

SFE DISABLED STUDENTS' ALLOWANCE

ACADEMIC YEAR 2024/25

DISABLED STUDENTS' ALLOWANCE

INTRODUCTION

Disabled Students' Allowance provides help towards the additional costs a student could face as result of their disabilities, long-term health condition, mental-health condition or specific learning difficulty:

DSA Support:

- Is available in addition to the standard student finance package
- Does not have to be repaid
- Is not affected by household income
- Looks at the specific needs of the individual student

DSA rates have risen by **2.5%** for academic year 2024/25

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SUPPORT OFFER SUMMARY

Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) is a grant to help eligible students with extra essential study costs they may have as direct result of their disability:

- DSA support helps enable opportunity by widening access and participation in higher education

Through DSA, students can get help with the costs of:

- Specialist equipment, such as a computer with assistive technology software or specialist ergonomic furniture
- Non-medical help (NMH), for example, specialist mentor, specialist notetaker or a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter
- Additional transportation costs to attend their course and support with other disability related study support, for example additional printing costs

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DSA SIMPLIFICATION

Undergraduate Disabled Students' Allowance, which **had been** structured as four separate sub-allowances, was, from AY 2021/22 simplified into one Allowance, in line with the postgraduate DSA:

- The same maximum allowance (**£26,948**) will apply to both full-time and part-time undergraduate and postgraduate DSA levels in AY 2024/25
- This change will apply for both new and continuing students
- An exception for high DSA travel costs applies to the maximum cap
- Travel costs will in effect, continue to be uncapped
- These changes were introduced to increase flexibility for students to access the DSA support that they need

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AY 2024/25 DSA RATES

A single DSA rate was introduced for both new and continuing full-time and part-time undergraduate students from AY 2021/22:

- This replaced the four DSA allowances available in previous years

Allowance Categories	Part-Time Max 20/21	Full-Time Max 20/21	Single DSA Rate 24/25
Non-Medical Helper	£17,443	£23,258	£26,948 + Further DSA support above the regulated maximum to pay for additional disability related travel costs
Specialist Equipment	£5,849	£5,849	
General Allowance	£1,465	£1,954	
Travel Allowance	Reasonable Spending		

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DSA REFORMS SUMMARY – A NEW FRAMEWORK

The way in which Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) support is delivered is changing:

- DSA will **no longer have** multiple equipment, needs assessment and Assistive Technology (AT) training providers
- The services will now be provided by two contracted suppliers, Study Tech Ltd and Capita Business Services

Study Tech and Capita will be responsible for providing the following:

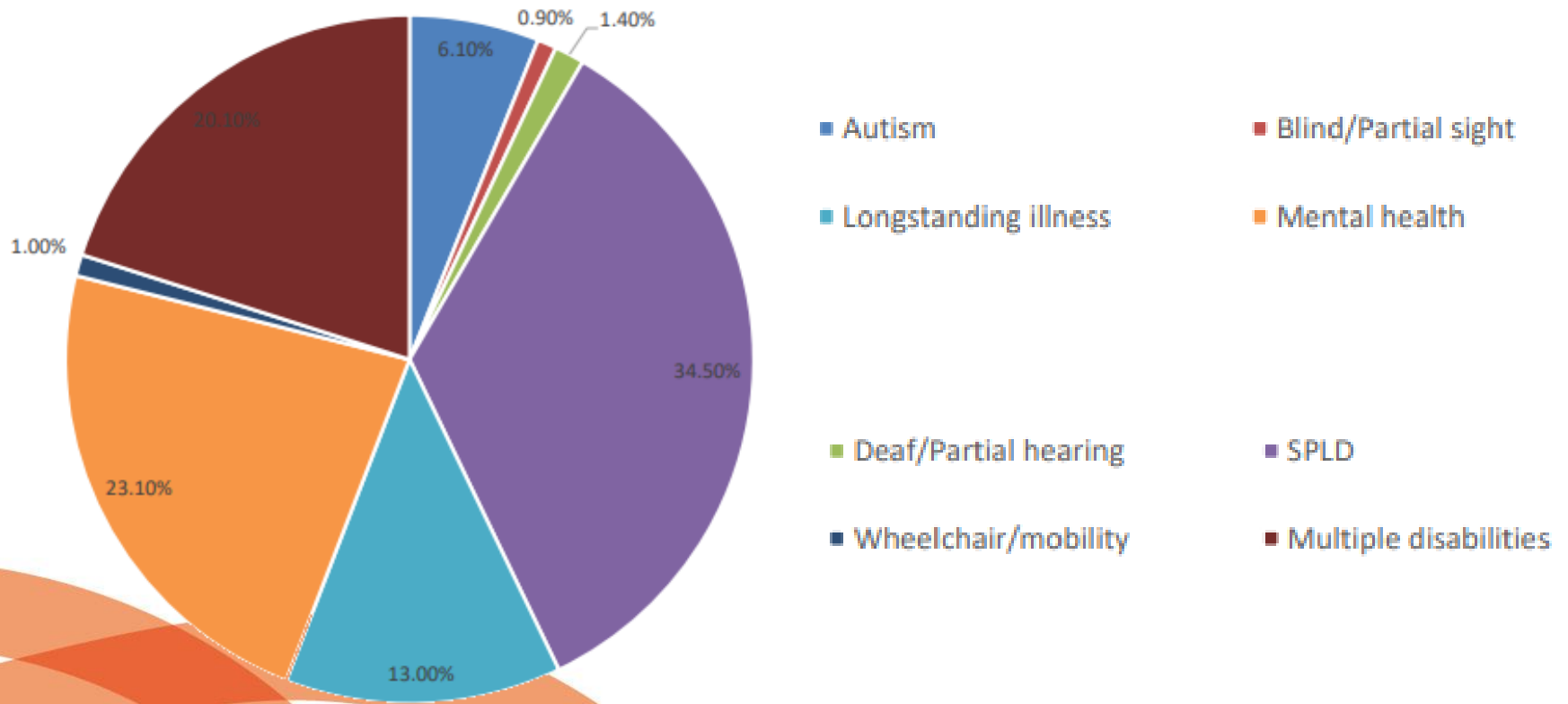
- Needs assessments
- Assistive technology equipment and related assistance and maintenance
- Assistive technology training and after care

The Non-Medical Helper support and Travel Allowance aspects of DSA **will not** be covered by the new framework and services will remain as-is

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DSA REFORMS SUMMARY – SFE DSA SUPPORT AY 2022/23

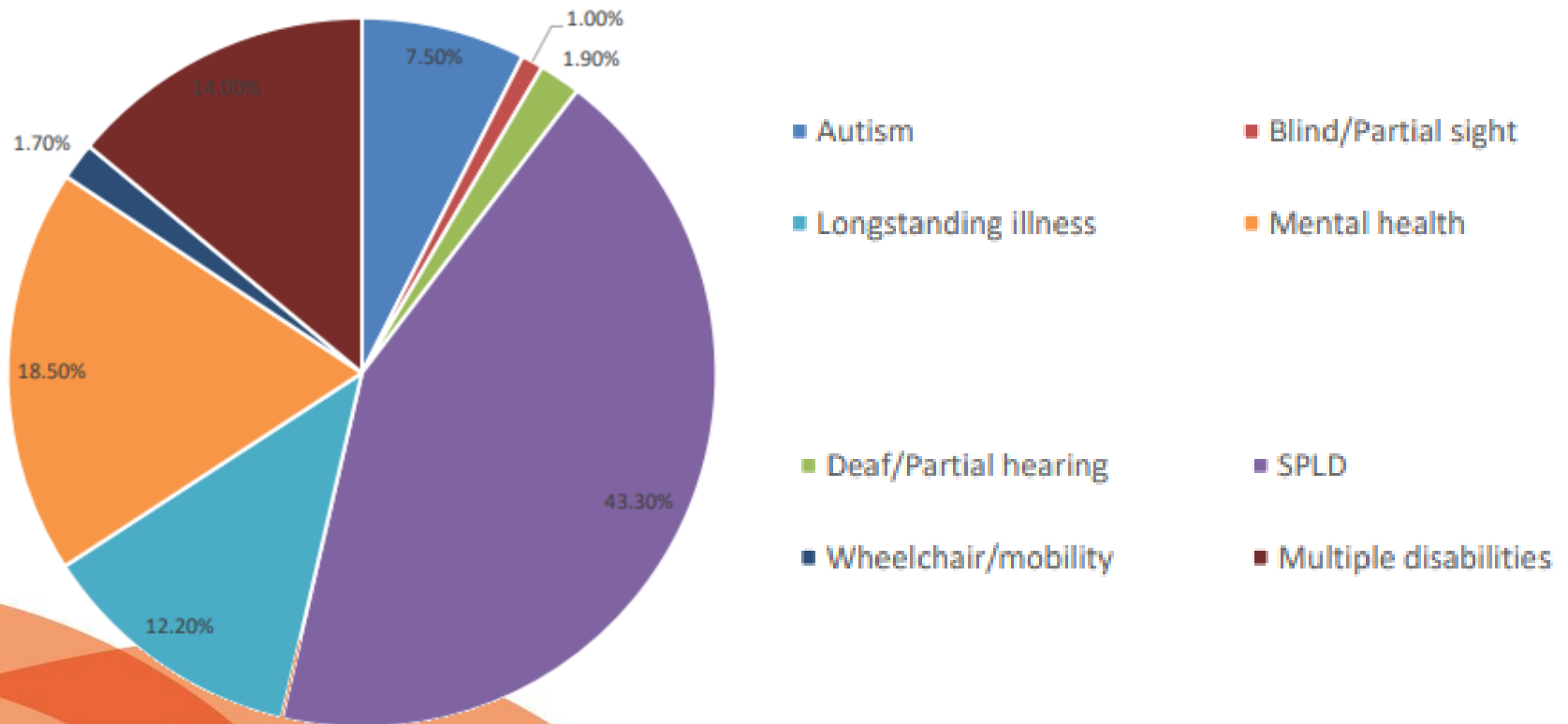
SFE Disabled Students' Allowance support provided by disability type for AY 2022/23:



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DSA REFORMS SUMMARY – SFW DSA SUPPORT AY 2022/23

SFW Disabled Students' Allowance support provided by disability type for AY 2022/23:



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DSA REFORMS SUMMARY – BENEFITS AND DELIVERY

The way in which Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) support is delivered is changing:

The aim of the new framework model is to:

- Offer better customer service to DSA students
- Allow SLC to have greater control over the provision of DSA services, and
- Offer better value for money for the taxpayer

Out of **four defined regions**, the suppliers (Study Tech and Capita) have each been contracted two geographical areas of the UK:

- Students studying or living in these areas will now access their DSA support* through their newly allocated contracted supplier

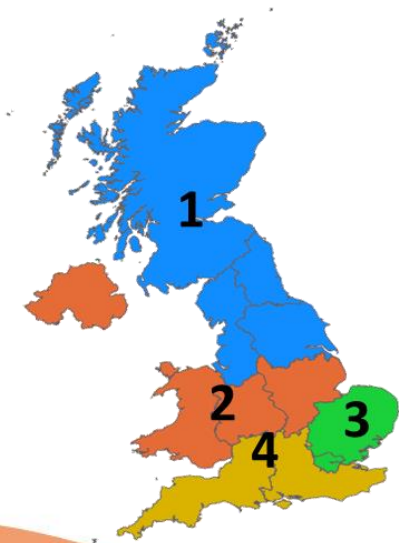
*Needs assessments, assistive technology and assistive technology training

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DSA REFORMS SUMMARY – SUPPLIER REGIONS

Study Tech and Capita have each been awarded **two geographical areas** across the UK to deliver the new DSA service model:

- The suppliers will engage with and help students navigate the DSA process



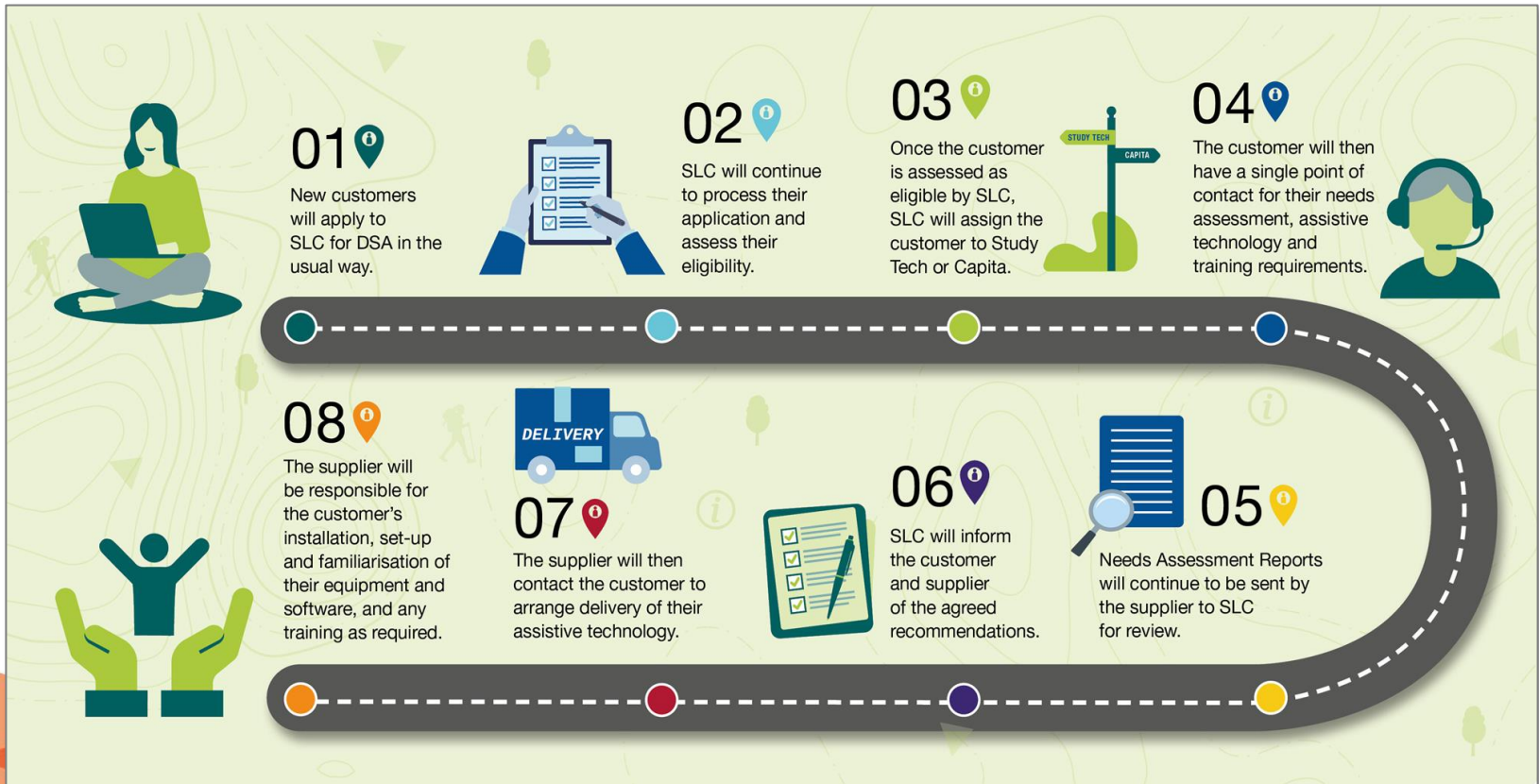
Zone	Territory	Supplier
1	Scotland North West England, North East England Yorkshire and the Humber	Study Tech
2	West Midlands, East Midlands Wales and Northern Ireland	Capita
3	East England and London	Capita
4	South West England and South East England	Study Tech

- This will be from the needs assessment appointment through to the delivery of assistive technology equipment and the on-going support/training

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DSA REFORMS SUMMARY – STUDENT JOURNEY

High-level map of the new, more efficient student DSA journey:



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DSA REFORMS SUMMARY – STUDENT JOURNEY 1

Students applying for DSA in AY 24/25 should continue to apply as normal:

Students will apply to SLC for DSA support in the usual way
SLC will continue to process their application and assess their eligibility

Once the student is assessed as eligible by SLC
SLC will assign the student to Study Tech or Capita

The student will continue to receive a DSA1 letter confirming their eligibility
However they no longer need to go to GOV.UK to find their supplier

The student will have a single point of contact for their needs assessment,
assistive technology and training requirements
These will be coordinated and delivered by their assigned supplier

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DSA REFORMS SUMMARY – STUDENT JOURNEY 2

Students applying for DSA in AY 24/25 should continue to apply as normal:

Needs Assessment Reports (NARs) will continue to be sent by the supplier to SLC for review

SLC will inform the student and supplier of the agreed recommendations in writing, via DSA2 correspondence

The supplier will then contact the student to arrange delivery of their assistive technology

The supplier will be responsible for the student's installation, set-up and familiarisation of their equipment and software, and any training required

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DSA REFORMS SUMMARY – SUPPLIER ALLOCATION

Generally, students will be assigned to Study Tech or Capita based on the **contact address*** they provide to SLC:

- Following term start, the student will be assigned to a framework supplier based on their **higher education provider (HEP) address**

Where a supplier **has provided a student's needs assessment**, they will also be responsible for supplying:

- Assistive technology, assistive technology training and supporting after-care **for the duration** of their course, even if they are located in a different zone after the assessment has been conducted
- Only in **exceptional circumstances** would SLC consider re-assigning a student to the alternative supplier post needs assessment approval

*Distance learning students will be allocated a supplier based on their home address

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DSA REFORMS SUMMARY – IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE 1

February 2024: New Service Launches (w/c 26th February 2024)

- Move to working with two contracted suppliers to provide students with their DSA service
- Simpler and faster experience for students as the new suppliers guide them through the process
- SLC's direct working with suppliers identifies opportunities to further optimise and improve the service
- Information on eligibility and approved support shared securely with the new suppliers to avoid students having to repeat information
- The only exception is disability evidence, which the student will need to send to both SLC and suppliers initially

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DSA REFORMS SUMMARY – IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE 2

Autumn 2024: Service and process enhancements

- Enhancing the processes and commercial models implemented in previous stages
- Integration between SLC and supplier systems for automated data sharing
- Administrative burden and complexity further reduced
- This will further benefit students, SLC and suppliers
- Students will only supply disability evidence once to SLC
- This evidence will then be shared securely with the suppliers

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DSA REFORMS SUMMARY – IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE 3

Introducing a transformed digital service **from 2025:**

- All student information integrated in a single digital repository
- This will be available to SLC, suppliers and students
- All DSA students have access to online applications and self-service tools
- This will include additional channels such as webchat and secure messaging
- Secure digital communication between SLC, suppliers, partners and education providers
- Everyone involved in the provision of support to DSA students will have easy access to the information they need

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DSA REFORMS SUMMARY – OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS

Making things better for students: Ensuring quality and consistency

- Key to the DSA reforms is to deliver **an improved student experience**
- SLC are committed to enhancing and strengthening the DSA process, to ensure it better **meets the needs** of students and enables them to fulfil their potential in higher education

SLC will have oversight of the quality of the services provided to students:

- Through formal performance management, SLC will ensure students receive a **consistent and high-quality service**
- A core set of **key performance indicators** (KPIs) will be measured and tracked by SLC to manage the delivery of the service

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DSA REFORMS SUMMARY – STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT 1

Delivering **an improved customer experience** is at the heart of the DSA procurement reforms:

- SLC will continue to engage with DSA customers and organisations supporting disabled students
- Their feedback will be listened to, and their valuable experiences and insights will be used to help inform SLC's work

The SLC Student Finance Customer Panel consists of prospective, current and former students:

- The panel put students at the centre of the SLC strategy to deliver outstanding customer experience
- Students in receipt of DSA sit on this panel and we have also established a dedicated DSA Student Finance Customer Panel to complement this work

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DSA REFORMS SUMMARY – STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT 2

SLC regularly survey students as they complete parts of the DSA journey:

- This helps SLC understand their experience of the application and the needs assessment process, and the supply and setup of equipment
- Under the new service model, SLC will provide feedback to the suppliers on customer satisfaction and how their service is being received by students
- Engagement will continue with the SLC Disabled Students' Stakeholder Group, members of which provide services to, and support, students with disabilities

SLC have established a DSA Quality Committee:

- This is a small group of third sector bodies who will provide independent review and validation that suppliers are adhering to the agreed quality standards, and
- That the agreed standards are driving the intended student journey outcomes

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DSA REFORMS SUMMARY – KEY POINT REVIEW 1

SLC is introducing an **improved service model** for students who receive DSA support* from SFE and SFW:

- The reforms are driven by ministerial decisions to put contractual arrangements in place for the provision of study needs assessments, assistive technology and assistive technology training
- In the new service model, students will have one supplier who has ownership of their end-to-end support for these services
- The suppliers will take the lead on ensuring students get the support they need
- As a result, the overall student experience will be improved, and the time taken for students to get their support in place will be reduced

*DSA policy, student eligibility and entitlement rules **are not changing**

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DSA REFORMS SUMMARY – KEY POINT REVIEW 2

SLC is introducing **an improved service model** for students who receive DSA support* from SFE and SFW:

- Introducing contractual arrangements enables SLC to ensure suppliers **meet service standards** and **deliver value for money for both the taxpayer and the student**
- Of note, students who receive funding from SFE or SFW and study in Scotland or Northern Ireland **will be covered** by the new arrangements
- Students who receive funding from SAAS or SFNI to study in England or Wales **will not** be affected by the new service model and will continue to be supported as they are now
- Non-Medical Help (NMH) and travel **are not impacted** by these changes and will continue to be delivered as they are now

To discuss potential staff update sessions, event support, student finance policy matters or just to register for our updates, please get in touch:

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