

SNOWDON

The Snowdon Survey
2013 Report

TRUST

A SHARED VIEW

Acknowledgements

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Thanks to Contact Associates; strong supporters of our work who have kindly sponsored the costs of production and distribution of our report and also to Elmwood, for helping us design this document.

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We hope the report's recommendations will lead to changes that will justify the hard work and resources that have been put in to its production.

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**SNOWDON=
SUPPORT
FOR OVER
100 DISABLED
STUDENTS
EVERY YEAR**

See pages 8-10 for a few of their stories

Executive Summary

The primary ethos of the Snowdon Trust is that regardless of disability, everyone should have the opportunity to achieve their true potential.

The employment gap between disabled and able-bodied individuals is 11 times greater in those who have no higher education qualifications than those who have graduated at a degree level.

These two statements go hand-in-hand and over the past 32 years the Trust has maintained this message, helping disabled individuals to become qualified, leading to greater chances of employment, independence and equality.

The Snowdon Survey 2013

Based on both anecdotal and existing research evidence, there appeared to be a need to re-evaluate the levels of statutory funding currently available to those in Higher Education.

When the charity was established in 1981, given the pace of disability equality legislation at the time, Lord Snowdon anticipated that by the year 2000, such support would be deemed superfluous. Although today the majority of disabled students do receive ample statutory funding, each year the Trust processes more and more applications from those whose level of disability means that the level of statutory support available is insufficient for their needs.

Evidently, the questions of who and why need to be answered, with regard to this active discrimination of access to education - something that should be available to all, as well as what should be done about it.

In order to do this, the Snowdon Survey 2013 has included:

- A review and comparison of existing data including both national and Snowdon statistics from the last five years.
- Relevant inquiries of other sources including the Student Loans Company and available Government data put into context.
- The design and distribution of questionnaires to disability officers and disabled students.
- The subsequent analysis and interpretation of the questionnaire findings using both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

**IT SEEMS
DISABLED
PEOPLE NEED
TO BE BETTER
QUALIFIED TO
GET THE SAME
EMPLOYMENT
OPPORTUNITY**

The Key Issues

1. Those individuals most severely affected by their disability, typically those with visual, hearing or mobility impairments, often have to 'make do' with far less financial support than they require.
2. The financial shortfall experienced by disabled students whilst at university is often as a result of high human support costs, which are an essential requirement for the most severely disabled while studying at this level. The Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) currently available is not sufficient to cover the costs of those who require a large amount of human support. Currently the maximum postgraduate DSA would fund only one hour a day of sign language support for a hearing impaired student.
3. Postgraduate disabled students are currently five times more likely to require extra funding from charities such as the Snowdon Trust, given that the statutory funding available is much lower than for undergraduates.
4. For both undergraduates and postgraduates, the most likely cause of financial deficit is that the maximum DSA available to them is not enough to cover all of their disability related study needs.

Our Recommendations

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are being made:

1. Ideally, the upper limit of the DSA available for postgraduates and undergraduates should be removed, which would eliminate the current discrimination of the most severely disabled who require the greatest financial support. We have to ask why, if a student has their additional disability-related needs individually assessed, the necessary adjustments identified are not then made available.

We have seen too many examples of students being accepted onto a course, only then to find that they will be charged £3000+ per year for essential carer's accommodation, or that they cannot easily access a large campus without additional mobility equipment.
2. At the very least, the level of postgraduate DSA should equal the amounts available to undergraduates. If there has to be a cap on maximum amounts available under DSA, then there is still no valid reason for postgraduate DSA being less than that of undergraduates. If anything, the needs of postgraduates are greater.
3. Provision for other essential access requirements, such as mobility equipment or funding for adapted or carer's accommodation, must also be made available (in a simple and timely manner).
4. The DSA assessment process and follow-up activity needs to be reviewed. More information and support should be provided to the student and their family. The assessment process needs to focus objectively on the needs of the individual, rather than being linked to a subjective view of their disability. Student experiences of the DSA assessment process vary greatly, as does the quality of the assessments that we see.
5. Additional ways of helping disabled postgraduates with fee funding should be explored, since they are often less able to find or undertake suitable part-time employment to fund themselves through a postgraduate course, and anecdotal evidence suggests they find it harder to obtain commercial career development loans. Difficulty in funding postgraduate fees is a major issue amongst the most severely disabled yet academically capable students.

**ARBITRARY
CAPS ON
SUPPORT
LEVELS SIMPLY
DISCRIMINATE
AGAINST THOSE
WITH THE
GREATEST NEED**

Chris's story

Chris Firmin is studying a PhD in Clinical Psychology at Bath University, specialising in obsessive-compulsive disorder and other anxiety disorders.

His depth of knowledge and the quality of his research have impressed his supervisor who has "no doubts that he will excel".

Because he has athetoid cerebral palsy, Chris cannot use his hands to write, or use a keyboard. At lower levels of study, he used his nose to type and to operate a mouse, but it is far too slow and painful for him to work that way with the volume of work that he has to complete at such an advanced level of study. So he needs a great deal of human support to take notes and record his work.

When he moved from undergraduate to postgraduate study, the statutory funding available to him fell by more than 50%. Why? Because of an arbitrary cap placed on statutory study support for disabled postgraduates for which there is no rationale. Chris recently had an opportunity to meet Esther McVey, the Minister for Disabled People, at the House of Commons. He was able to explain directly how the current DSA limits unfairly discriminate against people like him. We hope she listened and will support our proposal to improve such funding.



"Due to my Cerebral Palsy I struggle to do any of the typing or physical aspects of the course, so I need an assistant for up to nine hours a day, five days a week. Unfortunately, because I am a postgraduate, the disabled students allowance will only pay for about four months of my assistant's salary. I did not choose to be born with a disability, and I definitely will not allow it to prevent me from having a successful career.

It is unfortunate that DSA funding drops so massively when you progress from undergraduate to postgraduate education. Without the help of the Snowdon Trust, I may have had to end my education".

Chris Firmin

**"THE
POSTGRADUATE
DSA CAP IS LESS
THAN HALF
THE AMOUNT
AVAILABLE TO
UNDERGRADUATES"**

Lilli's story

Lilli Risner is studying a part-time BSc in Psychology at Birkbeck, University of London. She wants to become a clinical psychologist and support deaf people with mental health needs. She was offered one of a limited number of places on an accelerated pathway through the first year of the programme and is described as "one of the strongest candidates we have had on this challenging pathway".



Lilli has been profoundly deaf since birth. Hearing aids make no difference at all due to the rare nature of her deafness. So she needs British Sign Language (BSL) and note taker support at university. The cost of these adjustments for her study needs considerably exceeds the limited statutory funding available through her Disabled Students Allowance. Without additional help from Snowdon Trust and the university, she would simply have to "make do" with less help and risk not achieving her dream.

Lilli has always been interested in psychology. Her mother is a psychotherapist and she recalls many heated discussions about latest research in mental health as she grew up. After working at Sense with deaf-blind adults who had mental health issues, she resolved to become a clinical psychologist. This resolve strengthened further after working as an interpreter (BSL to written English) where she specialised in working at therapy appointments and case conferences with clients who have mental health and other issues.

Thomas's story

Thomas Blumire is studying a BA Hons in Photography at the University for the Creative Arts, Farnham. Before that, he was Head Boy at Treloar School.



Highly creative, photography and music are his passions. Thomas has received an award for Exceptional Ability in Music Composition but he has chosen to pursue a career in photography. He has had photographs exhibited as part of a Saatchi gallery scheme through his school. Most of his photographs are inspired by the beauty of the natural world and he loves to use his creative skills to share what he enjoys. He says "Part of my creativeness comes from using my disability as an advantage, for example, the height of my wheelchair allows me to see things from a different angle compared with those around me. Photography liberates me and breaks down barriers".

Thomas has Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. As a consequence, he requires 24-hour support for all his basic needs in addition to extra study support. Clearly, he needs an extra room on campus for his carer, but the Disabled Students Allowance does not cover accommodation/care costs. Thomas's care package is funded by the Surrey Continuing Care team but they do not consider paying for a carer's room as part of their provision. Without the funding for this room, Thomas would be unable to pursue his career plans and he is only able to do so because of funding provided by Snowdon Trust.

DISABLED STUDENTS ALLOWANCES EXCLUDE THE ADDITIONAL CARE, MOBILITY AND ACCOMMODATION COSTS THAT ARE NEEDED TO GO TO UNIVERSITY

WE SET UP OUR CHARITY IN 1981 WITH THE AIM OF BEING SUPERFLUOUS BY THE YEAR 2000

Part 1 - Introduction Background to the Snowdon Trust

The Snowdon Trust (previously the Snowdon Award Scheme) was established in 1981 by Lord Snowdon. He had a strong personal interest in disability equality issues and in the mid-1970s had chaired a major cross-government review into how better to integrate disabled people into society.

His ground-breaking report which was published in 1976 set the ball rolling for an adjustment in attitudes towards disabled people, promoting the belief that they should have an increased ownership of their own lives and decisions, along with equal opportunities and rights.



The Rt Hon The Earl of Snowdon GCVO

This work had highlighted the correlation between levels of post-16 qualifications and socio-economic integration, and it laid the foundations for the Snowdon Trust's primary ethos: that regardless of disability, everyone should have the opportunity to achieve their true potential. The trust has the intention of increasing the levels of support available and therefore bridging the inequality gap between able bodied and disabled individuals in both further and higher education. For the last 32 years this sentiment has prevailed and over this time, the Snowdon Trust has supported over 2000 disabled students with grants totalling more than £2.5 million.

Grants ranging from £250 to £2500 are made to individuals in further and higher education with physical or sensory impairments to help them with their additional disability-related costs, where statutory funding is either unavailable or insufficient.

Today, our grants mainly cover:

- Those whose needs exceed the maximum allowance available to them, for example deaf students requiring BSL translators or visually-impaired students with high equipment costs.
- Items not covered by DSA, for example mobility equipment or carer's accommodation.
- Those who are not eligible for DSA, such as overseas students or those whose courses do not qualify.

Background to this research

The Snowdon Trust accepts applications from students with disabilities in further education, on vocational courses and in higher education at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Although the total number of students becomes smaller as one progresses higher up the educational ladder, the volume of Snowdon applicants seems to have been skewed the other way, with the highest volume of applicants being those in postgraduate education and the lowest in further education. These huge inconsistencies between national statistics and Snowdon data suggested greater shortfalls in funding and less equality of access at the top levels of education.

Recent research assessing analogous themes has highlighted similar issues concerning disability funding deficits within higher education. For example, University challenge: the Trailblazers' education report (Muscular Dystrophy Campaign, 2009) focused on inequality issues for disabled students within the university environment.

After data was collected from a number of sources including first-hand experiences, university representatives and national statistics, it was recommended that an increase in guidance and awareness is required by students both before and during their studies.

Furthermore, an increase in funding and provisions to cover all disability related needs should be administered by universities and higher local and national bodies. Removing barriers, promoting independence, a report by the All Party Parliamentary Group for Young Disabled People (2012) stressed a number of topics of concern with regard to equal rights and opportunities for the disabled. Evidence was collated from interviews with industry experts, as well as individuals who have disabilities themselves. Within the higher education component of this report, it was recommended that inequalities could be minimised through collaborative input from the universities themselves, local authorities and the government. In particular it sought heightened awareness of DSA and an increase in the levels of the DSA available for postgraduates if university life is to truly be accessible to all.

Because of our own observations and the evidence from supplementary research, this survey has, as its main focus, funding deficits for disabled students in higher education.

“There aren’t many sources of finance and support for the needs of disabled students. The few organisations which offer help are often not as responsive as might be expected. They impose rules and restrictions which are so stringent that many disabled students are excluded from the help that is offered. At the start of my postgraduate study, I applied to more than thirty institutions for assistance. The only positive result came from the Snowdon Trust. I could not have reached my final year without help from the Trust. It leads the field in meeting the needs of disabled people and in philanthropy.”

Quote from survey responder

Statutory support available for higher education students

All students who wish to apply for statutory funding must first apply to Student Finance England (SFE), where they can receive up to £9000 for fees and up to £7675 for living costs. Additional maintenance grants of up to £3250 are available, dependent on household income. Students starting a second higher education course, whether re-training or at postgraduate level, do not qualify for loans from SFE. (This also impacts people who need to re-train to find suitable employment following the onset of a disability).

Before beginning their course, students with disabilities can then apply for Disabled Students Allowance (DSA). This allowance is not means tested and is not required to be repaid; the current rates for undergraduates are shown in Table 1.

Table 1- Comparison of Disabled Students Allowances

Type of Student	Specialist equipment allowance	Non-medical helper allowance	General allowance	Travel allowance
Full-time undergraduate	Up to £5,161 for the whole course	Up to £20,520 a year	Up to £1,724 a year	Reasonable additional costs (not capped)
Part-time undergraduate	Up to £5,161 for the whole course	Up to £15,390 a year	Up to £1,293 a year	Reasonable additional costs (not capped)
Postgraduate	Max £10,260 p.a. for everything			

Once an individual has accepted their place at a university and if they are in financial difficulties they can apply for extra help from the establishment’s Access to Learning Fund. This is a limited pot of money made available to universities to help needy students.

However, all applications are means tested. Awards range from £100 to £3500 and priority is given to students with children, those from low income families, those who are homeless or have lived in care, mature students, final year students and those with disabilities. Since these funds are restricted and cover such a broad range of needs they are not considered an appropriate source of funds for all students with DSA shortfalls.

Part 2 – Populations of disabled students: National and Snowdon

Based on the aims of this report, students in undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) education have been considered separately.

The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) is the official organisation governing the collection, analysis and publication of statistical data regarding students in higher education. Quantitative data, collected from each higher education establishment within the UK, is freely accessible on their website www.hesa.ac.uk.

Population of disabled students in undergraduate education

As can be seen from Table 2, while the total number of students has fluctuated both up and down, the overall number of disabled students in UG education has steadily increased over the past five years.

HESA has broken this data down further in respect to the number of students in each UCAS category of disability over the past five years. As can be seen from Table 3, students with a specific learning difficulty (for example dyslexia), take prominence.

Table 2- Number and percentage of students with disabilities in undergraduate education

Disability	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
No disability (Number)	654425	689670	695265	645275	629645
No disability (%)	92.73	92.60	92.59	91.48	90.74
All disabilities (Number)	51275	55127	55630	60110	64250
All disabilities (%)	7.27	7.40	7.41	8.52	9.26
Total	705700	744797	750895	705385	693895

Table 3- Percentage of students with each type of disability in undergraduate education

Disability	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
No disability (Number)	80.22	80.86	84.31	91.48	90.74
A specific learning difficulty	3.20	3.33	3.49	3.89	4.39
Blind/partially sighted	0.16	0.17	0.16	0.13	0.14
Deaf/hearing impairment	0.34	0.36	0.33	0.28	0.27
Wheelchair user/mobility difficulties	0.29	0.27	0.27	0.31	0.32
Autistic spectrum disorder	0.09	0.10	0.14	0.19	0.25
Mental health difficulties	0.46	0.48	0.53	0.72	0.88
An unseen disability	1.10	1.11	1.05	0.92	0.95
Multiple disabilities	0.72	0.74	0.69	0.73	0.77
Other disability	0.89	0.85	0.74	1.36	1.29
Not known	12.53	11.73	8.28	0.00	0.00
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Population of disabled students in postgraduate education

As can be seen from Table 4, when assessing the overall number of disabled students in PG education, a similar trend occurs to that in UG education. The percentage of disabled students has steadily increased over the last five years, whereas the total number of students has fluctuated.

Once these figures are compared with those of UGs, a number of assumptions can be made. For example, in both UG and PG the percentage of disabled students has grown over the last five years, which on the surface seems a positive shift. This perceived rise could however be due to an increase in the diagnosis of certain disorders such as specific learning disorders like dyslexia.

Furthermore, it can be observed that the percentage of disabled students in PG education does not equal that of UGs as it hypothetically should. This may be because disabled individuals considering the move to PG education are put off by the notion of funding their fees and expenses as well as the decreased levels of DSA available. Alternatively, when considering that UGs today will be the PGs of the future, the figures from UGs today may only be comparable with figures from PGs in say, two years' time (as can be seen from comparing 2010 UGs with 2012 PGs).

When considering the number of students with each type of disability, trends remain comparable to those found in UGs. As can be seen from Table 5, students with specific learning difficulties are of greatest occurrence.

Table 4- Number and percentage of students with disabilities in postgraduate education

Disability	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
No disability (Number)	167670	181550	181550	186755	170460
No disability (%)	93.72	93.49	93.21	92.97	92.08
All disabilities (Number)	11235	12640	14140	14120	14660
All disabilities (%)	6.28	6.51	6.79	7.03	7.92
Total	178905	194190	208170	200875	185120

Table 5- Percentage of students with each type of disability in postgraduate education

Disability	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
No disability (Number)	88.51	88.91	89.75	92.97	92.08
A specific learning difficulty	2.74	2.89	3.11	3.32	3.85
Blind/partially sighted	0.15	0.13	0.14	0.13	0.16
Deaf/hearing impairment	0.35	0.38	0.35	0.30	0.31
Wheelchair user/mobility difficulties	0.28	0.26	0.27	0.31	0.36
Autistic spectrum disorder	0.03	0.05	0.07	0.09	0.12
Mental health difficulties	0.33	0.35	0.39	0.50	0.67
An unseen disability	1.25	1.40	1.35	0.98	1.09
Multiple disabilities	0.35	0.38	0.38	0.48	0.47
Other disability	0.78	0.66	0.73	0.92	0.89
Not known	5.22	4.59	3.47	0.00	0.00
Total	100	100	100	100	100

“WHAT IS THE RATIONALE BEHIND THE POSTGRADUATE CAP?”

Valerie Kiln-Barfoot, disabled student

“THERE DOESN'T APPEAR TO BE ONE.”

Ed Lester, Chief Executive, the Student Loans Company

The above quote is an extract from a November 2012 report
 “Removing Barriers, Promoting Independence”
 by the All Party Parliamentary Group for Young Disabled People

Snowdon Trust students

The Snowdon Trust has provided financial support to over 450 disabled students throughout the past five years, with 360 of these studying at a higher education level.

These students would all have benefited from the increased levels of DSA brought about in 2008 following the previous Snowdon Survey in 2006 and therefore reflect the current financial situation for disabled students.

Level of study

When comparing Snowdon Trust data with national statistics, the figures suggest there was a disproportionate number of PG students receiving awards (Tables 6 and 7 and Graph 1).

While only 19% of higher education students with disabilities are PGs, 57% of Snowdon awardees were studying at a PG level, suggesting that a greater degree of financial shortfall is experienced by disabled students studying at this level.

Funding through Student Finance England for fees is, however, unavailable for all PG students regardless of disability and because of this a number of the Snowdon Trust's grants for PGs go towards the cost of fees. When these grants were taken out of the equation, 49% of the remaining grants were found to have been presented to PG students, reinforcing the impression of a deficit in funding at this level (Appendix 1).

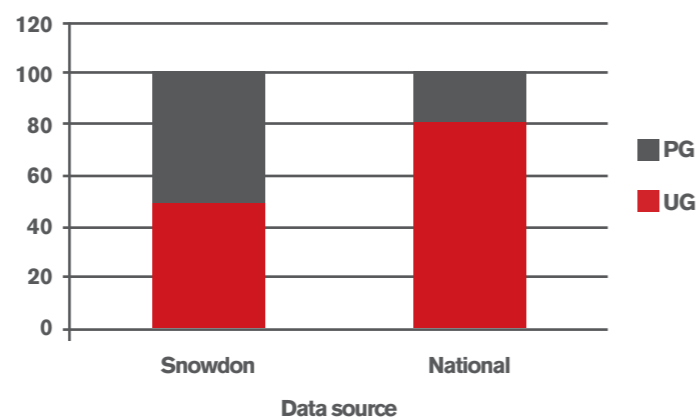
Table 6- Number and percentage of Snowdon students in undergraduate and postgraduate education

Level of study	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total	%
UG	26	26	26	35	40	153	42.86
PG	33	36	45	40	50	204	57.14
Total	59	62	71	75	90	357	100

Table 7- Number and percentage of students in undergraduate and postgraduate education with disabilities

Level of study	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total	%
UG	51275	55175	55630	60110	64250	286440	81.09
PG	11235	12640	14140	14120	14660	66795	18.91
Total	62510	67815	69770	74230	78910	353235	100

Graph 1 - Percentage of Students in UG and PG education: comparing Snowdon and National data 2008-2012



Category of disability

Students successful in receiving grants from the Snowdon Trust over the past five years were broken down by level of education and then further cross-sectioned by category of disability. These figures can be seen in Tables 8 and 9 and Graph 2, along with national statistics from the same years to allow comparisons to be made.

The Snowdon Trust rarely funds those with specific learning difficulties since statutory funding levels are usually more than adequate for their needs, so data concerning these individuals has been omitted. Based on the evidence presented, disproportionalities are observed when comparing the Snowdon Trust's data with National statistics. For example, in UGs 3.67% of all disabled students (excluding those with Learning Disabilities) are blind/partially sighted, while 16.34% of Snowdon students are placed in this category.

A similar trend occurs in those who are deaf/hearing impaired and those who are wheelchair users/have mobility difficulties across both UG and PG samples. This suggests that those who have either hearing or visual impairments, or mobility difficulties, require an increased level of financial support over and above the statutory funding that is available to them. Because of this they then seek to cover these shortfalls through additional funding provided by organisations such as the Snowdon Trust, leading to the contrast in figures observed.

Table 8- Undergraduate Snowdon students by type of disability compared to national statistics (excluding learning difficulty)

Disability	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total	% excl.LD	National Total excl.LD	National % excl.LD
A specific learning difficulty	0	0	0	0	0	0			
Blind/partially sighted	3	7	3	3	9	25	16.34	4445	3.67
Deaf/hearing impairment	2	2	4	6	7	21	13.73	9570	7.91
Wheelchair user/mobility difficulties	14	10	16	18	20	78	50.98	8265	6.83
Autistic spectrum disorder	0	0	0	0	1	1	0.65	3775	3.12
Mental health difficulties	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00	15825	13.08
An unseen disability	4	2	0	2	2	10	6.54	30480	25.19
Multiple disabilities	3	5	2	0	0	15	9.80	20895	17.27
Other disability	0	0	1	1	1	3	1.96	27740	22.93
Total	26	26	26	40	40	153	100.00	120995	100

Table 9- Postgraduate Snowdon students by type of disability compared to national statistics (excluding learning difficulty)

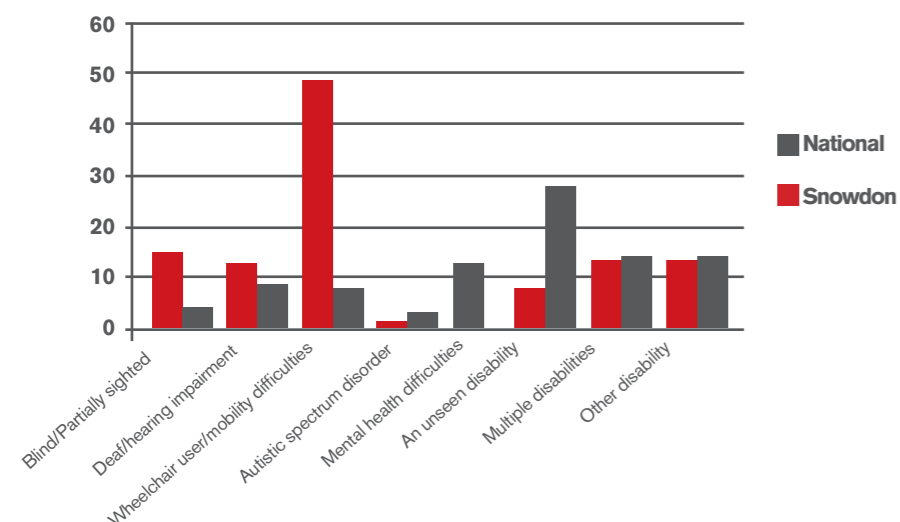
Disability	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total	% excl.LD	National Total excl.LD	National % excl.LD
A specific learning difficulty	0	0	2	0	0	2			
Blind/partially sighted	3	3	6	6	4	22	10.73	1070	3.76
Deaf/hearing impairment	3	3	7	3	7	23	11.22	2680	9.42
Wheelchair user/mobility difficulties	15	15	21	17	30	98	47.80	2205	7.75
Autistic spectrum disorder	0	0	0	0	1	1	0.49	475	1.67
Mental health difficulties	0	0	0	0	1	1	0.49	3105	10.92
An unseen disability	3	3	1	4	4	15	7.32	9735	34.22
Multiple disabilities	9	9	7	10	1	36	17.56	3125	10.99
Other disability	3	3	1	0	2	9	4.39	6050	21.27
Total	36	36	45	40	50	207	100.00	28445	100

It should be noted that, whilst this data is useful on a broad scale, it is likely to be of less value when assessing its relevance on a deeper perspective. Indistinct or blurring classifications may lead to one individual being viable for placement in a number of categories. For example, the Snowdon Trust generally categorises individuals by their main disability, whereas HESA may place those with a number of disabilities into 'multiple disabilities'. Furthermore, 'wheelchair user/mobility difficulties' covers a very broad range of disorders, including within Snowdon students: multiple forms of Cerebral Palsy, paralysis or arthritis, Muscular Dystrophy, bone damage or degeneration and Multiple Sclerosis. It would be difficult therefore to make accurate comparisons between individuals within this category based on the broad range of conditions and their related levels of need.

The fact still remains however that nearly 80% of Snowdon's grants are awarded to those who are deaf, blind or with mobility issues. Although this could be accounted for by the fact that the Snowdon Trust as a charity states that it supports individuals with either physical or sensory impairments, this data highlights the issue of funding deficits for individuals such as these, who require a large amount of specialist equipment or support. For example, 54 of the 92 grants (59%) awarded to those with hearing or visual impairments over the past five years were assigned for human support costs, including note-takers, BSL translators and interpreters. Furthermore, 23 of the 38 awards (61%) allocated for accommodation needs, including adapted or carer's accommodation were for those with mobility issues.

These figures stress the need for additional funding for the individuals who require the highest level of care, which would make university a more financially viable possibility for the most severely disabled who have already had to overcome the greatest adversity throughout their lives HESA may place those with a number of disabilities into 'multiple disabilities'

Graph 2 - Percentage of students in higher education in each UCAS category of disability: comparing Snowdon and National data 2008-2012



Type of help

While assessing the use of each Snowdon grant, when the funding was used in more than one category, multiple uses are counted as separate entities, therefore, the total number of grants does not equal the total use of awards. Within UG awardees, as the data in Table 10 suggests, the greatest shortfalls in statutory funding lie in the financing of human support, covering such essential requirements as BSL translators, note takers or library assistance.

Such support is highly costly, around £50 an hour in many cases. It is not surprising therefore that even the maximum level of DSA available is not sufficient to cover these costs as well as any additional disability related costs the individual may have.

This could account for the fact that over the past five years, nearly a quarter (24.85%) of Snowdon grants to UGs were spent in this category.

Furthermore, nearly a fifth (18.18%) of grants were used to help fund additional accommodation required for indispensable carers or personal assistants. This is a level of need that DSA does not cater for or fund, yet it is an essential requirement for some individuals while at university.

Table 10 - Use of Snowdon grants by undergraduates

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total	%
Equipment-computer	2	6	2	4	5	19	11.52
Equipment – mobility	5	3	6	4	6	24	14.55
Accommodation- additional	1	2	1	3	1	8	4.85
Accommodation – carer	4	8	6	6	6	30	18.18
Travel	4	1	3	2	6	16	9.70
Support	2	3	8	14	14	41	24.85
Fees	9	4	3	3	8	27	16.36
Total	27	27	29	36	46	165	100

Within PG awardees, as the data in Table 11 suggests, the greatest shortfalls in statutory funding lie in covering the cost of university fees, with 41% of grants being spent in this category. Student Finance England does not provide student loans to cover fees for

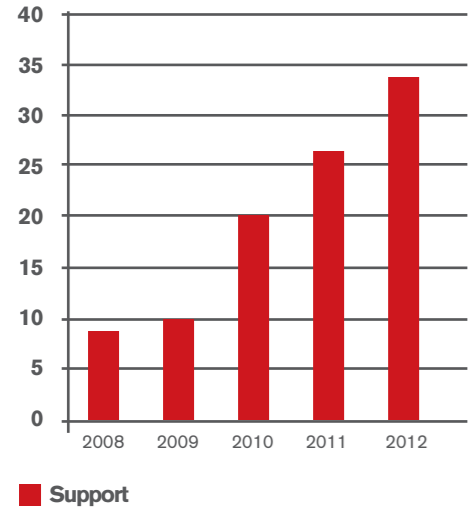
PGs, regardless of disability, accounting for the high level of financial need in this area. Once fees have been separated out, within the remaining grants nearly 40% of funding was spent on human support. As can be seen from Graph 3, the need for funding for

human support has steadily increased over the past five years, which is likely to be due to a rise in hourly rates without a proportional rise in DSA.

Table 11 - Use of Snowdon grants by postgraduates

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total	%	% Without Fees
Equipment-computer	4	4	8	4	6	26	11.61	19.70
Equipment – mobility	4	2	4	2	4	16	7.14	12.12
Accommodation- additional	3	4	2	5	6	20	8.93	15.15
Accommodation – carer	0	0	0	1	1	2	0.89	1.52
Travel	3	1	2	6	4	16	7.14	12.12
Support	6	5	11	11	19	52	23.21	39.39
Fees	16	22	21	17	16	92	41.07	
Total	36	38	48	46	56	224	100	100

Graph 3 - Uses of funding for support costs



The maximum PG DSA available is £10,260, less than half of that available to UGs and it is expected to cover all university related costs that disabled PG students may have. As the data in Tables 8 and 9 suggested, the Snowdon Trust awards a disproportionate amount of grants to the hearing, visually and mobility impaired. These individuals require a high level of support, both human and equipment based.

Considering that human support costs alone could be more than the total maximum PG DSA available, before taking into account the extra disability related accommodation, equipment or travel costs, it is not surprising that nearly 60% of our grants are awarded to PG students, with 22% of these being hearing or visually impaired and nearly 50% having mobility difficulties.

“If equipment is required, there is often not enough funding available for non-medical helper support (mentoring, note taking and study skills) or travel. This is particularly problematic for deaf BSL users, who will need note takers and interpreters, and those with multiple disabilities, say dyslexia, where they need study skills, and a disability that requires them to use a note taker or mentor, or use taxis.”

Quote from survey responder

“They (DSA levels) have been frozen for several years. Increasingly human support is now managed by 3rd party providers and inevitably where a commercial agency is involved the costs have gone up - an unintended but foreseeable consequence is that overall costs for non-medical helper support have risen exponentially.”

Quote from survey responder

Part 3 – Questionnaire findings and additional information

Survey of university disability officers

An electronic version of the Snowdon Survey for disability officers (DOQ: Appendix 2) was sent out via a list of National Association of Disability Practitioners (NADP) members, reaching disability officers in the majority of universities across the UK.

Due to low return rates additional e-mails were sent to disability officers at 66 UK universities directly. After ample time had been given for responses, 75 participants had begun the survey with a completion figure of 35 (46.7%).

Support disability officers provide:

The data suggests that those with mental health difficulties require the greatest amount of support of any sort from disability officers, with 20.8% of participants highlighting this category as needing the highest level of support. Those with learning disabilities were classed as needing the second most support with 19.5% of responses.

When text analysis was done on the type of support these categories required, both academic and emotional support stood out as the greatest need.

Perceived shortfalls in funding:

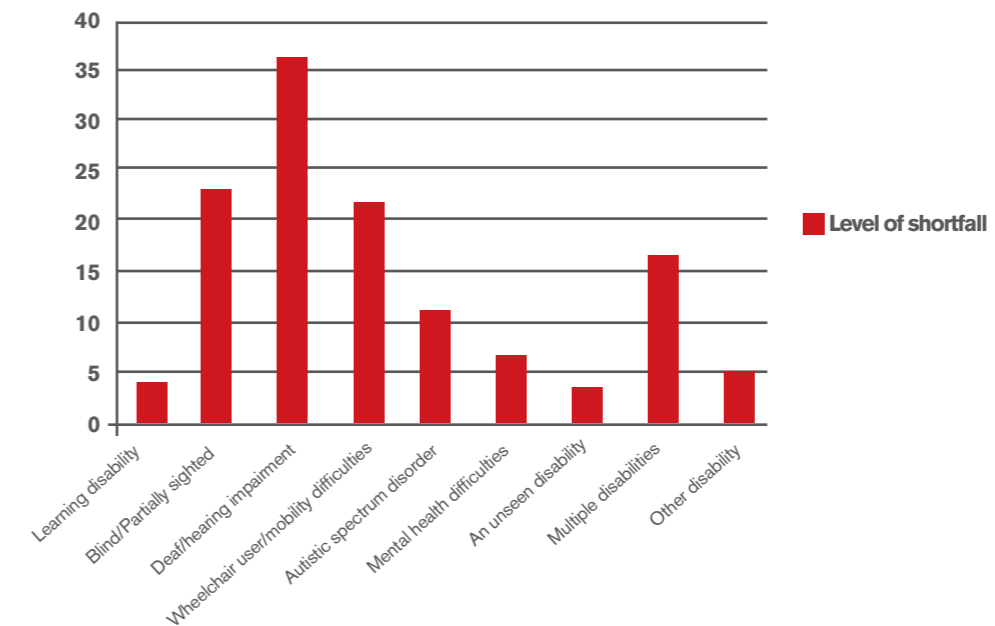
The data indicated that the greatest level of financial shortfall was found in the hearing impaired. The visually impaired had the second highest and the mobility impaired came a close third (Graph 4).

In all three of these categories, the financing of human support costs was highlighted as the primary origin of these deficits, with 58.3% of all responses being placed in this category of need.

“The most expensive shortfall is for deaf students who rely on a combination of interpreters, note takers and English language support. Another common difficulty is with postgrad students who need travel expenses on top of e.g. equipment and human support. The DSA simply doesn’t cover this. Many postgrad students on full-time courses also struggle to get their support covered especially when equipment needs replacing in addition to needing human support.”

Quote from survey responder

Graph 4 - Level of shortfall in the UCAS categories of disability

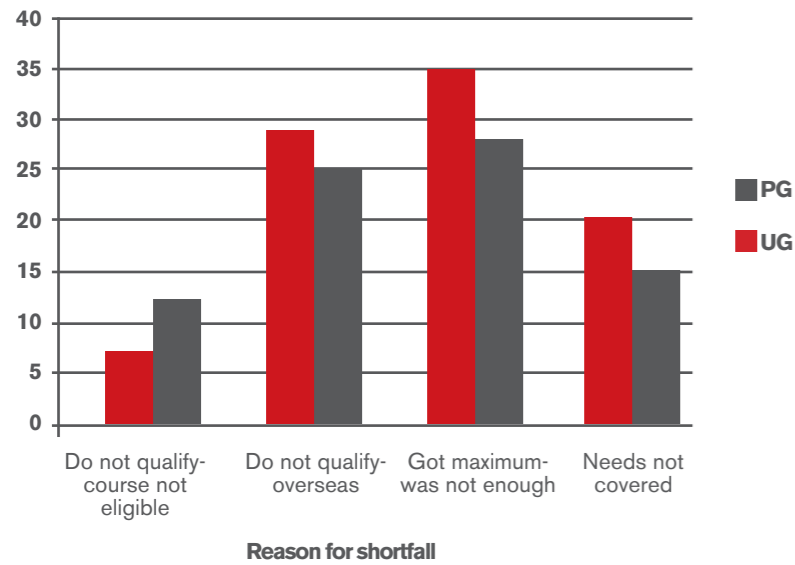


Shortfalls for UGs:

Across the 33 universities that answered the question regarding how many UG disabled students had funding needs exceeding the level of DSA that was available to them, eight said that they did not know, and 25 provided a figure overall. These figures ranged between one and 200, with an average of 20 UG students per university experiencing funding deficits. The maximum amount of financial shortfall ranged between £1,500 and £50,000, with an average maximum shortfall of £13,195 across the 23 universities that answered this question. Clearly we were asking for a maximum figure of funding deficits, which in many cases would be inclusive of overseas students who are not eligible for DSA. Most students, as indicated by following disabled student responses, would not need anywhere near this figure, with only a tiny proportion requiring more.

The most common reason for these shortfalls was perceived as being that the maximum DSA available to the student was not enough to cover their needs (Graph 5). The financing of human support was by far the most common reason for these shortfalls in UGs, with the financing of computer related equipment being the secondary cause (Graph 6).

Graph 5 - Reasons for financial shortfalls in UG and PG



“Undergraduate DSA total is too low for non-medical helpers for blind students needing a high level of transcription or deaf students needing interpreters, or students with physical impairments needing full-time assistance.”

Quote from survey responder

“Discretionary funding should be available for those with very high non-medical helper cost (e.g. sensory impaired students requiring high levels of specialist assistance).”

Quote from survey responder

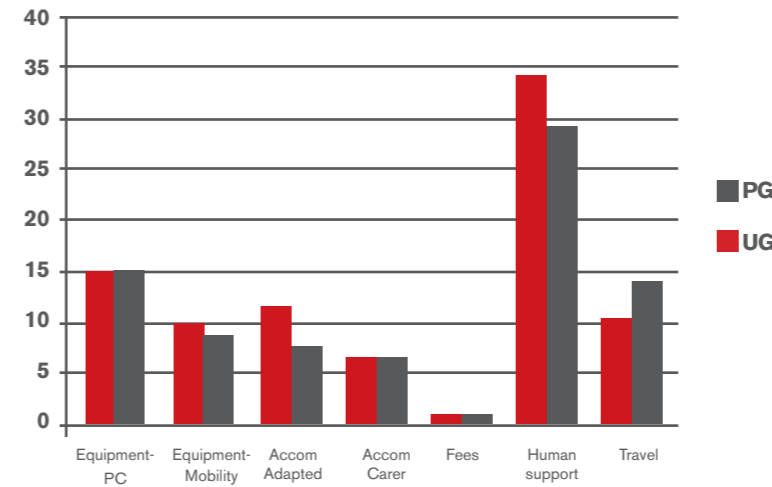
Shortfalls for PGs:

Across the 29 universities that answered the question regarding how many PG disabled students had funding needs exceeding the level of DSA that was available to them, four responded that they did not know, therefore 25 provided a figure overall. These figures ranged between one and 350, with an average of 29 PG students per university experiencing funding deficits. The maximum amount of financial shortfall in PGs ranged between £1,500 and £60,000, with an average maximum shortfall of £16,075 across the 20 universities which answered the question.

These figures highlight the inadequacy of the existing levels of PG DSA based on the fact that although there are four times more disabled students in UG education, on average there seem to be a third more PG disabled students per university with funding deficits. Furthermore, this data suggests that on average, PG students actually require a greater amount of funding than UG (maximum of £16,075 versus £13,195 respectively), which puts into question the current levels of DSA available. Again these figures may be skewed through the inclusion of overseas students and their associated deficits due to a lack of DSA funding.

With UGs the most common reason for these shortfalls was perceived as being that the maximum DSA available to the student was not enough to cover their needs, with the student not qualifying for DSA due to being an overseas student being a secondary reason (Graph 5). Again, the financing of human support was found to be the most common reason for these shortfalls in PGs and the financing of computer based equipment highlighted as a secondary cause (Graph 6).

Graph 6 - Areas of financial shortfall in UG and PG



“The PG allowance of £10,000 is very often unworkable, as students will have similar non-medical helper needs to their undergraduate course, which would be funded up to £20,500p/a. The PG allowance also does not take into account that some PG students do not have equipment from an UG course, and will need things bought for the first time.”

Quote from survey responder

“The DSA support provision should be the same for both undergraduate and postgraduate. The limit of the non-medical helper component is about right at undergraduate level, but too small at postgraduate level.”

Quote from survey responder

Responses from disabled students

Survey of past Snowdon students

An electronic version of the Snowdon Survey for past students (PSSQ: Appendix 3) was sent out to all individuals who had received a grant from the charity over the past five years. 315 students were contacted via their last known e-mail address and after ample time had been given for responses to be made, 87 participants had completed the survey, giving a response rate of 27.6%.

Demographic:

Of those who replied, the greatest response (31.8%) came from those who classed themselves as having wheelchair or mobility difficulties (Graph 7) and those who had most recently studied at a PG level (58.9%) (Graph 8). These results are analogous to the existing Snowdon data regarding recipients of grants over the past five years, indicating the validity of the sample. 56.1% of participants were still studying at the time of completion, while 23.5% were in paid or voluntary, full or part time employment and the remaining 20.4% were unemployed. 35.5% of participants had to take time out of their studies because of disability related issues. Disruption ranged from extensions on project deadlines, to having to discontinue studying because they were not allowed back on a course after absences due to health. The implications of such disruptions to study will be discussed in a subsequent section.

DSA:

The majority of participants (67.8%) applied for and received DSA. Of those who did not, the most common reason was that their course was not eligible (Graph 9).

In those who did receive DSA, 27.7% of Snowdon grants went towards the cost of fees and 23.8% towards human support. Over half (52.2%) of Snowdon awardees originally applied because they knew their needs were not eligible for DSA, made up, for example, by those from overseas or requiring equipment or accommodation not covered by DSA. The remaining 47.7% knew that their needs would exceed the maximum DSA that would be available to them; not surprisingly 77.3% of those applying for help with human support were in this category.

Shortfalls:

Although 70.6% of participants received some funding additional to their DSA and/or Snowdon grant (Graph 10), the majority of individuals found they still had shortfalls in their finances (Graph 11), these being 64.2% of PG and 46.2% of UG. The financing of fees was the main cause of these shortfalls, while disability related travel expenses were the secondary source (Graph 12). The approximate value of these shortfalls ranged between £200 and £25,000, with an average value of £2814.10 across the 42 respondents to this question. In UG these shortfalls averaged at £2755 and in PG they averaged at £2893.82, meaning there is an average of £138.82 difference in shortfall between UG and PG.

“I was not eligible because I already had a postgraduate qualification, even though my disability occurred AFTER my education and working in the field was no longer possible, appropriate nor desirable for me as a physically disabled person”

Quote from survey responder

“I had my needs assessment on 22nd November 2012 and I have yet to receive anything. Had I received my DSA in a timely manner I may have been able to continue my course without suspending.”

Quote from survey responder

Survey of disabled university students (Non-Snowdon students)

An electronic version of the Snowdon Survey for disabled students (DSQ: Appendix 4) was sent out via a number of routes. The organisations 'Trailblazers' and the NUS agreed to promote the survey on their website, Twitter and Facebook pages. Additional e-mails were also sent to a number of disability officers asking for the questionnaire to be passed on to the students whom they support. Once ample time had been given for responses to be made, 119 participants had completed the survey.

Demographics:

Of those who replied, the greatest response (40%) came from those who classed themselves as having learning difficulties (Graph 7) and those who had most recently studied at an UG level (83.1%) (Graph 8). This data is in line with existing national statistics and therefore suggests the participants who responded were an ecologically valid sample. 88.5% were still studying at the time of completion, while 8% were in paid or voluntary, full- or part-time employment and the remaining 3.5% were unemployed. 28.7% of participants had to take time out of their studies because of disability related issues. Time out ranged from a two week pause in studies because of mental health issues, to having to repeat a whole year on a part-time basis because of a deterioration in their health.

Such disruption or elongation of studies would be likely to have financial consequences on the student, through no fault of their own. There should, therefore, be a level of understanding integrated into the universities themselves as well as relevant funding agencies, so that this disability related expense is not allowed to affect the financial and academic future of the students affected.

DSA and shortfalls:

The majority of participants (63.9%) applied for and received DSA. Of those who did not, the most common reason was that they felt it was unneeded at the time (Graph 9). Although 56.5% of participants received some funding additional to their DSA, mostly through friends and family (Graph 10) 35% of PG and 23.5% of UG found they still had shortfalls in their finances (Graph 11). The financing of travel expenses was the main cause of these shortfalls, while paying for human support and computer based equipment were equal as secondary causes (Graph 12). The approximate value of these shortfalls ranged between £40 and £4,800, with an average of £1672 across the 16 respondents to this question.

Information and support provided:

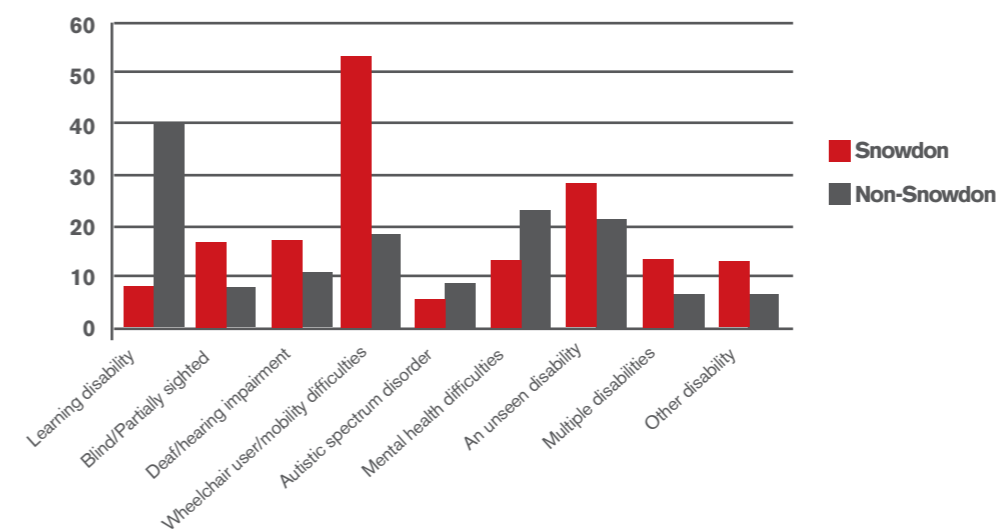
Levels of satisfaction with the amount of advice received regarding the statutory support that is available ranged between one and ten out of ten, with an average of 5.19 across the 115 respondents to this question. The individual's prospective university was rated as the main source of this information and advice (66.3%).

13.7% of participants received a personal care package provided by their local authority, with 78.6% of these individuals classing themselves as having mobility related issues.

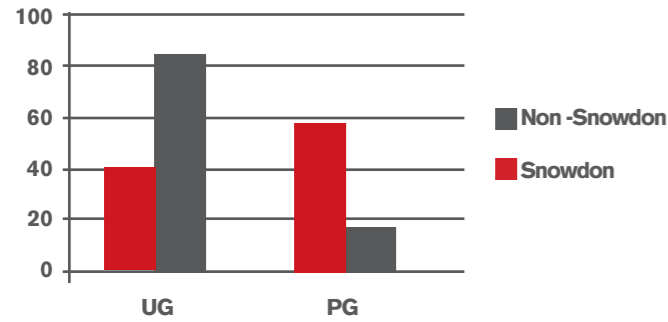
Summary and comparison of questionnaire results

The proportionally high response rate to the PSSQ from those who have mobility difficulties suggests that these students, although relatively uncommon in the general population of disabled students, have a greater level of support need and therefore require a high degree of financial assistance while at university (Graph 7). Furthermore, the disproportionality between UG and PG responses comparing the PSSQ to the DSQ (Graph 8) indicates a high level of funding need for students in the PG sector.UG and PG.

Graph 7- UCAS categories of respondents



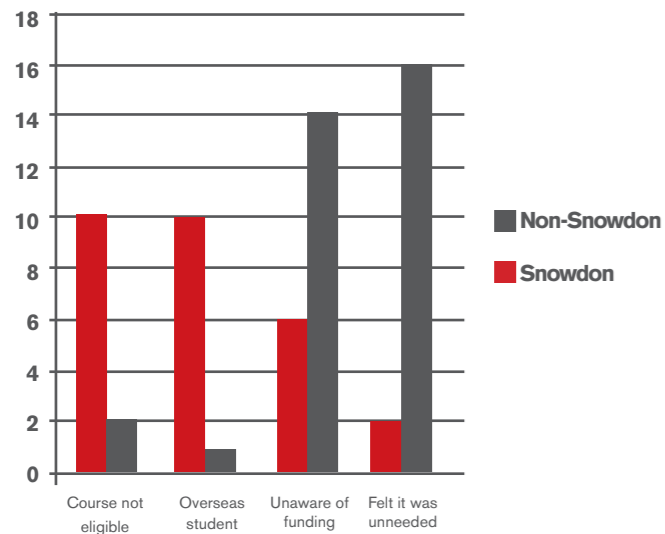
Graph 8 - Level of study



Comparable responses were received from both Snowdon and non-Snowdon students regarding whether they received DSA (68.1% and 63.9% respectively). Of those who did not, however, disparities occurred when comparing the Snowdon and non-Snowdon students.

The reasons for Snowdon students not to receive DSA were ones generally out of their control, i.e., eligibility, whereas non-Snowdon students generally were either unaware of DSA or felt it unnecessary (Graph 9). This could suggest that less stringent controls are needed regarding who is eligible for DSA or to where these eligibilities lie so that alternative financial preparations can be arranged in ample time.

Graph 9 - Reason for not receiving DSA



Within non-Snowdon students, over half didn't receive additional financial support from any source other than DSA and of those who did over a third got this from their family or friends. Past Snowdon students however received funding additional to their DSA and/or Snowdon grant from a range of sources indicating that those students who have to apply for charitable grants do so because they have a far greater level of financial need than is covered by DSA (Graph 10).

This is reinforced by the fact that 83.3% of the hearing and visually impaired respondents to the PSSQ and 68% of the mobility impaired participants in the DSQ received supplementary funding from an additional source.

As we know, these students require a large amount of human support, which comes at great expense.

“The DSA process was not only hugely disappointing and enormously frustrating, but debilitating and discriminatory. I have lived in this country since 1989 and worked full-time until no longer able to cope through disability. I paid my taxes and saved like I should have, but when I needed help the most there was none. I was excluded from all sources of statutory help.”

Quote from survey responder

“Each disability is a unique set of circumstances and has unique personal consequences; disability related support needs to be more responsive to individual needs, not subject to stereotyping and categorising in structured tick boxes.”

Quote from survey responder

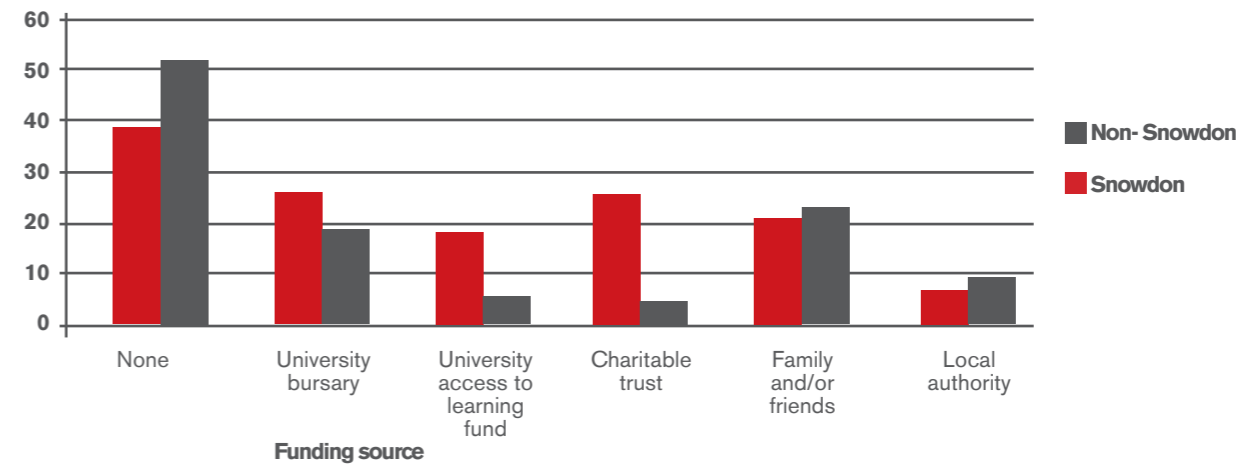
“They (DSA) should make it easier by setting up accounts with local tax firms and suppliers so students don't have to find the money in advance and then wait months for reimbursement.”

Quote from survey responder

“I was originally told I would have DSA funding for travel and was reimbursed for my expenses, but student finance changed this and now I don't receive any help. This has severely impacted my studies as I can't always afford to go in.”

Quote from survey responder

Graph 10 - Additional sources of financial support

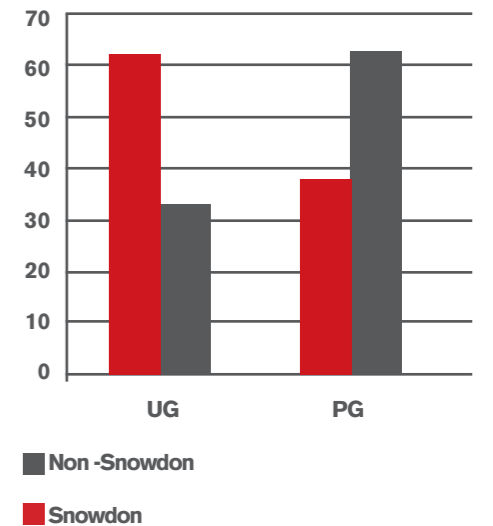


An interesting spread of data occurred when assessing where these shortfalls lie in both Snowdon and non-Snowdon students. All PG students, regardless of disability, are supposed to be 'self-funding' and therefore cover their fee costs through employment or other means. This may not however always be a viable source of income for disabled students who may already be struggling with university work load because of disability related issues, or may not be physically able to fulfil the requirements of typical part-time roles (for example waitressing or bar work). It is not surprising therefore that the primary area of shortfall in Snowdon students was with fees, considering 58.9% of our students were studying at a PG level where student loans for fees cannot be obtained.

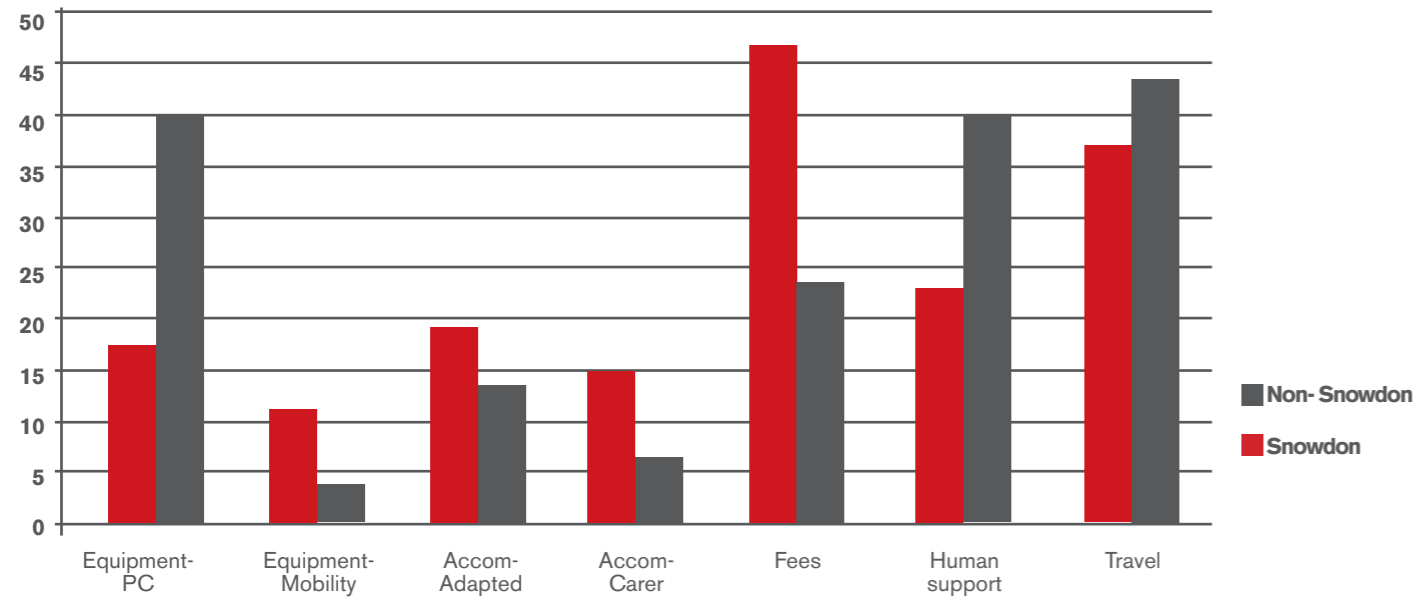
After fees, disability related travel expenses were the greatest area of shortfall in Snowdon students, as well as being the primary area of shortfall in non-Snowdon students (Graph 12). Considering this is the only area of DSA without a cap, this data suggests that there may be some administrative or communication based error within the agencies who should be reimbursing these expenses, causing individuals to either not know when or how to claim expenses, or to not receive payment in an appropriate time-scale.

Furthermore, even though 70.6% of Snowdon students received some sort of additional funding, over 60% of them still experienced financial shortfalls after all the funding they received, as compared to 35.7% of non-Snowdon students (Graph 11). This again suggests that existing support levels are not enough to cover the high costs incurred by severely disabled students while at university, who after receiving additional support from a number of sources still find they fall short financially. Moreover, 29.2% of all UG compared to 56.2% of all PG experienced financial shortfalls while at university, adding further merit to the assertion that current PG support levels are insufficient.

Graph 11 - Whether student experienced shortfalls after all of the funding they received



Graph 12 -Where shortfalls remain in students after all the funding they received



Additional data

Student Loans Company

Statistics regarding the number of DSAs allocated in England, Wales and Northern Ireland throughout the academic year 2010/11 are freely available on the Student Loans Company (SLC) website (www.slc.co.uk). The data (Table 12) indicated that the average expenditure per undergraduate student, which includes the multiple allowances available to them, was £2,216 as opposed to the £2,359 on average spent by postgraduates.

These official statistics suggest the heightened financial need of postgraduate students as compared to undergraduates. This puts into question the reasoning behind the lowered rates of funding in this area and provides additional justification for an augmentation of the statutory finding currently available for postgraduates.

Table 12- Statistics regarding DSA expenditure in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2010/11)

Level of study	Total expenditure (£m)	No. Students in receipt of DSAs	Average expenditure per student (£)
All	125.2	56,250	2,226
UG	116	52,350	2,216
PG	9.2	3,900	2,359

Source: Student Loans Company

“THE AWARD YOU PROVIDED HAD GIVEN ME MY LIFE BACK. THANK YOU.”

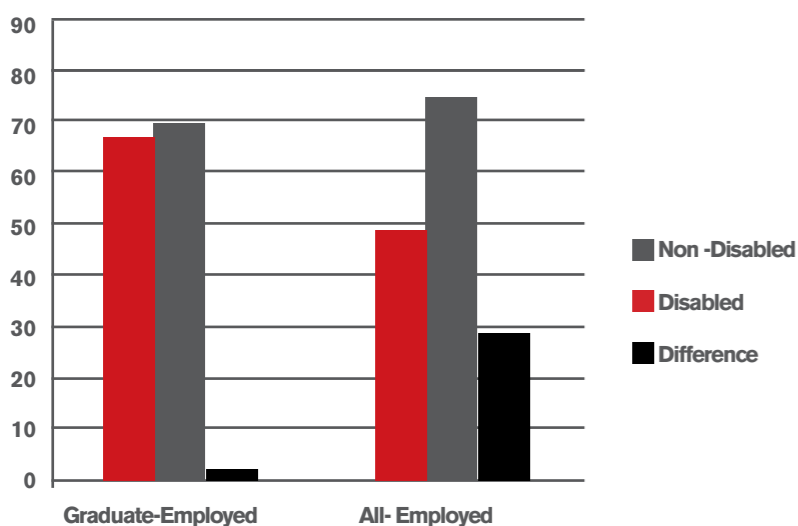
Quote from survey responder

Employment rates for disabled university graduates

As can be seen from Graph 13, there is a far greater difference between the employment rates of disabled and non-disabled individuals in general, than those who have completed a University education. This suggests that disabled individuals who attend university have a greatly increased chance of gaining employment once they have graduated, almost equal to that of non-disabled individuals.

Consequently, if we could bring the percentage of disabled individuals attending university in line with that of the non-disabled (currently 14.5% and 26.8% respectively (ONS, 2011)), then employment rates of the disabled could potentially become nearer to equality with those of the able bodied. Those in employment will be more likely to achieve independent living and have a reduced reliance on government benefits throughout their lives. This could hypothetically be achieved by increasing the levels of DSA currently available and therefore making a university education truly accessible to all.

Graph 13 -Comparing employment rates of graduates and all population samples of disabled and non-disabled individuals (2012)



Source: AGCAS (2012) and Department for Work and Pensions (2012).

“I would like to take this opportunity to once again thank Snowdon for their support. If it wasn’t for their generous contribution, I wouldn’t be on this journey, moving towards qualifying as a music therapist - to do so will mean I am able to earn enough money working part time to fully support myself, get myself off benefits and lead a more financially independent life.”

Quote from survey responder

Part 4 – Summary and recommendations

Summary of key findings

Through examination of the existing Snowdon student data and national statistics (HESA and SLC), as well as completion of the surveys produced and the subsequent analysis of the responses collected, a number of key issues have arisen for discussion.

- Although comprising a relatively small proportion of the disabled student population, those with mobility, hearing or visual impairments are likely to experience the greatest level of financial shortfall, often having to ‘make do’ with far less support than they need.
 - This is based on the fact that although only 19.7% of the disabled population fall into these categories, 75.4% of Snowdon grants were awarded to individuals affected by such disabilities.
 - Furthermore, 63% of disability officers placed these categories of disability as having the greatest level of financial need.
- Financial shortfall within these categories is frequently due to extremely high human support costs, which often cannot be fully covered by the existing DSA levels.
 - Human support such as BSL interpreters can cost as much as £50 an hour, so even one hour a day would not be available through the PG DSA allowance or two hours a day for UGs. Nearly a quarter of Snowdon grants were spent in this area.
 - Additionally, 31.5% of disability officers indicated that non-medical helper costs were the main reason for financial shortfall for the students they support.
- PG students are currently more likely to experience financial shortfall and to a greater extent than UG students.
 - Disabled PGs are over five times more likely to apply for funding from Snowdon than UGs, based on the fact that only 20% of disabled students are PG, yet 57% of Snowdon grants are spent at this level.
 - The average DSA awarded is higher for PGs than UGs suggesting a greater financial need when studying a higher level degree.
 - Findings indicated there are more PG students per university with financial shortfall (29 versus 20 UG), and their average level of shortfall is greater (£2894 versus £2755).
- In both UG and PG, the most likely cause of financial deficit is that the maximum DSA available to the student is not enough to cover their needs.

Recommendations

With regard to DSA levels

- Ideally, the upper limit of the DSA available for PG and UG should be removed, which would eliminate the current discrimination of the most severely disabled who require the greatest financial support.
- To provide individual assessments, but then in some cases fail to grant the level of support required, seems a rather idiosyncratic practice. Although only a very small proportion of the disabled population is affected by these caps, the impact of lifting the caps on the individuals concerned would be significant.
- At the least, the level of PG DSA should emulate that of UGs, considering that the costs incurred during a year in these levels of education are likely to be similar (or higher for PGs, as SLC figures suggest). There is no valid reason for PGDSA being lower than UGDSA.

With regard to the DSA process

- DSA will not currently fund items that it feels are not directly study related. This should be reconsidered because adapted or carer's accommodation and mobility equipment are fundamental needs for a small number of disabled students whilst studying at university.
- During the assessment process, those who are required to re-train following an injury which impacts their working ability in their current role should not be excluded simply because they have completed a similar level of study previously. Exception on reasonable grounds needs to be made for the limited number of individuals in this frustrating position.
- The information provided to students concerning how and when to claim back travel expenses needs to be more clearly defined and regimented in a timely manner. Alternatively, a more direct payment process should be arranged between DSA and the local transport providers to eliminate the need for up-front payments by the student who is likely to incur debt while waiting for reimbursement.
- The assessment process needs to focus objectively on the needs of the individual, rather than being linked to a subjective view of their disability. Not everyone for example, needs a new laptop, because some students may have a suitable one and would prefer to use their funding in more useful ways.

Generally

- PG disabled students are likely to find it harder to obtain employment to cover the costs of fees/living expenses throughout university (as non-disabled PGs are expected to do). To counteract this disability related restriction, either special scholarships should be provided or commercial lenders should be encouraged to provide more career development loans to disabled people through some form of loans guarantee scheme.
- Consider better ways to provide full "joined up" funding for those with more significant disabilities who will be leaving home for the first time to go to university, to ensure that additional mobility, accommodation and care needs are properly considered and provided for.
- This might include better guidelines to local authorities and other funding bodies about their responsibilities, or the provision of specific resources to help guide students and their families through this difficult transition.

Additional quotes relevant to the evidence contained within this report can be viewed in Appendix 5.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Percentage of Snowdon grants provided to UG and PG when fees are omitted

Level of education	Equipment-computer	Equipment-mobility	Accommodation-additional	Accommodation-carer	Travel	Support	Total	%
UG	19	24	8	8	16	40	137	50.92937
PG	26	16	20	20	16	52	132	49.07063
Total	45	40	28	28	32	92	269	100

Appendix 2: Disability officer questionnaire (DOQ)

1, Please provide the name of your university

2, Using UCAS definitions of disability, which categories have you found tend to need the most support from you, including what sort of support (please label 1, 2, and 3)?

UCAS CATEGORY	Level of support (1=highest)	Sort of support (e.g., financial, emotional, academic)
1 - Learning difficulty		
2 - Blind/Partially sighted		
3 - Deaf/hearing impairment		
4 - Wheelchair/ mobility difficulties		
5 - Autistic spectrum disorder		
6 - Mental health difficulties		
7 - Unseen disabilities		
8 - Multiple disabilities		
9- Other disabilities		

3, Using UCAS definitions of disability, which categories have you found tend to have the most shortfalls in funding, including where these shortfalls lie (please label 1, 2, and 3)?

UCAS CATEGORY	Amount of shortfall (1=highest)	Where shortfalls lie (e.g., equipment, human support)
1 - Learning difficulty		
2 - Blind/Partially sighted		
3 - Deaf/hearing impairment		
4 - Wheelchair/ mobility difficulties		
5 - Autistic spectrum disorder		
6 - Mental health difficulties		
7 - Unseen disabilities		
8 - Multiple disabilities		
9- Other disabilities		

4.1, Roughly how many undergraduate disabled students at your university have a level of financial need (in any funding category) exceeding the maximum DSA amount available to them?

4.2, In your experience what is the maximum amount of financial shortfall in undergraduate disabled students?

4.3, What are the main reasons for these shortfalls in undergraduate disabled students (please label 1, 2, and 3)?

Reason for shortfall	Reason for shortfall (1= most common)
Do not qualify as the course is not eligible	
Do not qualify as the student is from overseas	
Student got maximum available, but it was not enough	
Students needs were not covered, e.g., mobility equipment, carer accommodation	
Other (please specify).....	

4.4, What are the main areas of these shortfalls in undergraduate disabled students (please label 1, 2, and 3)?

Area of shortfall	Area of shortfall (1=most common)
Equipment – computer based	
Equipment - mobility	
Accommodation – for carer	
Accommodation – for additional needs due to disability	
Human support	
Travel	
Fees	

5.1, Roughly how many postgraduate disabled students at your university have a level of financial need (in any funding category) exceeding the maximum DSA amount available to them?

5.2, In your experience what is the maximum amount of financial shortfall in postgraduate disabled students?

5.3, What are the main reasons for these shortfalls in postgraduate disabled students (please label 1, 2, and 3)?

Reason for shortfall	Reason for shortfall (1= most common)
Do not qualify as the course is not eligible	
Do not qualify as the student is from overseas	
Student got maximum available, but it was not enough	
Students needs were not covered, e.g., mobility equipment, carer accommodation	
Other (please specify).....	

5.4, What are the main areas of these shortfalls in postgraduate disabled students (please label 1, 2, and 3)?

Area of shortfall	Area of shortfall (1=most common)
Equipment – computer based	
Equipment - mobility	
Accommodation – for carer	
Accommodation – for additional needs due to disability	
Human support	
Travel	
Fees	

6, What are your thoughts regarding the levels of DSA available for the students which you support? Plus any additional comments you may have on the subject as a whole

Appendix 3: Past Snowdon student questionnaire (PSSQ)

**1, We know not everyone identifies with these labels, but using the UCAS categories of disability, what type of disability is closest to your experience? (tick all that apply)
Plus any additional information regarding your disability if you wish**

1 - Learning difficulty	Additional information (e.g. specific type)
2 - Blind/Partially sighted	
3 - Deaf/hearing impairment	
4 - Wheelchair/ mobility difficulties	
5 - Autistic spectrum disorder	
6 - Mental health difficulties	
7 - Unseen disabilities	
8 - Multiple disabilities	
9- Other disabilities	

2.1, With regard to your most recent educational achievement, what level of study were/ are you working at?

- Undergraduate
- Postgraduate

2,2, Start and finish date of study

__/__/__ to __/__/__

2.3, Did you have to repeat a year of study or take a year out due to your disability?

- Yes – Why was this?
- No

3, Prior to receiving your Snowdon grant did you apply for and receive DSA?

- Yes
- No

-If no, was it because :

1,The course was not eligible

2, I was unaware of this method of funding

4, It was unneeded

3, Other (please specify).....

4, If you received DSA, for what did you require extra funding, prompting you to contact Snowdon

- Equipment- computer based (e.g., hardware/software)
- Equipment- mobility based
- Accommodation for additional needs due to disability
- Accommodation for carer or personal assistant due to disability
- Fees
- Human support (e.g., note-taker, signer)
- Travel expenses for additional needs due to disability
- Other (please specify).....

5, Why did you originally apply for funding from Snowdon

- I knew my needs were not eligible for DSA funding
- I knew my needs exceeded the maximum amount of DSA available to me
- Other (please specify).....

6, Did you receive additional financial support from any source other than Snowdon?

- University bursary
- University access to learning fund
- Other charitable trust
- Family and/or friends
- Local authority
- Other (please specify).....
- None

7.1, After all the funding you received, did you still find you had a shortfall in your finances?

- Yes
- No

7.2, If yes, in what area were these shortfalls?

- Equipment
- Accommodation
- Fees
- Human support
- Travel
- Other (please specify).....

7.3, If yes, what was the approximate value of these shortfalls?

8, What are you doing now?

- Still studying
- Paid employment
- Full time
- Part time
- Voluntary employment
- Full time
- Part time
- Unemployed
- Other (please specify).....

9, Do you have any comments or suggestions regarding the level of disability related support that was available to you?

Appendix 4: Disabled student questionnaire (DSQ)

1, We know not everyone identifies with these labels, but using the UCAS categories of disability, what type of disability is closest to your experience? (tick all that apply)
Plus any additional information regarding your disability if you wish

	Additional information (e.g. specific type)
1 - Learning difficulty	
2 - Blind/Partially sighted	
3 - Deaf/hearing impairment	
4 - Wheelchair/ mobility difficulties	
5 - Autistic spectrum disorder	
6 - Mental health difficulties	
7 - Unseen disabilities	
8 - Multiple disabilities	
9 - Other disabilities	

2.1, With regard to your most recent educational achievement, what level of study were/ are you working at?

- Undergraduate
- Postgraduate

2.2, Start and finish date of study

__/__/__ to __/__/__

2.3, Did you have to repeat a year of study or take a year out due to your disability?

- Yes – Why was this?
- No

3, Did/do you receive DSA?

- Yes
- No

-If no, was it because :

- 1, The course was not eligible
- 2, I was unaware of this method of funding
- 4, It was unneeded
- 3, Other (please specify).....

4.2, If you answered yes, where did these shortfalls lie? (check as many as apply)

- **Equipment- computer based (e.g., hardware/software)**
- **Equipment- mobility based**
- **Accommodation for additional needs due to disability**
- **Accommodation for carer or personal assistant due to disability**
- **Fees**
- **Human support (e.g., note-taker, signer)**
- **Travel expenses for additional needs due to disability**
- **Other (please specify).....**

**5, Did you receive additional financial support from any other source?
(check as many as apply)**

- **University bursary**
- **University access to learning fund**
- **Charitable trust (e.g., Snowdon trust)**
- **Family and/or friends**
- **Local authority**
- **Other (please specify).....**
- **None**

6, Do you have personal care package provided by your local authority?

- **Yes**
- **No**
- **Any comments on this service**

7, Prior to arriving at university, how satisfied were you with the amount of information/advice you were provided with regarding the amount of support that was available to you from statutory funding?

- **1 = very unsatisfied**
- **5 = very satisfied**

6.1., Who was the source of this information/advice?

- **My previous school or college**
- **My prospective university**
- **Student finance**
- **Other (please specify).....**

8, What are you doing now?

- **Still studying**
- **Paid employment**
- **Full time**
- **Part time**
- **Voluntary employment**
- **Full time**
- **Part time**
- **Unemployed**
- **Other (please specify).....**

9, Do you have any comments or suggestions regarding the level of DSA and additional financial support that was available to you?

Appendix 5 - Relevant quotes from questionnaires categorised

-Key to respondents

NS = Non-Snowdon student;
SS = Snowdon student;
DO = Disability officer;

With regard to the DSA process

-Time

“As an eligible disabled student I have applied for DSA and my application has been proceeding for 4 months. (NS)”

“Whilst I have applied for DSA and had my needs assessment, Student Finance did not receive my completed needs assessment and I've needed to chase this up which has not been helpful to my health. I had my needs assessment 22nd November and I have yet to receive anything. Had I received my DSA in a timely manner I may have been able to continue my course without suspending. (NS)”

“My university were quite good at telling me what I'd be able to get, but of course DSA took ages and I'm only getting the equipment soon even though I've been here for a year and a half. (NS)”

“My university asked me to take a gap year prior to starting university in order to sort out access. Taking a year out would have been necessary anyway in order to secure all the funding I needed (due to my disability) in order to attend university. (SS)”

“Not so much the level of support but the extreme delays - I started a new course in September and am still short of essential equipment now in January! I have had modules finish and have had to take final exams without support in place. This level of delay seems typical. (SS)”

“Snowdon award was prompt, helpful and of immediate benefit in comparison with excessive delays and problems with the DSA process. (SS)”

“But many students find the DSA process hard to navigate and lengthy so go without support in the short term. (DO)”

“I believe the funding for research students undertaking PhD's is far too structured. From time to time I need to change the designation of what my money is spent on or spend money in areas that were not envisaged in the needs assessment conducted at the beginning of the course.”

“If I want to change designation or spend more money in a particular area, the process is onerous and on at least two occasions my research has been affected by the fact that decisions have taken so long I have missed an opportunity to either undertake data collection or attend a conference. As a blind student, I am also very angry that I have to always go through my University assessment centre or student advisor.”

“I am mature enough to make my own decisions and know much more than the advisors at my University and I'm not allowed to talk to Disabled Student Allowances (advisors) directly and these are the people who make the decisions (the main DSA staff are not decision makers and in my opinion they are a waste of space, sorry about that)! In my opinion, my independent living and choice and control has been lost with the move of DSA to a national programme and I wait for the day that DSA is regulated like a direct payment or personal budget so that I can regain my independent living and choice and control. (SS)”

-Travel

“I was originally told I would have DSA funding for travel, and was reimbursed for my expenses, but then student finance changed this and now I don't receive any help. This has severely injured impacted my studies as I can't always afford to go in. (NS)”

“DSA pays for taxis and printing consumables etc upon receiving the receipts for the journeys. They should make it easier by setting up accounts with local taxi firms and suppliers so students don't have to find the money in advance and then wait months for reimbursement. (SS)”

“Another common difficulty is with postgrad students who need travel expenses on top of e.g. equipment and human support. The DSA simply doesn't cover this. (DO)”

-Spent on wrong things

“Sometimes DSA is all well & good but considering the money is being spent on computer equipment etc. for me, it would be helpful to get a non means tested bursary of some kind to help deal with the times when I can't feed myself properly etc. if I didn't have my parents living relatively close by I wouldn't be able to do it. Whenever I'm ill it's a massive task to pay bills and make myself eat etc., so not having to worry a lot about finances would help. (NS)”

“Following countless emails, telephone calls via my mum (due to my deafness) and university officials, issues with reimbursements, advice regarding purchase of equipment have left me thinking that most DSA claimants should have their budgets handled by the disability unit of their university but in collaboration with the student. As it would be a lot easier and less stressful to have someone such as a key worker to go to in events where guidance and assistance is required. This may not apply to all disabled students due to possible recent diagnosis, in need to guidance on equipment sources but I do feel most students should be allowed to purchase equipment from sources they choose or have had previous contact with before as after all, aren't disabled students their own expert about their disability and their needs? (NS)”

“I found the system for acquiring equipment through DSA to be very unhelpful, in that they ordered equipment for me that I didn't need & without asking me if I needed it. (SS)”

“I believe I would have had to drop my course without the mobility scooter Snowdon funded for me. This type of item should really be paid for via DSA, and I support any campaign to change their policy on mobility equipment. (SS)”

“SFE is resistant to purchase of individual expensive items promoting independence (electric wheelchair, equipment for blind students). (DO)”

-Eligibility

"I was not eligible because I already had a postgraduate qualification, even though my disability occurred AFTER my education and working in the field was no longer possible, appropriate nor desirable for me as a physically disabled person. (SS)"

"Even though I hold British nationality, I was told I would not be eligible as I had lived in another country in the EU prior to starting university. (SS)"

"It was not only hugely disappointing and enormously frustrating, but debilitating and discriminatory. I have lived in this country since 1989 and worked full-time until no longer able to cope through disability. I paid my taxes and saved like I should have, but when I needed help the most there was none. I was excluded from all sources of statutory help."

"There is no logic in a policy that says because I have already had undergraduate and postgraduate education in the past that I shouldn't need help now my circumstances have changed. Disabilities occur at any time in a person's life and some careers/fields of endeavour may not be appropriate or possible to (as in my case, to continue) to work in, to provide an independent living (Isn't that the point of re-educating oneself?). People with disabilities do not come in templates."

"Each disability is a unique set of circumstances and has unique personal consequences; disability related support needs to be more responsive to individual needs, not subject to stereotyping and categorising, structured in tick boxes. In my case the most helpful areas of support would have been in tuition/fees help, living expense help and in travel expense help (Thank you Snowdon Trust!). Instead, I was discriminated against in accessing funding for further education, because ironically I was unlucky enough to become disabled after my previous education and not before it! Thank you. (SS)"

-PG Need

"The level of post grad DSA funding does not adequately meet the needs of someone with a severe learning and physical disability studying at post graduate level. (SS)"

"The DSA was assessed as having more needs than could be afforded under the postgraduate DSA amount. (SS)"

"A loan should be made available to postgraduate students with disabilities. Regardless of disability type, finding work and sustaining it through a life changing course is incredibly hard, let alone if something - or multiple things - happen that hold the individual back during the period of study. Being free to pursue study without concern for rent, food, energy, is fundamental to any achievement. How many would agree that without the student loan they would have been unable to fund their undergraduate?"

"The vast majority. Paying the loan back is not daunting when one has the support to achieve highly and progress. Affording to keep yourself in the same place, clothed, warm and fed, provides the sort of challenge that can reduce productivity and cause ambiguity related stress. It's a lot easier to pay a loan when you have achieved what you set out to. It's hard to just survive and move on at all if you have failed to prove your worth and instead waste time and energy on undertaking peripheral life challenges that will not secure your future or the desired grades. (SS)"

"There needs to be more funding made available to cover the cost of tuition fees, particularly for post-graduate students who have a disability. The usual form of funding IE employment is not open to those of us with a disability. (SS)"

-PG Need

"Many postgrad students on full-time courses also struggle to get their support covered especially when equipment needs replacing in addition to needing human support. (DO)"

"It would be fantastic if bursaries were available within universities or from government to help postgraduate students that are chronically ill/disabled towards their fees. Students that are unable to work in order to save the required funds for postgraduate course fees, and are also unable to work alongside their studies, as a direct result of their disability/chronic health problems rely completely on family/friends and the support of charitable trusts such as Snowdon. But it would be great if there was more support available in this regard. I would not have been able to study without the help that I received from the Snowdon Awards scheme, which helped me towards the cost of my fees. I am extremely grateful to the charity. (SS)"

"Another common difficulty is with postgrad students who need travel expenses on top of e.g. equipment and human support. The DSA simply doesn't cover this. Many postgrad students on full-time courses also struggle to get their support covered especially when equipment needs replacing in addition to needing human support. (DO)"

"The DSA support provision should be the same for both undergraduate and postgraduate. The limit of the non-medical helper component is about right at undergraduate level, but too small at postgraduate level. (DO)"

"The Postgraduate allowance of £10,000 is very often unworkable, as students will have similar non-medical helper needs to their undergraduate course, which would be funded up to £20,500p/a (or can be more in some cases). The PG allowance also does not take into account that some PG students do not have equipment from an Undergraduate course, and will need things bought for the first time. (DO)"

"DSA is insufficient for postgraduate students (plus additional difficulty now SFE keep refusing re-assessment for students moving from UG to PG courses). (DO)"

"My disability has meant I can't get a job and find it very hard to get by on the limited money I get from student finance as I'm not entitled to any means tested grants etc. (NS)"

- Human support costs

“Students with SpLDs for instance have to find cost of assessment £250 -£500 before they can access DSA - once they have this access is good/satisfactory. Whereas some students with complex/overlapping conditions - mental health + SpLD can easily exceed amount allocated under DSA for mentoring, NMH support. Institutional funding limited for those with physical/sensory impairments - adaptations/estates/accessibility. (DO)”

“The most expensive shortfall is for Deaf students who rely on a combination of interpreters, note takers and English language support. (DO)”

“The DSA support provision should be the same for both undergraduate and postgraduate. The limit of the non-medical helper component is about right at undergraduate level, but too small at postgraduate level. Discretionary funding should be available for those with very high NMH costs (e.g. Sensory Impaired students requiring high levels of specialist assistance). (DO)”

“The main problem I see is with funding for postgraduate students. If equipment is required there is often not enough funds available for non-medical helper support (mentoring, note taking and study skills) or travel. This is particularly problematic for Deaf BSL users, who will need note takers and interpreters, and those with multiple disabilities, say dyslexia, where they need study skills, and a disability that requires them to use a note taker or mentor, or use taxis. (DO)”

“The DSA amounts cover the majority of a students’ needs except where specialist help e.g. BSL interpreters are required. (DO)”

“They have been frozen for several years. Increasingly human support is now managed by 3rd party providers and inevitably where a commercial agency is involved the costs have gone up - an unintended but foreseeable consequence is that overall costs for NMH support have risen exponentially. There is the issue that Funding bodies are resistant to funding post graduate students to the level which is actually required. Students with complex needs find it hard (as do some needs assessors) to distinguish between what is care related support and study related support, which puts an added strain on the DSA system. (DO)”

“Undergraduate DSA total too low for non-medical helpers for blind students needing high transcription or deaf students needing interpreters, or students with physical impairments needing full-time assistance. (DO)”

“On the whole the amount of DSA is sufficient however there are some disabled students who need a great deal more e.g. Deaf students, those with support needs who go on work placement and those with additional care needs. (DO)”

“Generally for most students the level is adequate - there should be a mechanism to allow exceptional cases to receive additional funds above the ceiling. (DO)”

- Won't replace equipment

“I didn't get a new computer when I started as I didn't need one, but I'm becoming aware of the need to update as sometimes it causes me difficulties now and SFE don't want to add anything to my DSA. (SS)”

“Replacing damaged equipment is a big issue - especially where student had own equipment at time of DSA assessment but then when it breaks SFE refusing to supply replacement via DSA. (DO)”

“Very concerned about how disadvantage students are when they declare that they have a working computer at start of course - then the horrible hoops SFE make them jump through before a replacement is funded via DSa. I do not think they have any legal jurisdiction over privately purchased computers but they act as they do. SFE will pay more to check old equipment than it costs to replace. So much wastage in DSA in not allowing students to return equipment that does not work well for them (but was well intended at the time), to enable them to use a different solution instead. (DO)”

“Main concern at the moment is the refusal for top-up assessments for students moving to post-graduate courses unless there is a change in disability or a two year gap. I have one student who received his equipment 5 years ago and it is now out-dated or broken and they have refused a top-up stating that the equipment company should service it. (DO)”

SNOWDON

SNOWDON TRUST SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

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