

# Your guide

**Queen  
Alexandra  
College**  
Birmingham

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

**A national  
college for people  
with disabilities**



**Empowering Abilities, Inspiring Lives**

# Your guide

## 02 Welcome to our College...

### **STUDENT QUOTE /**

"I really enjoy **QAC** - it's a friendly, caring, positive and fun place to be!"



# Queen Alexandra College

**Queen Alexandra College (QAC)** is a national specialist residential College and community charity that supports a diverse range of student abilities and needs based in Birmingham.

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

The College has been at its current location since 1903. Our original purpose was to provide education for young people who were blind or visually impaired.

Today, in addition to supporting people who have a visual impairment, we offer support and guidance for students on the autism spectrum (including individuals with Asperger syndrome), 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 380 students studying here at **QAC** but you will be pleased to know that class sizes are small and support levels are high.



To see our full Student Curriculum go to [www.qac.ac.uk](http://www.qac.ac.uk)

**PARENTAL SURVEY /**  
"My child has settled in really well. The staff have been amazing."

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# 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.

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
- ▶ BSL Support
- ▶ Music Wellbeing

**PARENTAL SURVEY /**  
"I'm really happy with my son's progress and the support he receives from the staff in his group."

To see our full Student Curriculum go to [www.qac.ac.uk](http://www.qac.ac.uk)





**PARENTAL SURVEY /**

"My daughter has made great progress at **QAC** with the help of staff."

**Achieve your long term goals**

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



**PARENTAL SURVEY /**

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

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**A friendly and  
safe environment**

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

# 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 campus is large and safe but handy for the shops in Harborne and buses into the city.

To see our full Student Curriculum go to [www.qac.ac.uk](http://www.qac.ac.uk)

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.

As **QAC** has grown, we now have new educational and learning sites. Whichever location you may attend, you will receive the same high quality experience and specialist support from staff.

### 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.

### Umberslade Campus

Located in Selly Oak, the newly refurbished Umberslade Campus is dedicated to horticulture and outdoor learning. **QAC** students can study in a high-quality, safe and accessible environment while benefiting from the excellent opportunities and experiences that the various horticulture facilities at Umberslade Campus can provide.

### Fitness Centre

Serving **QAC** students, 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.

### 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

### STUDENT QUOTE /

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



# 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** so that we can ensure that you find a programme that is perfect for you.

To see our full Student Curriculum go to [www.qac.ac.uk](http://www.qac.ac.uk)

Every student at QAC will have 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, Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS) or symbols are used. QAC's aim is to provide a total communication environment.

**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 and Sport.

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

If you need a phased transition back into education following previous difficult experiences, our **Access to College** programme provides bespoke specialist support initially away from campus over 3 days.

**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.

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.

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.

**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.

**The Powerchair Football Academy**, working in partnership with The Albion Foundation, is the first collaborative 'study programme' of its kind in the whole country. Ideal for students aspiring to be sports coaches and leaders.



The College also works in collaboration with the University of Worcester to deliver fully inclusive sports away from our main campus.





A young man with dark hair, wearing glasses and a white headset, is focused on his work at a computer. He is wearing a teal t-shirt and a red lanyard. The background shows a classroom setting with educational posters on the wall. The overall tone is professional and educational.

**STUDENT QUOTE /**

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

**Maximise your  
potential**

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

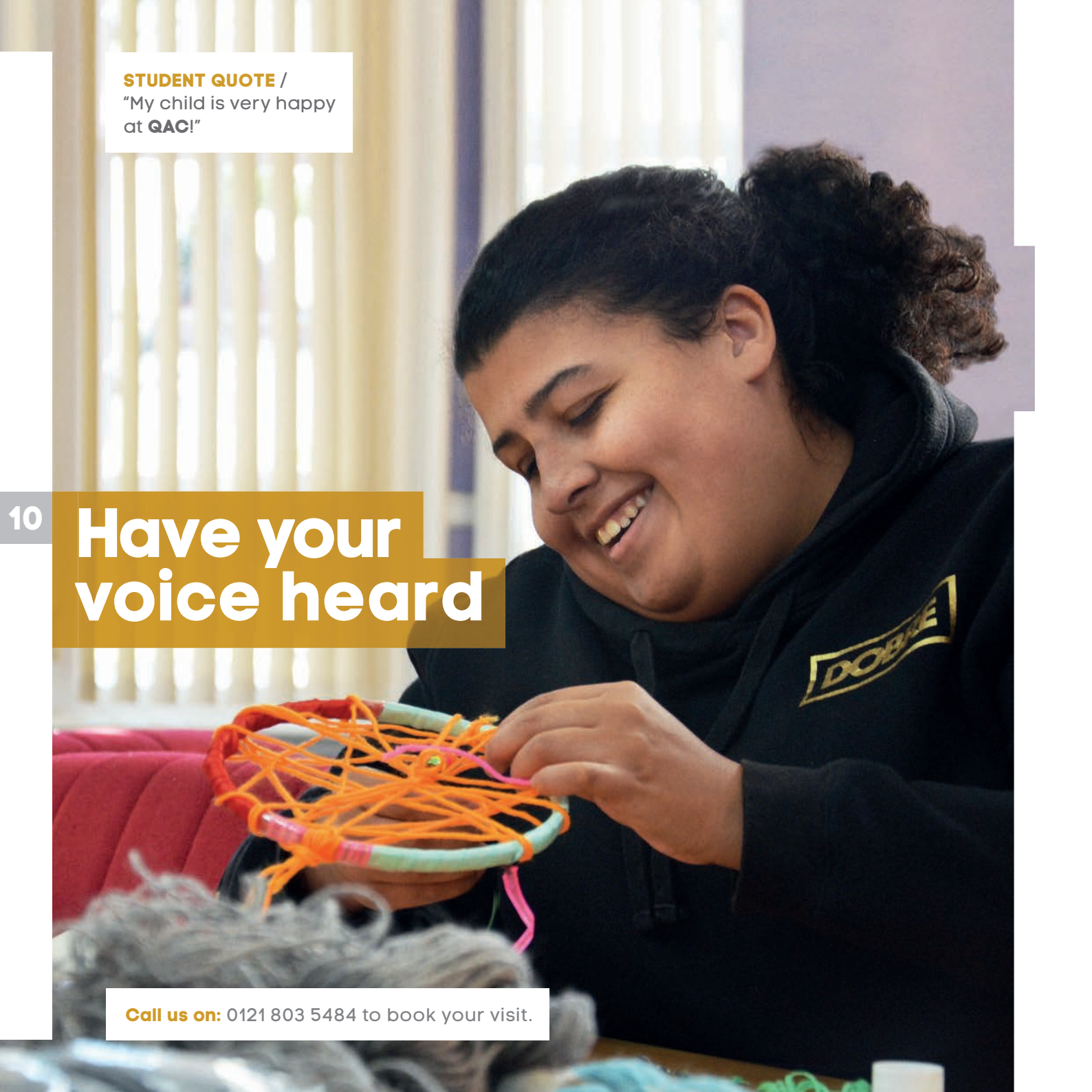
**STUDENT QUOTE /**

"My child is very happy  
at **QAC!**"

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**Have your  
voice heard**

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





# 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.

**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.

To see our full Student Curriculum go to [www.qac.ac.uk](http://www.qac.ac.uk)

**S**tudents 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.

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. All **QAC** students have free confidential access to this service, based on need.

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 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**'. The Team can offer you vital travel training skills including bus and rail travel, road safety, money management and communication skills to increase your confidence and independence.

The Rehabilitation Team will also provide support in your daily living skills to improve your confidence and knowledge.

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, sensory lighting and Soundbeam.

To see our full Student Curriculum go to [www.qac.ac.uk](http://www.qac.ac.uk)

**PARENTAL SURVEY /**  
"It's a great environment to learn."



# The residential experience

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

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.

**PARENTAL SURVEY /**  
"The residential staff understand my son very well, they have been amazing in how they have supported him."





**PARENTAL SURVEY /**

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

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# Enjoying your free time

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





# 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.**

To see our full Student Curriculum go to [www.qac.ac.uk](http://www.qac.ac.uk)

**A**s 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, Premiership and Championship football, climbing, discos, karaoke and residential visits.

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.

## **PARENTAL SURVEY /**

"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."



# 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.

To see our full Student Curriculum go to [www.qac.ac.uk](http://www.qac.ac.uk)

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 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.**

**EMPLOYER SURVEY** / "The students gave 100% during their work placement, they were a real asset."



**STUDENT QUOTE /**

"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."

**Useful skills  
for the future**

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



## PARENTAL SURVEY /

"This is the right environment for my daughter."



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# Support Us

## QAC is a registered charity.

The funds we receive from the government do not fully cover the costs of providing excellent staff, buildings and resources for our students.

**For this, the College relies upon charitable support.**

We rely on **donations** from Trusts and Foundations to make a lot of our work possible. We also receive **gifts in kind** and support from volunteers and are pleased to discuss ideas from supporters for fundraising events.

We are always planning fundraising activities and would welcome your support.

**For more information**  
please call

**0121 803 5487**

or email

[fundraising@qac.ac.uk](mailto:fundraising@qac.ac.uk)

# Community Services / Independence Plus



Independence **+**  
PLUS

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

To see our full Student Curriculum go to [www.qac.ac.uk](http://www.qac.ac.uk)

## Community Services

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.

The Hub runs weekly peer support and social groups for clients and students to access such as men's group, LGBTQ+ group, women's group and Games Club. In addition, QAC Community Services also organises 'Come As You Are', an all-inclusive monthly club night hosted at The Night Owl, Birmingham. 'Come As You Are' is a welcoming and safe space for people aged 18+ on the autism spectrum and other support needs, as well as their friends, partners, family and carers to meet, dance and socialise.

All of these services operate within the QAC ethos of developing learning and independence and will be open to young people.

Through person-centred leisure, work experience, recreational and cultural activities, 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.

► For more information regarding any of our community services please call 0121 803 5475 or email [communityservices@qac.ac.uk](mailto:communityservices@qac.ac.uk)

## Independence Plus Supported Living options

Independence Plus was developed because we identified a need 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 Direct Payment Personal Budget in conjunction with housing benefit for accommodation.

**INVESTORS IN PEOPLE REPORT** / "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."

# QAC Enterprises



## 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

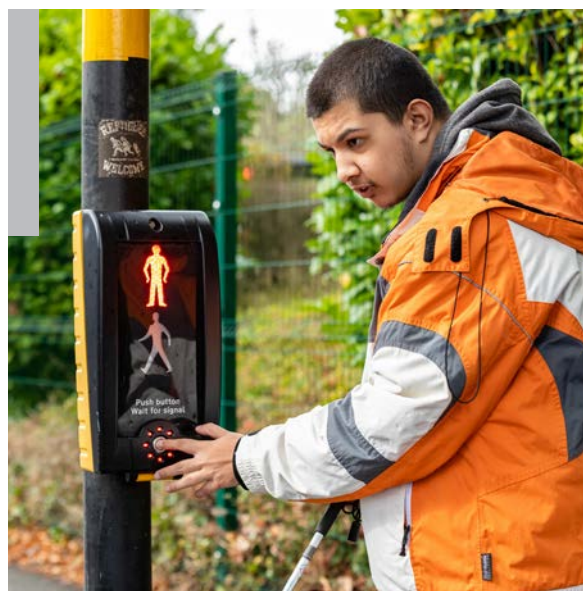
QAC is the UK distributor of Revolution Carbon Fibre Canes - used and acclaimed worldwide. These canes are lighter in weight and more durable than traditional aluminium canes. We are also able to supply coloured canes upon request.



## QAC Sight Village

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

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





# QAC Enterprises consists of a range of businesses that raise money for the College.

## Conference & Training Facilities *available 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 Campus.

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 **email** [info@qac.ac.uk](mailto:info@qac.ac.uk)

### INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

**REPORT** / "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."



## PARENTAL SURVEY /

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

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# Empowering abilities, inspiring lives

## MISSION STATEMENT

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

**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 College 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 the College. 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.





# Our values and intent

**Creating challenging learning opportunities** for people with visual impairment and/or other disabilities to realise their potential.

## Our core values & 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.

### 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 the College receiving the Investors in Diversity Stage 2 Award in July 2017.

### Investors in People

The College is proud to have achieved the 'We invest in people', silver accreditation - something only 20% 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

If you need this guide in an **alternative** format (Braille, large print or audio):  
Please **call** 0121 803 5484 or **email** [info@qac.ac.uk](mailto:info@qac.ac.uk)

**YOU ARE INVITED** to visit **QAC** to discover for yourself the friendly atmosphere and great resources. You can meet students and staff and get answers to any questions before making an application.

Call us on 0121 803 5484 to book your visit.

## Queen Alexandra College

Court Oak Road,  
Harborne,  
Birmingham,  
B17 9TG  
Switchboard:  
Tel: 0121 428 5050

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Email: [info@qac.ac.uk](mailto:info@qac.ac.uk)

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



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