

If you want to continue in education after you leave VEC, and your local college can't easily meet your course or therapy needs, you can look at ISP's (Independent Specialist Providers). For example, you could contact Treloars College (Hampshire), National Star College (Cheltenham), Nash College (Kent), and Sheiling College (Ringwood-ambulant students only), to see if they offer a course you are interested in.

These colleges are a lot like VEC, as they have small teaching groups with additional learning support staff, therapies, specialist equipment and disabled facilities. Most people go after Year 14 at VEC, and study for usually up to 2-4 years (or the length of the course)- if funding is agreed by your Local Authority (usually the council who is responsible for your EHCP).

Most of these colleges offer day-time course (if you live close enough) and residential based courses if it's too far to travel daily. Courses tend to be for a maximum of 38 weeks (so you may need extra holiday housing options), although a few colleges let you live-in for up to 50 weeks of the year.

You must be ready to leave home before applying to these colleges as a residential student.

The **NATSPEC** (National Association of Specialist Colleges) website offers information on all the ISP's/ specialist colleges available nationally, and explains the process for moving on to these, and the application process for each college. Their website is: www.natspec.org.uk

The **Natspec Colleges Directory** offers a **college finder tool**, where you can select the support needs of the student e.g. physical support needs and/or autism etc. It then recommends colleges offering support for these needs. You can then look at the college websites, and see if you would like to arrange a visit to look around.

It is advised that you look at more than one college, so you can decide which you like best. You will need at least 18 months to: visit, get assessed and then have a place offered at the college, so you will need to plan early e.g. start looking the end of Year 12, to leave school in year 14.

The college directory also gives information on the education reforms/changes e.g. Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP), and SEND reforms (SEND- Special Educational Needs & Disabilities- as part of the Children and Families Act 2014). **Colleges funded under section 41** of this legislation have the **s41 symbol** along-side them, and can be funded from the Approved List of funded colleges (or by your Local Authority).

Under this law, **students** (or representative e.g. parent/carer if the student cannot do this themselves) can name a **s41 funded college on their Education & Health Care Plan, and:**

"The local authority must comply with your preference and name the school or college in the EHC plan unless provision there is considered to not meet their needs, not represent good value for money or would impact negatively on the education of others" [Special Educational Needs and Disability -A guide for parents and carers, Department for Education, August 2014].

Some life-skills placements are not funded by Local Authorities (e.g. Horizons at Victoria) and would need to be funded by other means e.g. Social Services/Health (CHC)/self-funded etc.

It is important that other agencies are involved in your planning e.g. Social Services and Health (if you are eligible for these), as they may also need to pay towards some of the costs of a residential placement (e.g. for support outside of education hours -weekends, mornings and evenings, and holiday care packages).