

# Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) Non-Medical Help (NMH) provider guidance

This document contains guidance for NMH providers on delivering DSA-funded NMH support to students. The Department also operates a set of Standards with which all registered NMH providers must comply (see Annex 1). The Department monitors NMH providers in collaboration with Student Finance England (SFE), including via an auditing programme, and may request information or carry out unannounced telephone calls and/or visits to NMH providers at any time.

This guidance applies only to NMH support for students who are funded by Student Finance England.

Commonly used abbreviations:

- DSA – Disabled Students' Allowance
- NMH – Non-Medical Help
- HEP – Higher Education Provider
- DfE, the Department – the Department for Education
- SLC – Student Loans Company
- SFE – Student Finance England
- NAR – Needs Assessment Report
- SSIN – Student Support Information Note

## **Section 1 - Introduction**

1. Supporting disabled students to access and succeed in higher education remains a priority for government.
2. DSA is a grant for disabled students which helps them with the additional costs that they may face in higher education because of their disability. To be eligible for DSA, students must be eligible for student finance and have a disability as defined under the Equality Act 2010. DSA is part of the student finance package for higher education students and is administered by SLC.
3. HEPs have specific duties under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments for all their disabled students. Disabled students should therefore expect to have their needs met through inclusive learning practices and individual reasonable adjustments made by their HEP, wherever possible. DSA is available to fund more specialist support on top of those reasonable adjustments. It can be used for support such as specialist equipment, travel, or NMH, which is the human support provided to students to enable them to access their studies.
4. It is not the purpose of DSA to replace the support that should be provided by a HEP. DSA is also not intended to cover study costs that any student might have, or disability-related expenditure that the student would incur even if they were not attending an HE course.
5. All students who are eligible for DSA are expected to attend a Study Needs Assessment interview, where the student discusses with their Needs Assessor the

type and level of support required for them to undertake their chosen course of study. The report produced as a result of that discussion is the NAR, which is the basis of any DSA support provided. When completed and agreed the NAR is sent to SFE for approval.

## **Section 2 – what NMH is for and what can be provided**

### What is Non-Medical Help?

6. NMH is the human support provided to students to enable them to access their studies. This includes support such as British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation, specialist study skills and strategy support for students with specific learning difficulties (SpLDs) or autism spectrum conditions (ASC), and specialist mentor support for students with ASC or mental health difficulties. A full description of the various NMH roles is available in section 4.15 of the main DSA guidance at [dsa-guidance-2324-v20-final.pdf \(slc.co.uk\)](#). That guidance also provides the cost bands associated with each role and specifies which are eligible for DSA funding.
7. It is the role of a student's HEP to provide any academic support the student might require, and this includes providing course materials in an accessible format. DSA-funded NMH support providers must therefore avoid providing support to a student which is not directly linked to enabling a student to access the teaching and learning provided by the HEP, or which is:
  - the responsibility of the HEP, and/or
  - outside of the DSA-funded role(s) they are providing.

### NMH roles that are available for DSA funding

8. NMH roles fall into 4 bands: band 1 roles are the least specialist roles and band 4 roles the most specialist. However, it should be noted that it is generally only band 3 and 4 roles that are fundable by DSA. This is because DfE considers that the support provided through bands 1 and 2 is generally that which could be expected to be provided by a student's HEP as a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act. Which roles are – and are not – fundable by DSA is given with the description of each role in section 4.15 of the DSA guidance at [dsa-guidance-2324-v20-final.pdf \(slc.co.uk\)](#).

### Providing quotes for support

9. When a Needs Assessor is preparing a student's NAR, they may contact an NMH provider to ask for a quote. You should respond promptly when you are contacted by a Needs Assessor to provide a quote for support to ensure that there is no delay in submitting the student's report to SFE. Needs Assessors are required to provide quotes to SFE in a standard format, so it may be good practice to use this same format to provide a quote for your services, or to provide the information required in a similar format. For information, the NAR template and guidance can be found at [Exchange blog - SFE, Practitioners \(slc.co.uk\)](#) and pay bands for NMH support can be found in section 4.15 at [dsa-guidance-2324-v20-final.pdf \(slc.co.uk\)](#).

10. NMH providers should only quote for work where they are confident that they have the capacity to deliver that role and should not provide a speculative quote in the hope that they will be able to engage or recruit suitable staff. It is not acceptable for students to be in the position of seeking to engage support that is not available, or for the provider to withdraw from providing support at short notice: both occurrences can mean students are left without support in place when they need it, which is a significant issue for the students concerned.
11. If a provider cannot put support in place within 14 days of the student contacting them the student should be referred back to SFE.

### **Section 3 – providing support to students**

#### Work plans and delivering support

12. It is good practice to agree a work plan with the student so that students understand the support that will be provided. NMH providers must ensure that any NMH support provided is delivered in a manner that has been agreed with the student, which suits their learning needs, and which is compatible with the pedagogy of the student's course and programme of study.
13. DSA funds are paid for specific support only: recommendations and advice on other topics should not be provided to the student in DSA-funded time. This ensures that the student receives the full benefit of the support provided in the session invoiced for and therefore the taxpayer also receives value for money. The support delivered must be in line with the role parameters as set out in section 4.15 of the guidance chapter at [dsa-guidance-2324-v20-final.pdf \(slc.co.uk\)](#).

#### Venues for delivering NMH support

14. NMH support can be delivered remotely, but the decision on whether to receive remote, face to face or blended<sup>1</sup> support **must** be the student's. Where face to face support takes place, any sessions must be provided in a space where confidentiality can be maintained. Clearly, public places (coffee shops, restaurants, canteens, etc.) cannot provide the confidentiality required to deliver NMH support. This applies whether or not the venue is requested by the student as it is not appropriate to deliver support in this way.
15. The venue for support should be a room that is accessible to the student, with a door that closes and with some form of emergency notification – either a dedicated panic button or a phone alert. The room should be available solely for the use of the student and the support worker for the whole of the support session. It should also accommodate any additional person the student may wish to accompany them, for example a parent, carer, or friend.
16. There is no requirement for HEPs to provide accommodation for NMH provision, but many HEPs do allow students to book rooms for learning-related activity. Some

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<sup>1</sup> Blended support is a mixture of remote and face to face support.

students will wish to hold their NMH session within their HEP and, where a student wishes to do so, we would recommend that HEPs allow a student to access rooms for DSA purposes on the same basis as any other learning-related meeting. As independent and autonomous bodies it is of course a matter for HEPs to control access to their premises. However, we recommend that arrangements should be in place to allow DSA-funded NMH support workers to deliver support in the same way as other contractors, via temporary passes, arranging for the student concerned to 'sign in' the provider, etc.

17. Additionally, and where face to face support is provided (particularly in a student's home), all NMH providers should have a lone working policy in place and should ensure that risks for both the student and support worker are appropriately assessed before providing support.

#### Professional boundaries

18. Students in receipt of DSA-funded NMH support should be treated with dignity and respect and have their confidentiality maintained. All NMH providers receiving DSA funding for providing these services must ensure that these expectations are upheld and that the support they are providing is being delivered within professional boundaries.

#### Complaints

19. All providers should have a suitable complaints procedure in place.

#### Insurance

20. It is a requirement for all DSA-funded NMH providers to hold £5m public liability insurance, £5m employer's liability insurance, and £1m professional indemnity insurance. This will be checked on audit or by the Department at any time.
21. 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. However, other than that, the same insurance requirements apply to **all** NMH providers.
22. Required insurances must always be kept up to date.

#### Booking sessions, and cancelled or missed sessions

23. As a matter of course all sessions, including the first, must be booked and confirmed with the student, and this should be done using the student's preferred method of communicating. After the initial session, sessions can be booked either in a block (i.e., at specific times for a number of weeks ahead) or one session at a time.
24. There will be occasions where sessions will be cancelled, either by the NMH provider or the student. As a matter of good practice NMH providers should make any students they support aware of their cancellation procedures. Details of the Department's cancellation policy, including the actions that need to be taken in the

case of a missed or cancelled session, can be found in section 4.13 of the main DSA guidance chapter at [dsa-guidance-2324-v20-final.pdf \(slc.co.uk\)](https://www.slc.co.uk/dsa-guidance-2324-v20-final.pdf).

25. There will also be incidences where a support worker does not have the capacity to provide ongoing support (for example sickness). Where the provider is not able to provide an alternative qualified worker, the student should be referred to SFE to arrange an alternative provider as soon as it is known that support is not available.

### Session length

26. NMH agreements on a DSA2 letter will specify a number of hours agreed for each role. In general, it is presumed that most booked sessions of specialist support would be an hour in length. Some support will be dictated by the length of a student's lecture, e.g. Specialist Notetaking Support.
27. Where sessions either finish earlier than planned or run over, time can be claimed in in periods of 15-minute blocks. This is the minimum time period that should be invoiced for in order for SLC to accurately track and monitor used and remaining hours.

### Timesheets and invoicing for support delivered

28. If providers are allocated DSA-funded work, DSA funding will only be paid for the type of support, and the number of hours of support, that have been approved by SFE and delivered to the student. This is specified on the DSA2 letter the student receives from SFE confirming their entitlement, and as these are not issued to providers the student will need to be asked to share this.
29. It is good practice for providers to track the number of hours of agreed support that a student is using and to inform the student when they are nearing their total. This will allow the student to contact their Needs Assessor to arrange any increase in hours (if appropriate) in good time. Additional hours will need to be approved by SFE before they can be taken.
30. It is the provider's responsibility to invoice SFE for any DSA-funded support undertaken. Full details on the action you need to take when you have delivered support are available from SLC on [dsa\\_requests@slc.co.uk](mailto:dsa_requests@slc.co.uk), but particular note should be made that:
- a standard timesheet must be completed for each session provided (more than one session can be entered on to the timesheet),
  - both the student and the person providing the support must sign the timesheet to confirm that the details are correct, and
  - timesheets for all sessions claimed for must be included with invoices to SFE for payment.
31. Timesheets must not be signed prior to a session taking place by either the student or support worker.

Information for students

32. Information for students on what they can expect from their NMH provision can be found at: [Exchange blog - SFE, Practitioners \(slc.co.uk\)](#). We would recommend sharing this document with your students.

**Section 4 - assuring the quality of NMH provision**

33. Information on the auditing and quality assurance arrangements for NMH provision can be found at [Guidance for NMH Suppliers \(slc.co.uk\)](#). These arrangements include the Department's auditing programme, the conflict of interest procedures, and SFE's financial controls.

Registering to provide support

34. As mentioned above, all DSA-funded providers are required to register to provide NMH support. The registration process is straightforward and full details are provided in the section 'Registering as a new NMH supplier' at <https://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/exchange-blog/2020/september/10092020-guidance-for-nmh-suppliers/>. There is no charge for registering.
35. When registering, all providers agree to a set of Standards (attached at Annex 1). These are applicable to all NMH providers both new and existing.
36. NMH providers can market their services, but this must be done appropriately and responsibly. All providers should note that registering as an NMH provider for DSA-funded support is not an accreditation process, and those registered should not advertise themselves as having been accredited by DfE, SFE or SLC. Providers must also be careful to ensure that any advertising channels do not include misleading or incorrect information.
37. You should note that being registered as an NMH provider does not guarantee that you will be allocated DSA-funded work.
38. Where a support worker stops working for one NMH provider but continues providing DSA-funded support, either in their own right or through another NMH provider, the students who are being supported by that worker should be offered the choice of staying with that support worker at their new provider or staying with their current NMH provider and being allocated to another support worker. This should be a genuine and free choice for the student. There is no automatic right for the NMH provider to retain students in these circumstances, nor for the support worker to take the students to their new NMH provider or NMH sole trader business. If a student wishes to move with a support worker then SFE should be contacted with a request for the change. The proposed change cannot take place unless and until this is approved by SFE.

### Mandatory qualifications or professional body memberships for NMH roles

39. There are mandatory qualification or professional body membership requirements for most DSA-funded NMH roles. The full detail of these is given at: [nmh-qualifications-matrix-july2023-updated-sept-23.pdf \(slc.co.uk\)](#).
40. It is the responsibility of people undertaking these roles, and of those recruiting them, to:
- ensure that anyone looking to provide these roles for DSA-funded students meets these mandatory requirements.
  - keep copies of any qualifications or professional body memberships.
  - ensure that any professional body memberships required are kept up to date (i.e., they must be renewed in good time and without a break in membership).
  - ensure that professional body membership levels are those listed on the matrix. If a membership card or register entry does not show the required level of membership then further confirmation and evidence should be sought to confirm this.
  - Ensure when taking on new staff that the levels of qualifications or memberships are those required for the role. A provider should not rely on references, etc. from a previous provider but should check the qualifications certificates and professional body membership(s) themselves and retain a copy on file.
41. Should a support worker leave their role, NMH providers must retain their qualification and/or professional body membership records for a minimum of 12 months after their date of leaving for DfE audit purposes.
42. Where those engaging or taking on staff are unsure about what level a qualification is, reference can be made to the guidance at <https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/list-of-qualification-levels>. If a worker is found at audit to have incorrect qualifications or membership, they may be deemed unqualified and sanctions applied in line with the Department's Standards.
43. Teaching Qualifications: There are many different types of teachers, and so there are many different types of teaching degrees. Many qualifications confer qualified teacher status and the list on the DfE mandatory criteria and professional body membership matrix is not exhaustive. Queries on specific qualifications can be directed to the DfE DSA team on: [Disabled.STUDENTALLOWANCES@education.gov.uk](mailto:Disabled.STUDENTALLOWANCES@education.gov.uk).
44. NMH providers should be particularly careful to provide the appropriate support in the following categories, as separate qualification/membership requirements apply to separate roles:
- Specialist Mentors – there are different requirements for students with autism spectrum conditions, and for students with mental health difficulties.
  - Specialist 1-1 Study Skills Support Workers – there are different requirements for students with autism spectrum conditions, and for students with mental health difficulties.
  - Specialist Notetakers – there are different requirements for students who are visually impaired, and for students who are deaf.

45. NMH providers' accredited and DfE-approved in-house training courses are acceptable elements of qualifications for the following roles:
- Specialist Notetaker - Deaf (SN-D)
  - Specialist Notetaker - Vision Impairment (SN-VI)
  - Specialist Mentor - Autism Spectrum Conditions (SM-ASC).
  - Specialist one-to-one Study Skills and Strategy Support - Autism Spectrum Conditions (SS-ASC).
46. If your organisation has developed relevant accredited NMH in-house training or a new stand-alone training course specifically for those delivering support to DSA-funded students, this will require approval from DfE prior to delivery if it is designed to meet a qualifications requirement on the matrix. Please contact [Disabled.STUDENTALLOWANCES@education.gov.uk](mailto:Disabled.STUDENTALLOWANCES@education.gov.uk) for further information about DfE requirements and the approvals process. Current qualifications requirements can be found here: [nmh-qualifications-matrix-july2023-updated-sept-23.pdf \(slc.co.uk\)](#).
47. By "relevant", DfE means that the training is specific to the disability it is intended to support and includes content on supporting students in higher education.
48. In DfE's view, in-house and stand-alone training should be formally accredited in order to have assurance that the training is of the right quality and is evidenced by a certificate of completion. Formal accreditation provides assurance that an organisation or person is competent to perform specific processes, activities or tasks in a reliable, credible and accurate manner. This could be demonstrated if the organisation providing the training is externally accredited to provide training in the relevant subject area, e.g. accredited by CPDUK (<https://cpduk.co.uk/>), CPD Standards Office (<https://www.cpdstandards.com/>) or similar, or is a HE institution with degree awarding powers.
49. Relevant training that is delivered by an awarding body that is quality assured (e.g. by the QAA – the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education) and results in a certificate of completion is also acceptable.
50. All training should be delivered by an appropriately qualified trainer (a qualified trainer from a recognised organisation/charity, or a trainer who can demonstrate a relevant qualification), and result in a certificate of attendance.
51. If you are aware of any relevant qualifications or training for any DSA-funded support worker roles that are not included in the mandatory qualifications matrix please forward details to [Disabled.STUDENTALLOWANCES@education.gov.uk](mailto:Disabled.STUDENTALLOWANCES@education.gov.uk) for consideration.
52. People who do not meet the Department's qualification requirements are not allowed to deliver DSA-funded support. Given that, it is not possible for those who are 'working towards' a qualification to provide DSA-funded support and, similarly, it is not possible for those who have experience without qualifications to provide DSA-funded support. It might be helpful to explain that, in the first example, many qualifications or professional body memberships have a criterion for academic



achievement as well as a minimum amount of observed practice. A person may have achieved the required academic standard but may not yet have the observed practice, and so will not have the knowledge of using their particular speciality in real life situations. In the latter example, there is not a way of confirming or auditing a person's stated experience.

#### 2016 changes

53. At the time mandatory qualifications were introduced in April 2016 it was decided to allow support workers who were already delivering NMH services to existing students to continue to do so until the end of the student's current course without the need for the support worker to meet the new qualification requirements. In addition, where students continued from an undergraduate course to a postgraduate course without a break and continued at the same HEP, their current NMH support worker could continue to provide support even if they remained unqualified in line with DfE's mandatory qualification matrix. The numbers still doing so will now be very low. These unqualified workers must not have taken on any new students after April 2016 and cannot in any circumstances support new students without updating their qualifications or professional memberships in line with the most recent version of the matrix.

#### 2019 changes

54. When the revised NMH DfE qualification and professional body membership requirements matrix was issued in June 2019 there were exemptions for those existing support workers who met the previous standards but not the revised standards; in that respect there was no requirement for requalification. Those who fulfilled the existing qualification or membership requirements of the 2016 matrix were able to continue providing support in that role to DSA-funded students and were not required to 're-qualify'. However, please note that:

- i. Existing support workers who met the requirements of the 2016 version of the matrix (Version 2.8) and were not qualified to the revised 2019 standard, and who wish to change agency or employer in the future whilst undertaking their existing role, need to ensure that they have sufficient proof of being employed in their current role, with their existing qualifications, to satisfy both their new agency or employer and any DfE audit requirements. This means they will need to ensure that they have documentary proof of personally delivering DSA-funded support prior to June 2019, for example a wage slip with details of the role or an outgoing workplace reference.
- ii. Existing support workers who wish to undertake a new or additional role must meet the 'new' 2019 qualification requirement for their intended role. For example, they may currently deliver one-to-one specialist support within the 2016 matrix requirements and want in future to deliver support for a different role. From June 2019 they have been required to meet the qualifications or membership as defined in the new matrix (dated June 2019) for that new additional role.

## 2023 changes

55. In July 2023 DfE issued a revised NMH qualification and professional body membership requirements matrix. Please note that:
- i. Where qualification requirements have changed, these will only be required by those wishing to become a new DSA-funded self-employed, employed, or agency support worker from 1 July 2023. Those who currently meet the existing qualification or membership requirements of the previous matrix versions (2016 and 2019) will be able to continue providing support in that role to DSA-funded students for the foreseeable future. They will not be required to requalify unless they have a break in delivering their current NMH support role(s) of longer than 12 months. The exceptions to this are for those sole traders and support workers with membership of the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC); further details can be found in SSIN 04/23 at <https://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/media/1988/ssin-0423-dsa-nmh-qualifications.pdf>.
  - ii. Existing support workers who meet the requirements of the previous versions of the matrix (2016 and 2019) and are not qualified to the revised July 2023 standard and who wish to change agency or employer in the future whilst undertaking their existing role, will need to ensure that they have sufficient proof of delivering support in their current role with their existing qualifications. This is to satisfy both their new self-employed, NMH provider agency or employer as well as any Department for Education audit requirements. This means they will need to ensure they have documentary proof of personally delivering DSA-funded support prior to the date of this SSIN, for example, a wage slip with details of the role or an outgoing workplace reference

## Auditing and Quality Assurance Arrangements

56. The document at the following link 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. [https://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/media/1934/nmh-auditing-and-quality-assurance-arrangements\\_february-2022\\_updated.pdf](https://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/media/1934/nmh-auditing-and-quality-assurance-arrangements_february-2022_updated.pdf).
57. Information regarding how we treat the information used for auditing DSA-funded NMH support workers can be found in the document 'Privacy Notice: Auditing of Qualifications of Non-Medical Help Support Workers funded through Disabled Students' Allowances', which can be found at the following link: [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).

Conflict of interest process

58. All DSA-funded providers are expected to identify and manage any potential conflicts of interest. Full information on what constitutes a conflict of interest, and how to manage any that are identified, is provided in guidance at: [final-conflicts-of-interest-guidance\\_october-2021.pdf \(slc.co.uk\)](https://www.slsc.co.uk/media/1672/final-conflicts-of-interest-guidance-october-2021.pdf).
59. All providers are expected to maintain a conflict of interest register, to notify the Department of any material changes to this, and to complete and return a conflict of interest return when requested to do so.

Section 5 – Other informationProviding feedback

60. It is good practice that students are provided with a means of giving feedback on the support they are receiving. How to do so is a matter for individual providers to decide, but this can be through formal or informal methods.
61. The Department also encourages all NMH providers to contact a student's HEP disability advisor or team: this is to provide feedback on a student's DSA-funded support and to ensure as far as possible that support is integrated with any support provided by the HEP. However, as some students do not disclose their disability to their HEP **a student's permission to make contact with their HEP to discuss their support must always be sought**, in writing if that is appropriate and a record kept.

Background checks on people providing NMH support

62. It is for individual providers to satisfy themselves that DSA NMH support workers are suitable for the roles they wish to deliver. The Department's view on whether it is necessary or appropriate for those delivering DSA-funded NMH support to be Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checked is contained in SSIN 05/18, which is available at: [https://www.practitioners.slsc.co.uk/media/1672/ssin\\_dsa\\_18\\_10\\_2018\\_disclosure\\_and\\_barring\\_service\\_checks\\_for\\_non-medical\\_help\\_provision.pdf](https://www.practitioners.slsc.co.uk/media/1672/ssin_dsa_18_10_2018_disclosure_and_barring_service_checks_for_non-medical_help_provision.pdf).

CPD requirements and support worker training

63. It is the responsibility of NMH providers to ensure that any CPD requirements for specific DSA-funded roles are checked on an annual basis: this may be checked at audit or on spot checks<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, it is good practice to ensure support workers have undertaken appropriate training in confidentiality, data protection, health and safety, lone working, safeguarding and disability awareness. Where providers do not directly employ or engage staff, such as freelance support workers, it remains good practice to ensure any support workers they provide for DSA-funded NMH work have

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<sup>2</sup> A CPD form can be found at: <https://www.practitioners.slsc.co.uk/media/1990/audit-cpd-template-updated-sept-23.pdf>.

a similar level of training: this will ensure that staff understand the Department's and the provider's policies on these issues.

Sharing data

64. There is a requirement for all providers to share information or data; this may be, for example, sharing a student's personal information with SFE or with the student's Needs Assessor, or sharing a worker's data or information on qualifications with DfE during audit. NMH providers must therefore ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to enable this data sharing to take place.
65. NMH providers who are new to DSA will receive a Data Sharing Agreement from SFE following their first payment for DSA services. This will be sent directly from SFE and will contain information and instructions on how to complete and return this.

Disabled Students' Allowances Team,  
Higher & Further Education,  
Department for Education,  
Sanctuary Buildings,  
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## Annex 1 – Membership Standards for NMH Providers

1. This document sets out the membership standards (**Standards**) with which all Providers on the register of non-medical help (**NMH**) providers for Disabled Students' Allowance (**DSA**) (**Register**) must comply.

### Background

2. The Register is managed and owned by the Department for Education (**DfE**). It is hosted on the Student Finance England webpage for NMH Providers at [Guidance for NMH Suppliers \(slc.co.uk\)](https://www.slc.co.uk/guidance-for-nmh-suppliers). It is also hosted, for reference, on the Student Finance England webpage for assessment centres at [Exchange blog - SFE, Practitioners \(slc.co.uk\)](https://www.slc.co.uk/exchange-blog-sfe-practitioners).
3. Providers must be on the Register in order to deliver DSA-funded NMH support.
4. Entry on the Register does not guarantee that Providers will be asked to quote for, or receive, DSA-funded NMH work and it is not an accreditation process.
5. DfE reserves the right to update and amend these Standards from time to time and will give reasonable written notice to Providers on the Register of any major changes.
6. Providers acknowledge and agree:
  - (a) it is their responsibility to ensure that their employees or persons registered with the Provider to deliver DSA-funded NMH services (together referred to as **Support Workers**) and other staff comply with the provisions of these Standards and other DSA policies published by DfE; and
  - (b) they are responsible for the acts and omissions of their staff and Support Workers as if they were the acts and omissions of the Provider.

### Standards

7. Providers must ensure that they and any Support Workers have the necessary qualifications or professional body membership for the DSA-funded NMH roles that they deliver, as set out in the DfE qualifications matrix at: [nmh-qualifications-matrix-july2023-updated-sept-23.pdf \(slc.co.uk\)](https://www.slc.co.uk/nmh-qualifications-matrix-july2023-updated-sept-23.pdf).
8. Providers must maintain a comprehensive and up to date statement of interests. This should be submitted to DfE when requested, and any material changes to the statement between returns must be notified to DfE within 10 working days. Further information on managing conflicts of interest can be found in the guidance at [final-conflicts-of-interest-guidance october-2021.pdf \(slc.co.uk\)](https://www.slc.co.uk/final-conflicts-of-interest-guidance-october-2021.pdf).
9. Providers must not advertise themselves as accredited by DfE, SLC or Student Finance England.
10. Providers must comply with any audit requests from DfE. Further information on DfE's auditing programme can be found at [Guidance for NMH Suppliers \(slc.co.uk\)](https://www.slc.co.uk/guidance-for-nmh-suppliers).

11. Providers are required to hold and maintain employer's liability insurance (£5m)<sup>3</sup>, public liability insurance (£5m) and professional indemnity insurance (£1m).
12. Providers must:
- (a) act in a timely and professional manner and devote such time, care, attention and skill as may be reasonably necessary to ensure the students' needs are met; and
  - (b) not act, or omit to act, in any way that may or does cause harm, including reputational damage, to DfE (including DfE staff) the NMH services scheme (including its staff), or any student in receipt of DSA.
13. Providers must ensure that they and any Support Workers or staff comply with all DSA policies published by DfE, as updated from time to time.

#### Actions available to DfE

14. Non-compliance with any part of these Standards entitles DfE to suspend or remove a Provider from the Register.
15. DfE also reserves the right to suspend or remove a Provider from the Register in other circumstances which will be determined by DfE at its absolute discretion (including but not limited to fraud, misconduct, negligence or incompetence)<sup>4</sup>.
16. The names of Providers or support workers suspended from the Register may be published online and/or notified to all NMH Providers on the Register.
17. Providers or Support Workers will be given the opportunity to appeal a suspension or removal decision. Appeals will be considered by the DSA team within DfE and the final decision taken by a senior manager within DfE.
18. There are a range of actions available to DfE depending on the severity of a Provider's or a Support Worker's non-compliance with these Standards. These include, but are not limited to, any or a combination of the following:
- (a) Formal warning.
  - (b) Audit or repeat audit at any time.
  - (c) Recovery of DSA funds.
  - (d) Suspension or removal of Providers or Support Workers from the Register.
19. DfE also reserves the right to report any concerns that DfE has in relation to Providers' or Support Workers' conduct to such third parties as DfE considers is reasonable in the circumstances. These may include, but are not limited to the Information Commissioner's Office, the police, and any relevant professional membership bodies.

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<sup>3</sup> Sole traders who are not required to hold employer's liability insurance will not be expected to provide evidence of this type of insurance.

<sup>4</sup> Anyone with concerns about an NMH Provider or its support workers can raise these with DfE by contacting [Disabled.STUDENTALLOWANCES@education.gov.uk](mailto:Disabled.STUDENTALLOWANCES@education.gov.uk). Information provided to this mailbox will be treated in confidence. Investigations into concerns raised will be carried out either by DfE or by the SLC, or jointly, depending on the nature of the issue. DfE has sole responsibility for decisions on suspending or removing NMH providers from the Register.

**Annex 2 – Updates Log**

Date	Change
September 2023	Hyperlinks updated throughout to the latest versions available.
September 2023	Paragraph 43 updated to direct queries on teacher qualifications to the DfE DSA team.
September 2023	Paragraphs 44-45 updated to reflect the revised role descriptors.
September 2023	Paragraph 55 added to cover the new version of the DfE qualifications and professional body membership requirements matrix published in July 2023.