

LTC17D175

Title: *Disability support update*
Author: Claire Pratt, Wellbeing manager, STS
Date: 14th May 2018
Circulation: LTC – 20 June 2018
Agenda: LTC17A006
Version: Final
Status: Open

Issue

Update on disability support at UEA

Recommendation

Recipients are invited to consider and endorse the work as detailed in this report

Resource Implications

Resources required to carry out this work are provided within the STS established budget

Risk Implications

None identified

Equality and Diversity

This strategy builds on the UEA's commitment to promoting a culture of inclusiveness. It outlines how UEA will ensure that individuals with disabilities, are enabled to participate as fully as they wish to in university life in a non-discriminatory, non-stigmatising and positive manner.

Timing of decisions

None required over and above endorsement of the committee.

Further Information

Any queries, comments or observations to be directed to Claire Pratt, Wellbeing Manager, STS.
Ext 3774
C.Pratt1@uea.ac.uk

Background

A request was received from the committee to consider a report detailing the support provided to students with disabilities at UEA. This request came at a time where support for disabled students is an area of discussion and development for universities across the sector. There is an increasing focus on embedding inclusive practice into organisational approaches to teaching and engaging students. UEA is already working to ensure that students with disabilities have a positive experience and are keen to develop this support further, embracing the notion of inclusive practice which is undoubtedly going to be high on the national agenda in coming months.

In addition to looking at the national picture and sector wide focus, STS at UEA have undergone a number of changes in the last eighteen months which has impacted students with disabilities. The changes in this area have been undertaken to generate improvements in delivery as well as to improve student access and experience in relation to receiving support with disability related issues.

This is the first report detailing this but can be provided on an annual basis as required.

Discussion

- **DSA changes – a rebalancing of responsibility with HEIs funding and providing certain aspects of disability related support previously funded via the DSAs**

Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) are non-repayable grants that assist with the additional costs that a disabled student incurs in relation to their study in higher education. DSAs provide a range of support. This includes the purchase of laptops and specialist equipment, provision of support workers and assistance with additional travel costs. The support is not means tested and is available for eligible full-time and part-time students, studying at undergraduate and postgraduate level. Changes made in 2015 - 2017 aimed to rebalance responsibilities between government funding and institutional support with HEIs playing a bigger role in supporting students with mild difficulties, as part of their duties to provide reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act. These are partly anticipatory duties and HEIs are now expected to introduce changes which can further reduce reliance on DSAs and help mainstream support including giving greater consideration to the delivery of their courses and how to provide support. It is for HEIs to consider how they make both anticipatory reasonable adjustments and also reasonable adjustments at an individual level. DSA remains responsible for:

- funding the most specialist non-medical help support, under bands 3 and 4 (such as specialist study skills and mentoring, communication Support Worker, electronic notetaker, mobility trainer, specialist Mentor, Specialist One to One Study Skills Support, BSL Interpreter, language Support Tutor for deaf students, assistive Technology Trainer)
- Sighted Guides
- Disability-related costs of travel to and from the University
- Some technology support

Universities are now responsible for;

- non-medical support roles that are classified as bands 1 or 2 (such as note taking, library support assistant, reader, scribe, workshop/laboratory assistant, proof reader, study assistant, examination support worker, notetaker)
- provision of Specialist Transcription Services
- To assist students with disabilities who incur additional on-campus ensuite costs as a result of disability related requirements

- **UEA Student Support Services support for students with disabilities**

- Specialist disability advisors (1.5 FTE)
- ASD support group
- Peer support
- Specialist assessments for Specific learning difficulties (SpLD) (including dyslexia, dyspraxia, ASD, ADHD)
- Reasonable adjustments and individual exam arrangements
- Support and training to DLOs and advisors around disability and inclusive practice
- Support to specialist mentors
- Support to students to arrange DSA support

- **Working with external providers**
 - UEA has historically employed Non Medical Helpers internally, this changed in 2017 when it was outsourced to private providers. A positive relationship has been built between STS and one of the major providers in the sector, Ranstad
 - UEA contracts a number of specialist providers to undertake SpLD assessments, including educational psychologists and consultant psychiatrists.

- **Funding**
 - DSA as discussed above
 - HEFCE monies fund the support required for non DSA funded students
 - The opportunities fund, managed by the Widening Participation (WP) team, also has some input into the funding of support for students with a disability who meet specific criteria's relating to the WP agenda.

- **Waiting times improvements**
 - Waiting times to see a wellbeing advisor have improved significantly over the last term and students are able to access specialist advisors regarding disability, SpLd and mental health in a timely fashion. This has been something that the service has particularly focused on improving as we acknowledged that waiting times had become a barrier for students.
 - Students can access an appointment with a wellbeing advisor (offered by both mental health and disability advisors) daily through the 'same day' bookable appointments and an advance booked appointment with a specialist disability advisor within two weeks.
 - Support available to non DSA funded students has been streamlined to ensure that their access to required support is in line with that of DSA funded students.

- **Future planning**
 - To develop a disability strategy outlining the aims and objectives of student support services specifically and the university generally in relation to support available to students with disabilities, including the move towards inclusive practice becoming the norm across the university. This strategy will be developed in consultation with the SU and other relevant university departments.

Attachments

[Please clearly list all appendices which will be added to the report.]

- **The typical process of accessing disability support flow chart**

Access to support for Students with a disability

