Learners with learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities Policy

Family:	Safeguarding
Manager Responsible:	Anna Valentine-Marsh
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The Skills Network's commitment to equality

The Skills Network is committed to creating an inclusive environment where all learners are enabled to achieve regardless of disability or learning difference.

We aim to:
- treat all learners with respect and understanding
- provide individualised, learner focused support
- provide support based upon the impact on the learner rather than on the learner's diagnosis

Who is this policy for?

This is a learner focused policy however it may be utilised and implemented by:
- The Skills Network colleagues
- Assessors
- Partners
- Stakeholders

This policy has been developed in accordance with, but not exclusively by, the following guidance and legislation:
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Adult Skills Funding guidance.

Roles and responsibilities

All The Skills Network colleagues are committed to ensuring our service is inclusive and accessible. The Skills Network has a department that is dedicated to the support of learners with disability and/or learning difference, this is the LLDD department.

Learning Support Advisor (LSA) - work with learners to understand how their disabilities and differences affect their learning. A LSA will work with a learner to discuss how the LLDD team might be able to support the learner. Wherever possible a learner will be supported by the same LSA throughout their learning journey. The LSA will stay in contact with the learners throughout their course and provide support and guidance as required.

LLDD Team Leader - supports the LSA's helping them organise how best to implement support.

Safeguarding and LLDD Manager - over sees the department.

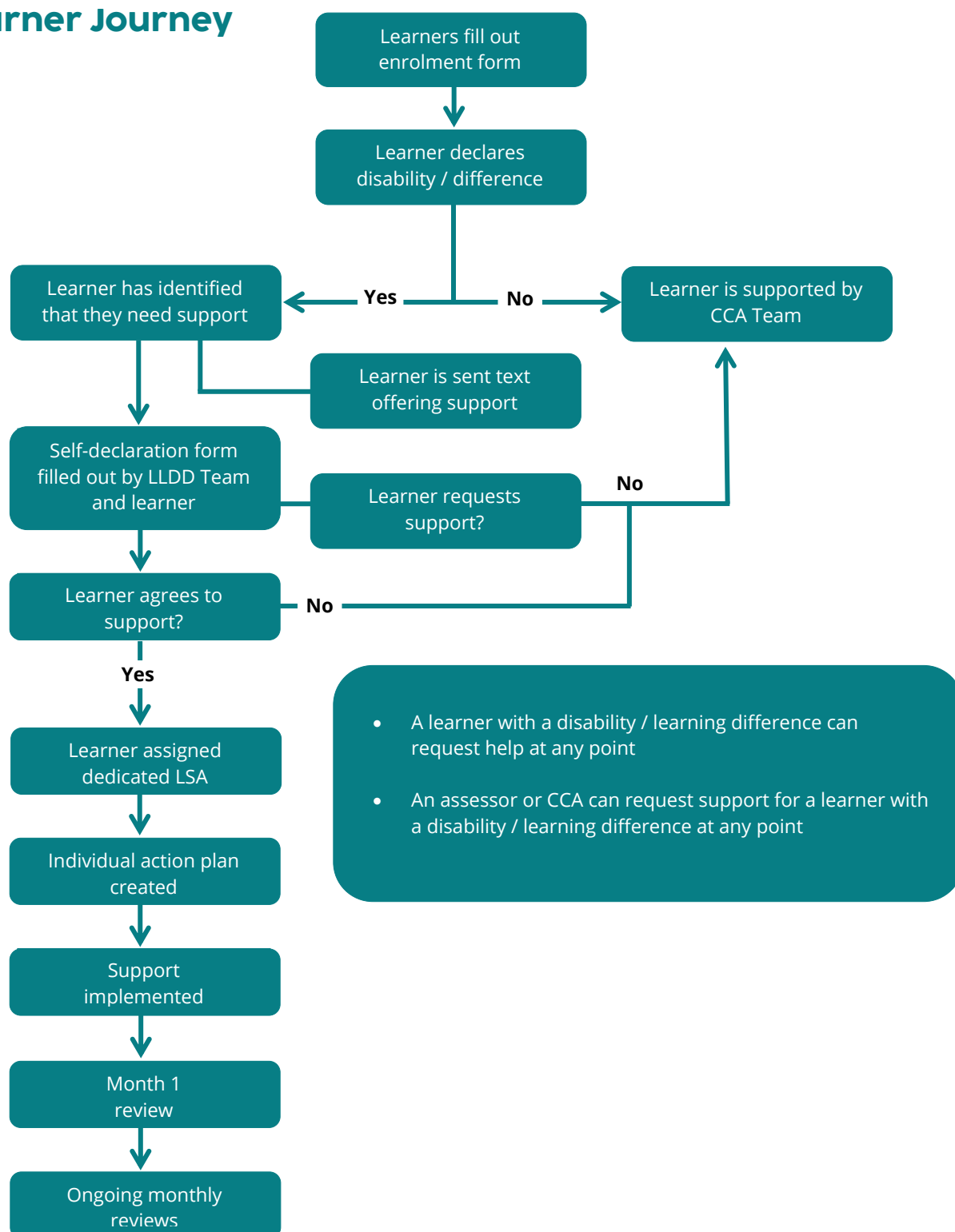The LLDD department works closely with several other teams.

Assessor Services - This team assesses learner's work and provides individualized, robust feedback. They may also provide support with learning issues and concerns. Sometimes assessors will refer learners to the LLDD team to discuss what additional support is available.

Quality - This team works with the LLDD Manager to adapt assessment materials where necessary.

Contact Centre Advisors (CCA) - This team works closely with the LLDD team to support learners. In many cases learners will meet the CCA team before being referred to the LLDD team. CCA's provide help, support, advice and guidance to learners at every stage of their journey.

Information Services Team - This team will ensure that monthly Learning Support claims are made where appropriate evidence is provided outlining support and interventions provided for learners.

The Learner Journey

```
        ┌─────────────────────┐
        │ Learners fill out   │
        │ enrolment form      │
        └──────────┬──────────┘
                   ▼
        ┌─────────────────────┐
        │ Learner declares    │
        │ disability /        │
        │ difference          │
        └──────────┬──────────┘
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- **Yes** → Learner has identified that they need support
- **No** → Learner is supported by CCA Team

┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Learner has identified │
│ that they need support │
└─────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────┐
│ Learner is sent text│
│ offering support   │
└─────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Learner is supported by │
│ CCA Team   │
└─────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Self-declaration form   │
│ filled out by LLDD Team │
│ and learner   │
└─────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────┐
│ Learner requests   │ → **No**
│ support?   │
└─────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────┐
│ Learner agrees to   │ → **No**
│ support?   │
└─────────────────────┘
      │ **Yes**
      ▼
┌─────────────────────┐
│ Learner assigned   │
│ dedicated LSA   │
└─────────────────────┘
      ▼
┌─────────────────────┐
│ Individual action   │
│ plan created   │
└─────────────────────┘
      ▼
┌─────────────────────┐
│ Support   │
│ implemented   │
└─────────────────────┘
      ▼
┌─────────────────────┐
│ Month 1   │
│ review   │
└─────────────────────┘
      ▼
┌─────────────────────┐
│ Ongoing monthly   │
│ reviews   │
└─────────────────────┘

- A learner with a disability / learning difference can request help at any point

- An assessor or CCA can request support for a learner with a disability / learning difference at any point

Supporting learners

It is important to acknowledge that every learner is an individual. At The Skills Network we understand that learners are impacted by disabilities and differences in different ways and whilst some adaptations suit many, they do not suit all. Each learner will be assessed and supported based on the impact their individual disabilities and differences have on their learning.

The first step to understanding how best to support the learner is the Welcome Call.

What to expect from a Welcome Call:

- ✓ An LSA will arrange a suitable time in advance with a learner, the LSA will then Phone or Email depending on the individual needs.
- ✓ a dedicated LSA will confirm a learner's identity by checking essential details such as the learner's full name, address and date of birth.
- ✓ The LSA will ask targeted questions which help us understand how the learner's disability or learning difference impacts their learning.

We may ask about:
- many people live with multiple disabilities or differences; we may ask which disability most affects their learning.
- challenges a learner may have faced in previous learning or at work
- how a learner plans to access course materials
- any previous adjustments that they have found useful and what they might find useful in the future

Agreeing and implementing support

In the second phase of the Welcome Call the learner and LSA work together to create and agree an adjustments plan (Appendix 1) and an action plan for completing the course (Appendix 2). Conversations are conducted with empathy and respect, ensuring the learner feels comfortable and supported while sharing their needs. This approach will provide equitable access to education for all learners.

Support whilst learning

The type of support agreed depends on the learner's needs and the funding partner the. If the learner is The Skills Network direct learner we will work with them to review their action plans and progress through monthly support interactions. These interactions are either conducted on the phone or via email depending on the individual learners needs.

What type of support is available?

The following are examples of the type of support that may be available to learners. The support offered depends on the learner's needs and the funding partner.

Additional support intervention
Printed learning resources
Technical adaptations in EQUAL
Screen overlays
Screen reader
Manual reader
Note taker
Scribe
Text conversion
Adapted assessment
Assistive technology
Study support sessions
Adapted feedback
Easy read versions
Additional assessor support

Working with learners with Education, Care and Health Plans (ECHP)

Some learners may have an ECHP plan. An ECHP is a legally binding document which outlines what support should be provided for a learner.

An ECHP only applies to learners under the age of 25. The LLDD team may use the detail provided in an outdated EHCP to understand the learners' needs and support implemented in the past, but when a learner is over the age of 25 there is no legal requirement to provide this support.

A current EHCP usually requires a learner to nominate a named learning provider. The named provider is then responsible for delivering the support required. Due to the length and nature of The Skills Network courses it is unlikely that The Skills Network would be a named provider unless in partnership with other providers.

In the event The Skills Network named as a provider each case would be individually assessed. The Skills Network will provide adjustments that are reasonable and practicable to enable learners with EHCP's to achieve their goals.

Supporting learners whose needs cannot be met

It is important to acknowledge that The Skills Network will not always be the right fit for every learner. When it becomes clear that The Skills Network cannot provide sufficient support to enable a learner to achieve this will be discussed with the learner and alternative course options will be discussed and supported where appropriate.

Extensions and breaks in learning

Our courses are between 12-14 weeks in length and are funded as such. Some learners will require additional time to complete course work and extensions may be granted to accommodate learners' needs. An extension is typically 1 to 2 weeks. There are times when a longer extension is needed this is sometimes

referred to as a break in learning. A break in learning must be agreed with a partner and may not be possible in all circumstances. All extensions must be completed within the funding period.

Ongoing monitoring and review

We are committed to supporting our learners through regular monitoring and adjustments. We will agree action plans monthly and conduct monthly reviews to assess progress and address any emerging needs (Appendix 3). These reviews will be conducted alongside any other necessary contact or adjustments to ensure that each learner receives the appropriate support to achieve their educational goals.

Some learners do not disclose they have disabilities or learning needs that impact their learning at application. There can be many reasons for this, we will not discriminate against a learner with learning needs or disabilities, and we will work with the learner to put in place appropriate support at any stage in their learning journey they require it. A CCA or Assessor can request support for a learner at any stage of their learning journey (appendix 4).

Assessing

Each learner's submission is assessed by an Assessor. The assessor's role is to make assessment judgements based on the Awarding Organisation (AO) specification and provide feedback in line with this via the SWANs model.

When a learner's work has not achieved the expected assessment criteria, this is referred in line with the (AO) specification. Feedback will be provided to explain why the criteria was not achieved with an explanation of how the learner can develop the referral/s.

Referral typically grants the learner a period of around 7 days to review and amend their answers, we know that some learners with additional needs and disabilities need additional time when learning and reasonable extensions can be given but work must be completed within the funding period
Learners can access the following support with referrals:
- access the learning resources
- access LSA support
- work with assessors who will provide guidance to improve their understanding.

Appeals:
All learners have the right to challenge the outcomes of their assessment decisions if they believe or consider the assessment has not been carried out properly. Learners might appeal on a variety of issues, including:
- Assessment outcomes
- Access to assessment
- Accusations of plagiarism or AI misuse.

In the first instance, we encourage learners to contact their assessor to discuss why they disagree with their decision. Their contact details can be found in the feedback. If a learner is unable to reach an agreement, they can then contact **Quality.Team@theskillsnetwork.com** to begin the formal appeals process.

Full details of the policy and process can be found here:
https://theskillsnetwork.com/documents/appeals-policy-apr25.pdf

Compliments and Complaints:

We are committed to providing the best possible experience for every learner. If a learner feels that something has not gone as it should, we want to hear about it so we can put things right and continue to improve.

If a learner has a concern, it should initially be raised with their Assessor or their Learning Support Advisor, or other member of staff. The member of staff must take every opportunity to resolve the complaint informally.

If an informal resolution is not possible, the complaint should then be escalated as a formal complaint to **Complaints@theskillsnetwork.com** either by the learner, advocate or member of staff.

The complaint will be assigned to an Investigating Manager who will review your feedback and provide an outcome and resolution within 10 working days. Full details of the policy and process can be found here:
https://theskillsnetwork.com/documents/complaints-policy-v3.pdf

Course design

One of The Skills Network's key strengths is in our online platform and ability to offer fully online flexible delivery that provides several affordances to a wide variety of learners, many of whom may not have had the opportunity to learn in a place-based setting.

Accessibility and inclusion are central to both our course design and educational philosophy. We actively incorporate Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, which promotes multiple means of engagement, representation, and action and expression (**see CAST**) to accommodate a wide range of learning preferences and needs.

Whilst text is the primary form of information delivery in order to utilise operating system and web browser accessibility tools. Our commitment to UDL means we are providing multiple means of representation so courses will be seeing more video and multimedia content as they go through iterative reviews to better support learners who benefit from chunked content and visual aids.

 In addition to our course design principles our learning platform includes:
- An overview of contents and a progress tracker to assist with navigation.
- Support for keyboard-only navigation and screen readers, in alignment with WCAG requirements.
- Compatibility with adaptive technologies and browser tools (e.g., Reader Mode, Dark Mode, font adjustments), and most operating systems offer accessibility tools (e.g., macOS VoiceOver, Windows Narrator, screen magnifiers).

- We use Open Dyslexic font and alt tags to allow for technological adjustments such as the ability to adjust text size and use screen reader tools to increase accessibility option for learning.

Our inclusive design initiatives aim to support a broad spectrum of learners, including those with dyslexia, autism, and ADHD. We have a commitment to continuous improvement and welcome direct input from learners with lived experience to inform these changes.

Appendices

Appendix 1 & 2 - Self declaration form and individual action plan
Appendix 3 - Progress record
Appendix 4 - Support request
Appendix 5 - Use of AI
Appendix 6 - Special consideration

Appendix 1 & 2 – Self declaration form and individual action plan

Additional Learning Support Plan

Learner Name		Learner Ref ID	
Course	Choose an item.		
Start Date	Click or tap to enter a date.	Planned End Date	Click or tap to enter a date.

Section A: Learner Declaration

As part of your application or during a conversation with a member of our LLDD Support team, it has been identified that you may benefit from additional support to enhance your learning experience with The Skills Network.

On the next page, please tick if you believe any of these factors will affect your learning:

Learning Difficulties

☐ 10 Moderate Learning Difficulty
☐ 11 Severe Learning Difficulty
☐ 12 Dyslexia
☐ 13 Dyscalculia
☐ 18 Down Syndrome
☐ 94 Other Specific Learning Difficulty
☐ Dyspraxia
☐ Dysgraphia
☐ Auditory Processing Disorder
☐ Non-Verbal Learning Disorder
☐ 94 Other Specific Learning Difficulty

[ ]

Physical Disabilities

☐ 6 Disability Affecting Mobility
☐ 16 Temporary Disability After Illness or Accident
☐ 93 Other Physical Disability
☐ 97 Other Disability (please specify below)

[ ]

Medical Conditions

☐ 95 Other Medical Condition
☐ Asthma
☐ Diabetes
☐ Epilepsy
☐ Long Covid

Primary Health Problem:

[ ]

Multiple Disabilities

☐ 7 Profound Complex Disabilities

Sensory Conditions

☐ 4 Vision Impairment
☐ 5 Hearing Impairment
☐ 17 Speech, Language and Communication Needs

Mental Health

☐ 9 Mental Health Difficulty
☐ Depression
☐ Bipolar Disorder
☐ Eating Disorder
☐ Mental Health Disorder
☐ Anxiety
☐ PTSD
☐ Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
☐ ODD
☐ Disordered Eating
☐ Body Dysmorphia

Social Emotional Conditions

☐ 8 Social and Emotional Difficulties
☐ ASD
☐ ADD
☐ ADHD

☐ 14 Autism Spectrum Disorder
☐ 15 Asperger's Syndrome

How do the difficulties affect your learning? Select as many are required:

☐ Spelling
☐ Reading
☐ Grammar
☐ Concentration
☐ Recall
☐ Comprehension
☐ Fatigue

☐ Brain fog
☐ Visual disturbance
☐ Hearing difficulties
☐ Organisation of time
☐ Organisation of thought
☐ Pain when typing/writing
☐ Short effective window

☐ Focusing
☐ Articulating/putting thoughts into words
☐ Lack of motivation
☐ Anxiety
☐ Other difficulties (please specify below)

Support	Have you had any adaptations in your last place of learning?	Would any of the following be useful?
Additional support intervention		
Printed learning resources		
Increased font		
Screen overlays		
Screen reader/Manual reader/Scribe/Note taker		
Text conversion		
Interpreter (BSL)		
Adapted assessment		
Personal equipment		
Assistive technology		
Personal assistant		
Study support sessions		
Easy read		
Additional assessor support		
Other adaptations		

Section B: LLDD Support Team Review

Learning or support need / disability / health condition

Impact on the learner

Adjustments required for teaching, learning and assessment

Declaration from LLDD Support Team that the above are required for the learner.

LLDD Support: Name		Date	Click or tap to enter a date.

Appendix 3 – progress record

Section C: Plan and review of monthly additional learning support

Learner name		Month	

Action plan *(include targets to be completed before next review)*

Action plan review
What intervention/support was provided in month?
What has gone well?
What hasn't gone well?
Detail any additional support needs identified and strategies to support **Ensure Section A is reviewed and updated with any additional items and note changes below*

| Is learning support required next month? | YES ☐ | NO ☐ |
| Claim for learning support in current month? | YES ☐ | NO ☐ |

LLDD Support: Name		**Date**	Click or tap to enter a date.

Appendix 4– support request

This request form is inbuilt within the Enchant system and activated by a Contact Centre Adviser when an on programme learning support referral is made.

Details of Referral:
- Learner Name:
- Date of Birth:
- Project Name:
- Specific Learning Difficulty/Disability: [Brief Description]
- Impact on learning: [Detailed Reason]

Supporting Documentation: Attach any relevant documents, including assessments, reports, and any other pertinent information that may assist in understanding the learners support needs.

Appendix 5 – Use of AI

Assessment is your opportunity to showcase your knowledge and understanding. This will come from prior knowledge as well as the new learning that you have just undertaken. We have provided you with a starting point, the learning resources on EQUAL. We hope that you will have also used other resources to enhance your knowledge further, as well as to tailor the learning to meet your own needs. Additional resources can include, but are not limited to, websites, textbooks, journals and even AI. This section will cover the latter which we recognise, is an important tool whose capabilities we will continuously explore, as well as encourage our learners to do the same whilst developing responsible application.

AI is a relatively new tool for us to use and presents options that could help some learners to better meet the requirements of their chosen qualification. If you live with a condition which can impact your learning experience, there may be justification for the use of AI to help bridge the gaps posed by the condition and enable you to be fairly assessed for knowledge and understanding. Unfortunately, it can also be misused, we need to be mindful of this (see the Plagiarism and AI Misuse Policy).

This section aims to provide you with some guidelines for the ethical and appropriate use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in assessment in a manner that preserves academic integrity and supports your development of critical thinking and independent learning.

Maintaining the integrity of the Qualification.

- When receiving your certificate, it is acknowledgement that you have successfully completed your own work.

- Where additional sources of information are included, such as to back up the points you have made, these are clearly acknowledged and not passed off as your own work. AI needs to be acknowledged in this manner too.
- Using AI-generated content to pass off as your own work is a serious matter which can lead to complications.

Using AI responsibly.

- AI can be a useful resource for mind mapping, research, and improving your writing. However, they should be used as aids, not replacements for your own critical thinking and analysis.
- Treat AI generated text as you would any other source. Acknowledge it by referencing.
- AI can generate incorrect information. This can be dangerous in some fields, so only use it alongside other trusted information sources.

Improve learning and not just the answers...

- Assessments are designed to measure your understanding and learning progress. Relying solely on AI to complete assignments undermines the learning process.
- Use AI to support your learning, not to bypass it. For example, use AI to generate summaries of complex texts, but then work on understanding it. You must write what you understand in your own words.
- Practice critical thinking and problem-solving skills. These are essential skills that AI will not be able to help with.

Some examples of AI use

- Use AI for mind mapping, outlining, or generating initial drafts, but always revise and rewrite the content to reflect your own understanding. Ensure that you can explain every point in your submitted work if required to. Your assessor might ask further questions to verify your knowledge and understanding.
- AI can be helpful for finding relevant research papers and data but always verify that these are reliable.
- Use AI to help generate graphs or charts, but make sure you understand the data and can explain the results.
- AI code generation tools are becoming more common. You can use them to learn syntax or generate basic code snippets, but ensure you understand how the code works and can modify it as needed. Speak to your assessor if unsure of the boundaries around this.

Reasonable Adjustment

If you have a declared learning need, AI might also be permitted for use in ways that will help you to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding in a fair way which maintains the integrity of the qualification.

Some examples include:
- Text-to-speech or speech-to-text software may be useful for the completion of assignments.

- Editing and Proofreading can be used to improve the clarity of written work.
- Learners who are learning English as a second language may be permitted to use AI tools for language support, such as translation or grammar checking.
- To aid comprehension, some learners could use AI to extract key learning points from complex concepts.

Requesting Reasonable Adjustment

If you think that you might require reasonable adjustments for one or more of the assessment criteria on your course, contact your assessor via details they have supplied to you. If you are yet to be assigned a tutor, you can contact the Learner Contact Centre directly and ask to speak to one of our contact centre advisors.

Telephone: 01757600915
WhatsApp: 07429 959331
Live chat: Learner Services Support (theskillsnetwork.com)

Provide some information on the type of adjustment you require. Be as specific as you can. Where AI is part of this, provide some detail of how AI can help you, or how you intend to use it while completing your course.

Appendix 6– special consideration

Special consideration can be applied before or after an assessment, if there was a reason the Learner may have been or will be disadvantaged during the assessment. The following is set out within the Ofqual Handbook: General Conditions of Recognition, Section G: "Special Consideration could include, but is not limited to:
- an adjustment to a Learner's mark for a Learner whose performance in an assessment has been affected;
- an adjustment to the arrangements for accessing an assessment for a Learner who is not disabled, but whose ability to access the assessment has been affected by an injury or illness;
- carrying over the fee for an assessment that the Learner was unable to take to a later assessment opportunity"

Any requests for Special Considerations must be carried out in line with the relevant awarding organisations policy and processes, and must be made by a relevant staff member at The Skills Network within 5 days of the assessment taking place. For example, special consideration could apply to a learner who had temporarily experienced:
- An illness or injury
- Some other event outside of their control

Special consideration, if successful, may result in a small post-assessment adjustment to the mark of the Learner. The size of the adjustment will depend on the circumstances and reflect the difficulty faced by the Learner. All documents relating to reasonable adjustments and special considerations will be stored securely by The Skills Network and made available to the relevant awarding organisation on request.

A special consideration should not give the Learner an unfair advantage. The result must reflect the achievement in the assessment and not necessarily their potential ability. It should be noted that a

successful application of special consideration will not necessarily change a Learner's result.
All Staff and Learners should note that:

- where an assessment requires the Learner to demonstrate practical competence or in the case of qualifications that confer a Licence to Practice, it may not be possible to apply special consideration.
- in some circumstances, for example for on-demand assessments, it may be more appropriate to offer the Learner an opportunity to take the assessment at a later date.
- The Skills Network will review a request for special consideration on a case by case basis and will take the particular need of each individual Learner into consideration when making a decision to submit the request for approval to the Awarding Organisation.

Who can request a Reasonable Adjustment or Special Consideration?

1. Quality Team inc. Safeguarding Manager
2. Exams Team Leader
3. Delivery team
4. Learner Support Team/Managers/Specialists
5. A Learner undertaking a qualification

A Learner undertaking an assessment as part of a regulated qualification may wish to request reasonable adjustments or special considerations, in which case they should contact their recognised member of delivery staff. Staff may request these on behalf of Learners, or they may apply these themselves where appropriate.

For some assessment types, Staff may wish to review what reasonable adjustments or special considerations they are able to implement internally for a Learner.

How The Skills Network will deal with requests

We will acknowledge all requests within 5 working days of receipt by the Quality Team. In most cases we will be able to provide an outcome within the timescale as well, but in more complex cases which require input from experts it may take longer. We aim to have issued outcomes to all requests within 5 working days. If we are unable to respond in this time, we will provide an estimated response date.

Supporting Evidence

All reasonable adjustment or special consideration requests must be supported by evidence, which is sufficient, valid and reliable alongside the relevant form. Requests may not be accepted without appropriate supporting evidence. It is the Delivery Staff's responsibility to provide this evidence and to ensure that all applications for reasonable adjustments are based on the individual needs of the Learner.

The Delivery Staff should decide which of the following types of additional supporting evidence will best assist understanding of the Learner's situation:

- An assessment of the Learner's needs in relation to the relevant assessment, made within The Skills Network by the relevant member of staff with competence and responsibility in this area; staff include learning support staff, teaching staff, trainers, Assessors and other specialist staff.
- History of provision within The Skills Network.
- Written evidence produced by independent, authoritative specialists