**What is the role of a Specialist Support Professional?**

The role is to provide mentoring and study skills support to students who are deaf, hard of hearing, visually impaired or have a multi sensory impairment. The foundation of this support is the relationship between the SSP and the student.  Over time, a supportive and respectful relationship of trust is developed allowing the student to explore issues and work on overcoming barriers in a safe environment.  The SSP supports the student in problem-solving, decision making and testing out new strategies.  The support sessions offer opportunities for reflection and constructive feedback to enhance the personal development of the student

The SSP is not expected to know all the answers but to support the student to find the information that they need and to access relevant support at the university and in the community.

Celebrating the achievements of students is a really important part of the sessions.

**What might come up in a SSP session?**

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| **Topics** | **Strategies that could be tried** |
| Academic studies | Strategies for studyingOrganisation, planning and time managementWorkloadManaging multiple deadlinesDeferrals and extensionsCommunicating with academic staffCommunicating with Faculty Disability Co-ordinatorRelationships with peersGroup work assignmentsProblems with technology – laptops, printers, turn-it-inAccess to workshops | Sharing information about learning styles and encouraging student to vary study methods and take breaksGoal setting and prioritisation activitiesEncouraging the student to try out using timetables, diaries, planners, smartphone applications and assistive technology etc. to find out what works for them.Setting targets for the next session for example:* Arrange an appointment with faculty disability co-ordinator
* Arrange to meet with lecturer about assignment
* Bring deferral form to next session

Encouraging student to write and send e-mails to academic staff during a session |

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| **Topics** | **Strategies that could be tried** |
| Accommodation | NoiseDealing with landlordsTheftRelationships with flat-matesOrganising cleaning, shopping and cooking | Assertiveness skillsBrainstorming options for resolving conflicts |
| Finance | Housing and other benefit issuesResolving issues with Student Finance England (SFE)Hardship fundEmployment | Providing support by listening and exploring optionsAssistance with applicationsEncourage working with Disability Advice Service re issues with SFESupporting the student with budgeting |
| General health and well-being | DietExerciseHobbies and interestsStudy/life balanceOther health issues or long term conditions | Wheel of Life toolFive ways to well-being – New Economics FoundationEncouraging students to explore and join university societies or local groupsEncourage students to find out about and use local amenities e.g. parks |
| Mental health | Maintaining mental healthConfidenceSelf-esteemDealing with a crisis | Exploring student’s own strategies for maintaining their mental health and encouraging them to keep using them.Encouraging the student to engage with their GP, as appropriateEncourage student to make use of support provided by the university Personal development exercisesEncourage use of the university counselling service if appropriate |
| Relationships | Partners, friends and families | Assertiveness techniquesRole play |

**Some helpful resources**

The staff portal – [www.learningsupportcentre.com/sp](http://www.learningsupportcentre.com/sp) - timesheets, mentoring logs, policies and procedures, resources for mental health, study skills etc

Progress Log

Weekly planner

The Wheel of Life

Five ways to wellbeing

Self-care – some useful questions to ask

My personal first aid kit

Clare Carr – September 2015, edited Laura Cook September 2017