

Are you thinking about opening new education provision for 16-25 year olds with learning difficulties and disabilities?



What you need to know

Introduction

If your organisation is setting up new provision for high needs students aged over 16, most of whom will have an Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP), you might be considering applying to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to become eligible for funding as a Special Post 16 Institution (SPI).

To be considered for eligibility for funding and start the due diligence process, your organisation needs to meet these requirements:

- You need to have been referenced in your home local authority high needs place change workbook
- Your organisation needs to have been named by one or more local authorities in the EHCPs of 10 or more high needs students.

If you meet these conditions, you can apply to the ESFA and will then have to complete the [due diligence process](#).

But what is it really like to enter the further education sector? What else do you need to know?

Many new providers have been surprised and shocked at how much they have had to change or introduce as a result of becoming a college funded by the ESFA and subject to Ofsted inspections.

"Becoming a college changed our whole perspective and culture. Natspec helped us with the transition"

Therese Timberlake, Robert Owen Communities, Devon

"Since becoming an ISC I have had to on many occasions seek assistance from Natspec and each time I have found the staff to be most helpful.... For example, submitting the data on the ILR system for the first time is extremely difficult. The support we received from a Natspec member over the phone was a tremendous help ... Having always provided accredited qualifications I was not familiar with using RARPA ...I have received a lot of support and attended a training event provided by Natspec regarding the use of RARPA which is now in place for employability and independence targets".

Kim Everton, Head of College, the Hive, Wilson Stuart, Birmingham

Natspec can provide advice, guidance and ongoing support on issues and topics that are an essential part of becoming a college:

1. For schools opening post-16 or post-19 provision: the differences between a special school and a specialist college: legal, cultural, operational - and how to create an adult learning environment
2. Study programmes: what they are, how to plan and implement personalised programmes that are linked to aspirations, plus the condition of funding related to English and maths provision
3. Study programmes: setting appropriate targets, using qualifications effectively and monitoring non-accredited learning (using RARPA – recognising and recording progress and achievement)
4. Funding and Data: the Individualised Learner Record (ILR), practical operation of submitting data and funding returns; bursaries and free school meals funding.
5. Financial compliance and Audit: how is this different from schools?
6. Staff skills and experience: how legal and quality requirements differ
7. Learning Support Staff: deploying and training learning support staff in an adult learning environment
8. Technology: is your infrastructure robust enough? Do you have the right assistive technology in place to enable students to learn? Do you need help with technology strategies and funding?
9. Student Voice: listening effectively to students and promoting opportunities for them to inform their own learning and the provision generally
10. Safeguarding: everything you need to know – Mental Capacity Act, Deprivation of Liberties, on-line safety, 'Prevent' strategies, and more
11. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: are your policies in place and understood?
12. Transition: supporting incoming students and planning effective destinations – aiming for positive outcomes for every student
13. Ofsted: the FE experience; Self-Assessment Reports and Quality Improvement Plans.
14. Natspec and other support organisations – who can help?

New providers can also apply to become part of the [Section 41 list of approved institutions](#). This is voluntary, and there are responsibilities involved, but many providers decide to apply in order to take advantage of the benefits of being on the list, principally that if an EHC plan names an institution that is on the list, the LA must comply with the request unless certain circumstances apply. Being on the S41 list means that the provider is on the same legal footing as maintained schools, academies, non-maintained special schools and FE colleges.

What support is available?

Natspec offers support on all these topics, using experts from within specialist colleges who are currently working with the systems and procedures, and have significant experience in leading, managing and working in colleges.

We can provide support in the following ways:

1. One-off advice and guidance: Phone us on 0115 854 1322 or email info@natspec.org.uk to arrange an initial phone call to discuss your support needs. This is free of charge. If you are interested in any of the services below, we will explain our charging policy.
2. On-going email and telephone support on particular issues: we will put you in touch with one of our experts for specific issues e.g. ILR returns or data
3. A visit to your organisation for a health check and overarching support on becoming an SPI (N.B. we will not offer legal advice, nor do we provide detailed help with the application to become an SPI).
4. A quality visit to examine different aspects of your provision, for example:
 - planning of study programmes, teaching, learning and assessment and ensuring learner progress
 - technology and assistive technology
 - learner voice activities
 - funding and finance, contracts and administrative systems

Membership: you can become an associate member of Natspec whilst applying to become eligible for ESFA funding, and a full member when you have been designated an SPI. For a full list of [membership benefits and prices, visit our website](#)