Guidance for supporting young people with sensory impairment in further education

'Just Enough Support'

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Preface

Department for Education

This document was prepared using funding provided by the Department for Education under grant agreement with NatSIP, the National Sensory Impairment Partnership:

NatSIP
National **Sensory Impairment** Partnership

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1. Purpose of this document

This document is intended to provide guidance for supporting young people with sensory impairment (SI) in Further Education.

This guidance has been written following:

• Interviews with VI/HI professionals

• Meeting with young people with SI

• Visits to Dorton College (an Independent Specialist College for students with VI) and West Kent College (WKC) Deaf Services.

Both settings provide support to students with SI in the mainstream setting, and so provide a 'case study' approach to examples of provision.

Dorton College is a residential college, but this aspect is not explored in this guidance.

Although the broad themes are the same for both types of provision, funding arrangements meant that the specialist college did have more flexibility with timetabling, and, as the students attended full time, there was automatic provision of supported study. For the deaf students at the general further education college, (GFE) their funding arrangements meant that they were funded to be supported for the time they were timetabled at college. Any funding for supported study had to be separately negotiated. However they were able to use the college facilities and the Deaf Services space at any time.

2. Context – SEND reforms

The context is the impact of the SEN reforms. Under the previous legislation, a Statement of Special Educational Need ceased when a young person left school, so those choosing to study in further education no longer had that protection in terms of provision for support. They may have had a Learning Difficulty Assessment. This would not have provided the same depth of information found in the Statement, and would not have had the same legal standing.

Under the new legislation there is the potential for young people with SEND to remain in education. Unlike a statement, the EHC Plan will be maintained in FE.

This situation has provided a challenge for SI services who have found themselves with young people with a statutory requirement for support to continue but with no additional resource to meet the need.

Some local authorities have well-established provision in place, but this is not the case for all and has been expressed as a cause for concern.

Some SI teams have stated that they do not as a matter of course, extend their provision beyond schools.

Others have developed working relationships with the FE colleges who buy in the support from them. This is a solution but the challenge may be the services having the resource to 'sell'.

Some FE colleges have employed appropriately qualified staff to work as part of the college team.

There are examples too of Independent Specialist Colleges (ISC) who work in partnership with the FE colleges so that their students are accessing the mainstream college, but the support is being provided by the ISC.

So the picture is a varied one but for most services working in the FE context will be new.

3.   Context – FE College for students with SI

The purpose of this guidance document is to recognise that the college environment will be different from the school environment in a number of ways including:

•   Number of students and staff

•   In some subjects there may be less face-to-face time with tutors, but in others, e.g sports, there may be a core group of tutors which the students get to know well. Either way, it will be a different approach to timetabling than the students will have experienced in school.

•   Similarly, the way pastoral care is delivered may be different and take some time to get used to. At WKC each course has a mentor attached who monitors sickness absence and other wellbeing issues and provides follow up.

•   Several campuses – navigating a potentially much more complex environment.

•   Wide range of courses, all linked to qualifications.

•   Engagement with students who have been NEET and the attendant challenges in classes of re-engaging those learners.

•   Whilst starting points for students entering college are recognised, there will be expectations about levels of independence both in learning and in navigating the less structured college environment. The expectation will be that while support may be given at the start of the course that the students will develop the skills.

•   Less class contact time – and the consequent expectations around individual study.

•   Less formality – for example no uniform, calling staff by their first names.

•   Lecturers come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Some will have a commercial, trade or industry background and will have gained their teaching qualification at the college (QTLS). Others will have come in via the school route with QTS.

•   The requirement for students to continue to study English and maths if they have not achieved the appropriate grades has been a challenge to the sector for which this has previously been identified as a weakness.

It is not the intention of the guidance to repeat the ways in which QTVIs and ToDs already provide and support to schools as part of their support for pupils with SI.

There are already a number of places where such advice is well articulated. The following documents may be helpful:

RNIB:
Access to Education: Working with students with a vision impairment in further education.[1]

NDCS/NatSIP:
Supporting the achievement of deaf young people in further education.[2]
Supporting the achievement of deaf young people on apprenticeships.[3]
Supporting deaf young people through transition.[4]

It also needs to be recognised that the SEND legislation now extends to FE colleges and so adherence to the Code of Practice is new to them. Their teaching staff is not necessarily as steeped in the processes that attend that, particularly around annual reviews and the reporting on individual learning goals required.

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[1] http://www.rnib.org.uk/services-we-offer-advice-professionals-education-professionals/guidance-teaching-and-learning (See the sixth section down the page)
[2] https://www.natsip.org.uk/index.php/doc-library-login/supporting-the-si-workforce/supporting-the-achievement-of-deaf-children-in/1010-04-supporting-the-achievement-of-deaf-young-people-in-further-education
[3] http://www.ndcs.org.uk/professional_support/our_resources/supporting.html#contentblock10 (tenth document in the list)
[4] https://www.natsip.org.uk/index.php/natsip-documents/natsip-documents/16-25-years/1059-supporting-deaf-young-people-through-transition

4.   Why 'Just Enough Support'?

As has been indicated, the FE environment gives young people greater opportunities for developing independence, providing a bridge to their next stage.

A key aspect will be preparation for employment, or for other provisions along that pathway e.g. supported internships, traineeships and apprenticeships. The assumption is that as they move towards employment young people will be prepared to require less general support, and that the support will be very specifically targeted. For some young people the expectation of increasing independence may not mirror the expectations made of them in their previous educational setting or at home.

All of the above will to a greater or lesser degree require the young people to demonstrate independence. For young people with SI a key aspect of that is:

•   Being able to articulate the impact of their SI on their learning and their lives. This won't necessarily be immediately evident.

•   Being very clear what aspects of life, learning and work they need support with.

•   Being able to articulate what that support would look like – this may vary according to the specific need and is unlikely to simply be 1:1 support at all times.

•   Being clear about the skills, knowledge and qualifications of the staff supporting them – levels of BSL/braille.

•   Being able to articulate the areas in which they don't need support.

•   Being able to flag up when their support needs have changed and why.

5.   For support to be effective there must be good assessment

For the purpose of this document, 'assessment' is used in its broadest sense to cover formal educational attainment, assessment specific to the SI needs and difficulties and ongoing observational assessment of how the young person is coping educationally, practically, socially and emotionally.

Assessment needs to identify:

•   Support required for learning and achieving the expected educational outcomes and other life outcomes detailed in an EHC Plan.

•   Support for managing the physical environment.

•   Support for managing the social environment.

The assessment also needs to identify the way in which the student has previously been supported and the context in which this happened. This will give an indication of some of the challenges the student may have in adapting to the college learning environment.

**6.	Support for students with VI in a mainstream FE college:**

**6.1	Support for learning and achieving the expected educational outcomes**

- Learning and teaching resources provided in the correct accessible format (braille, large print, appropriate background colours, tactile diagrams). The support arrangements will need to include how, when and by whom the lesson materials are to be provided.

- Appropriate software on the college computers – JAWs, zoom text etc. There is potential for this to be problematic and a cause of frustration so staff supporting the students will need to have good negotiating skills.

- Students will need to use the college's internal e-tracker – and accessibility may be an issue. Again the student may need support in accessing this, or support to advocate for themselves in getting this sorted and to explain how and why it is not accessible.

- Additional supported study time so that the young people are able to keep pace. This is particularly important for subjects which are visually challenging e.g. maths, media. This may mean that there needs to be a space, although likely to be at a premium in a busy college, where this can be done. It may be beneficial for some students to have this added to their timetable so that they understand that this is part of their commitment to their course.

- Students may find that they have longer periods of time, including whole days when they are not timetabled to be in college but will be expected to manage this time to complete portfolio work. To begin with they may need support to organise this time especially if it is to be spent at home. They may need help with identifying specific tasks to be accomplished.

- Specific study skills training e.g. in speech output, braille note, organisation, key strokes etc., to facilitate greater levels of independent learning.

- Students will need to enrol in person on their course of study and may need support to explain how they will be successful. They may need to sport to advocate for them and to explain any 'reasonable adjustments'. This may not be immediately apparent to a tutor for whom they are the first student with VI that they have in their class.

- QTVIs to provide training for college tutors on an overview of the impact of VI on learning, how to adapt their lessons to include the VI student.

- QTVIs to provide individual profiles on each student with VI to all tutors teaching them which includes information on the nature of their visual loss and the impact, print font size/braille, approaches to maximise residual vision, etc.

- The EHCP outcomes are likely to include those related to preparing for adulthood so it is likely that the students will need some specific teaching in things like money management and other aspects of this transition. This may include the wider employability skills not covered by completing qualifications e.g. personal presentation and responsibility.

As explained above, the ethos of 'Just Enough Support' means that the way a student is supported is not fixed – it needs to differ according to context and as the student develops skills. So support levels and how support is delivered need to be kept under review. This needs to be an ongoing dialogue with the student so that they are learning those skills of evaluation and also increasing their understanding of their own changing support needs. It will give them practice in articulating their own needs which will be an essential skill for employment and good preparation for adult life.

6.2   Support for managing the physical environment

Young people will need to be prepared to:

- Navigate multiple sites with a variety of lunchtime and leisure facilities, toilets etc.

- Lunchtimes may be daunting – cafeteria style arrangements with the need to carry a tray are particularly difficult, especially if money need to be exchanged. Students will need support to find their best way of doing this – individual strategies like putting bags down first, or using a cross body bag will leave both hands free. It is likely that the college will have a payment card system so this might solve the money handling aspect. The college may have a variety of places with different styles of service. The student might benefit from trying them all to find which one they are most comfortable with managing and where they are most able to be free of support so they can participate in the social aspects.

- It will be important for the students' effective inclusion, particularly socially, that they are able to find their way to and use the toilet facilities independently. Finding the one with the easiest route layout needs to be prioritised. If the student finds learning routes a challenge then they will need to concentrate on the layout, so that they are independent once there.

- They will need to learn the fire evacuation routes for several different areas – and to understand the risk involved in each, their own ability to evacuate safely, and who they can ask to support them if needed.

- There are likely to be classroom changes made with little or no notice and students will need to be flexible with this. The aim would be for them to have a good idea which changes they can manage independently and when the need to accept support and be supported outweighs their wish to be independent.

- The environment is likely to be busy and crowded most of the time and it may not be as possible for students to trail or to use other environmental clues and cues. Whilst it is desirable that those who are confident and competent long cane users do so, there may be some environmental factors to be overcome or managed.

6.3   Support for managing the social environment

The aim is for the students with VI to form friendships with other students and to take a full part in student life. But they may well need support in order to achieve this – initially at least. This might depend on how they have previously been supported and the level to which they have become dependent on that support and this has become a barrier to forming friendships.

- The students may need support to develop confidence and resilience.

- They may benefit from support with explaining their visual loss to other students.

- They may need support to advocate for themselves and 'speak up'.

- They may have experienced bullying in the past and fear the same thing happening in the college context.

The NatSIP/Guide Dogs UK Training Programmes *'Think Right – Feel Good' for young people with VI*[5], and *'Think Right – Feel Good' – Self Advocacy*[6] may be useful.

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[5] https://www.natsip.org.uk/index.php/doc-library-login/emotional-resilience/think-right-feel-good-trfg-vi
[6] https://www.natsip.org.uk/index.php/doc-library-login/emotional-resilience/think-right-feel-good-self-advocacy

6.4   Times students tell us they do want to be supported

- In class.
- Resourcing.
- Advocacy.
- Lunch/break times.
- To get out and about – accessing regular activities in the community including going to the gym regularly.

6.5   Times students don't need support/should develop skills to have less support

- In class – taking notes. This needs to be gradually reduced year on year and within each year – will always need more support on commencing a programme each academic year to settle in. Challenges – resistance from tutors.
- At lunchtimes – following support to get meals in busy environments and find places to eat, support should be withdrawn. Challenges – many students resist this.
- Mobility – challenges: always individual. Students who have learned routes but are resistant to using them. Learned helplessness. Resilience: one negative experience e.g. for mobility (or other situation) may deter from striving for independence in that area again.
- In the house: where students are risk assessed as being capable to spend blocks of time in the house independently.

6.6   Times students do not want support

- When with others in social contexts.
- With personal care, where this can be learned (if not already independent).

7. Support for students with HI

7.1 Support for learning and achieving the expected educational outcomes

For deaf students in the college setting good preparation is essential – ideally the Teacher of the Deaf (ToD) attending school reviews from year 10. This enables other crucial links to be made with other professionals involved in the life of the student - paediatric audiologist, social care professionals, cochlear implant team, speech and language therapy (SaLT).

Experience suggests that the college's application forms are not sufficiently detailed. The Additional Learning Support (ALS) Department subsequently contact the young person and offer an appointment to discuss their individual support needs e.g. the requirements of specialist equipment like FM systems, examination arrangements, etc.

More useful pre-entry information comes from the local authority services specialist teachers.

In West Kent College, there is a ToD for 2 days a week, another teacher undertaking the mandatory qualification and a team of experienced Communication Support Workers (CSW). The majority of the CSWs are qualified in supporting deaf and hard of hearing students to Level 3 in deaf learning requirements, language modification, and notetaking and communication strategies and in addition, have at least Level 3 in BSL, and some are qualified in BSL to Level 6.

In addition there is a team of Speech and Language Therapists, who assess and provide programmes for oral learners, related to speech production, language development and communication.

It is not the purpose of this document to promote any particular approach to communication, but the 'Deaf Services' is an environment offering a broad spectrum of communication support from sign language to spoken language. Some oral students find that the environment is so conducive to signing that they start to acquire social signing.

Key for all deaf students will be that their teachers, support staff and fellow students understand their communication needs, the impact this has on learning, particularly their use of and competence in English. Their possible lower levels of literacy will need to be taken into account.

To ensure this:

• ToD monitors the hearing aids/cochlear implants and other additional technology e.g. FM Systems. It is essential for the deaf students that the range of technologies which they use is provided, works properly and that all staff working with them have an understanding of its importance.

• ToD works with the students on the individual aspects of their learning needs in order to develop the skills they require to be successful on their course and in their chosen post college pathway - language or concept development, memory, CV writing, etc.

• ToD trains all the college tutors and lecturers who have deaf students in their classes on deaf awareness and classroom management – for example making sure that clear instructions are given at the beginning of the sessions and don't get 'lost' in the general delivery.

• The student profiles are available for all staff to access via the on-line tracking systems. This information is followed up by Deaf Services, to ensure all the tutors understand the needs of the particular students they are teaching and the appropriate strategies for to use for each of them.

• It is favourable for the CSWs to have good understanding of the vocational subject areas; then care is taken to match the correct CSW to match the student, their communication requirements and their level of comprehension.

• In practical aspects of learning the CSW will allow the confident student to work independently by 'stepping back', but be prepared to 'step in' if required.

• New concepts may require new signs – and some of these will need to be researched, checked for meaning with the student and the lecturer, and then agreed with the student.

- Skilled signing is essential. Insufficient knowledge of the subject may mean that the signing is wrong thus disadvantaging the student.

- The teaching staff are encouraged to provide materials in advance of the lesson so that the CSW can support the student, particularly with technical terms and jargon that might arise.

- To support the student with some pre-teaching the CSWs may provide them with a glossary book which is individual to the student's communication needs and specific to the course they are undertaking.

- The CSW will modify or explaining the language used in course materials, so that it is more easily understood, using clear English at the appropriate level for the deaf student. Where the text can be put into bullet points this may be helpful as it emphasise key words and is succinct. Language support is key. It is not sufficient for the deaf student to just get the 'gist' of what is being conveyed in the lesson. The aim is always to encourage the student to work in full sentences.

- The CSWs will support the students in making up for lack of incidental learning through over hearing other discussions and comments through lessons. They will support the students in accessing the class group for class work and discussions enabling them to keep track. The CSW may provide 'voice over' for the student's contribution to the discussion, if their speech is unclear or until the student has confidence to speak to a group.

- The CSWs will support oral students by taking notes during the lessons, providing support before and after lessons to ensure that concepts introduced are clear and understood.

- For lessons where video clips are being used, the CSW will need to have access to the material in advance, and ideally the student too. The student may find it difficult to keep pace with the sub-titles, if they haven't been able to become familiar in advance. They are often very quick and may assume a level of English reading that the student may not have. If the CSW and student have not had prior access to the video, then if they are following signing or speech reading explanation, then they will need to turn away from the video. Clips from places such as YouTube may have automatically generated sub titles, but these often contain incorrect words or spellings.

- Where PowerPoint is being used for teaching, the situation is similar. Ideally a transcript would be provided in advance. If this doesn't happen then lighting will need to be at a level where the deaf student is able to speech read or follow signed translation.

- Deaf students may find the pace of lessons challenging, so pre- and post-teaching is important.

- Some courses at FE are very demanding. It might be that there needs to be a negotiation individual programme for the deaf student e.g. to take a 1 year course over 2 years.

- Where there are parallel classes doing the same subject and at the same level the Deaf Services staff may suggest that a deaf student moves to another class group where the teaching style and the social context may be better for them.

7.2   Support for managing the physical environment

• A large, busy college with a great deal of continual background noise will of course present significant challenge for deaf students and is likely to impact on the choices they might make for example in choosing the quieter coffee shop or canteen.

• Students like the 'Deaf Services' area. It gives them a quiet space where they can confidently sign to each other. Break out areas are important generally – to give the deaf student a chance to relax from the significant effort required to sign and/or speech read.

• The physical environment for group discussions will need to be managed. A quiet, well-lit area is preferable. A deaf student needs to be able to see the other students. A system of listening and speaking needs to be managed by the lecturer. The speaker should be encouraged to raise their hand before speaking so the deaf student is able to identify who is speaking.

• Travel and transport can be an issue – and some of the issues are not necessarily related to deafness.

7.3   Support for managing the social environment

• Whilst inclusion with hearing students for the whole of the college day might be desirable, many of the deaf students expressly choose to spend lunch and break times with each other in the Deaf Services area.

• Few of the deaf students use the canteen with confidence. They gradually develop confidence in signing in a public space.

• Interaction with hearing students is dependent on their willingness to learn how to communicate and develop patience. If they need to learn basic signing, the hearing students need to get through their initial feelings of embarrassment when they are first learning to sign.

• So much depends on the character and resilience of the deaf student. The ToD is able to provide deaf awareness training to the friendship group and/or the class, and also to teach them all some useful signs. The CSWs follow up on this provision. When all the aspects of this are in place then there is mutual benefit – but most importantly the deaf students are enabled to enjoy meeting with friends, including in the canteen.

• There is recognition that there are a significant number of deaf young people who have mental health issues and they have access to Deaf CAHMS Services.

The following resources may be useful:

The NatSIP/Guide Dogs UK Training Programmes *'Think Right – Feel Good' for young people with HI.*[7]

NatSIP Training Programme *'Think Right – Feel Good' – Self Advocacy.*[8]

NDCS *Healthy Minds*[9] resource

The NatSIP document *Supporting the achievement of deaf young people in further education.*[10]

[7] https://www.natsip.org.uk/index.php/doc-library-login/emotional-resilience/think-right-feel-good-trfg-hi
[8] https://www.natsip.org.uk/index.php/doc-library-login/emotional-resilience/think-right-feel-good-self-advocacy
[9] http://www.ndcs.org.uk/family_support/positive_parenting_families/emotional_health_and_wellbeing/healthy_minds.html
[10] https://www.natsip.org.uk/index.php/natsip-documents/natsip-documents/suporting-the-si-workforce/supporting-the-achievement-of-deaf-children-in/1010-04-supporting-the-achievement-of-deaf-young-people-in-further-education

8.   Conclusion

This guidance aimed to provide some examples of ways in which students with SI are being supported in further education.

The intention is that this remains a 'dynamic' document in the sense that there will continue to be examples of good practice emerging and also new challenges with the need for different and innovative solutions.

NatSIP will continue to champion the improved outcomes for young people with SI.

9.   Thanks to…

With particular thanks to:

Jill Bussien, ToD, West Kent College

Jodie Knight, QTVI, Dorton College

Students at West Kent College and Dorton College

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