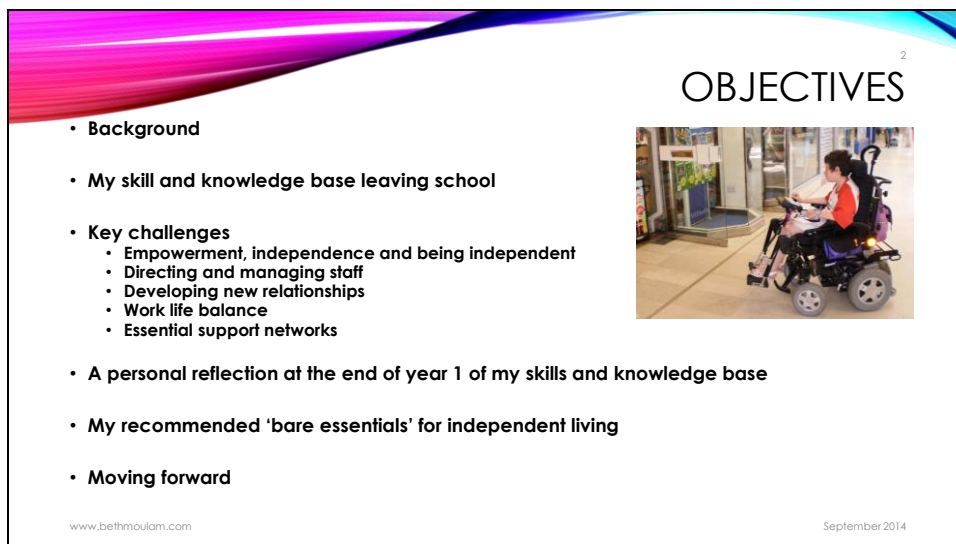


This paper is based on my personal experience. I started at University in 2013. My experiences have led me, to question if I was sufficiently prepared for the challenge.




It has been a challenging year. One of academic success, and many social care challenges. This is a personal reflection of what I know now, and what I wish I had known then. With my action plan moving forward. My aim is to make others wanting to live independently think about these challenges and anticipate what they might need to plan for.

3

BACKGROUND

- Mainstream playgroup, primary school and Y7 & 8
- Special School Y8 – Y14
- University of York 2013/14
 - BA (Hons) Social Policy (Extended)
 - Completed Y1
 - 3 years to go
 - Living in halls
 - 24 hour support
 - Agency vs Own Staff



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As background, I went to mainstream playgroup and primary school. I started mainstream secondary school before I moved in 2007 to a local authority special boarding school. A year ago, I moved into halls, I had already had several years being away from home during the week. I had experience of directing personal assistants, and care staff at school. I started in halls with 24 hour agency support. The fact I now have my own directly employed and dedicated support team, tells you it has been a year of change.

4

LEAVING SCHOOL: SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic • Socially • Emotionally • Health • Relationships • Housing and Equipment • Leisure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CQC • Health and Safety • NHS • Student Finance England • Disabled Student Allowance • University
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My family, and I, had done a lot of planning. I thought I was in good shape 12 months ago, to begin this new stage of my life. I considered my personal and more general skills, knowledge and experience up to the job in hand. Even though I knew it would be a tough first year, with a lot to learn.




To help me reflect, I looked at the typical development milestones for all young adults. This covers communication, social, learning, emotional and physical skills. What I have done in the coming slides is broken these into the competencies expected. What I felt I could do a year ago, and any concerns at that time.

6

COMMUNICATION

- Conveying needs, wants and desires
- Confident I could make others understand
- Good use of Lightwriter, low tech and no-tech
- Concerned 'new people' wouldn't want to give me time




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The right to communicate is essential for us all. To be able to convey our needs, wants and desires. I knew I was a good functional communicator. I am very resourceful in getting my message across. But I was also concerned I would be meeting many new people. Most of whom had no experience of people who use AAC, and might not be patient with me.

7

SOCIAL

- To be able to collaborate and cooperate with others
- Good social life at home
- Regularly met friends
- Concerns about making new friends, reliance on new PAs



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Socially, everyone needs to be able to cooperate and collaborate with others. I felt this wouldn't be a problem having been at boarding school, and having my own support staff at weekends and in the holidays. I have always had a good social life, regularly meeting friends from school, at boccia and in my local community. The challenge would be making people understand that I was no different to them. I was aware I would be completely reliant on a new team of personal assistants. This would be, I knew, tiring, and at times frustrating, whilst they learned their job, and the boundaries, between being a formal employee and a relaxed companion.

8

EMOTIONAL

- The ability to cope, manage anger, control impulses and resolve conflict
- Stable leaving school
- Feeling good about the future
- Moving away from family and friends
- Needed new counsellor and support services
- Would I be 'good enough'

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Emotionally, all young adults need to be able to cope with change, control impulses, manage anger and resolve conflict. I had had plenty of change in the past, and done a lot of planning for my move. I felt I could manage my emotions well and had rarely had to deal with conflict. I was used at school to a good support team and I had a counsellor I saw weekly. However, I had some concerns as I was leaving my friends and family behind and would have a new support team, and would need to find a new counsellor.

9

LEARNING

- Ability to academically perform at HE level
- Achieved AS level qualifications
- Place to study Social Policy at York
- Not the most independent of learners
- I wouldn't be as good as the others

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Going off to uni means being able to learn at an appropriate level. I had the qualifications and a place to study Social Policy on the extended degree. This meant 'someone' believed in me, not least myself. However, coming from a special school, where I had always had 1 to 1 support, I knew I was not the most independent of learners. I was also worried I might not be as good as the others, for lots of reasons. From speed of my communication, needing academic support, my slow reading, and just generally as things take longer for me.

10

PHYSICAL

- Being able to look after my own health and hygiene
- In good shape leaving school
- Playing regular sport
- No identified physio or services at Uni – all to be set up via GP
- Need to set up hydro, gym, boccia, skiing
 - Finding time
 - Training staff

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Physically those leaving home need to be competent to look after themselves. I knew I was in good shape, that I could direct staff, and I was, and still am, an active sports woman. The communication challenge for my physical well being would be to meet and establish relationships with the university doctor, therapists and set up the physical programmes I needed. These are things over and above what most other students need to do.




In summary, I felt good. Yet a little apprehensive, as I knew this was an enormous leap into the future, by leaving home.

12

EMPOWERMENT, INDEPENDENCE AND BEING INDEPENDENT

- Mixed messages and confusion
- Do they mean the same things?
- Misunderstandings?

- Definitions
- What it means to me and why



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Almost immediately I started university it was clear different people had different ideas about empowerment, independence and being independent. There were some incredibly supportive people, but a small minority with views, such as. I was at uni so should be able to do everything myself. There was a lot of confusion so I spent some time researching this. Here is what I've found.

13



EMPOWERMENT

'a movement that encourages individuals to take more control of their own welfare and treatment, either by forming a partnership with professionals, or by seeking more appropriate representation of their rights and needs'


Moore (2002) p459

Actively involving those involved eg people with disabilities making their own decisions

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Moore said, empowerment is. A movement that encourages individuals to take more control of their own welfare and treatment, either by forming a partnership with professionals, or by seeking more appropriate representation of their rights and needs. This means actively involving people in making their own decisions.

14



INDEPENDENT

'not being influenced or controlled by others, and/or not being dependent or relying on others for aid or support'


Dictionary.com (2014)

Doing it for yourself

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In contrast. The dictionary tells us. Independence is not being influenced or controlled by others, and or not being dependent, or relying on others, for aid or support. This means. Doing it for yourself.

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INDEPENDENCE

'The process whereby disabled people make decisions for themselves about their care and finances'

Moore (2002) p410

Medical/Individual Model 'Being able to meet one's own needs without relying on someone else' with disability caused by condition or illness

Social Model 'Having control over the type and level of support one receives'

Punch (2013) p766

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Moore in 2002, said independence was about disabled people making their own decisions about care and their finances. More recently, Punch has used the social model to explain the meaning of independence, as having control of the type and level of support you need.

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A COMMON THEME?

- Being in control and making decisions
- Physical independence does not mean being empowered
 - Personally physical independence is exhausting
 - Quality of life MUST count
- Empowerment and independence is being able to direct people in what I need, when to ask and how I desire the support to be given



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There is a common theme across these 3 definitions. This theme is being empowered, being independent, and independence, is being in control and making decisions. I can agree with this. Being physically independent doesn't mean being empowered. Just because you can dress yourself, it doesn't mean you have the skills to direct your own support. To me being empowered, and independent, is directing people in what you need, what to ask for support and how you would like that support to be given.

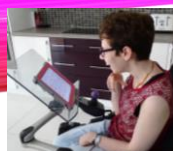
TEAMWORK – A PARTNERSHIP

- This doesn't mean telling people every little thing
- We can anticipate together what I want to do next
- It's like being with a dance partner
 - Learning the steps you are conscious of every movement and check with each other
 - Once you are comfortable the dance unconsciously flows in a beautiful rhythm.
- Working as a team means anticipating the flow of the routine, without constant decision making by me, questioning by them, and discussion, especially when I'm tired. (Moulam, 2014)



Directing others is a skill. This doesn't mean I have to tell people every little thing I need, working with a personal assistant is a form of teamwork. If I need to do the same thing, at the same time every day, we can anticipate together what I want to do next, as it's what I always do, for example, bedtime routines. It's like being with a dance partner. While you learn the steps you are conscious of every movement, and check with each other. Once you are comfortable the dance unconsciously flows in a beautiful rhythm. Working as a team, with good staff who facilitate, and support my needs, means us both anticipating the flow of the routine, without constant decision making, questioning and discussion, especially when I'm tired.

MY PERSONAL OPINION



'Asking for, and receiving, help is not easy. But learning to ask and accepting support does not make you a failure because to me being empowered and having independence is all about independent thought and control. This means directing your support, not exhausting yourself trying to do it alone'

Moulam (2014)

In my humble opinion, I know that, asking for, and receiving help, is not easy. But learning to ask, and accepting support, does not make you a failure, because to me, being empowered, and having independence, is all about independent thought and control. This means, directing your support, not exhausting yourself trying to do it alone.

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YEAR 1 LIVING INDEPENDENTLY ALL STUDENTS

- Away from home for first time
 - Home sick
 - Organising life including food, washing, time, cooking
 - Managing larger sums of money
- New learning styles
 - Independent learner
 - Time management
 - Teaching styles
- Making new friends




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Many students moving away from home experience the same challenges. Feeling homesick and alone, missing friends or a pet. Needing suddenly to look after themselves. Learning new ways of working, and having to make new friends. I know people who have phoned or skype home daily for weeks. Some lost weight or piled it on by not eating well. And, some ran out of money in the first few weeks of term. In addition to these normal student challenges I have had a few other things to contend with.

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YEAR 1 LIVING INDEPENDENTLY BETH

- **Typical student experience PLUS**
- **Directing and managing every waking minute of my life**
 - Physically and mentally exhausting during day
 - Having to be completely awake if I have a night time issue
- **Day 1 a new team of 6 people to train in routines and learn my communication – learning to negotiate**
- **Balancing studying with having a life (or not!!)**
- **Diplomacy needed when I wanted space, peace or quality time alone. Even more when things went wrong and I needed to explain**

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I've had the typical student emotions and experiences. I've felt physically and mentally tired, completely frazzled. Not just from the new life style, but also having to direct a brand new team 24 hours a day. If I wake at night I have to be able to tell them what I need, so I have to be awake. The team all work shifts and so everyone has had to learn every part of my daily routine. In the first term I didn't get any academic work done on an evening as they were focussed on cooking me a meal, helping me eat, getting me showered and into bed. In the second term I agreed to a ready meal on an evening to free up some time but it's not been easy. Everything takes me longer so my free time has been work focused. In January the G P signed me off and told me to do no work. I had worked every day apart from Christmas day and boxing day and was exhausted.

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MY EXPERIENCE

- Its been a huge learning curve – I can get things wrong
- Hundreds of new experiences taking me outside my comfort zone
- Leadership and management experience at 20 is limited
- Skills needed to
 - Complain
 - Raise an issue
 - Give praise
 - Know what is acceptable behaviour (for me and others)
- Saying yes when I want to say no

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Year one has been a huge learning curve. I can easily, and often have, got things wrong. I've had literally hundreds of new and sometimes fantastic experiences. And sometimes scary experiences that take me outside my comfort zone. These are not things I anticipated or planned for. I know now I have had limited leadership and management experience. Not many people aged 20 have the knowledge and skills to run a team. And I have definitely been learning on the job.

22

KEY CHALLENGES – DIRECTING AND MANAGING STAFF

DIRECT

- To manage or guide by advice, helpful information, instruction etc
- To administer, manage, supervise

MANAGE

- To bring about or succeed in accomplishing, sometimes despite difficulty
- To take charge of

LEAD


- To show the way
- To influence
- To guide in direction, course, action
- To command or direct

(Dictionary.com 2014)

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A huge challenge has been directing staff. I need to show the way, guide and influence. This means trying to set an example in how I behave. I need to take charge, instruct and even when it's difficult, be successful. The starting point, is making sure my own team know I am determined, that I need to succeed, and based on this year's experience, know that I am in charge, even if I make mistakes. This doesn't mean we don't talk. I expect to share experiences, discuss opportunities, and options, and enjoy being together.

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COMPLAINING AND ISSUES

- Often easier in writing
 - Less confrontational
 - Taken more seriously
 - BUT becomes formal when informal might be better
- Need to find time and place to take action
 - If it's about a staff member then hard to have a scribe or in front of others
 - Need time and space to compose what I want to say
 - Need to act promptly and independently
 - Suitable recording system needed and PRIVACY


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Since I was at school when I need to raise an issue, I often find myself writing an email, because it is less confrontational. Something in writing is usually taken more seriously, although it risks being more formal if people don't understand this is easiest for me. Making a complaint means I need to find an appropriate scribe. I had an issue this last year, where I couldn't use any of my team to scribe. Without a suitable recording system I was in a situation where I continued to feel at risk. Luckily, I have just been assessed for eye gaze, for recording, so this should stop this happening again.

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COMPLAINING FACE TO FACE

- Need to be diplomatic
- Choose words carefully
- Lightwriter can make it seem harsh
- My speech is challenging and can be misunderstood
- RISK of upsetting team
- Learning to phrase it as
 - “would you mind if”
 - “I need your help to”
 - “Can we talk about”



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We all know tone of voice and AAC don't go together. When using AAC, being diplomatic is key. Using the right words are vital, as I don't want to be seen as rude. Even my natural speech can sometimes make me seem abrupt, because of my dysarthria. This means I worry about upsetting my team. I have been working on phrasing things in a way that is less confrontational. For example, making more of an appeal for help, and asking for their support, before I raise the issue.

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*Without You, This
Would Not Have
Been Possible* ❤️

GIVING PRAISE

- Must be appropriate and sincere
- Thank you is not good enough
- Team are all older than me (3 – 13 years)

- Learning to use Carol Dwek's 'Growth Mindset'
- Praise the process not the outcome
 - "I like it when you pack my bag that way"
 - "It was good for me when you pointed out in that lecture who was speaking so I could turn to see them"
 - "Thank you, I love the way you iron and fold my clothes and put them away neatly"

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Because of my course, my team are all graduates, so they are older than me. They work hard, and sometimes saying thank you is not enough. Saying more can feel awkward. I heard about Carol Dwek, and the growth mindset, in relation to my sports coaching. I have found it easier to praise the process, rather than the outcome. Saying 'I like it when you do that' gets better results than 'well. done' and makes us all feel good.

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CHALLENGE OF SAYING NO

Bob Segalman (2014)

"Saying 'no' is not something I usually do, possibly because of my exaggerated need to please people"



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There is research showing people with complex needs often smile at staff, and say yes, when they would like to say no. Bob Segalman, who uses AAC, and lives in America has said, 'saying 'no' is not something I usually do, possibly because of my exaggerated need to please people'. I can identify with this. I need staff to want to be with me, so even if I am not happy I won't show it easily. It is sometimes easier to go with the flow than say no!

SAYING NO CAN MEAN

- **Staff**
 - Feel threatened
 - Become defensive or aggressive
 - May act in unacceptable ways
 - Thinking I am uncooperative
- **Beth**
 - Being made to feel bad, that the situation is my fault
 - Scared or afraid that staff will be upset or cross
 - Worried they might take away my freedom
 - Saying yes to keep people on side



I've found saying no, or don't, means staff can feel threatened. So in turn they can act inappropriately. It is funny that they think I am uncooperative if I don't want to do things their way. I never thought I was vulnerable, or at risk. This year has shown me that others can make me out to be the culprit. Saying yes does help keep people on side, but, we all have the right to choice.



NEEDING ME TIME

- 24 hour support is exhausting
- Everyone needs down time
- 1-1 does not mean being wrapped in cotton wool
- Sometimes I like my own company
 - Read with headphones
 - Listen to music
 - Watch TV
 - Go on the computer or iPad

"I'd like to be alone, can I call you when I need you to come back please?"

As I said before, having people around 24 hours a day is testing and exhausting. Yes, I do need 1 to 1 help, but I also need down time to myself. I'm often happy to read, watch a DVD, use my iPad or listen to music. Sometimes I prefer to be alone, sometimes I like my Personal assistant to be companionable and just sit quietly with me. Getting the space I need means I have had to learn to send staff off to do a job, which is easier than telling them to go to their room nicely. Then wait to be called to come back.

ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

- Knowing my rights
- Awareness of statutory guidance
 - Reasonable requests vs an interpretation of guidance (CQC)
 - Student Finance England hoops for DSA
- Contract of employment and job description vs my needs
- Assessing other people's behaviour
- Understanding my own emotions and behaviour



I mentioned before, acceptable behaviour. At school the staff were well trained and supervised. There were never any real incidents. What I have had to learn is the detail of what is in a job description. The agency guidelines, statutory information and whether it is reasonable to be black, and white, when life is often in the middle. I've also had to learn that when I am uncomfortable with my own, or someone else's behaviour, there is probably an issue. By knowing the signs of acceptable behaviour I am learning how to deal with situations.

SIGNS FEELING THREATENED

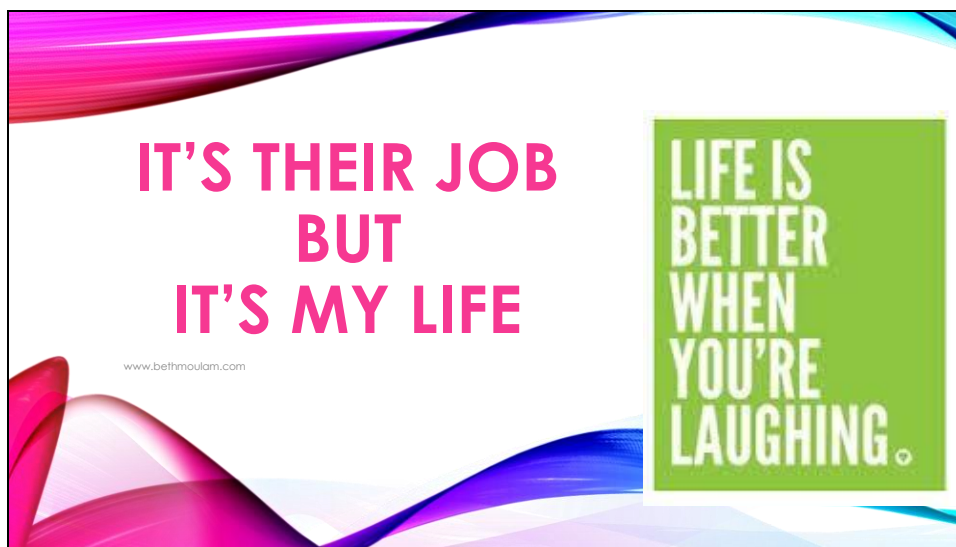
Physical Changes	Behavioural Changes
Sweating / perspiring	Loud speech or shouting
Clenched teeth and jaws	Pointing or jabbing with the finger
Shaking	Swearing/verbal abuse
Muscle tension	Over-sensitivity to what is said
Clenched fists	Standing too close
Rapid breathing/sharp drawing in of breath	Aggressive posture
Staring eyes	Tone of voice
Restlessness, fidgeting	Problems with concentration
Flushed face or extreme paleness of face	Stamping feet
Change in Health of a Family Member	Banging/kicking things
Rise in pitch of voice	Walking away

If someone is threatened, or upset, then they often show it, without realising. By knowing that if someone sighs a lot, or shouts, or flushes, or clenches their jaw, there could be a problem. Then I know I need to raise the issue to avoid it escalating. But likewise, I also need to understand the difference between threatening behaviour, and someone who is enthusiastic, but unaware their actions invade my private space. There are the protocols for working with someone disabled, knowing that making us look up, or standing over someone, or leaning in too close, can be intimidating unintentionally.

RECOGNISING STRESS


Stress Warning Signs and Symptoms	
Cognitive Symptoms	Emotional Symptoms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Memory problems ▪ Inability to concentrate ▪ Poor judgment ▪ Seeing only the negative ▪ Anxious or racing thoughts ▪ Constant worrying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Moodiness ▪ Irritability or short temper ▪ Agitation, inability to relax ▪ Feeling overwhelmed ▪ Sense of loneliness and isolation ▪ Depression or general unhappiness
Physical Symptoms	Behavioral Symptoms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aches and pains ▪ Diarrhea or constipation ▪ Nausea, dizziness ▪ Chest pain, rapid heartbeat ▪ Loss of sex drive ▪ Frequent colds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Eating more or less ▪ Sleeping too much or too little ▪ Isolating yourself from others ▪ Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities ▪ Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax ▪ Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)

I have a condition triggered by stress. This year I have experienced new problems, and so I have had to recognise the cause, and how to deal with them. I have always been a worry wort. But this year when things were tricky I became moody, short tempered and felt over whelmed. I also retreated to sleeping all the time when I went home, as I couldn't sleep in halls. At times I felt physically sick and didn't want to get up or eat. With better knowledge of myself I know I need to take action.




This year has reinforced the importance of employing great staff who want to be with me. It may be their job, but it is my life. I need to live, love and laugh.

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THE VALUE OF RELATIONSHIPS

- **No (wo)man is an island**
- **We all need a helping hand, I just need many!**



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People have always been important to me. Again this year I have learned the value of good relationships. When things went wrong I had a core of very good people around me who continued to make my life worthwhile. There is the old saying that no one is an island. How true. Everyone needs a helping hand, I just need an army of them.

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ACADEMIC SUPPORT RELATIONSHIPS

- **ACADEMIC TEAM**
 - Expectations
 - Understanding my communication
 - Understanding my learning style
 - **Understanding why I need support staff and what they do**
- **UNIVERSITY SUPPORT TEAM (Welfare, Disability Support, Facilities)**

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I ended last year with, I think, a good relationship with the course team. I also know the value of a great rapport with my academic support team. Last year I left the academic support team to find this out over time, but they all need to see me, as, me, from the first day so they have high expectations of me. It is important they understand it takes longer to communicate because of how I need to output using the Lightwriter. I have always known I was a visual learner and have learned even more this summer about my learning style. I will be sharing this with the course team in the first week to make sure they can facilitate me. Throughout last year the university support team was great, providing me with a safety net to fall back on when things needed sorting.

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DEVELOPING SUPPORT NETWORKS

- GP
- THERAPISTS
 - Need a trusted person (Mum for initial meetings and ongoing issues)
 - Services only want to deal with crisis issues not ongoing condition
 - Time delay getting support from registering with GP to waiting list
 - Services need to know you when you are well and not in need of help
 - Need to develop person in team to coordinate appointments

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All students moving to university have to change their GP. For most people it is just a case of signing up and then going in if they are under the weather. I have had a great relationship with my GP surgery at home since I was born. They knew everything about me, the receptionists knew I needed a double appointment. The nurses knew about my condition and even trainee doctors were told about what I needed. To get new therapists I had to first register with the GP and then wait for referrals. I wasn't allowed to register for services, or have referrals, until I was actually on campus. Mum came with me to see the doctor and they agreed to make the referrals to physio, O T and speech. They sent me back to the university for counselling. Some referrals took longer than others which resulted in me having to find other ways of doing things. Mum has remained my coordinator for medical things as I haven't had someone in my team who can do this, yet.

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RELATIONSHIPS

- FLAT MATES
 - See me, not my chair and device
 - Understanding my communication
 - Understanding why I have support staff in halls
- OTHER STUDENTS ON COURSE
 - See me not my chair and device
 - Seeing me as an equal
 - Understanding why I have support staff on campus

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Relationships with other students are really important. I need people to see me, and not my chair or my device. Unfortunately that hasn't always happened. People need to get to know my communication and see me as an equal. I can't demand this, but I need people to understand why I need extra support in halls and around the campus. I can understand it's hard for my flat mates having a stream of people in and out of the flat who are working for me. On the course and in my life generally my team are there to support me medically, as well as, academically. But they are not there to over protect me. It is just life that my team are very obvious. Other students get note takers who sit at the back of the room, mentors they meet on campus, scribes who they work with in the library. The difference is I always has someone alongside me.

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STUDYING

- **Well documented support needs for academic work**
 - For tutors/lecturers
 - Academic Support team
- **Protocols and competencies for support team**
- **Top tips of what works and doesn't work**
- **Competencies for looking after essential equipment**
 - Hearing aid

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I need well documented protocols for academic tutors and lecturers. My support team need training in how I work and not just general academic training. This year I will have one single team who work with me 52 weeks of the year around the clock. This will take away the issues of not having academic support on an evening or weekend if I have work to do. It also means everyone in my team is trained to do the whole job and not just parts of it. We have nearly finished 5 days of tailored training for the team in how to support me. This has included scribing, note taking, my communication, study support, library support, carrying out research, and much more including looking after all my equipment. After last year, I need everyone to work in the same way, not to have to spend my time re briefing people when a shift changes.

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SOCIALISING

- **Balance between studying and having a life**
- **Strategies to make friends**
 - Ask people to go for coffee after a lecture
 - Arranging social activities 'in' with flat mates
 - TV nights
 - Drinks on fresher's week
 - Chocolate biscuit queen
 - Kitchen a social hub
 - Projector for films in kitchen
 - Arranging social activities out
 - Inviting them to ski
 - Meals
 - Joining uni societies

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Year one was gruelling. I did not do any socialising, at all. Apart from a few coffees and one night out at Christmas, and one at the end of the year, I worked the whole time. This year I have a very different plan. I intend to work hard but make time to enjoy myself, and definitely have time for sport.

A PERSONAL REFLECTION YEAR 1

- Hours of planning
- Didn't get everything right
 - Can't predict everything!
- Plan for things going wrong
- Double and triple check the detail

On reflection last year I did hours and hours of planning with my family. We had lists of lists, yet unfortunately, I didn't get everything right. I know I couldn't have predicted everything. But we planned for things to work smoothly and go well. What we didn't plan for were situations going wrong. From communication breakdowns, to low expectations, and delays getting health support. Moving forward I know the importance of planning for the things that might not work so well, as well as, those things that will.

THE 'BARE ESSENTIALS' FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

- ✓ Letter from:
 - ✓ Therapists
 - ✓ GP/Consultant
- ✓ Investigate care options more closely
- ✓ Find out 'can' and 'cannot' of support staff
- ✓ Get **everything** in writing
- ✓ Double and triple check
- ✓ Keep everything
- ✓ Vocabulary for new situations when things go wrong
- ✓ Role play things that might go wrong

I have come up with a list of my bare essentials for anyone going into independent living. Some are uni specific, and some only apply if you change your GP. First get letters from everyone who supports you that are detailed and up to date. Second investigate fully your care options. I fell into the trap of assuming what the university recommended would be right for me. With whatever option you choose, fully understand their protocols, of what they will and won't do. Get everything in writing and don't just double check, triple check it. Keep all the paperwork in case you need to go back. Plan for situations to go wrong. That means have the appropriate vocabulary on your device.

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MOVING FORWARD

- Own team
 - Self interviewing
 - Being sure I get the right people
 - Specific training for whole support team
- Quick wins
 - Appointment with academic team first week
 - Training in flat with SLT
- Knowing how to deal with conflict and assertiveness training
- Leadership skills

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With my own team I do both formal, and informal interviews, there is a training programme which ensures everything is taught by someone expert, like Mum, or someone who has worked with me well for months. There is also formal training on key aspects of support, like supporting me doing presentations and academic work. We have written our own course, and the feedback has been good so far. I am aiming this year to have some quick wins with the academic team, and with my flat mates, this will be supported by my speech and language therapist to give them the opportunity to ask questions they may not feel comfortable asking me. I now want more training on being assertive, handling conflict and leadership.

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CONCLUSION

Plan for the best
Expect success
BUT
Prepare for the worst
Life has a habit of throwing a wobbly

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I am a planner, so I plan for the best and aim to be successful. Now I know I need to also prepare for the worst because no one knows when life will throw a wobbly at you. If you asked me today if I knew then what I know now would I have not tried to do it? The answer is that I am stubborn and determined. I have learned and grown in many ways and I am better able to handle situations because of what has happened. I would definitely still have done it!

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