

The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to participate in lifelong learning irrespective of their personal circumstances. In May 2009 the Government issued a revised version of its Partnership Matters document, previously published in 2005 and 2007, which describes the roles and responsibilities of agencies supporting students with additional support needs at or as they prepare to go to college or university.

Partnership Matters is about removing barriers faced by people with additional support needs. This is not solely the responsibility of the colleges or universities; all agencies have a role to play whether by providing personal care, health care, transport or other forms of support. The revised document provides updated guidance which has for the first time been extended to universities and includes additional case studies to illustrate how support might be provided.

Schools have a duty, under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, to ensure that pupils with support needs are prepared for post-school transition to further education, higher education or whatever route is most appropriate for them to pursue. The schools must engage with the college or university and the other agencies at least a year in advance of the pupil leaving school to ensure that arrangements are in place when they start their course.

These early discussions are particularly important for people with complex needs as it may take longer to arrange their support packages. Colleges and universities have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that their courses can be accessed and that there are suitable arrangements in place to meet the educational requirements of the student. The social work authority or health professionals are responsible for providing any necessary personal or health care that the student requires in order to be able to undertake their studies.

Partnership Matters also encourages the setting up of local formal partnerships so that there are structures in place to ensure that support is available and to give strategic direction to achieve integrated support. A partnership should include representatives of colleges, universities, the local authorities, voluntary organisations and NHS boards or other health professionals plus any other appropriate agencies. Colleges and Universities may wish to consider joining existing partnership forums such as Community Planning Partnerships or Community Health and Care Partnerships.

This updated guidance is in electronic format only which makes it easier to keep it up to date and makes it much more accessible for everyone. It can be accessed at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/05/08155445/0>. The Scottish Government has also produced information booklets for potential students, students, parents and carers to explain what kind of support is available if they are studying at college or university. Copies of these booklets are available at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Funding-Support-Grants/FFL/College> and <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Funding-Support-Grants/FFL/University>.