



LEARNER SERVICES OVERVIEW





An Introduction to Learner Services

QA provides holistic support for our apprentices through our dedicated Learner Services Team. Learner Services provide support in 4 key areas: learning support (SEND/disability), safeguarding, Functional Skills and academic study skills (degree apprenticeships only). The wider benefit of having these functions in one larger team is pro-active communication and the ability to collaborate to ensure the learner receives the best possible service.

Our Learner Support Offer (SEND)

We believe every learner is unique, so we are driven to provide support that is as unique as they are.

Our mantra:

“Once you’ve met one person with a disability/neurodiversity, you’ve still only met one person with a disability/neurodiversity.”

We don’t believe in a ‘one size fits all’ approach and work collaboratively with all our key stakeholders to ensure learners’ needs are always met.

We want to support our neurodiverse learners, 100% of their working time. All apprenticeship providers are duty bound to offer learning support for learners with a disability/neurodiversity. However, this makes up just 20% of the learner’s apprenticeship, leaving the potential for their needs to be overlooked 80% of the time if their employer is unsure of how their employee could be supported.

With that being said, QA have partnered with ToHealth/Concept Northern, an access to work specialist business, to offer a complete end-to-end service for employers, assisting them in supporting their employees with a disability/neurodiversity. Their service includes formal diagnostics, assistive technology, ergonomics, consultancy, workplace needs assessments and specialist assessments for hearing and visual impairments. In short, QA supports the learner during their learning journey and ToHealth/Concept Northern can support you to support your employee in the workplace.

Ensuring Robust and Timely Support

At QA we have a dedicated and highly qualified team of SEND/disability specialists who provide ongoing support to our neurodivergent/disabled learners. However, this team is not the first link in this chain of support, so we have been keen to ensure that our recruitment teams and onboarding teams are suitably trained to ensure they ask the right questions before an initial referral is made to the learner support team. Most importantly, we want our recruitment team to



create a culture of acceptance so that any perceived stigma can be removed and so learners feel able to disclose with confidence.



Identifying Need

Once referred, learners will meet with one of our specialists and an in-depth needs assessment will take place leading to the creation of a bespoke, individualised Learner Support Plan (LSP). If a learner has a formal diagnostic report, we will unpick its contents alongside the learner and see how we can ensure any recommendations within it can be tailored to their learning journey. If the learner has been referred to us with a suspected learning need, we will utilise a highly regarded screening tool called 'Do-It Profiler' to gain a greater understanding of the learner's profile. Our approach to our learners with hearing, visual and physical difficulties follows the same process and we work, when required, with our facilities teams to ensure the physical environment is accessible and suitable so the learner can have the best possible experience.

Ongoing Support

The LSP is used as the central document to track and review the effectiveness of the support the learner is receiving. The LSP describes the reasonable adjustments and wider support the learner should receive from internal stakeholders, such as: the course tutor, the skills coach, the client relationship manager, Courseware, Functional Skills tutors and even safeguarding. Where applicable, the team will also call on external expertise from professional notetakers and even British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters for our deaf community; we've had great success with our deaf community.

Each learner will meet with the learner support specialist at least once a month but the frequency may increase where learners have acute needs. The LSP is reviewed alongside the learner on a monthly basis so all parties can consider the effectiveness of the reasonable adjustments that are in place. Some examples of reasonable adjustments include availability of hard copy textbooks, bespoke communication strategies from key stakeholders, adaptation of course materials, post workshop check-ins, recording of lectures, advance access to course materials etc. All these adjustments are coordinated, reviewed and championed by the learner's dedicated support specialist.

Holistic Support

Mental health difficulties are considered as a disability under the Equality Act 2010 where an individual has experienced mental health difficulties for 12 months or more. Due to the emotive nature of neurodiversity/disability, we are keen to ensure the learner's mental wellbeing is always considered and will encourage proactive engagement with the safeguarding team, so learners remain safe throughout their learning journey.

In addition to the above, our safeguarding team is in place to ensure all learners receive timely support if they are ever in crisis or if they are in other areas of difficulty such as being at risk of homelessness. However, despite our excellence



in being able to react to unexpected elements we are also proactive in minimising the need for our safeguarding service through the introduction of monthly awareness sessions. The team produce monthly newsletters to give both employers and learners an insight into current trends regarding safeguarding and the underlying factors that many may not consider so that learners can keep themselves safe. For example, the wider impact of the cost of living crisis and the potential for individuals to be drawn towards risky/criminal behaviour so that bills can be paid.

Wider Support

As mentioned previously, our Learner Services team is also made up of Functional Skills tutors and academic study skills tutors (degree apprenticeships only).

Functional Skills

Our Functional Skills team is in place so any learners who do not have a recognised English and maths qualification can receive support and achieve a level 2 in each area. The need for a level 2 or equivalent in English and maths is a prerequisite to any apprenticeship and this is set out by the government.

The Functional Skills team offer support to meet every starting point. For those learners who have simply misplaced their certificates but are otherwise competent, they can access one of our 'intensive' offers and complete an area of Functional Skills within a week. For learners who require a little more support we offer small group sessions where individuals can address their opportunities to develop with peers of a similar level. Lastly, our learners who need the most support can access one-to-one tuition with one of our team.

Study Skills Support

Last, but certainly not least, is our ACE Degree Apprenticeship team or ACEDA as we like to call them. This team is dedicated to our degree apprentice population. The team provide academic study skills support for our learners in the shape of one-to-one tutorials, group sessions and webinars. The team deliver over 40 webinars a month on areas such as referencing, writing for criticality, understanding your assignment brief and many more.

The webinars are designed to meet the needs of every type of learner: confident learners who are continuing their learning, those who are returning to learning after many years away and all of the learners in-between. Each webinar will be complemented by materials learners can access independently so they can continue their learning beyond each session.



The ACEDA study skills team is not to be confused with the learner support team. Although they can often provide similar support, the learner support team is there to coordinate the learner's wider support whilst providing them with some useful strategies to ensure they can leverage the many hidden abilities their neurodiversity/disability may bring. However, the learner support team do work very closely with the ACEDA team and often signpost neurodivergent/disabled learners to ACEDA sessions as a reasonable adjustment.

The above is just one illustration of how we support our learners. Our wider learner services offer allows for a marvellous cocktail of support for each learner with a measure and flavour that is as individual as they are.



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