

**Attention:** Assessment centre managers, needs assessors, NMH providers and assistive technology service providers.

20 August 2019

Dear Practitioners

### **SFE Contractual Arrangements between SFE and Needs Assessment Centres**

Further to my recent communication, I informed assessment centres and NMH providers that DSA-QAG had received notification from the Department for Education (DfE) that contractual arrangements between Student Finance England (SFE) and assessment centres would be introduced by October 2020.

In conjunction with the Board of Trustees, DSA-QAG has completed a careful analysis of our business model and the impact the loss of the assessment centre and outreach centre groups would have on the organisation. The Board concluded that it was not feasible to continue to operate due to the significant loss of revenue to our business in 2020. It is therefore with much regret that I write to inform practitioners that DSA-QAG will be closing at the end of this year and the charity will be dissolved.

Many of you have been on the long journey with DSA-QAG when the first quality assurance framework was introduced in 2004 for assessment centres and assistive technology service providers, to standardise the DSA needs assessment process throughout the regions, and to ensure that equipment, software and AT training recommended for DSA students was provided during the student's time at university or college.

There has been much improvement to the processes and support services available for DSA students from the changes over the years. The sector has grown significantly from back in 2004 when there were less than 80 registered organisations (assessment centres and ATSPs) to now over 750 organisations who adhere to the various quality assurance frameworks and thrive to maintain a high standard of service and support for DSA students.

On a personal note, it has been a great pleasure working with many colleagues in the DSA sector over the past 13 years and *"there is no greater joy, nor greater reward to make a fundamental difference in someone's life"* (Mary Rose Mc Geady).

We have all made a difference collectively for the good of disabled students and I hope that the DSA reforms continue to improve the services and support delivered for DSA students now and in the future.

With regards to the current audit cycles underway, DSA-QAG will aim to complete the assessment centre and outreach audit cycles by the 31 October 2019 in line with our service level agreement.

For NMH providers, the audit cycle we will aim to complete in December 2019. The moratorium placed on new centre and NMH provider applications in July will continue until further notice.

Prior to closing, we have been requested to provide to the Department for Education with the register of accredited assessment, outreach centres and NMH providers.

We will be working closely with our DfE colleagues over the next four months to ensure as smooth a transition when DSA-QAG closes its doors.

Yours sincerely

*Karen Docherty*

Karen Docherty  
CEO

