior phase prospectus’ or the schools section on their website to find out which options are available to you.

As you are still a school pupil, your school will need to talk to you about how your support needs might be different at college and make sure that you have everything you need to take part in college learning. However, the college also has to ensure it is accessible for you, so they will need to think about any support you need to overcome any barriers you might face if you are disabled.

Support for Learners with Additional Needs

What kind of support is available in college?

There are lots of different kinds of support available in colleges. For example, some students have support such as:

- sign language interpreters
- one-to-one help in the classroom
- accessible computer equipment
- help with going to the toilet
- help at lunch breaks

- a flexible timetable or extra time in exams
- and many more support measures

These are only some examples. The support you get will depend on your individual support needs which the college will assess before you start.

The different kinds of support you might get at college are provided by a range of different organisations including the college itself, social work departments, the NHS, or maybe even voluntary organisations. The type of support you might get and who provides it will depend on whether you need help with learning, personal or health care, or other needs such as transport.

Sometimes the support will be the same as you have had at school, and sometimes it will be different. If you are taking a mainstream course, the classes will be made up of a large number of students, and additional support should be made available for any student who needs it to help them take part in the class. Depending on what kind of support you need, other students in the class do not need to know that you are receiving additional support if you would rather keep this private.

If you are taking a programme which is specifically designed for students with additional support needs, support will be provided to all students on the programme. As well as support from college staff, you might also receive support from other people such as personal assistants to help with your personal care needs.

How do I find out what support I need?

To find out about the support you might need, you should first speak to the support staff in the college. Every college has at least one member of staff who advises students who need additional support. They can talk to you about your course, the support you have used before and any new support that might be available. They will tell you how the college can help you. They may ask you to have an assessment of your needs at the college, or at a separate Access Centre, to make sure you get the support you need to help you on your course. These assessments will be 'needs-led', which means they will consider what your individual needs are, rather than assuming your needs are the same as other people with the same impairment or people facing similar barriers.

If you are disabled, you can ask your local social work department for an assessment of your need for care services, including any healthcare or social care needs that you need while at college. The care services that are to be provided will then be agreed and noted in a care plan, or you may already have a care plan in place.

What are my rights as a disabled learner?

If you have a disability you have certain rights under the law. Your college also has duties under the law to help you.

The Equality Act is a law that aims to protect disabled people. This Act says that colleges must provide extra support to ensure that disabled people are not disadvantaged compared to non-disabled students. These are known as 'reasonable adjustments', which means the college will need to provide help or make adjustments if they are thought to be reasonable things to do. This might include things like:

- providing course materials in electronic formats if you are visually impaired
- providing ramps to help wheelchair users access buildings
- writing things in Easy Read if you have a learning disability
- providing car parking spaces for people who use a wheelchair or have difficulty walking

The college can't expect you to pay for the cost of these adjustments and they can't refuse to provide them unless they have a genuine reason for doing so.

Who provides support in college?

A number of different organisations provide support in college. As there are so many different organisations, you may be unsure about who to contact. Here is a summary of who does what:

- **Educational needs:** colleges are responsible for providing educational support. This might include learning materials in alternative formats, a sign language interpreter, computer software, or a scribe for example. If you are taking a higher education course at college (such as an HNC or an HND), you may receive an allowance called the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) which can be used to pay for some of your educational support. However, it is important to remember that even if you receive DSA, there are some kinds of support which the college should be providing as part of its duties to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students (see above).
- **Personal care support:** if you have been assessed by your local authority as needing personal care support, then it will be the local authority's responsibility to provide this support at college. This is usually arranged through the social work department. This might include help going to the toilet, someone to help you travel to the college, or help to prepare or eat a meal. Your local social work department will be able to tell you about the different kind of support available for your personal care needs, including services, equipment and any adaptations you might need to your home.
- **Healthcare needs:** your needs assessment by the local authority may identify a need for healthcare support in addition to your personal care support. If so, your local health board will be responsible for providing that support, such as someone to give you medication at college or to programme your communication devices.

- **Careers advice:** your school careers adviser or a Skills Development Scotland adviser can help you work out which education, training or employment option suits you best. They may also be able to refer you to a Key Worker who can help you deal with different agencies during your transition to college.
- **Support during the transition to college:** you may find that you need help when you are moving from school to college, especially if you have to deal with various different agencies. Your school/education authority may assign a transitions coordinator to take the lead on supporting you before and during the transition to college.
- **Other support needs:** voluntary organisations like Lead Scotland might provide other types of support, such as learning new skills to help you get ready for college, helping to build your confidence, help using assistive technology, or help to travel independently.

Although different organisations provide support, they should be working together to ensure that the support you need is provided in college.

What if I need to take medication at college?

If you need to take medication during your college day, then the college must make sure that you are able to do so and not placed at a disadvantage. The college may also ask you to provide them with a note of your medication requirements and details of the procedures to be followed in case of an emergency. It is important the college knows about your needs for medication.

Can I bring my own support worker / personal assistant?

You may have had the same support worker / personal assistant (to help with your personal care needs) throughout your time at school, who you would like to bring with you when you go to college.

Each college has different arrangements for support workers within the college. Some employ people to provide support, while others have agreements that the local authority or another organisation provide care within the college. Other colleges might have different arrangements. It is therefore best to speak with the college to find out what arrangements they have in relation to support workers / personal assistants and ask if it is suitable to bring your own assistant with you when you go to college.

What about transport?

If you receive the mobility part of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or Disability Living Allowance (DLA), you will be expected to use this to contribute towards your transport costs. The college then have the discretion to top this amount up if it does not fully cover your transport costs.

If you don't receive this allowance or your support needs mean you need specialist transport services or support to get to and from college, this will be discussed by the college and your local authority. These agencies should decide between them who will pay for your transport if this is necessary, but it is important to note that colleges generally will only contribute to transport costs, but not to the costs of any human support required to get to and from college. In addition, these agencies do not have to provide transport just because you live far from the college. Transport may be provided when your disability prevents you from travelling on your own.

If you are taking a further education course, then you may be able to access the Additional Support Needs for Learning Allowance (see below) to pay for extra transport costs. If you are taking a higher education course at college (such as an HNC or HND), you should apply to the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) for the Disabled Students' Allowance (see below) for your travel costs if you can't use public transport because of your disability.

Financial Assistance

Different funding arrangements are in place to provide financial support depending on whether you are doing a further or higher education course. A good place to get further information would be the [Student Information Scotland website](#) as well as the funding pages of the college's website.

Further Education courses

If you are taking a further education level course, the college will normally email you an application for financial help once you have been accepted on to the course. This is known as a bursary and is awarded to help you with your day-to-day living costs. It is important to note that not all eligible students will receive a bursary, as it is up to the college who gets them. Check the college's website for more information. You may also be able to get an allowance to pay for any extra study costs you might have because of your impairment or additional support needs. This is called the Additional Support Needs for Learning Allowance (ASNLA), and the amount you might get depends on what your needs are. You can read the [policy guidance for colleges related to the ASNLA here](#) (Page 21) for more information. You may also be able to get extra allowances if you have children or caring responsibility for other people.

Higher Education courses

If you are studying a higher education level course at college, you may be eligible for financial help from the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS). This includes a student loan, bursary and additional living-costs grants such as the lone parents grant. You may also be able to apply for the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) to pay for any disability-related study costs. Further information and application forms are available from the college or can be downloaded from the [SAAS website here](#). You may also find our

[DSA factsheet](#) useful in understanding how to apply as there are a few steps involved.

It is best to complete your applications for financial help as soon as possible so that the college/SAAS can consider your application in time for the start of the course. Most financial help for students (apart from ASNLA and DSA) is means-tested, which means that your own and your family's income will be taken into account to decide how much you might get.

Benefits for students

As a disabled student you may also be entitled to certain welfare benefits. You should contact your local Jobcentre Plus to discuss what you might be able to get, and how studying might affect your entitlement to benefits. The Scottish Government also produces a [guide to student funding which has a section on benefits for students here](#). In addition, Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) in Scotland produce a number of factsheets on benefits for students, including one on [benefits for disabled students here](#). You can also contact your local citizen's advice centre or the Lead Scotland helpline if you require further information.

Support from other organisations

Lead Scotland

Lead Scotland (Linking Education and Disability) aims to widen access to learning for disabled people and carers across Scotland. Lead offers the following services:

- Help to learn new skills or brushing up on existing ones
- Help to develop your self-confidence and other personal development skills
- Free information and advice about the support you might get at college and your rights as a disabled learner
- Opportunities to volunteer
- Support finding work experience or during your transition to employment

Lead's services are available to disabled people and carers at any point in their learning journey, including people who need support to get ready for college, people who are attending college, or those who would prefer to learn in a more informal environment. They may be able to lend you accessible computer equipment and a volunteer to work with you on a one-to-one basis.

Please note that some of Lead's services are only available in certain areas (see their website for more information).

Disabled Students' Helpline: (Freephone) 0800 999 2568, info@lead.org.uk

General enquiries: 0131 228 9441, enquiries@lead.org.uk

Enable Scotland

Enable supports people with learning disabilities and their families to

participate, work and live in their local communities. It operates across Scotland and has local managers in most areas who work alongside individuals and their families to develop the services that people want.

Enable also provides supported employment services for young disabled people. Working in partnership with colleges, Enable can provide employment development workers to work with support staff in colleges to help students move into work.

Telephone: 01698 737 000, enabledirect@enable.org.uk

RNIB Scotland

RNIB provides support and services for blind and partially sighted people as well as the people who support them. This includes:

- Advice about specialist equipment and products
- Learning new skills to help you adapt if you have recently acquired a visual impairment
- Providing materials in alternative formats such as Braille or audio books
- Referring you to local support services

RNIB may be able to able you during your transition from school to college.
Telephone: 0303 123 9999

Dyslexia Scotland

Dyslexia Scotland provides support for people of all ages who are affected by dyslexia. They can provide the following services:

- Advice about dyslexia assessments and who to contact to get an assessment
- Help to find a dyslexia tutor
- Advice about how to cope with dyslexia
- Information and resources on support for dyslexic learners in colleges

Dyslexia Scotland will also be able to put you in touch with local dyslexia support organisations.

Helpline: 0344 800 84 84

Scottish Autism

Scottish Autism provide information, support and services for people with autism (including Asperger syndrome). They can provide the following services:

- Advice and information about autism and the kind of support that might be useful in learning environments
- Advice about your rights in education
- Day, vocational and residential services for children and adults
- Transition services for young people

Scottish Autism will also be able to give you advice and support about the transition from school to college.

Telephone: 01259 222 022

Email: advice@scottishautism.org

National Deaf Children's Society

NDCS provide information, advice, training and resources related to supporting deaf children and young people. Their services include:

- Advice line
- Support services
- Specialist technology advice
- Events and information for young people
- Appeals and disputes

They will be able to provide information, advice and support related to the transition into college and getting specialist support and equipment to learn.

Telephone: 0808 800 8880

SMS: 0786 00 22 888

[BSL Video call service](#)

[Online contact form](#)

Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH)

SAMH offer a range of community-based services for people with mental health problems, as well as a national helpline which can provide information and advice about various issues relating to mental health. Please note that many of SAMH's community-based services are only available in certain areas.

Telephone: 0344 800 0550

[Online contact form](#)

Capability Scotland (Advice Service)

Can provide advice for disabled people on a range of issues.

Telephone: 0131 337 9876 Textphone: 0131 346 2529

Equality Advisory and Support Service

Can give information and advice on discrimination and equality rights issues including letter templates for making a complaint.

Helpline: 0808 800 0082 Textphone: 0808 800 0084

Enquire

Provide advice for children and young people (under 16) with additional support needs.

Helpline: 0345 123 2303 Textphone: (18001) 0345 123 2303

[Online guides related to additional support for learning](#)

Skills Development Scotland (SDS)

SDS (formerly Careers Scotland) has specialist advisers who support people

with additional needs to take up education and training opportunities. You may wish to speak to an adviser if you have an additional support need that might affect your career choice. Specialist advisers will help you make the most of your skills and strengths when looking for a career.

SDS has an office within most colleges, where an adviser is available on a full or part-time basis. You can also contact them outside college.

Telephone: 0800 917 8000

[My World of Work](#) – online resources and information to explore careers, look for jobs and opportunities and search for suitable courses and training.

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)

Deals with complaints about organisations providing public services in Scotland, including colleges and universities.

Telephone: 0800 377 7330

Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS)

Awards funding to students taking higher education courses in colleges and universities including the Disabled Students' Allowance.

Telephone: 0300 555 0505 (press option 2)

Email: SAAS_4@gov.scot

Student Information Scotland

National student information portal providing information for Scottish residents on the full range of funding options to study at colleges and universities.