

**DEIS CYFLE ! PROJECT FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION LEAFLET**

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# **Effective Support for Young People with Autism Spectrum Disorder**

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**Some young people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) may choose to apply for a place to continue their studies post-school. By the time they are in year 11 or year 13, their support and learning needs will have been well catered for at their school or 6th form college.**

Once they enter the transition period and start applying for a place for further study at a college of further education, training centre or university, their needs will benefit from appropriate support (Martin, 1999 and 2008; Harpur et al,2004).

This leaflet has been produced by the Deis Cyfle! Project to highlight some of the additional considerations that young people with ASD may need at this time of transition, and after, to make the most of their lifelong learning.

## **For any post school setting**

- Awareness and knowledge of ASD by staff will play an enormous part in the success of a individual with ASD
- Training and awareness raising is vital and needs to be regularly updated
- The cornerstone of awareness will be understanding how the person with ASD thinks and functions
- A trusting rapport with the individual will need to be built up
- Time spent getting to know the individual, their skills and strong points will be time well spent
- The majority of individuals with ASD work well with structure, timings, to do lists, self organisation
- Support may be needed to help hone those skills and to organise priorities and deadlines

## BEFORE AND DURING APPLICATION

- Anything that helps to prepare the individual for FE or HE life will be invaluable
- Previous experiences and talents developed through a school career may lead to expectations that Further and Higher education will give an extension to earlier achievements
- The usual pre-entry requirements to FEI and HEI may give a misleading picture of what the individual can do and what he/she is seeking from you
- Audit the institution's application process and ensure that information provided is concise, clear and explicit
- Think of different ways to get the most out of potential students at application, interview and offer stages
- The personal presentation of the individual on paper and at interview may lead to the wrong conclusions – they may not have the level of social skills to present themselves in the best possible light, how can we enable them to give the best of themselves ?
- Their choice of courses may be reliant on what they perceive to be their strengths or how that subject was delivered at school- this may lead to their expectations not being fulfilled or their early promise not being realised
- Experiential, taster sessions may give them a better idea of what a course is all about
- Taster days/orientation tasks/study skills input, as well as input from the relevant student support department, will help the individual
- If some of these exercises can begin before entry or as soon as grades and acceptance are worked out, then the individual will have a clearer picture of what they are aiming for
- Not all individuals with ASD will appreciate the importance of declaring their disability – their assessment of their own support needs may not have projected into a different environment with different expectations but student support may be needed
- Ensure that they know how and where to access help
- As part of equality impact assessing arrangements for applicants, student and graduates, why not build in an ASD-specific component of this wider exercise of reviewing processes and support ?

## INDUCTION AND TRANSITION PROCESSES

- Ensure that they know if they are entitled to benefit support from Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) and support them in their claim
- Give them time to explore and orient themselves to the new environment
- Check that they have a mode of transport to get to you and can use it reliably
- Buddying up with older students or having a strong rapport with a member

of support/course staff will be of benefit and help to iron out any early issues

- The social world of Further and Higher Education will be different to what they have known and they may have additional support needs that will not be identified in advance
- They may come to college/uni with former school peers and there may be a circle of support amongst these peers that may help to guide them through the more fluid and flexible timetable.

## STUDYING WITH YOU

- The competition of attention to work or play is sharper than at school. Structuring work and planning will benefit
- An assumption about cognitive ability compared to life skills may rear its head – you may have brilliant scholars who struggle to care for themselves or get themselves onto public transport – you may assume more independence than there is, a buddy or mentor may need to ask direct questions about eating/sleeping and self care skills
- The pedagogical mode of large lectures followed up by individual or group study may cause issues for an individual who is more used to a didactic approach
- Large periods of time researching studies and fulfilling assessed tasks may also need careful structuring through which the individual may need mentoring
- Sometimes thoughts and knowledge are at a very high level- having an

undergraduate querying your beliefs can be a challenge to manage in a lecture theatre

- Studies that have a large group work component may be a problem for students with ASD who may be used to working on their own and being self reliant
- Unlike other students, an individual with ASD may need ongoing support throughout their studies or other issues may arise that could not be anticipated
- Issues around anxiety and susceptibility to mental health problems may mean that students with ASD will need to know about accessing specialist support services
- Studies and future outcomes may need explicit exploration at different points through their course of study
- Have you used the institution self evaluation audit tool (Deis Cyfle! Project 2012) to assess fuller learning and support needs of students with ASD ?

## LEAVING YOU

- Have they been offered the appropriate support and guidance concerning future career options during the time of their study?
- Do they know of the Alumni Association and its benefits ?
- Are there schemes or opportunities within your institution to practise employability skills or employment preparation exercises ?
- They may need further support to manage the transition post college or uni, will that be available ?
- Do you keep track of the trajectories of students leaving you ?

## Acknowledgements

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## References

Harpur. J., Lawlor. M. and Fitzgerald. M. (2004) 'Succeeding in College with Asperger Syndrome' London/NY: Jessica Kingsley

Martin. N. (1999 and 2008) 'Support in Transition for FE Students with AS Abstract' DNA Day to Day, Conference Proceedings :36

Martin. N. (2008) REAL services to assist students who have Asperger syndrome. <http://www.shu.ac.uk/faculties/ds/education/theautismcentre/papers.html> (accessed 30/03/12)

## Useful Websites in Wales

[www.awares.org](http://www.awares.org)

[www.autismcymru.org](http://www.autismcymru.org)

[www.ASDInfoWales.co.uk](http://www.ASDInfoWales.co.uk)

[www.autism.org.uk/wales](http://www.autism.org.uk/wales)

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