

Student Handbook 2017 -18



“Helping you make the most of your time at Aspire”

Welcome to Aspire!

Aspire aim to provide learning opportunities, support services and information and advice within a safe, supportive environment. We encourage and enable all women to raise their aspirations and achieve their full potential.

We are committed to providing equality of opportunity and fair treatment for all learners, volunteers and staff. We value, respect and celebrate differences through the promotion of the principles of equality and diversity.

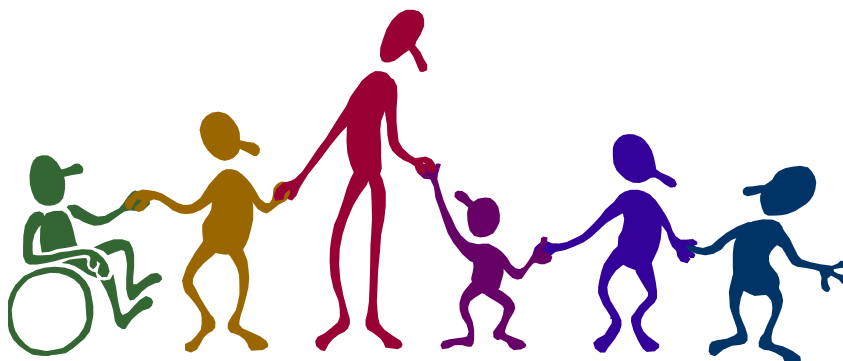
If you are a new student, we hope you enjoy your time with us. We have a very relaxed and friendly atmosphere and want you to know that all the staff are here to help you settle in. We are confident that you will find your learning with us rewarding and hope you have fun along the way.

We pride ourselves on being a centre with a difference; somewhere you will feel at home and want to come back to.

Remember that this is only the beginning of your journey; may it be a happy and beneficial one!

If you have been a student here before, welcome back! It's good to see you again. Please remember the Aspire Code of Conduct and look out for new students in need of a friend.

Whatever your course and no matter how long you spend with us, we are sure you will enjoy your time here at Aspire.



Student Code of Conduct

Aspire aims to give all women who use our centre a very positive and enjoyable experience.

To help us do this, we want to create a safe place where women can meet new friends, reach their goals and experience a very supportive atmosphere.

We expect all women at Aspire to take responsibility for creating and maintaining this positive experience and so we ask all students to abide by the following Code of Conduct.

Students are expected to:

- Refrain from using language that can exclude people
- Respect other people's beliefs
- Respect the Aspire commitment to challenging discriminatory language and behaviour
- Respect Aspire facilities including the resources within them
- Be supportive of all other women at our centre

In our **Student's Charter**, we set out our commitments to you and also what we ask of you in return.

Our commitments to you are:

1. To make entry onto our courses as easy and fair as we can
2. To provide high quality courses that meet the needs of our students
3. To provide high quality student support services
4. To operate fair and effective procedures for feedback and appeals

We will do our best to:

- Provide full and accurate information about our courses and other services
- Respond promptly and appropriately to all requests for information
- Implement an equal opportunities policy that is widely communicated
- Process course applications quickly and fairly
- Give you advice about the specialist equipment and support available to help with your studies
- Make all buildings accessible to all students, wherever practicable
- Publicise available financial help (including bursaries and childcare) and make any applications and appeals procedures straightforward

In return we ask you to:

- Take note of any information provided about your course
- Ask our staff at an early stage if there is anything you do not understand
- Keep us informed of your intentions when you are offered a place on a course
- Provide us with full and accurate information on application forms and enrolment forms
- Provide relevant evidence regarding fee remission and identity when requested
- Inform the centre of any relevant changes to your personal circumstances
- Be punctual and consistent in your attendance at your chosen programme

We also ask you to:

- Inform us if you cannot attend any session, wherever possible
- Seek help when you need it
- Take advantage of the support offered
- Attend all tutorials and reviews

We aim to operate fair and effective procedures for feedback and appeals. We will do our best to:

- Publicise and operate a clear and effective system for receiving and acting upon comments, suggestions and complaints
- Operate a fair system of academic appeals

Having your say at Aspire

We want to make sure that all our services are helpful. We encourage your feedback to help us learn how we can improve our services.

We love to hear your comments and ideas, and there are several ways you can share these:



- Leave a comment in the Student Suggestion Box (Red letter box) in the kitchen
- Speak to one of your Student Representatives (they are named on the centre notice boards)
- Attend one of your Student Representatives' sessions (dates will be publicised in the centre)
- Use the 'Talking Boards' in the centre where you can leave your comments and ideas

You have a right to be involved in the decisions we make about our service. To make sure this happens we will do the following:

- Offer you support so that you can tell us what you think
- Listen to what you tell us
- Write down your suggestions
- Involve you in any decisions we make
- Tell you what is happening

Please let us know if you are not happy with any part of our service so that we can put it right. There are a number of ways for you to tell us what you think. These include the following:

- Talk to any member of staff
- Speak to one of your Student Representatives (they are named on the centre notice boards)
- Speak to the Directors of Aspire – Janice Rokni & Jan Vincent
- Write directly to the Directors at Aspire outlining any complaint or concern you have

We will do all we can to put things right when they go wrong. We hope to do this as quickly as possible.

We understand that sometimes you may find it difficult to discuss things which are going wrong without having someone there to support you. You may decide to ask a member of your family or a friend to help you. The decisions is entirely yours, but you can always ask for advice from others about this if you are not sure.

In return we ask you to:

- Discuss issues in the first instance with your course tutor
- Follow our procedures if you wish to make a complaint, comment, suggestions or appeal

Facilities

Refreshments

Hot and cold drinks are available in the kitchen for a small donation per cup (we suggest 50p). This money goes towards restocking refreshments whenever they run out.



Toilets

The toilets are situated in the reception area, one of which is an accessible toilet.

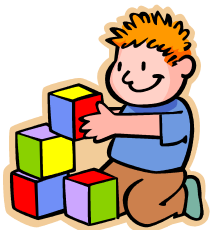
Car Parking

Due to the parking restrictions around our building, we are unable to offer car parking to our students. The parking spaces around the building are allocated to various businesses and require a parking permit. If you park here without a permit you are liable to a parking fine issued by the agent who manages the car park. There is a choice of parking near the centre, please ask a member of staff if you are unfamiliar with the area.

Crèche

Aspire has an on-site crèche facility for under 4s that aims to provide a safe, secure and fun environment where children can develop many skills through a wide range of learning experiences. As well as providing a caring and friendly atmosphere, our crèche workers ensure that children have fun in their development.

This is staffed by a team of fully qualified and dedicated staff.



Crèche opening and closing times are 9:30 – 11:30 am and 12:30 – 2:30 pm on selected days. Please ask if the crèche will be available on the day and time of your course when enrolling.

Please ensure you collect your children on time.

To support the funding of this facility, we would greatly appreciate a £3 donation each time your child uses the crèche.

Contacting Aspire

There are various ways you can get in touch and keep up-to-date with latest developments at Aspire:

- Call into our centre (Mon - Fri, 9am - 4pm)
- Telephone us on 0191 389 1504 (Mon - Fri, 9am - 4pm)
- Visit www.facebook.com/aspire.northeast
- Follow us on twitter @AspireHouse
- Check our website www.aspire-northeast.co.uk

Student support – Preventing Bullying and Harassment

We are committed to providing a safe and supportive environment where everyone can achieve their full potential

All students, staff and visitors are entitled to:

- Be treated with respect and understanding
- Take part in any activity free from intimidation



Bullying and harassment of any kind is unacceptable at Aspire

Bullying has been defined by our student forum as “a behaviour by an individual or group which is usually repeated over time, but can be a one-off incident, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally”.

Harassment can be defined as “any unwanted behaviour which is offensive, demanding or threatening”.

Bullying or harassment may be:

- Verbal and psychological e.g. mocking, making offensive comments, spreading hurtful and untruthful rumours, excluding from groups
- Physical e.g. kicking, hitting, pushing, taking belongings
- Cyber bullying e.g. sending inappropriate messages, emails or telephone calls, sending offensive or degrading images by phone or via the internet

If you believe you are being bullied or become aware that someone else is being bullied, tell someone you trust about your concerns and get some help from your tutor, a member of Aspire staff, a parent/carer or friend. You can also ask for an Aspire Complaints form.

A member of staff will help you to identify possible options, explain Aspire procedures and tell you about further support available.

General Information



Important rules to remember

- No aggressive behaviour towards staff or other students
- Mobile phones must be switched off or put into silent mode in teaching and learning areas
- Smoking is only permitted in the designated area beyond the green gates next to the Aspire building
- Put all litter in bins provided
- No animals, except support dogs
- No computer hacking or misuse
- No alcohol or illegal drugs

Lost property

Should you lose or find any property, please contact a member of staff or Main Reception. The centre cannot accept responsibility for the safety of students' personal possessions.

Health and Safety

In the event of a fire

Please stay calm and leave the building by the nearest fire exit: the main entrance, the purple doors in the annexe or the door at the rear of the kitchen. The designated meeting place is through the green gates at the side of the building (assembly point 3).

If you have a child in the crèche you should not go to the crèche. The crèche workers and office staff will evacuate the children.

If you are staying in the building over lunch-time, we would appreciate it if you could sign in and then sign out at the end of lunchtime; this is in case we have a fire.

Other items of safety

Please ensure that coats and bags are stored safely on the coat hooks.

Food and drink must not be taken into the computer room.

If equipment needs unplugging, it is the responsibility of a member of staff to do this. Please do not unplug any equipment yourself.



First Aid Kit / Accident Book

The accident book is available in the main office and can be accessed through a member of staff.

Details of our current named first aiders can be found on notices around the centre.

Study Support

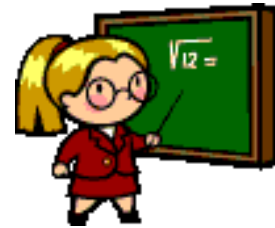
We're here to support you!

Aspire is committed to supporting you to do well in your studies. We have qualified, specialist staff to provide you with a range of support services.

If you need support with any of the following (reading, writing, spelling and maths skills) or would like to discuss your support needs, please talk to your course tutor.

Your tutor will help you to:

- Settle into Aspire
- Organise your time
- Plan progression
- Set targets and review your progress
- Improve your study and personal skills
- Deal with any difficulties



We expect you to:

- Be punctual and attend all sessions, wherever possible
- Inform Aspire if you are unable to attend, wherever possible
- Complete all work on time
- Complete your course and achieve to the best of your ability
- Show respect for others

Appeals Procedure for students on Aspire courses

Here at Aspire we are committed to offering quality learning and support in an environment that is conducive to personal development and growth.

In the event that any learner is unhappy with an element of their course e.g. if they disagree with any assessment decision or feel they have received unfair treatment, then it is hoped that the first step would be to approach their course tutor to discuss the matter. We envisage that any matter could be resolved at this point to the mutual satisfaction of both parties.

If you feel that you are not able to approach your course tutor, or the matter has not been addressed to the mutual satisfaction of both parties, then you will have access to a named link person e.g. Team Leader/Internal Verifier.

Again, we hope that the matter causing concern could be dealt with at this point to the parties mutual satisfaction. If this is not the case, the student is then entitled to ask one of the directors to intervene on their behalf if necessary.

If the learner is participating in a course provided by New College Durham then their appeals procedures will also be instigated.

Any decision reached at this point and endorsed by the Directors will be accepted as final.