

Local Offer information

Support for students with learning difficulties, disabilities or special educational needs (SEND) at Wirral Met College

The Children and Families Act 2014 requires Local Authorities to develop and maintain a 'Local Offer' of services for children and young people with special educational needs. The information below answers questions you might have about what Wirral Met College provides as part of your Local Offer.

Wirral Met College prides itself on being an inclusive learning environment, and we welcome students with a very wide range of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Our aim is to ensure that we have courses that match our students' strengths and goals, and that we support our students to overcome any barriers they may face.

We support students with SEND in every curriculum area, and at every level from pre-entry level to Higher Education. We also have a range of courses designed specifically for students with SEND. (see '**What courses do you offer specifically for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities?**' below).

How will you know if I need extra help?

There are several ways we can find out this information.

- You can tell us on your application form when you apply for a course. Please tick the relevant box in the 'Support' section of the application form. We will contact you, to arrange a meeting with one of our Additional Learning Support team.
- You can tell us by ticking the similar box on your enrolment form when you enrol at college.
- You can contact our Additional Learning Support department at any time. Please ring 0151 551 7435 or email ALS@wmc.ac.uk.
- Once you are at college, you can also tell your Personal Tutor and they will let the Additional Learning Support (ALS) department know.

Do you have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)? If you would like to come to Wirral Met you need to request that we are named in your

EHCP. It is also very helpful if we can be invited to your EHCP review before you come to us, so that we can plan the support you may need at college.

Remember – you can tell us you need help at any time, but the earlier you tell us, the better. If you tell us about your needs before you come to college, we can help to make sure you have the best possible start with us.

What should I do if I think I may need some support with my learning?

You can contact the Additional Learning Support (ALS) department on (0151) 551 7435 or ALS@wmc.ac.uk. The ALS department supports around 700 students every year, on all levels of course across the college. Many of our students did not have an Education Health and Care Plan at school, and have often not had an 'official' diagnosis of their difficulties, but we are still able to help them succeed.

How will staff support me?

Our ALS department will contact you to find out about your difficulties. We will invite you to meet with one of our team of Specialist Support Tutors (SSTs). This team of highly experienced tutors and lecturers have a wide range of qualifications and experience to help ensure that your learning support needs are met..

Our team of Specialist Support Tutors will work with you to put together your Additional Learning Support Plan, which will meet your learning support needs while you are a student with Wirral Met. They also work with your teachers and other college staff, to ensure they understand your needs.

Our team also includes over 40 Learning Support Assistants, Carers, and Communication Support Workers who work with students in the classroom and around the college.

Different students require different kinds of support, so every support plan is different. Examples of support that some students may require include:

- Specialist equipment (e.g. desks/chairs, computer equipment, hearing loops, iPads/iPods, Dictaphones, laptops)
- Extra support in the classroom (e.g. from the class teacher or a Learning Support Assistant). This may include help with:
 - concentration

- understanding a task
 - taking notes
 - reading/spelling etc.
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- Communication support – e.g. with British Sign Language
 - Additional tutorials – e.g. to work on study skills; organisational skills; communication skills; assignment work; behaviour; English/Maths
 - Support with personal care – we have excellent facilities to support students with physical needs who require help with personal care such as using the toilet. We also have adapted equipment to enable you to access the bathroom more independently, such as a tracking hoist system and clos-o-mat toilet which washes and dries for you.
 - Support at break times – e.g. some students need to be accompanied at all times of the day, from the time they arrive to the time they leave, to enable them to feel safe, buy their lunch, interact with others etc
 - (Some students need one-to-one support, others are able to be more independent).

The relevant Specialist Support Tutor will work with you, and your parents if appropriate, to put together the right support plan for you. They will then review this plan regularly and update it if your needs change. They will never include anything on your plan that you are not comfortable with.

This plan is shared with other college staff, to ensure everyone who works with you understands what they need to do to support you. Any sensitive information you share with the Specialist Support Tutor (e.g. personal history; medical needs) can be kept confidential – we will only share information with your consent.

How are the College Governors involved and what are their responsibilities?

The Governors are responsible for ensuring the college meets its legal obligations to meet the needs of our students with learning difficulties or disabilities. This includes checking that we have the right range of courses and opportunities for everyone in our community. They also check that our students with learning difficulties and disabilities are as successful at Wirral Met as all other students.

How will the curriculum be matched to my needs?

At Wirral Met, we work very hard to ensure that every student is placed on a course that matches their interests, strengths, and future goals. This is the most important step in meeting your needs. Once we have found the right course for you, your Learning Support Plan will detail how things might need to be adapted to meet your needs.

Your Learning Support Plan may also require your teachers to use particular strategies to support you. There are lots of strategies that teaching staff can use to support students. Some of the strategies that our students most commonly request include:

- Adapted learning materials – e.g. enlarged print; coloured paper
- Providing copies of presentations in advance, to limit how much you need to write
- Allowing you to record lectures to help you with revision
- Allowing you additional time to complete tasks
- Encouraging you to work alongside another student, so that you can support one another
- Reassuring you that you won't be asked to read aloud in class
- Allowing you to take brief 'time out' breaks during lessons if you have difficulty concentrating
- Arranging for you to have 'Access Arrangements' in your exams, such as extra time, sitting in a separate room from other students, enlarged or adapted exam papers, or working with a reader or scribe.

Our Specialist Support Tutors are highly skilled in suggesting strategies that may work for you in the classroom, but they also know that YOU are the best expert in your own needs. They will listen to your suggestions and your experience, and will only recommend strategies that you are comfortable with.

What courses do you offer specifically for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities?

We support students with learning difficulties/disabilities on all of our courses, but our Prep 4 Life department has a range of courses specifically designed for students with learning difficulties. These courses teach a range of life skills, independence skills and work skills. They can help you to develop the skills you need in adult life, or help you prepare to move on to further learning in another vocational area. Please see '[Prep 4 Life](http://wmc.ac.uk/prep-4-life/)' <http://wmc.ac.uk/prep-4-life/> for more information.

We also offer entry level courses in several vocational areas, for students who may not be ready to study at level 1 or above.

How will my parents/carers know how I am doing, and how will you help them to support my learning?

If you are under 18, we are happy to involve parents/carers in your education and progress. If you are over 18 but still need us to do this, again we are happy to do so. There are a number of ways we can do this. Some students have communication diaries that enable us to exchange daily messages with parents/carers. Some will attend parents' evenings, or can arrange for individual appointments to meet with your Specialist Support Tutor. Other students only need us to involve their parents/carers if there are any concerns about their progress.

If your parents/carers would like to be kept informed about your progress, or would like to discuss your support needs with us, they or you can let your Specialist Support Tutor know at any time.

What support will there be for my overall well being?

Every full-time student at Wirral Met has a Personal Tutor. Your Personal Tutor takes the lead responsibility in making sure you have a positive experience at college, and supporting you with any difficulties. If there are problems with your attendance, behaviour, or progress on your course, your Personal Tutor will support you with these.

If you need it, your Personal Tutor can arrange for you to meet with a Pastoral Support Mentor. Pastoral Support Mentors support students with a wide range of issues, including

- Problems relating to finance
- Childcare
- Accommodation
- Family issues
- Time management
- Study support to help you keep up with your work

Support with Behaviour:

Our priority is to make sure every student has a positive experience in college, and is able to stay on their course and achieve their goals. We set high standards of behaviour for all of our students, but we also understand that some students need support with this. Our Additional Learning Support department and Pastoral Support Mentors can support students to manage their own behaviour, so that wherever possible they are able to stay in college and succeed. Strategies we use include:

- Behaviour contracts
- Behaviour support plans
- Agreed 'time out' from class if you need help to re-focus
- Support to understand what behaviour is appropriate

Support with social skills

College is a great place to meet people and make friendships that will last for the rest of your life. We know that some students can have particular difficulty with this. Where needed, our Additional Learning Support department and Pastoral Support Mentors can help you with this important part of student life.

If you have autism or more complex learning difficulties, we can work with Speech and Language Therapists to help you improve your communication skills using sign, symbols, pictures, social stories, support with your communication device, etc.

Medical support

If you require support with medication, our Additional Learning Support department can help you with this. We can:

- securely store medication for you
- remind you to take it
- administer regular medication
- administer emergency medication (such as Midazolam; EpiPen medication)

Please inform the Additional Learning Support department if you require help with this, and our trained care staff can discuss your needs in detail.

Personal care support

If you require support with your personal care, please inform the Additional Learning Support department. Our qualified care staff will work with you to produce an individual care plan. This can include support with:

- eating/drinking
- changing
- using the toilet
- catheter care, colostomy care, ileostomy care etc.

Support with personal safety

All college staff are trained in safeguarding of children and adults at risk, and we have a full-time Safeguarding Manager who is responsible for ensuring that we support our students to stay safe and get the help they might need.

Some of our students are particularly vulnerable, perhaps due to a more complex learning difficulty or disability. If this relates to you, we can put lots of strategies in place to keep you safe and happy at college. For example, we can provide:

- Support from the moment you arrive at college, to the moment you leave at the end of the day
- Support during all lunch and break times, to make sure you don't get lost or frightened
- Access to a quieter area
- Support to help you communicate with others
- Individual risk assessments to take account of your particular needs

How will I be able to contribute my views? How will you support me to do this?

We encourage students to give us their views on how the college is run. In addition to student surveys, students are encouraged to become Course Representatives, or to stand for election as Student Governors. If you require support with any aspect of this, please speak to Additional Learning Support. For example, we can support you to complete surveys, or to prepare for and take part in Course Rep meetings.

What specialist services and expertise are available at, or accessed by Wirral Met?

We have a large team of specialist staff in our Additional Learning Support department (as listed above).

We also work closely with professionals from external services, who may be working with our students. These include: Social Workers, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Community Nurses, Physiotherapists and many others.

- **Speech and Language Therapists** – may provide a programme for our staff to deliver ongoing guidance for our staff, or work with us to assess whether you need a communication device
- **Occupational Therapists** – OTs often work with us to identify appropriate furniture or other equipment for students
- **Physiotherapists** – provide exercise programmes for our care staff to support students with
- **Continuing Care Team** – provide training regarding medical needs e.g. diabetes, colostomy/ileostomy care, PEG feeding, throat/nasal suction, tracheostomy care etc

What training do the staff who support me have?

Our Specialist Support Tutors have a wide range of qualifications associated with their particular area of expertise, and undergo continuing professional development to ensure they are familiar with the latest advances in their particular fields.

We also provide a regular programme of training to the rest of our Additional Learning Support staff, and our teaching staff across the whole college, regarding strategies for supporting students with various learning difficulties/disabilities.

In addition to this, we work with teaching staff to ensure they understand the specific needs of our individual students.

How will I be included in activities outside the classroom including college trips?

Our Additional Learning Support department work closely with teaching staff to ensure that you are able to take part in any college trips included in your course. This can include:

- Arranging accessible transportation
- Ensuring the venue is accessible
- Providing staff to assist you on the trip
- Arranging suitable accommodation to meet your needs
- Making all reasonable adjustments to ensure you can fully participate in any activities

We will work closely with you (and your parents/carers, where needed) to make sure we fully understand your needs.

How accessible is the college environment?

Our buildings have excellent levels of accessibility (please see www.wmc.ac.uk/about/getting-to-and-from-college/ and choose a campus for detailed information). We also regularly make adjustments to our buildings to meet the particular needs of students who plan to come to us in the future. If you have particular access requirements, please contact our Additional Learning Support department and we can discuss this with you before you come to college.

How will you prepare and support me to join your college, transfer to a new college or the next stage of education and life?

We know that for some students with learning difficulties/disabilities, coming to college is a huge change that needs lots of preparation. We work closely with our partners in local schools and Councils, to identify students who may need support with this. This support can include:

- Visiting the college, perhaps at a quiet time of day
- Meeting the teaching and support staff

- Taking part in ‘taster’ activities, or studying with us part-time while still attending school, to help you get comfortable with college
- Looking at all our facilities
- Planning the support you will need at college
- Working with other professionals, such as the Continuing Care team, to ensure all your needs are met at college

Once you are approaching the end of your course, we can support you with planning your next steps. This can include:

- Identifying another course for you to progress onto at Wirral Met; this could include a Supported Internship, a Traineeship or an Apprenticeship if you are planning to progress into employment
- Passing information on to another college/university, if you are continuing your education elsewhere
- Providing you with guidance about employment opportunities, and supporting you to apply for jobs
- Referring you to other agencies, such as Career Connect, Job Centre Plus or Remploy, to support you into employment or other opportunities

How are your resources allocated and matched to my needs?

Further Education colleges are provided with a Disadvantage Fund, and an Adult Skills Budget, which are used to meet students’ needs. Your individual needs will be assessed by one of our Specialist Support Tutors, as detailed above. It is the responsibility of the Assistant Principal for Foundation Learning and Student Support to ensure that we use our funding effectively to meet your individual needs.

If your needs are particularly complex, we may need to work with your local Council to identify additional ‘High Needs’ funding to cover these costs.

If you are studying on a Higher Education course (e.g. a degree course), you will need to apply for Disabled Student Allowance to fund the cost of your support. Further information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas/overview>

It is important that you apply for this well before your course starts.

How is the decision made about what type and how much support I will receive?

As described above, you will meet with one of our Specialist Support Tutors, who will assess your needs and work with you to plan your support. This can involve discussion with your parents, carers or other professionals who work with you, if you need it to.

This support is reviewed regularly – at least three times per year – to make sure it is right for you. We will talk to you about how you feel you are doing. We also ask for feedback from the staff who teach and support you, and this will help with any decisions about your support. We will encourage you to become as independent as possible, but we aim to ensure you have enough support to reach your full potential.

This process works extremely well; our statistics show that Wirral Met students with learning difficulties/disabilities are just as successful as all our other students.

Who can I contact for further information?

If you would like to discuss support at Wirral Met in more detail, please contact Pete Miller, Additional Learning Support Manager, on 0151 5517777 or email ALS@wmc.ac.uk .

Can staff get extra help from experts outside if they need to? (eg advice and training on medical conditions)

We regularly receive training and advice from other professionals, so that we can meet our students' specific needs. This has recently included training in catheter care, continence management, guide dog awareness, assistive technology in examinations.

How will information about me be circulated to all members of staff and who will be responsible for that?

When your Specialist Support Tutor produces your Support Plan, they will agree with you what information you are happy for us to share with other staff. They then add this information ProMonitor, our student database, and inform the manager for your particular course. That manager ensures that everyone who teaches you is aware of the information on your Plan.