



**This bulletin gives you an update on the Student Finance England service for disabled students for academic year 2010 / 2011 - how we are doing and what's new.**

### **Application processing AY 2010 / 2011**

As at 3 September, we have received over 13,720 DSA applications which is nearly 40% of what we expect to receive for AY 2010/2011.

We are preparing for a surge of applications in October when students arrive at university or college.

We have nearly 5,300 applications where we have established eligibility and confirmed with the student that they need to attend a Needs Assessment Centre so their study needs can be evaluated.

Within this 5,300 will be cases where:

- the student has not yet booked their needs assessment appointment
- the student has booked but not yet had their appointment
- the needs assessment report has not yet been sent to us.

Where we have 'consent to share' we have contacted HEIs to let them know the names of students attending their institution who fall into this category and requesting their help in encouraging these students to book their needs assessment appointments as soon as possible. We are also following this up with students directly to encourage them to book their appointments.

### **How you can help**

If you are in contact with any students who have been advised to make their needs assessment appointment, please encourage them to do so now, rather than waiting until they start their course, so that they are more likely to have their support in place for the start of term.

Students should be directed to the [DSA QAG website](#) to find their nearest Assessment Centre.

### **Latest Service Improvements for 2010/2011**

#### **Our people**

We have increased the number of employees in our DSA team from 24 to 47, all of whom are now fully trained.

We have introduced a dedicated sub team, within the DSA team, who are responsible for managing invoices and paying suppliers.

#### **Our processing**

We're paying suppliers faster as we have reduced the target time to process invoices from 20 days to 10 to 15 days, however, please allow 20 working days before querying individual accounts.

We are continuing to process DSA applications faster, working within our new target times of 10 days to process an application and 10 days to process a Needs Assessment report.

Our processing remains on track and within Service Level Agreements for all areas even though we have received slightly more applications for DSA than forecast.

We are going to post our current turnaround times on the Practitioners website. This information will be available shortly and will be updated on a weekly basis.

#### **Our process updates**

Where a student has given 'consent to share' we will now email a copy of the letter which confirms their agreed support to the Disability Advisor and the Needs Assessor who conducted the assessment, instead of sending it by post.

When an Assessment Centre uses PGP encryption software to send us a Needs Assessment report, we will send an automated response to confirm it has been received.

We will support requests for group sessions of specialist support where there is appropriate justification and rates are adjusted accordingly.

## Improvements to employee training

### Stakeholder led training day

SKILL, NADP, NNAC, NASMA, NUS and other stakeholders held a training day on 22 June for over 100 of our employees to help them better understand the needs of disabled student customers and the valuable role our staff play in helping these students access higher education.

We have made a film of the training day which we are rolling out to other contact centre employees. The film is also available on our Practitioners website and can be accessed [here](#).

### Dyslexia training

We recently held a training day to help our DSA team better understand the needs of customers with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs).

The training was delivered by PATOSS (The professional association of teachers of students with specific learning difficulties), it covered the processes and systems for how SpLDs are diagnosed and information about supporting recommendations and needs assessment reports for customers with SpLDs.

### Needs Assessment report training

NNAC and other stakeholders provided a training day for our employees to give an insight into the needs assessment report process.

The day included training on the role and operations of Assessment Centres, how this fits with the DSA process and advice on how to understand and interpret needs assessment reports. The training also looked at the provision of needs assessments in a student's home, with Open University providing access to their mobile assessment bus. We also received training on supporting students with mental health problems from the Equality and Diversity Unit at the University of Oxford.

Feedback from our employees on the recent stakeholder led training events has been very positive, with comments that the insight stakeholders provide into the many barriers faced by some of our student customers, is invaluable.

## Disabled Student Stakeholder Group

The Disabled Student Stakeholder group met on 2 September. The group looked at our DSA application processing statistics and acknowledged the considerable work that has been done to improve processing.

They were presented with findings from our recent customer research study, into the 2009/10 DSA application process, and discussed further improvements which could be made following this feedback.

Initial proposals from stakeholders, to develop a database of non medical helpers, to help address current issues of quality, value for money and comparability of quotes, was shared with the group. The group discussed the benefits and issues surrounding the development of a NMH database, it was agreed that the sub group of stakeholders would continue to progress work on this.

## Your questions answered

We have updated the 'Your questions answered' document on our Practitioners website. Please access this to see the answers to your most frequently asked questions about the DSA process.

## Need to contact our disabled student team?

Here are our contact details for partners and practitioners, **please use these contact details in all instances. Emails being sent elsewhere in the company may result in your enquiry being delayed.**

For disability practitioners at HEIs email - [disability\\_adviser@slc.co.uk](mailto:disability_adviser@slc.co.uk)

For Needs Assessment Centres email - [access\\_centre@slc.co.uk](mailto:access_centre@slc.co.uk)

Submission of Needs Assessment Reports via encrypted PGP - [needs\\_assessment\\_reports@slc.co.uk](mailto:needs_assessment_reports@slc.co.uk)

For practitioners with queries relating to policy and regulations -  
Email: [ssin\\_Queries@slc.co.uk](mailto:ssin_Queries@slc.co.uk)  
Call: 0845 602 0583 (this number is not for students)

For practitioners with DSA enquiries -  
Tel: 01325 215194 (this number is not for students)

For suppliers submitting invoices, invoice queries or specific student queries email - [invoice\\_team@slc.co.uk](mailto:invoice_team@slc.co.uk)

For Needs Assessment Centres referring Educational Psychologist's reports email - [matthew\\_hall@slc.co.uk](mailto:matthew_hall@slc.co.uk)

For general matters related to working with partners email - [michelle\\_wickenden@slc.co.uk](mailto:michelle_wickenden@slc.co.uk)

## Feedback:

We would like your feedback on this bulletin - what has been most useful to you and your organisation? What would be of interest and value to you to include in future bulletins?

We are also reviewing our Practitioners website and welcome any feedback on what would be useful for practitioners in the DSA section of the website.

Please email any feedback to - [michelle\\_wickenden@slc.co.uk](mailto:michelle_wickenden@slc.co.uk)

More information for practitioners is available on our Student Finance England practitioners' website [www.practitioners.studentfinanceengland.co.uk](http://www.practitioners.studentfinanceengland.co.uk)