

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/CARERS

GOING TO A SPECIALIST RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE



Education

The aim of this leaflet is to give you information if your son/daughter requires a specialist college placement.

Young people can only go to a specialist college if local colleges have assessed them and have said that they cannot meet their educational needs.

Under the Disability Discrimination Act local colleges must make reasonable adjustments to cater for people with disabilities. Colleges in Hertfordshire can now access additional money to help young people with more complex needs learn locally and remain in their community.

A new assessment process has been introduced for young people with more complex needs who may need extra support at a local college, or who might need to go to a specialist college. The assessment process should start 2 to 3 years before a young person leaves school. This should allow plenty of time for local colleges and other services to assess and put support in place. The assessment process is started by the school and Connexions. Please talk to your son/daughter's Connexions Personal Adviser for more information.

A specialist college can only be considered if local colleges cannot meet a young person's needs.

Questions to consider when thinking about specialist residential colleges

It is important to think very carefully about your son/daughter going to a specialist residential college.

These are just some of the questions you can consider:

- Does my son/daughter want to go to a specialist residential college?
- Will the specialist residential college provide the support my son/daughter needs? Over recent years many specialist colleges have struggled in inspections.

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- How will going to specialist residential college help my son/daughter achieve their longer term goals?
- What will my son/daughter gain from the education offered at the specialist residential college?
- What are the educational reasons that mean my son/daughter cannot attend a local college?
- What will my son/daughter do once they have finished their course at a specialist residential college?
- Where will my son/daughter live once that have finished their course at a specialist residential college?
- How will my son/daughter cope with being away from home?
- How will the family adapt to my son/daughter being away from home?
- How far away is the college and how easy is it for me and my son/daughter to travel this distance?
- How has the specialist college performed in recent inspections?

Choosing a specialist residential college

If your son/daughter is considering a specialist residential college, it is essential that you meet with their Connexions Personal Adviser. The Personal Adviser can recommend colleges to consider, and talk you through the assessment process outlined above.

A directory of specialist residential colleges is published by NATSPEC. This is free of charge to parents. You can obtain a copy by e-mailing chiefexecutive@natspec.org.uk. You can also find out more information for the NATSPC website www.natspec.org.uk.

How are young people funded to attend a specialist college?

Young people are funded through a body called the Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

Is my son/daughter eligible for funding?

Every year the LSC publishes the criteria it uses to decide whether a

young person is eligible for funding for a place at a specialist college. Although the wording of the criteria can change slightly from year to year, the general principles that the LSC consider do not. These are:

- A specialist placement has to be essential to enable the young person to participate in education
 - The specialist college offers a level of specialist support and / or equipment that is not available elsewhere
- ① You can ask your son/daughter's Personal Adviser for the criteria, or visit the LSC website **www.lsc.gov.uk**.

Very often the LSC will ask for joint funding from other agencies (such as Social Services or the Health Service)

How is funding agreed?

These are the steps that have to be taken to get funding from the LSC.

1. Assessment takes place at local colleges to allow the local college to understand the young person's needs and if the college can access the support required
2. Only if the local college cannot support the young person's needs will a report and request be presented by your son/daughter's Connexions Personal Adviser to the LSC Specialist Provision Panel
3. The panel will seek to clarify evidence if it is not clear, any additional evidence will need to be re-submitted to the panel
4. A place at a residential college is found which meets your son/daughter's needs

How long does funding last?

- The LSC fund your son/daughter to study on a particular course at a residential college. The length of funding will therefore depend upon the course that your son/daughter may follow
- In many cases the LSC will initially only agree to fund one year, even if the college course may last up to three years. In these cases the LSC will only agree further funding if your son/daughter is making satisfactory progress and this is evidenced through reports
- Under certain circumstances an additional year's funding (on top of the standard 2 to 3 years) can be sought. This is only where a student has started a course at a specialist college and time has

been missed due to ill health and they need more time to stay on to complete it. If an additional year's funding is sought, a new recommendation has to go to the LSC Specialist Provision Panel

Who else can help?

Social Workers

It is **highly recommended** that all students considering specialist residential colleges have a Social Worker. Social Workers can help with planning the next steps after leaving college.

- ❗ If your son/daughter does not currently have a Social Worker, you can request an assessment by phoning **01923 471400** or **01438 737400**.

Other professionals

Other professionals who work with your son/daughter (e.g. psychologists, occupational therapists, doctors, advisory teachers) can sometimes provide evidence that is very valuable when seeking funding!

What help will my son/daughter receive when they attend a specialist college?

Connexions Hertfordshire (through the Access Ability Service) will continue to support your son/daughter while they are at a specialist residential college:-

- Your son/daughter's Connexions Personal Adviser can meet him/her in the holidays
- The Connexions Personal Adviser will attend some progress reviews and liaise with other agencies to identify a future placement and support them into it

A social worker from Adult Care Services may also attend reviews.

Your son/daughter should also see the Connexions Personal Adviser from the area where the college is situated.

Every specialist college is required to help students plan for what they will do when they leave.

It is important to remember that your son/daughter will only attend a specialist residential college for 2 or 3 years. Therefore planning for the next step needs to happen soon after a young person takes up his/her college placement.

Are there any specialist colleges in Hertfordshire?

There is a specialist college called St Elizabeth's, based in Bishops Stortford and Much Hadham. St Elizabeth's College is set up differently from other specialist colleges. The housing for each young person is provided through a housing association in purpose built accommodation so young people become tenants in their own homes.

Funding for young people at St Elizabeth's college comes from several sources. The Students use housing benefit to pay their rent, the LSC pay for young people's learning as day students, and Social Services pay for domiciliary care costs. Funding can also come from Health Authorities. All students follow the City and Guilds Skills for Life and Work curriculum.

It is essential that you talk to your son/daughter's Connexions Personal Adviser if you are thinking about St Elizabeth's College. Although young people are funded by the LSC as day students, funding is agreed in the same way as other specialist residential colleges as outlined in this leaflet.

For more details on the college, contact Paul Dolman on **01279 844422**, e-mail **college@stelizabeths.org.uk**, view their website **www.stelizabeths.org.uk**

For more information contact:

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