

**SUPPORT INFORMATION NOTE (SSIN)**

Arrangements for students funded under the Education (Student Support) Regulations

**DISABLED STUDENTS' ALLOWANCE (DSA)****To:**

Student Finance administrators and practitioners in institutions of higher education, further education or specialist colleges providing HE, and alternative providers; DSA assessors, assessment centres and Non-Medical Help suppliers; Student Finance advisors, and The Student Loans Company

**SSIN 04/23**

Dear Colleagues,

**Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) – Department for Education (DfE) qualification and professional body membership requirements to deliver DSA fundable Non-Medical Help (NMH) support roles (generally known as the NMH Matrix)**

The Department has revised the qualification and professional body membership matrix and role descriptors, drawing on advice from several disability Advisory Groups made up of sector professionals.

The revised July 2023 NMH matrix has been posted on the SLC's Practitioners' website, on the policy documents page [Guidance for NMH Suppliers \(slc.co.uk\)](https://www.slco.co.uk/guidance-for-nmh-suppliers)

**New qualification and professional body membership matrix**

Where qualification requirements have changed, these will only be required by those wishing to become a new DSAs-funded self-employed, employed, or agency support workers 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). Please see **Specialist Mentor - Mental Health (SM-MH) – Important changes** below.

However, please note that 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.

### Undertaking a new/additional DSA funded support role.

Existing support workers who wish to change or undertake a new additional role must meet the July 2023 qualification matrix requirement for their intended role. For example they may currently deliver Specialist Mentor - Autism support under the previous matrix requirements and want in future to deliver support for a different role. From the date of this SSIN they must meet the qualifications or membership requirements for their new role as defined in the new matrix (dated July 2023).

A DSA sole trader or support worker may therefore be qualified under more than one qualifications matrix, but it is important that the matrix 'qualification' period for each role is defined at audit. Evidence will be required to support this.

### **Changes to roles**

As well as revision to the role descriptors there have been substantive changes to five roles on the July 2023 matrix:

- **Sighted Guide**

Training requirements and continuous professional development (CPD) for the role of sighted guide has been introduced. Free online training and CPD is available online for this role. A course in visual impairment awareness must form part of CPD if not already attended.

A CPD record form is available to download at [Guidance for NMH Suppliers \(slc.co.uk\)](https://www.slsc.co.uk). CPD is detailed on the qualification's matrix at Annex 1. This must be submitted for audit when requested.

- **Communication support worker (CSW) and Communication Support Worker with British Sign Language (BSL) – removed from DSA funding.**

The decision to remove DSA funding for the roles of CSW and CSW-BSL was made following discussion with sector professionals. Deaf students will instead benefit from BSL interpreting support or a Specialist Support Professional with BSL (SSP/BSL) for deaf students in a Higher Education setting.

To Note: Students currently receiving CSW support may continue to receive this support until they complete their studies or request to transfer to BSL or SSP/BSL support.

- **Specialist Mentor - Mental Health (SM-MH)**

TO NOTE: At the organisation's request the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) has been removed from membership choices for the Specialist Mentor Mental Health support role.

When their SSSC membership expires a support worker or sole trader will no longer be qualified in line with DfE requirements. They will therefore be unable to continue supporting DSA funded students.

If a sole trader is unable to join one of the professional bodies listed, their DSA funded students must be directed to the Student Loans Company (SLC) in time for replacement support to be put in place. NMH providers who cannot put a support worker with appropriate professional body membership in place should also direct the student to SLC.

New professional body added for SM-MH role.

Membership of the International Society of Psychotherapy and Counselling (ISPC) has been added to the qualification matrix.

- **Specialist Mentor – Mental Health (SM-MH) and Specialist one-to-one Study Skills and Strategy Support – Autism Spectrum Conditions (SS-ASC)**

Two new courses have been introduced to the mandatory qualification matrix as options for those wishing to deliver Autism support to DSA funded students:

- Autism and ADHD in Higher Education: Recognising and addressing the barriers through Non-Medical Helper (NMH) Mentoring and Study Skills Strategies.
- Non-Medical Helper (NMH) Skills Training Course: Mentoring and Study Skills and Strategy Support for autistic and ADHD students in Higher Education.

Revision of Autism matrix layout

The matrix layout for autism qualifications has been revised to improve navigation. The revision includes a box for personal qualifications that prospective autism support provider can complete.

CPD form for Autism Roles

A CPD record form is available to download at [Guidance for NMH Suppliers \(slc.co.uk\)](https://www.slc.co.uk/guidance-for-nmh-suppliers). This must be submitted for audit when requested. CPD is detailed on the qualification matrix at Annex 1.

- **Specialist Support Professional for Visually Impaired, Deaf and students with Multi-Sensory Impairments.**

Changes have been made to the qualification requirements for the Specialist Support Professional (SSP) role. The aim of these changes is to have a positive impact for DSA funded students by attracting appropriately qualified support professionals to this role.

Support workers currently delivering this role may continue to support DSA funded students in this role and do not have to re-qualify.

If printing the matrix, please note that A3 paper is required.

If there are any queries, please do not hesitate to contact the Disabled Students Allowance Team at [Disabled.STUDENTALLOWANCES@education.gov.uk](mailto:Disabled.STUDENTALLOWANCES@education.gov.uk).

We hope that this information is helpful.

Regards

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