



The voice of specialist further education

Membership Information

Natspec: who we are

Natspec is the membership association for organisations, including colleges and independent providers, which offer specialist further education and training provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

What we do: Purpose and activities

Natspec supports a diverse range of specialist further education and training provision for young people with learning difficulties or disabilities that broadens their choice, supports their aspirations and represents their best interests.

Our core activities are that we:

1. **Support, inform and promote our members:** via guidance, briefings, [events](#), conferences, networks and promotional activity such as our [directory](#), website, [e-newsletters](#), [social media](#) and articles to highlight the positive difference members can make the lives of young people with SEND.
2. **Influence policy:** via [representations](#) to government, funding agencies and other stakeholders, including through the use of [student voice](#).
3. **Support the wider FE sector:** via training and development through [TechAbility](#) and the [Natspec Transform](#) service, together with projects and partnerships to support professionals throughout the sector.
4. **Deliver and implement policy and programmes:** we work to ensure the needs of young people with SEND are being met in accordance with the Code of Practice, and provide opportunities for students to engage in inter-college activities such as [Inclusive Skills](#), the [Natspec Games](#) and the [Student Parliament](#). We also provide advice and guidance to [young people, their families](#) and supporters.

Member colleges provide:

- ✓ Challenging but safe adult environments which encourage students to develop personally and socially
- ✓ Specialist multi-disciplinary teams with expertise in teaching, learning support, therapies and assistive technologies which enable students to learn effectively
- ✓ High quality, personalised Study Programmes linked to Education, Health and Care plans, which support students to achieve their aspirations for work or higher education; living more independently with greater choice and control; having friendships, supportive relationships and being involved in the community, and leading a healthy lifestyle
- ✓ Opportunities for students to develop their communication skills, express their views, and make choices and decisions

To promote continuing improvement and innovation, member colleges:

- ✓ Work in partnership with students and their families, with other members, with other education and training providers, and with local and national agencies
- ✓ Ensure that staff are suitably experienced and qualified and have regular opportunities to update their professional practice.

As part of their Natspec membership, member colleges commit to:

- return requests from Natspec for information and data that will provide evidence for consultations and lobbying
- engage with Natspec activities as far as possible, and encourage staff members to attend relevant training and forum meetings
- avoid behaving in such a way as to bring Natspec into disrepute
- share their skills and strengths with other members and to further the interests of Natspec.

Types of membership

There are two types of membership: Full membership and Natspec Transform.

Natspec Membership is open to specialist FE providers only:

- ESFA funded Specialist Post 16 Institutions (SPIs) in England
- Specialist FE Colleges in Wales
- Equivalent organisations in Scotland and Northern Ireland
- Other organisations, including independent learning providers, which provide state-funded Further Education (post-school), and where the majority of the education provision has been established for students with learning difficulties and disabilities, and there are at least 10 high needs students with the provision named in their Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).

All Natspec Members (Specialist providers) automatically also become members of Natspec Transform, but not vice versa. They have full voting rights according to the articles of association.

Natspec Transform is our professional development, advice, support and training service

Membership of Transform is open to:

- Incorporated colleges: General FE Colleges, Sixth Form Colleges, Land based colleges, and specialist designated colleges: [details on the AoC website](#). Individual departments or specialist units of these colleges can also subscribe directly.
- Independent Learning Providers and Adult and Community Learning providers who are inspected by Ofsted and hold an ESFA contract.
- Other organisations who work in the FE sector with an interest in promoting the objectives of Natspec.

Individuals and freelance consultants can take advantage of some member benefits, including briefings and discounted training, for an annual fee. Contact Rita Buckley for details.

Benefits of membership

The benefits received for the two levels of service are detailed below:

Member benefit	Natspec membership (specialist FE providers)	Transform membership (others)
Events, CPD and training (details below)	Yes	Yes
One free 2-day full residential place at Natspec conference	Yes	Discount available
Free events	Between 3 and 6 free places for member forums (depending on size of college/ member fee paid)	3 free places for network events
Discount at national and regional Natspec Transform and TechAbility conferences, training and events	Yes – up to 50% discount depending on event	Yes – up to 15% discount depending on event
Access to projects and training from projects and programmes including TechAbility, Inclusive Skills, Natspec Games, Focus Weeks (e.g. Maths Week) – (as current)	Yes	Yes
A termly bulletin summarising policy and funding issues, relevant to the whole sector	Yes	Yes
Representation: advocacy and lobbying on issues specific to specialist providers, influencing government policy. A place on DfE and ESFA roundtables, meetings with ministers, and regular liaison with Ofsted and other stakeholders.	Yes	No
Personalised advice and guidance on specific issues, and visits from CEO and Policy officer	Yes	No
Reduced cost of AoC membership - heavily discounted rate	Yes	No
Promotion: inclusion in the Natspec directory	Yes	No
A page on the Natspec website	Yes	No
Stories included in Natspec News	Yes (priority)	Yes (projects)
Policy advice and guidance: Access to member-only forums on employment, care, funding, quality, and more.	Yes	No

Member benefit	Natspec membership (specialist FE providers)	Transform membership (others)
Regional and national meetings for principals and senior leaders, for networking and advice	Yes	No
Access to the member-only section of the website, including Natspec Knowledge and chat forum	Yes	No
Fortnightly briefing on policy issues of direct relevance to SPIs/Specialist FE colleges.	Yes	No
Full voting rights at the AGM and to elect Regional Directors	Yes	No
Eligible to vote for the wider sector board policy director	No	Yes
Student Voice: 2 places for student representatives at the National Student Parliament Promotion of learner voice activities Access to Natspec ambassadors/role models	Yes	Access to learner voice resources and support for LVPs

For further information please contact us email info@natspec.org.uk or telephone 0115 8541322.