

## **New Accommodation Guidance**

DSA is not available towards the additional costs of accommodation where the accommodation is provided, managed, or controlled by the HEP or its agent, by which is meant an organisation or individual acting on behalf of the HEP for the provision of accommodation. HEPs should not pass any additional costs of accommodation on to the student.

DSA is, however, available for the additional costs of accommodation not provided by the HEP or its agent, but only where the additional costs are incurred solely because of the student's disability, and the recommendation is supported by specific medical evidence demonstrating a clear link between the student's disability and the accommodation need.

Each recommendation from a needs assessor for additional accommodation costs to be funded from DSA will be considered in line with the Regulations, which set out that the purpose of DSA is to assist with the additional expenditure which a student is obliged to incur in connection with their attendance on or undertaking of a designated course by reason of their disability.

Some examples illustrating this policy are given below. These scenarios are for guidance purposes only and each case will be decided on its individual facts.

- Student A has Crohn's disease and is living in specialist student accommodation run by a private provider with no links to her HEP. The accommodation has a mixture of en-suite rooms and rooms with shared bathrooms. The student's medical evidence demonstrates that she needs a private bathroom due to her condition. In this example, DSA may be available to fund the difference between the cost of a room with a shared bathroom in that accommodation block and an en-suite room in that accommodation block.
- Student B has Tourette's syndrome. He suppresses his tics during the day while in the company of others at his HEP and as a result frequently has outbursts of tics after returning home in the evening. The nature of his tics means that they would have a negative impact on anyone with whom he was sharing accommodation, and therefore he needs a private space to enable him to manage his condition. In this example, DSA may be available to fund the difference between standard accommodation and self-contained accommodation such as a studio flat.
- Student C has anxiety. In previous years of her course, she lived in a flat share but told the needs assessor that she found sharing a kitchen with other students stressful due to differing hygiene standards. She has therefore decided to rent a studio flat for the final year of her course. Student C's medical evidence does not indicate any specific needs with respect to accommodation. In this example, DSA will not fund the difference between standard accommodation and a studio flat because the reason for the studio flat could apply to any student and is not solely linked to the student's disability.

- Student D has a condition affecting his physical mobility and is living in specialist student accommodation run by a private provider with no links to his HEP. The accommodation has a range of rooms available of different sizes and layout. Student D's medical evidence confirms that he often has to use crutches and has to store bulky medical equipment in his accommodation. This means that he requires a larger room with a suitable layout. In this example DSA may be available to fund the difference between a standard room and a larger room with the appropriate layout in that accommodation block.
- Student E has an autism spectrum condition and OCD. Student E's medical evidence confirms that the ways in which these conditions manifest make sharing kitchen and bathroom facilities with others unmanageable. In this example DSA may be available to fund the difference between standard accommodation and self-contained accommodation.

When making a recommendation for accommodation, needs assessors should consider the following:

- Any recommendation for accommodation should take into account the best interests of the student and be in line with any medical advice or treatment received or being received by the student. There are three broad scenarios that may occur here:
  - Scenario 1: The student's medical evidence does not indicate any specific needs with respect to accommodation. We would therefore not expect the needs assessor to make an accommodation recommendation.
  - Scenario 2: The student's medical evidence indicates specific disability-related needs with respect to accommodation. If these needs require additional disability-related expenditure on accommodation, we would expect the needs assessor to discuss the matter with the student and, if appropriate, make an accommodation recommendation in line with that medical evidence.
  - Scenario 3 (likely to be rare): The student's medical evidence refers to previous issues the student has experienced with a particular accommodation type (for example, a student with a mental health condition who found that living on their own made that condition worse). In this case we would expect the needs assessor not to make a recommendation for that type of accommodation (though if the medical evidence indicates that another type of accommodation is better for meeting the student's needs, and this is more expensive than the "standard" accommodation, the needs assessor could make a recommendation for that in line with Scenario 2 above).

- DSA will not fund excessively expensive accommodation unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- DSA will not fund accommodation that is excessively far away from the student's HEP unless there are exceptional circumstances. The exact distance will vary depending on whether the HEP is located rurally or in an urban area, but as a guide we would expect the accommodation to be no more than an hour's travelling time from the HEP.
- DSA is unlikely to fund more expensive accommodation solely on the basis that there was no cheaper suitable accommodation available in the student's preferred location. For example, if a student wants to live in a particular privately owned student accommodation block with a range of different accommodation options and has selected a "premium" studio because there were no "standard" studios left and they need self-contained accommodation due to a disability, DSA is unlikely to fund the difference between the "standard" studio and the "premium" studio (only the difference between the standard accommodation and the "standard" studio). This would be because the fact that only a "premium" studio was left has arisen from the student's preference for a particular location rather than from their disability

When providing comparators for the purpose of calculating the student's additional disability-related accommodation costs, needs assessors should note the following:

- The comparator accommodation should be of broadly similar quality and in a similar area to the student's recommended accommodation. For example, if a recommendation is being made for a studio flat to be funded through DSA, a suitable comparator might be half the rent of a 2-bedroom flat in the same area (and not a sixth of the rent of a 6-bedroom house in a different area).
- At least two suitable comparators should be provided (in addition to the recommended accommodation), and we may request more comparators if the information provided is not sufficient to take a decision on the recommendation. The average cost of the comparators provided will be used to calculate the additional disability-related accommodation costs that may be funded through DSA. We may discount from this calculation any comparators that we do not consider to be appropriate.