

# Your Guide



A National College for People with Disabilities

## Empowering Abilities, Inspiring Lives



[www.qac.ac.uk](http://www.qac.ac.uk)

# Your Guide

**Welcome to our college**

“I really enjoy QAC - it's a friendly, caring, positive and fun place to be.”

***Student Quote***

**Queen Alexandra College is a national specialist day and residential College that supports a diverse range of student abilities and needs.**

**We welcome students who come to our College from all over the country - as well as many who are local to us.**

Queen Alexandra Charity empowers young adults with learning difficulties and disabilities to achieve their ambitions and to lead fulfilling lives. We achieve this by offering a comprehensive range of services, including specialised education, residential support, community engagement, and enterprises.

We can trace our history back to 1846 when the General Institution for the Blind was founded. In 1997, we were established as an independent charity, with its own governing body.

The College has been at its current location since 1903. Today, in addition to supporting people who have a visual impairment, we offer support and guidance for students with autism, those with moderate to severe learning difficulties, students with physical and other disabilities.

Ultimately, we have a great mix of students and provision which adds to the inclusive atmosphere of QAC.

There are over 400 students studying at QAC but you will be pleased to know that class sizes are small and support levels are high.

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To see our full student curriculum please visit [www.qac.ac.uk](http://www.qac.ac.uk)

**“ My child has settled in really well. The staff have been amazing.”**

***Parental Survey***



# It's All About You...

**We offer an innovative, holistic approach to learning and support. Developing the right learning programme for you is vital to ensure you achieve your long-term goals; programmes are personalised and flexible.**

At QAC our aim is that your learning is planned around your individual needs, interests and ambitions.

Our curriculum aims to maximise adult life, independence and work opportunities for all students. QAC offers a broad range of study programmes that are tailored to ensure you receive the educational, therapeutic and support services that you require.

Residential learning, Preparation for Life, LEAP, Vocational and Supported Internship programmes provide opportunities to progress towards your own goals, at a pace that suits you and with exactly the level of support that you need.

Some of the opportunities available to you will include learning with others, learning through social and leisure activities and through work experience.

**“ I'm really happy with my son's progress and the support he receives from the staff in his group.”**

*Parental Survey*

As well as your main programme, your personal learning experience will be developed with you and will include some of the following:

- Functional Skills (literacy, numeracy and communication) and GCSEs in English and Maths
- Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE)
- Access to Support Services (psychological and behavioural)
- Physiotherapy
- Rehabilitation and Travel Training
- Speech and Language Therapy
- Healthcare Support
- Occupational Therapy and Sensory Support
- Dyslexia Support
- Assistive Technology / VI Support
- Braille Tuition
- D/deaf Support
- Music Wellbeing





To see our full  
student curriculum  
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Call us on  
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# Achieve your goals

“ My daughter has made great progress  
at QAC with the help of staff.”

*Parental Survey*





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# A friendly and safe environment

“ QAC has helped me to be more  
independent and learn new things.  
The staff are very nice and really helpful! ”

*Student Quote*

# Our College

**We have a hugely diverse student population here at QAC. Everyone who studies here is unique and as such has their own abilities and needs.**

**This makes for a really vibrant environment, where students feel valued and empowered.**

The College has many specialists on site who are able to support students, including Speech and Language Therapists, Healthcare Professionals, Counsellors, Mentors and Rehabilitation and Travel Training Instructors.

Our Harborne campus is large and safe but handy for the shops and buses into the city. Harborne used to be a separate village near to Birmingham; local people still call it 'The Village'. There are a variety of shops, cafés, banks and a library in the centre, all just a short journey from the College.

## **What Students Like:**

- The friendly and safe environment
- Being treated like an adult
- Opportunities to make new friends
- The specialist support they receive
- Gaining more self-confidence
- The approachable nature of staff

**“ My son is more confident, it's lovely to see he actually enjoys going to College.”**

*Parental Survey*



## **Pinewood Campus**

Pinewood Campus is located in nearby Woodgate Valley. It provides a high quality and exciting stepping stone into the world of work and is more business-like than educational in its feel. It was purposefully designed to not feel like 'being at College' as Pinewood Campus supports students to move away from being in education and helps them to become more confident with the working world. Dedicated to employment progression, Pinewood is where specific programmes such as Supported Internships are delivered.

## **Fitness Centre**

The Fitness Centre has been designed to meet the needs of a diverse user base and has an extensive range of exercise equipment in a friendly and relaxed environment. It also serves as QAC's centre for physiotherapy delivery, incorporating specialist assessment areas and rehabilitation and therapy services.



# Personalised

## Learning Programmes

**Here at QAC we know how important it is that you find a programme that is right for you and that can help you to maximise your potential and achieve your aspirations for adult life.**

**We take time to work with you and your family/carers so that we can ensure that you find a programme that is right for you.**

Every student has a Personal Tutor who will encourage and support you throughout your time at College.

For those students who require additional support with communication alternative methods such as Braille, Makaton, symbols are used. QAC's aim is to provide a total communication environment.

### Our Curriculum

Our Curriculum is designed to maximise life chances, develop independence and work skills. Students may work at Pre-Entry, Entry level or gain vocational qualifications up to level 3 in a wide range of subject areas. You will find a full list of our programmes on our website at [www.qac.ac.uk](http://www.qac.ac.uk)

### Subject Areas Include:

- Art & Design
- Animal Care
- Business & Retail
- Creative Media Production
- Design & Production
- Health & Social Care
- Horticulture
- Hospitality & Catering
- Information Technology
- Multi-Trades
- Performing Arts
- Sport

English, Maths, employment skills and PSHE are embedded across all areas of study.

### Access2Pathways Programme

If you need a phased transition into education following previous difficult experiences, our Access2Pathways Programme provides bespoke specialist support initially away from campus over 3 days.

### Preparation for Life (PFL)

Preparation for Life (PFL) provides you with an opportunity to develop the skills that you would need to participate within your community and, where possible, the workplace. This programme is designed for students who are working at Pre-Entry to Entry level and offers a great deal of variety. It will enable you to develop a range of practical and social skills in addition to increasing your confidence and self-esteem. Quality is assured through the RARPA (Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement) process to ensure that you have relevant preparation for adulthood targets to work towards.

### Step Out Programme

Our Step Out programme helps prepare students who have been in an educational setting for the majority of their life. The 3-day programme is for students who have finished their initially funded course with QAC and still have learning aims from their EHC plan which can continue to be developed and progressed towards and enable them to take a more active role in their own lives.

### LEAP Programme

The LEAP programme (Learning, Employment and Progression) offers a wide variety of personal development and vocational taster units to provide students with an introduction to a diverse range of employment skills.



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## Vocational Programmes

Vocational programmes enable students to learn and develop valuable sector specific knowledge and skills. A Supported Internship could also be followed which involves spending the majority of time with an employer in a real job role.

Some students can also participate and experience fully inclusive sports through strong external links developed with external providers, such as our collaboration with the University of Worcester.



“ My programme has helped me decide  
what I want to do in the future and given  
me the skills to do it! ”

*Student Quote*



# Maximise your potential



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# Have your voice heard



“ My child is very happy at QAC! ”

*Parental Survey*

# Your Voice

**We are always interested to hear your thoughts on how we are doing and we like to get students involved in all aspects of College life.**

**Students are invited to attend a range of meetings with staff and Governors throughout the year.**

We appoint Student Ambassadors each year to assist us when we are talking to potential students and to help visitors learn more about QAC. We also appoint Student Mentors who can support students new to the College.

You will have the opportunity to be involved in QAC's Student Council and even national groups such as Natspec Student Voice Parliament or the National Union of Students.

If you need to talk to someone about personal issues, our confidential counselling service is available in private surroundings and you will be given the opportunity to discuss issues which are personal to you with a College counsellor.

Counsellors practise in accordance with the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy ethical practice. They aim to help you get the best out of your time at QAC and to prepare for the future.

Students value the one-to-one sessions they can attend with Mentors with regard to their mental health and wellbeing in the College's Wellbeing Hub. Where appropriate, we can deliver structured sessions to help your social and emotional skills development by following Jigsaw, our Emotional Literacy programme.

We also provide support through our sensory support service. Staff will help with your day to day College life and interaction with others.

We provide ongoing Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education to all students. Personal Tutors can also work with you if you need extra support, or just want to come and discuss matters in private. Peer support groups are offered around a variety of issues such as men's group, LGBTQ+, women's group and others.





# Developing Independence

## QAC offers Rehabilitation and Travel Training to develop your independent orientation and travel skills.

This training might be really useful for you whether you have a visual impairment or other disability and will enable you to travel with greater confidence.

Your training may begin using our own onsite travel training area 'Independence Street'. In addition to all aspects of travel training, our Rehabilitation and Travel Trainers can also cover other areas such as long cane training, accessing public transport, keeping safe, orientation and mobility, rehabilitation and habilitation skills, and activities of daily living.

## Sensory Rooms

The Sensory Rooms provide a safe space for students to use to meet their regulation needs with the help and support of the Occupational Therapy and Positive Behaviour Teams, as well as the student's support staff.

The rooms are designed and equipped to help students regulate their emotional and sensory needs through a range of student-led activities and the use of a variety of sensory integration equipment.

Equipment includes swings, a large barrel, trampettes, scooter boards, therapy balls, a ball pit, tents and sensory lighting.

"It's a great environment to learn."

### Parental Survey



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# The Residential Experience

**If you are thinking of studying at QAC you may wish to consider joining us as a college residential student.**

This is an excellent way to develop your independent living and social skills. For many young people it's the first time they have ever been away from their families and it provides an excellent opportunity to experience what it is like to transition into adulthood.

The ability to form relationships, organise social events, manage money, navigate travel routes, learn how to stay safe, prepare and cook meals and perform household chores are just some of the skills that our residential students develop in the waking day curriculum.

Your residential accommodation at QAC will match your needs, personality and your level of independence. As your independence and confidence grows you may move to new supported accommodation to help you progress.

You will be supported towards your key individual targets by experienced residential teams which include sleep-in and waking night staff.

**“ The residential staff understand my son very well, they have been amazing in how they have supported him.”**

***Parental Survey***

There are lots of activities that take place during evenings and weekends including quiz nights, bingo, sport clubs and movie nights to name a few. We also visit theme parks, go shopping, visit local cinemas as well as going on weekend trips away.

If you think that residential provision might be right for you then you can speak to us about this in more detail when you are making your application.

We also offer a specialist respite service and aim to develop and grow our capacity to increase the number of respite spaces. Please ask for more information.



A young man with a mustache, wearing a black Nike cap, glasses, and a red hoodie, is leaning over a pool table. He is holding a pool cue and about to strike a white cue ball. The pool table has a blue felt top and a dark blue rail. In the foreground, several colorful pool balls (yellow, red, pink, orange) are blurred. The background shows a brick wall and a window with a sign that says 'STUDENT CENTRE'.

“ QAC offers a wide range of activities that my daughter enjoys and she is encouraged to become more independent”.

*Parental Survey*

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Enjoying your  
free time



# Having Fun

**QAC staff will work with you to co-ordinate a choice of sports, music and leisure activities. These will take place not only at QAC and in Birmingham but also throughout the UK.**

**Whatever a student's level of independence, socialising, having fun and building friendships is an important part of being at QAC.**

As well as using our indoor Sports Hall and Fitness Centre you might choose to use our table football, pool table and games consoles. We also offer a range of wellbeing and mindfulness activities.

There is a good range of leisure activities in the evening and at weekends for residential students to enjoy.

## **These Include:**

- Ten-pin Bowling
- Cinema
- Ice Skating
- Concerts
- Climbing
- Discos
- Karaoke
- Residential Visits
- Premiership and Championship Football

**“ My son would not lift his head to look at anyone when he first started College, now he plays the drums on stage to a crowd.”**

***Parental Survey***

Further afield, QAC students have sailed from Salcombe in Devon, conquered the peaks of Snowdonia and visited all the major theme parks.

There are many more local and regional trips built into educational programmes.



# Your Life After QAC

**Whatever your ambitions in life QAC staff will support and guide you in the right direction when the time comes to leave College.**

**Whatever your destination after QAC we will help you to make sure that the time you have spent with us at QAC has prepared you for adulthood and has a positive impact on your future life.**

Every student at QAC is entitled to and will have access to impartial information and advice to support their next steps. QAC aspires to support all students with a careers programme that follows the Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Career Guidance. We provide meaningful encounters with employers as well as hold Careers Weeks and Transition events.

During your time at QAC you will receive support from many staff, including our dedicated Transitions Team, to help you explore your future options. Together they will help you to identify professionals and organisations that can assist you with the progression from College into the next phase of adult life and make positive plans based around your needs and aspirations.

Regular Annual Reviews will be held with you, your family, College staff and other relevant professionals. During a review, future options will be discussed such as further education, care, health, accommodation, employment and training opportunities. Following the review, a person-centred plan will be created.

You might choose to move on to a general further education college or university and gain further qualifications. We will help you look at your choices and find out whether you have the right qualifications to apply.

Your Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan will be updated to reflect your needs. You might seek our help in finding a job, day care opportunities or supported accommodation in Birmingham or near to your home.

QAC has other opportunities for you to explore too, such as our Residential Services (Independence Plus) and Step Out programmes or our growing Community Service offer.

**As we say goodbye to our leavers at the end of each academic year parents and families are invited to a special event to celebrate the successes of students.**





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## Useful skills for the future

“ QAC has provided me with the opportunity to experience new things and develop skills that will help me to get a job in the future.”

*Student Quote*

“ The students gave 100% during their work placement, they were a real asset.”

*Employer Survey*



# Community Services



**QAC has developed a new range of services for young people with disabilities in the community.**

QAC's Community Services are open to any young person, you do not have to have been a QAC student previously.

Our PA/Support Worker Service provides students, former students and other young people in the community with a personalised package of support via direct payments or a personal budget.

Through person-centred leisure, work experience, recreational and cultural activities and clubs, we aim to support people to not just achieve greater independence but also to create friendship groups and support networks, find new opportunities and to participate as active members of the community.

We even run a night club dedicated to those with learning difficulties and disabilities in Birmingham City Centre monthly.

Our community services are based in Stirchley on a site with green outside spaces as well as activity rooms and kitchen facilities etc but you can be supported wherever you choose.

**For more information please contact  
Community Services  
E-mail: [communityservices@qac.ac.uk](mailto:communityservices@qac.ac.uk)**



# Residential Services



**Residential Services are supported living opportunities known at QAC as Independence Plus. It was developed because there was a need identified to sustain the independence that people were developing while at QAC.**

You may have gained really useful living skills during your time at College and so it might make sense for you to continue to develop this independence at QAC as a Supported Living client living in the local Harborne community.

Clients on this programme still need support and the aim is to deliver a service that provides you with the means to live independently/semi independently into the future. Many clients are in education, voluntary work or paid employment not linked to QAC directly.

Funding is usually provided through a flexible Direct Payment Personal Budget in conjunction with housing benefit for accommodation.

**For more information please contact  
Residential Services  
E-mail: [info@qac.ac.uk](mailto:info@qac.ac.uk)**



# Enterprises



Due to working in such a specialised field QAC has gained knowledge which has led to the creation of businesses whose profits can support the charity. Our Enterprise arm consists of the following:



## All Formats Transcription Services

All Formats is one of the UK's leading braille, large print and audio producers, providing commercial specialist accessible print services. A well-respected member of the transcription industry, All Formats is a proud member of UKAAF - UK Association for Accessible Formats.



## Advantage Graphite Canes

QAC is the UK distributor of Revolution Carbon Fibre Canes - used and acclaimed worldwide. These canes are lighter in weight and more durable than traditional aluminium canes. We are also able to supply coloured canes upon request.

## Sight Village

### QAC Sight Village

QAC Sight Village exhibitions are premier UK events showcasing the latest technology, support and services available for people who are blind or visually impaired and those experiencing age related sight problems.



## Facilities for Hire

### Facilities for Hire

QAC has a range of indoor and outdoor facilities available for hire both on the main campus in Harborne and at our newly refurbished Umberslade site.

Facilities are available throughout the year, however, there are restrictions on the times and dates that some of the facilities are available. Enquiries from individuals and organisations that can provide Risk Assessments, Public Liability Insurance and, if working with children or vulnerable adults, a copy of your Safeguarding Policy are welcome.

For more information or to arrange to view the facilities please call: **0121 803 5310** or e-mail: **info@qac.ac.uk**

For more information regarding any of our enterprises please visit: **www.qac.ac.uk/enterprises** or call: **0121 803 5484**

" People are very proud to be a part of QAC and get a great sense of satisfaction from their roles and being able to support the needs of both students and those cared for."

*Investors in People Report*



# Support



The funds QAC receives from EHCP payments or personal care budgets cover the basic health and care provision for our students and clients. Everything else, such as refurbishing buildings, community service venue hire, additional staff, extra resources and activities relies on charitable funds.

It is thanks to charitable donations that projects such as our sports hall, music wellbeing provision, community integration activities and site improvements, to name just a few, are able to happen - enabling QAC to support young adults with a diverse range of abilities and needs through an innovative and holistic approach to learning and support.

Support comes through awards from charitable trusts, corporate support, individual donations or fundraising challenges, charity led events, gifts in wills, in memory donations and regular giving.

For more information please call: **0121 428 5050**  
e-mail: [fundraising@qac.ac.uk](mailto:fundraising@qac.ac.uk) or visit: [www.qac.ac.uk](http://www.qac.ac.uk)



**“ This is the right environment  
for my daughter.”**

*Parental Survey*

**“ QAC has a significant positive impact on  
the communities in which it operates,  
providing support to a wide range of  
individuals, groups and good causes.”**

*Investors in People Report*

# Mission Statement

QAC empowers young adults with learning difficulties and disabilities to achieve their ambitions and to lead fulfilling lives.



## Empowering Abilities, Inspiring Lives

“ The inclusive environment allows the students to relax and feel welcome, safe and valued.”

*Parental Survey*

# Values and Intent

## Our Core Values and Vision

**QAC makes a positive difference to the lives and learning of people with disabilities and learning difficulties, having high expectations of staff and students and being responsive, innovative and collaborative.**

We incorporate the following values into our daily College life and behaviour:

- Respect
- Inclusion
- Integrity
- Collaboration
- Excellence
- Enabling

QAC is also committed to the principles of FREDIE (Fairness, Respect, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Engagement) and British Values.

**Please note:** QAC undertakes to provide the educational and support services detailed within this prospectus as far as reasonably practicable. It does not however, guarantee the provision of such services since circumstances beyond the control of the Charity may affect its ability to do so.

The information given was correct at the time of going to press but may suffer amendment from time to time without prior notice, both in relation to individual courses and the facilities and services available from or provided by QAC.

A minimum enrolment total is required for the opening of any class. The College reserves the right to cancel/change a class, course or programme if there is a significant reduction in attendance or where the minimum enrolment total is not achieved or due to changes beyond our control.

## Safeguarding & Prevent at QAC

We take seriously our responsibilities for safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults in our care. We have designated safeguarding leads and robust practices in place to ensure student safety. We liaise with allied professionals to ensure delivery of support to students and families when the need arises. We can send you a copy of our Safeguarding Policy on request.

## Leaders in Diversity

In October 2021 QAC achieved the prestigious Leaders in Diversity Award. The award recognises organisations going above and beyond in their commitment to the FREDIE values. This success follows on from receiving the Investors in Diversity Stage 2 Award in July 2017.

## Investors in People

QAC is proud to have achieved and retained the 'We invest in people', silver accreditation – something only 22% of the organisations assessed achieve. It means that the right principles are in place but more than that, it means that QAC staff, managers and leaders are making proactive efforts to make sure that everyone in the organisation feels the positive effects.

## A Mindful Employer

QAC is committed to promoting an inclusive environment for staff and stakeholders. QAC is positive about Mental Health and shows this commitment by being signed up to the MINDFUL EMPLOYER and AoC Mental Health and Wellbeing Charters.

## EDI Charter

All members of staff, volunteers and students of QAC are entitled to equality of rights and opportunities and have the same responsibility to respect and treat people with dignity regardless of their differences.



# Contact Us



**For further information contact:**  
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(Braille, large print or audio)  
please call  
**0121 803 5484**  
or e-mail:  
**[info@qac.ac.uk](mailto:info@qac.ac.uk)**

Join us for one of our  
**Open Days** where you can  
discover for yourself the  
friendly atmosphere and  
great resources.  
Meet students and staff and  
get answers to any questions  
before making an application.

**Call us on: 0121 803 5484**  
to book your visit.



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