

Disabled Students' Allowance

Non-Medical Personal Help

A guide to using the Disabled Students'
non-medical personal help allowance

If required we can provide alternative versions
of this booklet in the following formats:

- Braille
- Large print
- Audio

Contents

Contents

Introduction	3
How we pay the NMPH allowance	4
Support workers employed by institutions	5
Support workers from a private agency	6
Employing your own support worker	7
Employing your own support worker	8
Employing your own support worker	9
Types and roles of support workers	10
Personal support assistant	12
Classroom/laboratory assistant	12
Note-taker/electronic note-taker	13
Scribe/amanuensis	14
Sign language interpreter	14
Proof Reader	15
Reader	16
Mentor	17
Study support assistant	18
IT/ Software trainer	19
FAQs	20
How to make an appeal/complaint	22
Useful contacts	23
Websites and useful publications	24
Contact us	25

Introduction

What is the Non-Medical Personal Help allowance?

The Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) is a non means-tested allowance. You can use it to cover extra costs or expenses that you incur while you are studying, which arise because of your disability or additional learning needs. The DSA is made up of three allowances: the equipment, software and accessories allowance, the consumable items allowance and the Non-Medical Personal Help allowance (NMPH).

The NMPH is an annual allowance. The maximum amount you can claim if you are studying full time is £20,520. If you are studying part-time we scale the allowance down on a pro-rata basis: for example if you are studying for 50% of the length of a full time course you will be entitled to £10,260 (50% of the NMPH full time allowance).

The NMPH allowance is intended to cover personal support such as:

- British Sign Language interpreters (BSL)
- Tactile BSL
- Note takers/ scribes
- Proof readers
- Mentors
- IT training
- Study skills support
- Mobility support

It does not cover:

- Subject specific tuition
- Support that would normally be provided by Social Services
- Asfedic tuning or similar diagnostic services

Your local Social Services department can provide you with more information about the type of support they provide, your disability adviser will be able to help you with this too.

How we pay the NMPH allowance

We pay the NMPH allowance monthly and termly in arrears on receipt of a claim form or invoice. NMPH costs are not paid in advance.

Once NMPH has been approved, you or your helper should submit a claim form or invoice for each month that support provided.

If you employ your helper direct or your helper is self-employed

We will send you a copy of our claim form with your DSA award letter. We will also send a copy of a Helper Registration for students employing their own helper for the first time. We will require this form only once unless the student changes helper. Please contact us if you did not receive a copy or require a duplicate.

You should complete all sections of the claim form clearly using black ink. You and your helper should sign the form. Please note that we will return the form to you if you do not complete it correctly and this may lead to a delay in you receiving payment.

Claims will be limited to the hourly rate and number of hours that were approved in your DSA award letter.

We will pay any money directly into the bank account you provide and you should use this money to pay your helper. . Please note that we cannot pay your helper direct.

We aim to pay all correctly completed claim forms within 21 calendar days of receipt. If you do not receive payment within 28 days please contact us at your earliest convenience.

If your helper is employed by your institution or a private company

We will reimburse them directly on receipt of an invoice(s). Invoices should include:

- your name and SAAS reference number
- type of work carried out
- cost per hour, number of hours claimed and the period of the claim

Support workers employed by institutions

Many institutions have a pool of trained staff able to provide services such as scribing, study support and mentoring. If your institution offers such a service we highly recommend that you use it, though you do not have to.

There are many advantages to using a support worker employed by your institution, including:

- your institution will be responsible for paying your support worker and dealing with things like holiday pay, national insurance contributions and tax
- your institution will invoice us directly for the services you receive
- if your support worker is ill or unable to work on a certain day your institution will be able to provide a replacement
- your institution will provide on-going training and support to your support worker
- if there are any problems with your support worker, for example they don't turn up when they should or their work is not of an acceptable standard, your institution will be able to resolve these issues for you
- you can be sure that their work will be carried out to agreed standards
- your institution will check that your support worker has all of the necessary qualifications and experience to support you

Your institution will be able to provide further information about their standards of practice and the level of service you can expect to receive.

Support workers from a private agency

Private agencies can be a useful way to employ support workers. Some of the advantages of using a private agency are:

- the agency will be responsible for paying the support worker and dealing with things such as holiday pay, national insurance contributions and tax
- the agency will invoice us directly for the services you receive
- if your support worker is ill or unable to work on a certain day the agency will normally be able to provide a replacement

If you want to use a private agency to provide your support worker you should consider the following:

- do they check references/ensure that their staff are Disclosure Scotland (or equivalent) checked?
- do they provide training for their staff?
- what qualifications/experience does their staff have?
- do they work to a recognised code of practice
- do they have a complaints procedure?
- will they provide a replacement support worker if your regular support worker is ill/unable to attend class?
- do their support workers have experience working with disabled students?

You should be aware that we have a rates of pay that we pay for support workers. If you employ a support worker from a private agency their rates can often exceed the amount we will normally pay. Please refer to pages 12 to 19 for further information about the rates that we will pay.

Your disability adviser will be able to provide you with a list of private agencies that operate in your area. Other organisations such as Dyslexia Scotland and The Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters also keep registers of suitably qualified people.

Employing your own support worker

Introduction

If you wish to employ your own support worker you may do so.

When employing a support worker you will want to check the following:

- do they have experience working with disabled people?
- do they have the necessary skills and experience to support you?
- do they have a Disclosure Scotland (or equivalent) certificate?
- can they provide references?

If you are employing your own support worker, before endorsing your application for Disabled Students' Allowance, your Disability Adviser is required by SAAS to check the suitability of the person you employ.

Are you classed as the employer or is your support worker self-employed?

When using your own helper they will either be employed by you directly or classed as self-employed. Your duties and responsibilities will differ depending on what category they fall under.

Generally speaking, if your support worker works exclusively for you it is unlikely that they will be given self-employed status. If this is the case you may be held liable by HM Revenue and Customs for National Insurance contributions and other associated costs if they decide to view you as an employer rather than class your support worker as self-employed.

Please note that this decision is made by HM Revenue and Customs and not by you or your support worker. You should contact your local tax office to discuss your support worker's employment status.

Employing your own support worker

Immigration status of workers

As an employer you have a responsibility to prevent illegal working in the UK.

You could be fined up to £10,000 if you employ someone who is subject to immigration control and not entitled to undertake the work in question. More information is available from the UK Border Agency website.

Employment contract

It is a legal requirement that you provide your support worker with a contract stating the terms of their employment including:

- number of hours per week that they are required to work
- place of work
- hourly rate of pay
- sick leave entitlement
- termination notice period
- period of contract

The Department of Trade and Industry publishes a booklet listing all of the terms that you must include in your contract.

Wage rates

You must pay your support worker at least the minimum wage. We have set rates that we pay for different types of support (see pages 12 to 19). If you wish to pay your helper more than this you will have to pay the difference yourself.

The National Minimum Wage advisory line can provide you with up to date minimum wage rates.

Benefits

If your support worker is on benefits the wages that you pay them may affect the amount of benefits that they are entitled to. They must declare any earnings they receive from you to the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP).

Employing your own support worker

Tax and National Insurance

When you employ a support worker direct you are legally responsible for their tax and National Insurance Contributions (NICs) and you must deduct tax from their wages. You may also need to pay Employer's NICs. You can get more information about this from HM Revenue and Customs.

Employee rights

If you employ a support worker they have certain legal rights which you must observe, these include the right to:

- itemised pay statements and written terms and conditions
- 4 weeks holiday leave each year
- rest periods between working days
- the right not to be discriminated against
- daily breaks if they work more than 6 hours in a day

The Health and Safety Executive can provide you with further information about working time regulations.

What we do and do not pay for

We will pay an agreed hourly rate for the type of support you need. This must not exceed the maximum as set out in our payment scales (see pages 12 to 19). Your disability adviser will be able to help you to set an appropriate rate.

Your hourly rate can include payroll administration charges (if you use a professional payroll company). You must provide us with documentary evidence if you wish us to reimburse this cost.

We will not pay for any costs you incur in relation to the following;

- producing an employment contract
- Disclosure Scotland (or equivalent) certificates
- training for your support worker
- travel for your support worker
- materials for your support worker, for example paper and pens
- employer's National Insurance Contributions

Types and roles of support workers

Depending on your disability and individual needs, you may be recommended various types of NMPH. This section lists the main types of NMPH and what you can expect from your support worker.

All support workers should:

- have a good understanding of the needs of disabled students
- be punctual and reliable
- be trustworthy
- respect the privacy of the student they are working for and
- maintain a strict level of confidentiality

Support workers should not:

- participate in class or group discussions
- help you complete class work or assignments
- provide you with answers or correct factual errors in your work
- provide subject specific tuition

Your responsibilities

When working with a helper you also have certain responsibilities that you need to meet including:

- providing your helper with a copy of your timetable as soon as it is available, along with a note of all class times and room numbers
- making it clear if you have any special requirements, for example if you want your notes on a specific colour of paper or in a particular font
- you must be in attendance of your class/lecture etc while accompanied by your support worker. They cannot be reimbursed if they attend in your absence.

Cancellation of NMPH Sessions

Should you need to cancel an arranged NMPH session, it is important you provide as much notice as possible to your NMPH provider.

There may be occasions where you cannot attend a booked NMPH session and/or do not give the required notice of cancellation, for example, because you were ill or had a personal emergency. When this occurs it is understood that the NMPH provider has arranged for a worker to attend the session and so has incurred a cost for arranging the support. The cost of these booked support sessions will be met from your NMPH allowance (subject to the repeated cancelled sessions rule below).

There may be occasions where you do not attend a session and could have cancelled the session with more than 24 hours' notice. The cost of such sessions may still be met through the student's NMPH allowance, in cases where the NMPH provider has incurred a cost for arranging the support and paying the worker for those sessions (subject to the repeated missed session rule below).

The fee SAAS can pay depends on the notice provided, as detailed in the table:

Notice period (working days only)	Less than 1 working day (24 hours)	2 working days	3 working days	Over 3 working days' notice (72 hours +)
Compensation	Payment in full	50%	25%	No payment

*Please note a working day is defined as 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays

In all scenarios, DSA funding will not be provided for NMPH provision that is repeatedly not being used once booked, or cancelled with less than 24 hours' notice, or where you indicate that you no longer need or want NMPH support. For the purposes of DSA funding, the standard of "repeatedly" is considered to be more than two sessions which have been missed per term. SAAS consider that it is unlikely that most students would need to cancel their NMPH session with less than 24 hours' notice more than twice per term*. If there is more than one cancelled session per day, SAAS will count this as the same instance.

DSA funding will not be provided where the HEI is responsible for cancelling the lecture/tutorial etc. that the session was booked for. The HEI must take responsibility for notifying you that the lecture/tutorial etc. is cancelled to enable you to cancel the session with the NMPH provider.

Cancelled sessions will be carefully considered by SAAS before payment. Where more than two sessions have been cancelled at short notice per term* SAAS will ensure that all parties understand their responsibilities and reasons for missed sessions are being investigated and documented.

*Term will be defined as 1 August - 31 December, 1 January - 30 May and 30 May - 1 August.

Personal support assistant

Duties and responsibilities

- provide you with physical help for day to day study related tasks, for example, carrying bags or equipment
- help you access buildings/rooms on campus
- take books to/from the library for you
- accompany you to lectures and tutorials

Hourly rate £12.60

If employing your own support worker. If you are using a support worker from an agency or one provided by your institution, the rate may be higher.

Person specification

- physically fit
- ability to judge when assistance is required

Classroom/laboratory assistant

Duties and responsibilities

- read instructions and explain diagrams to you
- support you in undertaking experiments
- take notes on the results of your experiments

Hourly rate £12.60

If employing your own support worker. If you are using a support worker from an agency or one provided by your institution, the rate may be higher.

Person specification

- knowledge of the subject is essential
- must be aware of health and safety issues and practices

Note-taker/electronic note-taker

Duties and responsibilities

- take notes in lectures/tutorials/field trips
- provide detailed notes in the style and format that you require

Hourly rate £12.60

If employing your own support worker. If you are using a support worker from an agency or one provided by your institution, the rate may be higher.

Person specification

- clear, legible handwriting
- good keyboard skills
- ability to take clear, concise notes
- basic knowledge of course material

Additional information

If your note-taker is provided by an institution or private company they will supply their own pens, paper, etc. If you employ your own note-taker it is your responsibility to supply them with pens, paper and any other stationery that they might need.

Depending on the rules of your institution you may not be able to use your own note-taker during exams, instead you may have to use one provided by them.

Scribe

Duties and responsibilities

- to write or type your dictated answers to questions, under exam conditions

Hourly rate

- it is up to your institution to ensure that you have all the assistance you require to sit an exam therefore, your institution will help you find an appropriate person to scribe for you and the cost of providing a scribe for your exams will not be covered by us

Person specification

- legible handwriting/good touch typing skills
- basic knowledge of the subject including familiarity with any technical jargon that might be used

Additional information

- a scribe should note down exactly what you dictate, they should not comment on or attempt to correct what you say
- depending on the rules of your institution, you may not be able to use your own helper during exam situations, instead you may have to use one provided by them

Sign language interpreter

Duties and responsibilities

- provide interpreting support at lectures and tutorials

Hourly rate from £12.60

Person specification

- hold a qualification in BSL
- have experience of providing sign language support in an education setting

Proof Reader

Duties and responsibilities

- to proof read work produced by you, including essays and project work
- identify spelling and grammatical errors and provide feedback to you on the errors you have made
- to make you aware of any problems with fluency or cohesiveness in your piece of work

Hourly rate £12.60

If employing your own support worker. If you are using a support worker from an agency or one provided by your institution, the rate may be higher.

Person specification

- basic understanding of the subject
- strong reading and spelling skills and a solid understanding of grammar and sentence structure
- excellent attention to detail
- the ability to work to tight deadlines

Additional information

Proof readers should provide comments on grammar, spelling structure, layout and style only. They should not comment on content or correct factual errors.

Reader

Duties and responsibilities

- to read a variety of texts and articles, either direct to you or onto tape or disk

Hourly rate £12.60

If employing your own support worker. If you are using a support worker from an agency or one provided by your institution, the rate may be higher.

Person specification

- a reader should have a clear reading voice and the ability to read clearly at an appropriate pace
- basic understanding of the subject and the ability to read technical jargon
- ability to use audio recording devices

Additional information

- a reader should only read the questions or text as written, not explain or clarify them
- the cost of providing a reader for your exams will not be covered by us, instead it is up to your institution to ensure that you have all the assistance you require to sit an exam
- depending on the rules of your institution, you may not be able to use your own reader during exams, instead you may have to use one provided by them

Mentor

Duties and responsibilities

- meet regularly with you to assist in planning for the week ahead
- help you make full use of the facilities at your institution for example, the library, sports centre, canteen, etc
- act as a liaison for you when required
- provide general help, support and encouragement

Hourly rate

The rate we pay will depend upon the experience/qualifications of your mentor. If you are employing your own mentor, your disability adviser will help you set an appropriate rate.

Person specification

- suitably qualified with an understanding of the needs of disabled students, in particular an understanding of mental health issues and autistic spectrum disorders
- an ability to empathise and build trust
- excellent communication skills and the ability to provide good practical advice when required
- completely reliable

Study support assistant

Duties and responsibilities

Help you to:

- organise and plan your work
- develop study skills and exam revision techniques
- make full use of your institution's library facilities

Hourly rate

The rate we pay will depend upon the experience/qualifications of your study support assistant. If you are employing your own study support assistant, your disability adviser will help you set an appropriate rate.

Person specification

- suitably qualified with an understanding of the study requirements of students in higher education
- experience of providing one to one tuition
- awareness and understanding of specific learning difficulties in general and familiarity with the specific difficulties experienced
- by the student they are supporting. For example, if you have dyslexia your study support assistant should have knowledge of how this learning difficulty affects your ability to learn

Additional information

Study support assistants should not provide you with any sort of academic tuition or coaching in specific subjects.

IT/ Software trainer

Duties and responsibilities

- provide training on specialised software, for example voice recognition or text reading software

Hourly rate

This rate will vary depending upon the company or institution providing the training.

Person specification

- in depth knowledge/qualification in the specialist technology
- understanding of the work required by students in higher education

Additional information

- we will only pay for IT software training carried out by a recognised training company or by a suitably qualified person employed by your institution
- we will not pay for IT training carried out by your family or friends
- you should speak to your disability adviser, if you require general training in basic IT skills or software packages such as MS Word or Excel as institutions often run general classes for students in these subjects
- you must provide us with two quotes from two different training providers, where possible if your IT/software trainer is not employed by your institution

FAQs

How do I submit a claim for NMPH?

Please see page 4 of this booklet.

I have not received my payment from you, what do I do?

It can take up to 21 days from the day we receive your claim to process it. Once we have processed your claim it can take up to 5 working days for it to go into your bank account. If you submit a claim to us and have not received the money after 28 days phone us on 0300 555 0505.

I have received a payment from you but it is not for the correct amount, what should I do?

You should contact us immediately on 0300 500 0505.

I am not happy with my support worker, what do I do?

If your support worker is employed by your institution or a private company you should contact them to discuss the matter. If you employ your helper direct/use a self-employed helper, you must take this matter up with them. We cannot intervene in any dispute you have with your helper and if they are not employed by your institution your disability adviser will not be able to intervene either. They may, however, be able to offer you some general help or support.

How do I go about increasing the level of NMPH that I receive?

You should discuss this with your disability adviser. If appropriate, they will send us a revised assessment with a new level of NMPH on it. We cannot agree to an increase in the level of NMPH you receive without it being agreed by your disability adviser first.

I want to complain about the level of service I have received from my support worker

Please see [how to make a complaint](#).

As part of my course I need to spend a period of time abroad, can I still claim NMPH?

Yes, you can claim NMPH for periods of study abroad, whether they are a compulsory or voluntary part of your course. As soon as you know that you are going abroad, contact your disability adviser to discuss the support you will need.

I am going on a placement, can I still claim NMPH?

Yes, though some of the support you require might be met by your placement provider as part of their obligation under the Equality Act (2010). As soon as you know that you are going on a placement, contact your disability adviser to discuss the support you will need.

The amount of NMPH I need is going to be more than the maximum allowance levels, will you pay more?

No, we cannot pay more than the maximum amount. If you require support over and above this level you should contact your disability adviser, as there might be extra help available from your institution.

Can I receive money to pay my support worker in advance?

No, we will only pay DSA in arrears, on receipt of a fully completed claim form confirming that the work has been carried out.

If I withdraw from my course will I have to pay back my NMPH?

As DSA is paid in arrears for work already carried out you will not normally have to pay back any money.

Can I receive NMPH outwith term time?

Normally we only pay for NMPH carried out during term time. However, in certain circumstances, for example if you have a dissertation to complete over the long summer vacation or are attending a placement, we can consider paying NMPH. In these cases we require a letter of support from your disability adviser before we can make any payments.

How to make an appeal/complaint

Our appeals and complaints procedures

Students who wish to complain or appeal against our assessment of a DSA application

If a student wishes to make a formal request to review our decision they can submit a formal complaint or appeal directly to SAAS.

Further details regarding our appeals process are available on the SAAS website http://www.saas.gov.uk/contact_us/appeals.htm

If a student wishes to make a complaint you can do so by phone, in writing or by email. Further details regarding our complaints process are available on the SAAS website http://www.saas.gov.uk/contact_us/complaints.htm

Students Disputing a needs assessment

If a student disputes the recommendations in their needs assessment and the matter cannot be resolved directly between them and the needs assessor, the student should be able to submit a complaint/ appeal directly to the organisation that carried out their assessment. The organisation that provided the assessment should provide the student with a copy of their complaints/ appeals process.

In the rare occurrence where, the matter cannot be resolved directly between the student/ needs assessor and the student has exhausted the internal complaints/appeals procedure then we may seek to have an additional needs assessment carried out by another organisation who is independent to the case.

Useful contacts

HM Revenue and Customs Employers Helpline

Information about tax and national insurance for employers

Telephone: 0845 60 70 143

Text: 0845 60213810

Website: www.hmrc.gov.uk/employers

UK Border Agency

Information about employing migrants

www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/business-sponsors

National Minimum Wage Helpline

Can give advice about the national minimum wage for your employee(s)

Telephone: 0845 6000 678

Business Link

Information about producing contracts and other paperwork associated with being an employer

www.businesslink.gov.uk

Websites and useful publications

Websites

Disclosure Scotland:	www.disclosurescotland.co.uk
Health and Safety Executive:	www.hse.gov.uk
National Centre for Independent Living:	www.independentliving.co.uk
Citizens' Advice Bureau:	www.cas.org.uk
National Union of Students:	www.nus.org.uk
The Care Inspectorate:	www.careinspectorate.com
The Scottish Government:	https://www.gov.scot/
Lead Scotland	www.lead.org.uk

Contact us

The contact details for the SAAS are:

Telephone: 0300 555 0505

Address: DSA Team
Saughton House
Broomhouse Drive
Edinburgh
EH11 3UT

If you need to send documents/evidence, we can now accept these through the online document uploader on your [SAAS Account](#). If you do not have an online account you can submit these to saas_4@gov.scot. Please, do not post anything to us.

Website: www.saas.gov.uk

Email: saas_4@gov.scot



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twitter.com/saastweet



youtube.com/fundingawareness

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