



Differabled
Scotland

Creating an effective “Circle of Support” within further/higher education for students with Additional Support Needs

- Contact the Head of Admissions to enquire about any potential reduction in entry requirements prior to course application or on confirmation of exam results.
- Request collaborative report from school, educational psychologist and any other relevant agencies prior to leaving school – if student has left ask if this can still be made available.
- Collate medical evidence from GP, CAMHS or any other practitioner (e.g. OT, speech and language therapist) before any assessment of disability. Highlight any mental health needs such as stress, anxiety or low mood.
- Forward copies of collaborative report and medical evidence to any college or university who have made an offer (some may read and process before exam results, others will not). Highlight any areas where young person requires additional support in this transition.
- Encourage your young person to allow you to attend Disabled Student Assessment with them if possible. Ensure any potential support issues are highlighted at the assessment, and that you can evidence what was discussed – make notes and/or confirm afterwards in writing what has been agreed.
- At the Disabled Student Assessment highlight any mental health concerns in addition to any other diagnosis they may have and address any adjustments which may be required to support this. A Mental Health Mentor may be available within the placement to assist with, e.g. anxiety. It can be useful to have someone outside the family monitoring a young person’s mental health.
- Request guided visits to the campus prior to the young person beginning their course to familiarise them with buildings, lecture theatre layouts, etc.

- Assess whether young person can travel fully independently or if taxi provision will be required. Taxi support may be available for the length of the course, or initially with young person working towards independent travel longer term. Use the medical evidence collated to support this request.
- Request an Advisor of Studies if the course has various modules across various departments to support any communication difficulties.
- Ask to be copied into any student email correspondence to assist the student in meeting deadlines and other vital emails. Highlight the poor executive functioning of the individual to evidence this adjustment.
- Request any alternative exam arrangements if you can medically evidence high levels of anxiety and impaired functioning when sitting exams in school (ask school to evidence this).
- If you encounter an individual who is blocking your requests/progress, try to find a way around the situation. See if there is another contact or route you can use to make requests (complaints process if necessary).
- Remember that taking the college route into year three of a university degree course may not be right for your young person . Beginning in year one of university and adjusting supports through year one and two may mean it is working effectively by year three! Arriving in year three may be too big a jump for many young people.
- University may be able to split year one or two into part-time placements due to 5 year funding availability for those transitioning straight to university from school (depending on course).
- If you have received SDS up to age 18 and have remaining funds (if no longer entitled under adult provision), ask if these may be used to further support the young person during this huge transition. Evidence the impact transition may have on their functioning and physical and mental health.
- Try not to enter into conflict, particularly if you have had a difficult journey through education already. Look for an alternative. Don't give in until you find the support and reasonable adjustments your young person needs. Research organisations and supports who can help if/when you need it.
- Be aware of possible regression in your young person's behaviours and communication due to the major transition process. Give them time to adjust – and you too.

GOOD LUCK - your young person will thrive with the right supports, but is likely to need your support to make this happen!