



Working with Parents to Improve Access into HE for Disabled Students

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Workshop Facilitators:

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Workshop Context

This workshop considered how disability is defined in school, further and higher education, how learning support is organised differently across secondary, further and higher educational sectors, why it is important for young people to disclose information about their support needs and what information needs to be passed on to parents. These key questions were explored drawing on the experiences of the Lancashire Aimhigher Disability (LAD) project and Lancaster and Sussex University's Disability Effective Inclusive Policies (DEIP) research project.

Summer schools can be an important way to raise pupils' aspirations. The Lancashire Aimhigher Disability project has explored the views of school, FE and HE staff, as well as disabled pupils and students, to try and identify reasons for low participation and help understand the factors that help or hinder participation in summer schools and ultimately progression into HE.

The LAD project offered a series of awareness raising activities to encourage them and their teachers to explore how summer schools might be used as part of the transition planning process. When summer schools are part of transition planning they can make a difference in raising pupils' aspirations and increasing their self-confidence and awareness of factors that they need to take into account when preparing to move into HE. Making the transition beyond compulsory education can be a challenging time for pupils, for disabled pupils there may be additional factors to explore including accommodation, funding for support and how that support is organised within an HE context.

 For further information on the Lancashire Aimhigher Disability Project and to access information sheets for parents, school, FE and HE staff refer to:

 <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/reap/projects/LAHDDisability.htm>

 For further information about the collaborative Disability Effective Inclusive Policies (DEIP) project funded by HE ESF (HE European Social Fund) and to access a range of Discussion Papers on the following topics:

- Institutional disability policy analysis
- Transition entering and leaving HE
- Identity
- Dyslexia
- Physical and Sensory impairment
- Disclosure
- Disabled students and employability
- Mental Health Difficulties
- Hearing impairments
- Employment advice

 <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/reap/projects/deip.htm>



Top Tips & Key Issues

1. Encourage disabled students to attend summer schools.

It is important that disabled students and parents are actively encouraged and made aware of the benefits of attending summer schools to increase confidence and aspirations. Summer schools can play an important role in alleviating their concerns and in identifying what support is needed and how it will be organised.

2. Make your learning support needs known

Students who only disclose a problem on a need to know basis may be missing out on opportunities for learning and need to be encouraged to disclose. There is disparity between how schools, further and higher education sectors refer to disability, which can be confusing for parents. For example, schools refer to Special Educational Needs (SEN), whereas FE and HE use the term disability, which includes dyslexia and mental health difficulties. By explaining to parents about the differences in how support is funded and organised within schools, FE and HE, negative perceptions about disclosing disabilities can be alleviated.

3. What do we mean by learning support?

The identification of support needs follows on from assessments, so it is important to make use of assessments in order to benefit from learning support, and also to recognise that there are differing approaches to learning support between school, FE and HE. Encourage parents to support their son or daughter to ask about the learning support provided by an education establishment prior to the application process by talking to course tutors, disability officers and attending open days.

4. Increase the students' confidence in their ability

Many able students do not aspire to university because they lack confidence in their own ability and do not assert themselves at school. SENCOs can play a big part in raising the aspirations of students and breaking down myths that parents may have about who can study for a higher education qualification.

5. Find out about all the different ways of progressing

There is more than one route through FE and HE. For example, a foundation degree may be a good stepping-stone to an honours degree. Schoolteachers, Connexions Personal Advisors and parents need to encourage disabled young people to think ahead and consider all the options. For some students part-time or studying at home may be more suited to their circumstances. The Transition review process in year 9 is often a key point in starting to think about the future, alerting parents to the importance of this process is important.

6. Encourage early application for Disabled Students Allowance (DSA)

The DSA provides funding for individual learning support including equipment, note takers, assistants in HE. This system is very different from school. It is not a means tested allowance and is based on a formal assessment. Encourage and support parents to apply to their LEA for the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) early on in the year, even if a final decision about a HE place is not agreed. Late applications to DSA, perhaps because of applying through clearing can result in delays in receiving DSA, with a consequently delay in the full learning support the student will be able to access.

7. **Parent Peer Support**

Parent peer support across year groups can have many benefits. It allows parents who have been through the system of gaining support for their disabled young person to share their practical experiences and recommendations to parents who are new to the system. Emotionally this can be more reassuring for parents to talk to another parent than talking to a professional. Parent peer support can be encouraged in a variety of ways such as the setting up of a forum for parents of disabled students, organising workshops and generic or specific awareness raising events.

Useful Contacts

SKILL: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities.

Skill is a national charity promoting opportunities for young people and adults with any kind of disability in post-16 education, training and employment across the UK.

 www.skill.org.uk/  Free National Helpline 0800 328 5050

Action On Access, Disability Co-ordinator

Action on Access have a Disability Co-ordinator working nationally to provide disability support to higher education institutions and supporting staff involved in widening participation.

 Mike Wray, Disability Co-ordinator, Action on Access, Edge Hill University, Ormskirk, Lancashire, L39 4QP

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 Action on Access Disability Pages http://www.actiononaccess.org/?p=1_3

Lancashire Contacts

LAD Information Sheet 1 – Contact Details

 <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/reap/projects/LAHDResources.htm>

Further Lancashire Aimhigher Resources

 Parent Resource: Progression into Higher Education: Top Tips for Parents of Young People with Autism or Asperger's Syndrome

 <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fss/projects/edres/cap/families/practitioners.htm>

 Lancashire Aimhigher Families website:
<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fss/projects/edres/cap/families/>

Prepared on behalf of Aimhigher Lancashire

For other Information Sheets

This is one of 5 Information Sheets prepared following the 'Valuing Families, Valuing Diversity' Lancashire Aimhigher National Families Conference. For further details see: <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/reap/families/Conference06.htm>

For further information about working with families, or copies of other resources, contact:

 Lancaster University, Department Educational Research, REAP: Researching Equity, Access and Participation, County South, Lancaster, LA1 4YD

 01524 592907

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 <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/reap/families/index.htm>



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<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/reap/families/Conference06.htm>