Student Finance England customers

Background

1. Non-medical help (NMH) is the human support provided to students to enable them to access their studies. A full description of the various NMH roles is available in the main DSA guidance which can be located at Policy - SFE, Practitioners (slc.co.uk). The guidance also provides the cost bands associated with each role and specifies which are eligible for DSA funding. Note that DSA guidance is updated and published every academic year so you must refer to the relevant version.

2. DfE operates a register of NMH suppliers who can provide DSA-fundable support. DSA-fundable NMH work will only be awarded to registered suppliers, who are required to comply with certain standards as a condition of registration. These membership standards can be located at Guidance for NMH Suppliers (slc.co.uk).

3. If you determine as part of a needs assessment that a student requires one or more of these DSA-fundable NMH roles in order to access their studies, you should make a recommendation to SLC for the relevant role or role(s). Alongside this recommendation you will need to provide two quotes from any of the registered NMH suppliers. SLC will choose the best value supplier that can meet the student's needs and write to the student advising them to contact that supplier to arrange their support.

4. This document sets out guidance on how to select quotes from two NMH suppliers for inclusion in the report to SLC. Please refer to your contact within our Outsource Supplier Management team if you have any queries about this guidance.

Guidance on selecting quotes

5. You should refer to the NMH register at Guidance for NMH Suppliers (slc.co.uk), which contains the details of currently registered NMH suppliers (note that suppliers who are at capacity are expected to ask SLC to be removed temporarily from the public register until they have availability again, so this register will not include all NMH suppliers currently operating).

6. You should ensure that all NMH suppliers selected offer the relevant role in the relevant region. The regions given on the register are fairly broad, so you will need to contact each NMH supplier that you are considering for selection to ensure that they are able to provide the role in the student's specific location so that the student can have face-to-face support if they wish. Note that even if the student expresses a preference at the needs assessment for remote NMH support, the NMH supplier must also be able to provide face-to-face NMH support in the student's location should they wish to have face-to-face support at a later date.

7. You should also request a quote from each of the NMH suppliers that you are considering for the work. Quotes should be given as an hourly rate. Note that there are cost bands associated with each role, as set out in the main DSA guidance. All quotes provided must be at or below the maximum of the range for the role or the NAR will be rejected by SLC.

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8. You will need to provide two quotes in total in the NAR for each DSA-fundable NMH role recommended. There may be rare cases in which it is not possible to provide two quotes, for example where a student requires a less common role in an isolated location and there are not two suppliers available. In these instances, you should include one quote and provide an explanation to SLC in the NAR. If there is no face-to-face support available at all in the student's region (likely to be a very rare scenario), you should provide two quotes from NMH suppliers who are able to provide remote support for the student, as it is better for the student to be offered remote support than no support at all.

9. If the student requests a specific NMH supplier based on previous experience of support from that supplier, you should include that NMH supplier as one of the two quotes on the report and make a note of that student preference in the NAR with the reason for it. You will still need to confirm that the NMH supplier is able to provide that support to the student. Note that if a student requests a specific NMH supplier for any other reason than previous experience of support from that supplier, this will be classified as an exception and a case will need to be made to SLC. It is expected that these exceptions will be rare (for example, if a student has very complex needs that a specific NMH supplier is best placed to address).

10. Where a student's HEP is an NMH supplier, you should consider whether it would be beneficial to include the HEP as one of the two quotes. As above, you will still need to confirm that the HEP is able to provide that NMH support to the student.

11. You should note that the following are specifically prohibited in all circumstances:

    - DSA funding is not available to any company, partnership or other organisation that is owned or controlled by the student being supported, or in which the student has a financial interest or personal investment.

    - Students are not permitted to deliver DSA-funded support to friends or family members, due to the potential conflict of interest and the difficulty in maintaining professional boundaries.

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    - Students are not permitted to deliver DSA-funded support if they have been assessed as 'needing' similar DSA funded support by a DSA study needs assessor.

12. If the framework supplier or an employee of the framework supplier has a conflict of interest which could affect the selection of NMH suppliers (e.g. a financial interest in an NMH supplier), this should be declared to SLC and managed appropriately in line with the contract arrangements. Volumes and patterns of recommendations will be monitored and discussed with DFE to ensure a fair and balanced process for NMH quotations.

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