

## **Non-Medical Help – Auditing and Quality Assurance Arrangements**

### Introduction

1. This document sets out details of the auditing and quality assurance arrangements for non-medical help (NMH) providers who deliver DSA-funded support. These arrangements are intended to provide assurance that public funds are being spent appropriately and effectively.

### Financial controls

2. SLC have in place a number of financial controls to ensure that DSA funds are being spent appropriately. For NMH support these include, for example, checking that DSA funding is used only for NMH support that was recommended at the student's needs assessment and approved by SLC (i.e. included on the student's DSA2 Entitlement Letter), and checking that DSA funding is paid to the provider for NMH support only when that has been delivered by that provider.
3. All support must be recorded on timesheets that should be submitted to SLC with the invoices. Timesheets must not be signed prior to a session taking place.

### Conflicts of Interest

4. DfE is required to ensure that public funds are used fairly, transparently, and for the purpose intended. All providers of DSA-funded goods and services, including NMH support, must therefore maintain a comprehensive and up to date statement of interests. This should be submitted to DfE annually, and any material changes to the statement between returns must be notified to DfE. Full guidance on the arrangements for conflict of interest returns is set out in SSIN 07/20<sup>1</sup>.

### Audit of NMH support worker qualifications

5. All NMH providers are expected to ensure that NMH support workers delivering DSA-funded NMH roles have the relevant qualification and professional body membership requirements as set out by DfE<sup>2</sup>.
6. NMH providers should be particularly careful to provide the appropriate support in the following categories:
  - a. Specialist Mentors, where separate qualification / membership requirements apply for specialist mentors for students with autism spectrum conditions or mental health difficulties.
  - b. Specialist 1-1 Study Skills Support Workers, where separate qualification / membership requirements apply for specialist 1-1 study

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/media/1837/conflicts-of-interest-ssin\\_july-2020\\_final.pdf](https://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/media/1837/conflicts-of-interest-ssin_july-2020_final.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/media/1844/nmh\\_mandatory\\_qualifications\\_and\\_professional\\_body\\_membership\\_requirements.pdf](https://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/media/1844/nmh_mandatory_qualifications_and_professional_body_membership_requirements.pdf)

- skills support workers for students with autism spectrum conditions or specific learning difficulties.
- c. Specialist Notetakers, where separate qualification requirements apply for visually impaired students and hearing impaired students.
7. DfE is now operating a programme of auditing of NMH support worker qualifications. NMH providers are selected for audit either randomly or in response to concerns that have been raised.
  8. NMH providers who have been selected for audit will be asked to provide the Department within a specified timeframe qualifications and professional body membership evidence for a list of support workers who have delivered DSA-funded NMH roles in the 12 months prior to audit. The list of support workers in scope of the audit will be provided by DfE. Sole traders and very small NMH providers should expect to have all support worker roles audited. For larger NMH providers, a random sample of support workers will be taken. Support workers who have stopped working for an NMH provider may still be selected for audit; we expect that for DSA auditing purposes NMH providers will retain records of a support worker's qualifications and professional body memberships for 12 months after the support worker ceases working for the provider.
  9. Data on support workers who have been providing DSA-funded support will be provided to DfE by SLC, so there is no need for NMH providers to supply this data to DfE.
  10. The data privacy notice for this auditing programme can be found at: [https://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/media/1845/privacy\\_notice\\_nmh\\_auditing\\_august\\_2020.pdf](https://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/media/1845/privacy_notice_nmh_auditing_august_2020.pdf).

### Insurance

11. We expect all NMH providers to hold employer's liability insurance (£5m in cover), public liability insurance (£5m in cover) and professional indemnity insurance (£1m in cover). Any NMH provider who has been selected for audit will be required to provide evidence of their insurance to DfE. Sole traders who are not required to hold employer's liability insurance will not be expected to provide evidence of this type of insurance at audit.

### Sanctions

12. There are a range of sanctions available to DfE depending on the severity of a provider's breach of our funding conditions. These include any or a combination of the following:
  - a. Formal warning and repeat audit at any time.
  - b. Temporary suspension from the register of providers who can be allocated DSA-funded work (this means that the provider can continue to support existing students with qualified support workers but cannot be allocated new work)
  - c. Complete deregistration for a period of time (this means that the

- provider cannot continue to support existing students and cannot be allocated new work).
- d. Recovery of DSA funds.

### Expectations regarding service to students

#### *Timeliness of support*

13. We expect NMH providers to put in place support for students in a timely fashion. In most circumstances, we would expect that the NMH provider should within 14 calendar days of the student making contact either (a) start supporting the student, if the student has requested support to start within this timeframe, or (b) put in place support for a later date if requested by the student and confirm this to the student in writing. If the NMH provider is unable to meet this expectation then they should contact SLC to inform them that the student's requirements cannot be met, so that the student can be reallocated to another provider.

#### *Mode of delivery*

14. NMH support can be delivered either remotely or face-to-face. This should be at the student's choice. Where NMH support is delivered face-to-face, this must be provided in a comfortable and confidential location, taking account of the student's disability. This should be in a private room with a door. Support must be delivered on a one-to-one basis, not in a group.

#### *Monitoring*

15. Our expectations around timeliness of support and mode of delivery to students will not be directly audited, but DfE will monitor the situation and take action as required. DfE and SLC are also working together to ensure that these expectations are communicated effectively to students.

### Welsh Government

16. Where an NMH provider also provides support to students who are funded by Student Finance Wales, we may share the outcomes of any audit with the Welsh Government.

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## Version History

V0.1	September 2020	<p>V0.1 prepared for practitioner webpage. Arrangements are as set out in SSIN 05/20, with the exception of the following updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Correction to the categories of Specialist 1-1 Study Skills Support Workers (paragraph 6).</li><li>• Providing a link to the data privacy notice for the NMH auditing programme (paragraph 10).</li><li>• Clarification of insurance requirements for NMH providers, and confirmation that employer's liability insurance and professional indemnity insurance will be checked at audit as well as public liability insurance (paragraph 11).</li></ul>
V0.2	March 2021	<p>V0.2 prepared for practitioner webpage. Arrangements are as set out in SSIN 05/20 and above with the exception of the following updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clarification of employer's liability insurance requirements (paragraph 11).</li><li>• Update to advise a repeat audit may be carried out at any time (paragraph 12a).</li></ul>
V0.3	April 2021	<p>V0.3 prepared for practitioner webpage. Arrangements are as set out in SSIN 05/20 and above with the exception of the following update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clarification of the audit expectations for sole traders who are not required to hold employer's liability insurance (paragraph 11).</li></ul>