



Non Medical Helper QUALITY STANDARDS

1. Introduction

This document sets out Claro quality standards for the provision of Non-Medical Helper (NMH) support supplied to students under the Disabled Students Allowance. Funded by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, the DSA is administered by Local Education Authorities (including the Open University), and Student Finance England (SFE).

For the purposes of this document, the following definitions apply.

“NMH Supplier” means an organisation that supplies DSA-funded Assistive Technology Training, Learning Support, or any activity embraced by the terms “Enabling” and “Mentoring” such as Mobility Assistance, Library Support, Note-taking, Specialist Mental Health Support etc. The list of applicable activities is flexible and dependent on each student’s diagnosis and assessment.

“Provider” means the individual Claro consultant who provides the NMH support.

“Assessor” means a person qualified to undertake an assessment of a student’s needs and entitlement to assistance under the DSA.

“Client” means a recipient of DSA-funded NMH services.

1.1 Purpose

The company quality standards addressed in this document include the following: service delivery, administrative and financial competence and control, data confidentiality, integrity of personnel and student focus. The issues faced by disabled students in Higher Education vary widely according both to the nature of each student’s disability, their course of study, and their personal experience and background. Means of providing DSA-supported assistance in the light of such issues are not fixed but are in a constant process of evolution. In addition to the basic requirements outline in this document, all Claro personnel are, therefore, expected keep up to date with advances in thinking, and developments in assistive technology and other support methods appropriate to carrying out their professional services.

1.2 Contents

This document is organised in sections as follows:

Section 2 addresses Claro's responsibilities towards the various constituents involved in the provision of DSA-funded support: students, funding bodies, educational institutions, assessment centres, and the Quality Assurance Group (QAG).

Section 3 sets out basic service delivery standards to the student.

Section 4 deals with administrative and processing standards, including documentation, data protection, pricing, and accounting.

2. Basic Responsibilities

NMH support is a component of an overall strategy of state-financed provision. Both Claro as a company and all Claro personnel commit to providing good service practice in the following areas:

2.1 Focus on Students

- a) awareness of the differing needs of disabled students;
- b) (for trainers) understanding of and an ability to demonstrate and provide training in the full range of assistive technology recommended by assessors to address those needs;
- c) ability to ensure that students have the widest possible choice of when, where and how support is given;
- d) ability to gender match Providers to students whenever so requested by the student;
- e) up-to-date staff development in the area of disability and new technologies;
- f) knowledge of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and how it may affect NMH staff;
- g) Awareness of the time frames and stresses under which students often work and a willingness and ability to respond to these efficiently and effectively;
- h) ability to deal sensitively with student difficulties, and with complaints (see Section 3.2.3);
- i) willingness and ability to change the Provider if requested to do so by the student, or where it may otherwise be necessary in order to fulfil the requirements of the service (see Section 3.1.5).

2.2 Relations with Assessors, Assessment Centres and Educational Institutions

- a) ability and willingness to offer the support and the solutions specified and/or recommended;
- b) a readily-accessible source of information - including but not restricted to the internet - on the services offered and the associated costs (see Section 3.2);
- c) ability and willingness to respond to questions, offer advice, and engage in dialogue;
- d) a high standard of recording-keeping and an ability to report on the outcome of recommended support - within what is permissible under the data protection regulations and student confidentiality.

2.3 Funding Bodies and the Quality Assurance Group (QAG)

- a) an efficient, clear and consistent method of invoicing and of dealing with queries;
- b) willingness to supply evidence of the amount and nature of NMH support given for each Student;
- c) ability and willingness to supply statistics on work undertaken - in particular on student uptake of NMH support;

3. Services to Students

3.1 Providers

All Claro Providers must have a current, valid CRB verification, be ISA-registered (from October 2010), and be covered by public liability insurance, in addition to qualifications and experience relevant to the service being provided. They must also be disability aware as a result of formal or informal training and supervised practical experience. Under no circumstances do any Claro Providers acquire disability awareness “on the job” at the expense of students.

3.1.1 Assistive Technology Trainers

Trainers are:

- a) fully versed in all the technology packages awarded to the student whom they are training; they also have expertise in using more than one computer operating system if this is what a student requires;
- b) up to date with the latest versions and upgrades;

- c) able to diagnose and deal with simple technical problems, to recognise when technical problems require input from the equipment supplier, and to advise the student accordingly.

3.1.2 Learning Support Tutors

The minimum formal qualifications for Claro Learning Support Tutors are: a Degree from a recognised university or college; and a Postgraduate Certificate in Education or equivalent. Additional qualifications or special experience may be needed depending on the disability of an individual student. All Claro Providers are trained in disability awareness, and have undergone in-house training with an experienced tutor. Claro assigns appropriately-qualified personnel when required to do so (for example, for students with significant visual impairment). Learning Support Tutors are required to develop an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) for each student with the latter's full involvement and consent.

3.1.3 Mentors, Enablers etc.

Although academic qualifications and training vary with the level of mentoring and enabling required by the student, Claro guarantees to match the Provider's skills to the kind of assistance needed. Notetakers at all levels undergo training in notetaking skills and appropriately versed in the notation conventions used by the relevant academic discipline.

3.1.4 Gender Matching

Claro guarantees to offer a Provider of the same gender as the student if the student so requests.

3.1.5 Substitutes

It sometimes occurs that a Provider proves unsuited to a particular student. In such a case, Claro will offer a substitute Provider.

3.2 Communications

3.2.1 Basic Standards

Claro guarantees to:

- a) maintain a website containing information on the services offered that meets the best standards of accessibility for users with disabilities;
- b) ensures that Clients (students) are fully informed about how to contact the company by email, telephone, fax, conventional mail, electronic text, and Tynetalk or an equivalent facility for the hearing impaired;

- c) deal quickly and effectively with queries from Clients and from other interested parties, with a 100% initial response rate within 24 hours (48 hours at weekends).

3.2.2 Feedback

In the case of every student Claro:

- a) seeks feedback on the services provided from students and institutions, and uses the resulting information as part of an ongoing quality-control procedure;
- b) ensures that feedback and action arising therefrom are properly recorded and readily retrievable.

3.2.3 Complaints

Claro operates a formal complaints procedure that:

- a) permits the complainant to register a complaint directly to the company, without the need to communicate its nature to the Provider;
- b) guarantees a prompt initial response (not more than 24 hours during the working week and 48 hours at weekends).
- c) involves senior executives of the company, including the Chief Executive Officer in all cases where a complaint has not been addressed expeditiously (within 48 hours) and to the complainant's satisfaction.

Claro personnel are required to handle complaints in a professional and non-confrontational manner and, regardless of the nature of the complaint, to follow through until the matter in question has been resolved.

3.3 Session Timing and Length

Within the overall termly or annual limits on the amount of NMH support awarded, students may choose how and when to receive their support. As far as is reasonably possible, therefore, Claro endeavours always to meet Clients' wishes with respect both to the timing of NMH sessions and their length.

4. Process

4.1 Documentation

All NMH support is documented by means of Job Sheets (for technology training) and Time Sheets (for other NMH support). Both are signed by the Provider and countersigned by the student.

4.2 Pricing

Claro is conscious that the costs of NMH are borne by the taxpayer. We monitor our prices carefully to ensure that they reflect the genuine costs of the support provided. Prices are available on the Company website.

4.3 Accounting

Claro is able at any time to furnish evidence to funding bodies concerning the company's financial health and capacity to meet its obligations as a NMH Supplier.

4.4 Data Protection

Claro Client records contain only sufficient data to ensure that the company can meet its obligations to the Client. These data include contact details, information specific to the support required by the Client and for which the Client has appropriate DSA funding, a record of support given and pending, and details of any complaints made by the Client and any other issues relevant to the provision of NHM support.

All data are held in strict confidence, and in compliance with the Data Protection Act.

Under no circumstances are student data transferred or sold to third parties, nor delivered to any other party (except as required by funding bodies and by law) without the consent of the Client.

4.5 Institutional Relations

Claro commits to maintaining a close, collaborative working relationship with educational institutions for whom the company is a recognised supplier of services to students. That commitment includes ensuring that the company's services meet the relevant requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.