

“An inclusive approach necessitates a shift away from supporting specific student groups through a discrete set of policies or time-bound interventions, towards equity considerations being embedded within all functions of the institution and treated as an ongoing process of quality enhancement. Making a shift of such magnitude requires cultural and systemic change at both the policy and practice levels.” (May & Bridger, 2010, p.2)

May, H., & Bridger, K. (2010). Developing and embedding inclusive policy and practice in higher education. York: Higher Education Academy.

**2018/19 Annual Report**

**Disability Resource Centre (DRC)**

**Support and advice for students**

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**Figure 1: The main entrance to the DRC & the Student Services Centre**

## Annual Review: 2018/19

The 2018/19 academic year was a challenging year for the DRC with another significant increase in students disclosing disability (in of itself a positive thing) which has placed considerable demands on available resources. This has had an impact on waiting and response lead-times, which has been reflected in student feedback. However, it has also been a productive year, with significant steps forward in a number of projects with a focus on accessibility, inclusive practice, process improvement and support for students with mental health difficulties. The DRC also successfully moved to the new Student Services Centre, co-locating with other student services and support functions.

Particular mention needs to go to the excellent work of the University's Sub-Committee on Accessibility which has led on the approval of the new University access guides (in conjunction with AccessAble) which represents a huge step forward in the provision of access information to students, staff and visitors. Another project, Sensus Access (kindly funded by the University Library) was also developed and supported by the Sub-Committee. This service, which went live in June 2019, provides students and staff with a web-based self-service system allowing for the production of accessible digital materials. The Sub-Committee has also supported the development of plans for a centrally coordinated alternative formats service within the University Library (currently under discussion).

The DRC has engaged in an important project as part of the Our Cambridge initiative, looking at making radical changes to the student support document (SSD) process to improve the dissemination and implementation of recommendations for disabled student support. The anticipated benefits of the project represent a significant saving in cost and time in the medium term (c. £0.5 million over 10 years) for the DRC, Departments & Faculties, and the Colleges, and has the potential to vastly improve the experiences of disabled students.

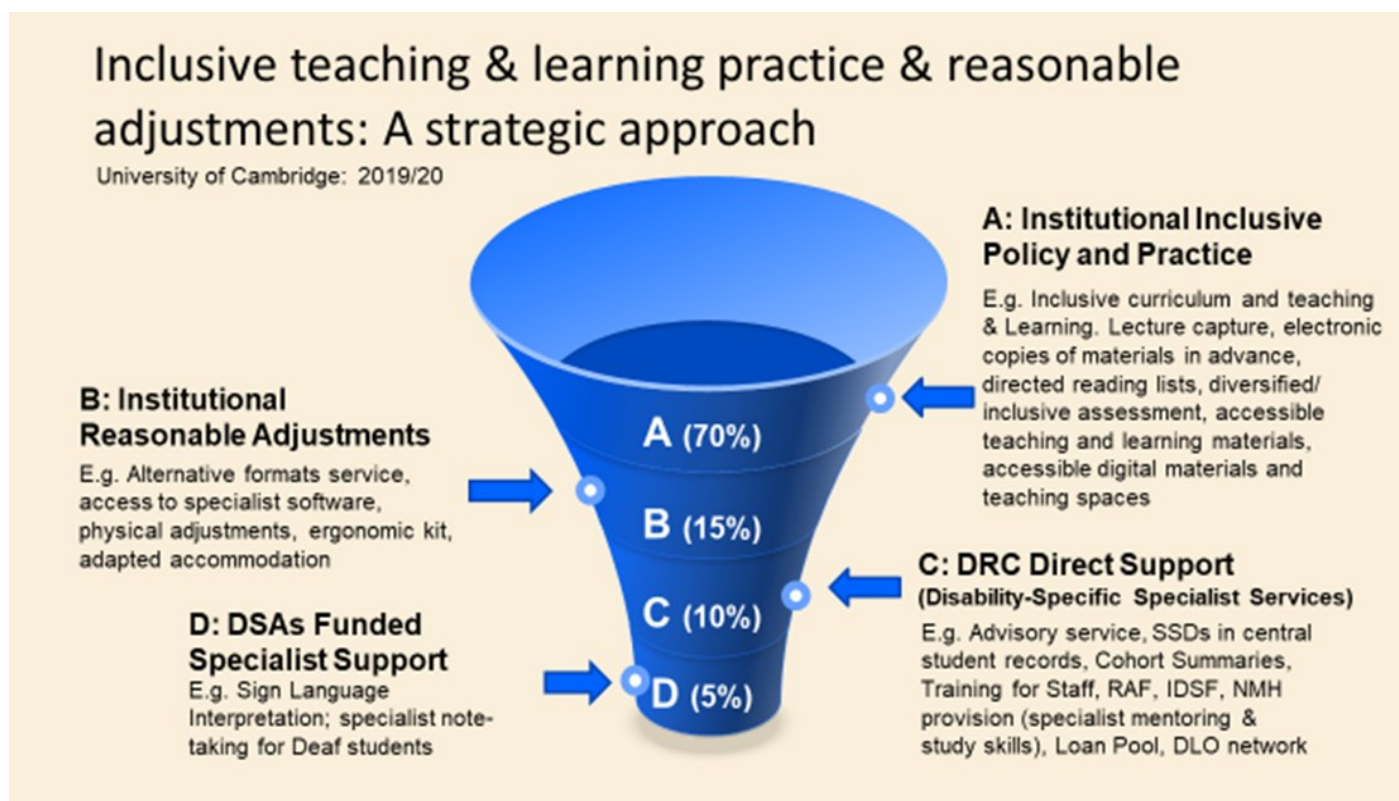
The DRC has also been engaged with and supported the work of the Cambridge Centre for Teaching & Learning in the promotion of inclusive teaching and learning practice and diversified assessment. The DRC is represented on the Steering Committee for the University's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, alongside the Counselling Service, Education Services, Students' Unions' Advisory Service and many others, looking to enhance the provision of support for students with mental health difficulties. The DRC's specialist mentoring scheme continues to receive extremely positive feedback from students and staff (continued overleaf)

(now supporting over 500 disabled students across the collegiate university). Many students identify specialist mentoring as a key factor in keeping them in study.

All of these initiatives will contribute to the University's commitment within its access and participation plan to increase the attainment and retention levels for disabled students. They will also help the collegiate university move from a costly model based on individual adjustments to one based on the inclusive principles of Universal Design (see strategy diagram in figure 2).

My sincere thanks go to all of the staff at the DRC, without whose dedication and extremely hard work this would not have been possible.

**John Harding, Head of the Disability Resource Centre**



**Figure 2: A strategic approach to inclusive teaching and learning and support for disabled students**

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# 1. Summary

## Service Demand

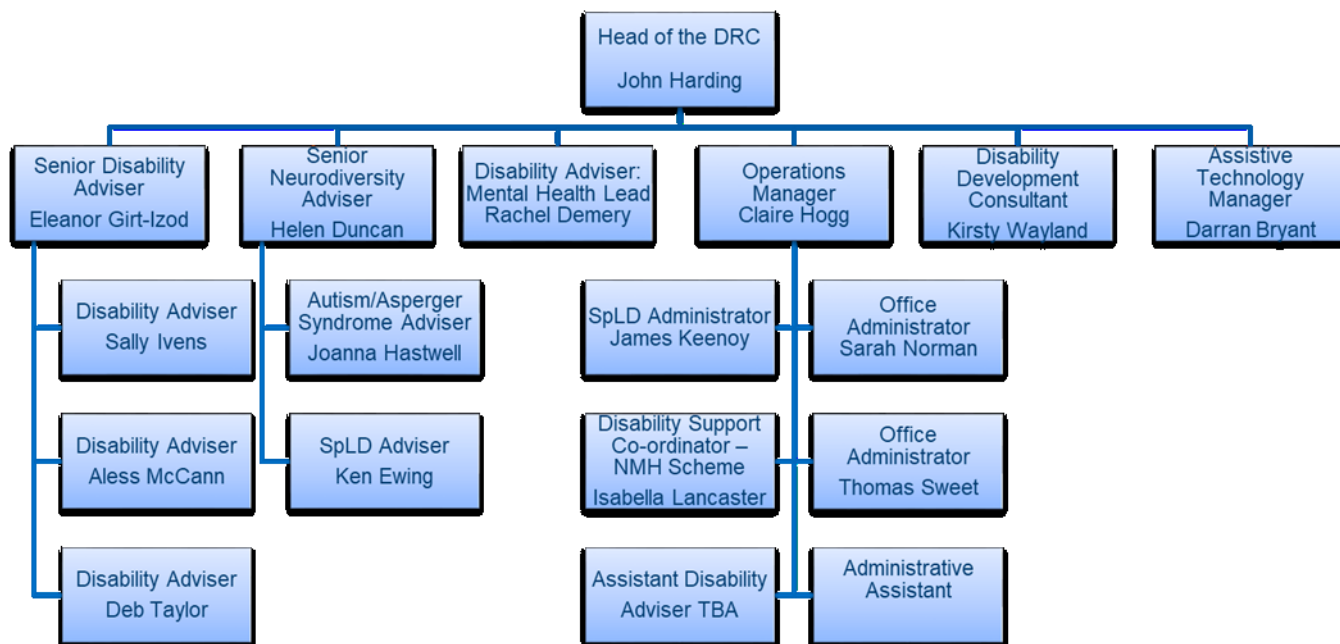
- ⇒ The total number of **current disabled students** at the end of the academic year (July 2019) was **3268**, an **increase of 8%** on the previous year (**3017**)
- ⇒ Students disclosing a **mental health condition** rose from **805** to **1043** in the same period, an **increase of 30%** in one year
- ⇒ Students disclosing **Autism** rose from **166** to **208**, in the same period, an **increase of 25%** in one year
- ⇒ In 2018/19 each Disability Adviser supported an average case-load of **681** students
- ⇒ DRC Student Survey 2019: 85% of respondents (n=121) rated the support from their Disability Adviser as Very Good, Good or Satisfactory, although those rating support as Very Good or Good fell from 74% in 2018 to 67% in 2019, with 15% of students (n=21) rating their support as poor or very poor, an increase from 13% in 2018. These differences are likely to be a result of the impact of increased demand on the DRC's finite resources

Further data available in Appendices

## DRC Priorities for 2019/20

- ◆ Our Cambridge Student Support Document (SSD) process improvement project
- ◆ Launch of inclusive teaching and learning Moodle module and associated initiatives to promote and embed a move towards a more inclusive model of student support and teaching and learning
- ◆ Supporting the University's Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy and work towards Access and Participation Plan targets
- ◆ Working with the Sub-Committee on Accessibility in the development of the University's overarching Accessibility Policy
- ◆ Revision of the Code of Practice: Disabled Students
- ◆ Implementation of Assistant Disability Adviser roles
- ◆ Extension of the AccessAble Access guides
- ◆ Supporting the creation of a central alternative formats service
- ◆ Promotion of digital accessibility, through training, collaborative working with UIS, academic staff, UAS and others and in development of policy and practice
- ◆ Review of the DRC's Non-Medical Help (NMH) process
- ◆ Implementation of the DRC's process improvement and efficiencies plan
- ◆ Continued close collaboration and cross functional working (e.g. with the Counselling & Careers Services, OSCCA and the Student Registry, UIS and Estates Management and the Colleges)
- ◆ 17th Annual Disability Lecture - the focus will be on Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

## 2. DRC Team



**Figure 3: The DRC Team: Organisation Chart and Team Photo**

The DRC is planning in 2020 to introduce the role of Assistant Disability Advisers, to help reduce the workload for Disability Advisers and to allow them more time to work directly and effectively with their academic colleagues, alongside a detailed process improvement and efficiencies plan.

### 3. Neurodiversity team

The DRC's Neurodiversity team is led by Helen Duncan, Senior Neurodiversity Adviser. Helen is a recognised specialist in her field with a number of recent academic papers and conference presentations. Her work on the development of evidenced-based disability policy has been recognised by the National Association of Disability Practitioners.

The term Neurodiversity emphasises that individuals with Specific Learning Difficulties, Autism Spectrum Conditions and ADHD have a cognitive profile that includes strengths as well as challenges, as do individuals without these diagnosis (the 'Neuro-typical'). It supports an approach which recognises *difference* not *deficit* supporting a social model of disability approach

#### Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs) support

Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs) is a term that covers a range of conditions such as Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia and, for the purposes of support and funding, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

#### Service Demands

The total number of current students who have disclosed a Specific Learning Difficulty, or were in the process of being diagnosed as of July 2019, was 1086 as against 1013 in July 2018. This is a 7% increase on the previous year. 205 students were referred for educational psychologist diagnosis following screenings. Data on the DRC service for students with Specific Learning Difficulties, is available in Appendix 2..

#### Service Development

Two transition events for all students were run before the start of MT 2018/19. The extended programme of workshops for students with SpLD (run as a result of feedback from students) ran successfully, and were developed and delivered by two of the DRC's specialist study skills tutors and the DRC's Neurodiversity team. Helen Duncan is continuing her research into exam access arrangements (with a focus on STEM subjects) as part of her ongoing PhD.

#### Specialist 1-1 Study Skills

Specialist 1-1 study skills is coordinated by the Disability Resource Centre. The DRC has a pool of four 1-1 specialist study skills tutors who support students who have been recommended this support by Educational Psychologists or DSAs Needs Assessors. A further two STEM study skills tutors are providing tailored support to STEM students. Specialist 1-1 study skills is funded either by the Reasonable Adjustments Fund or the International Disabled Students' Fund.

#### Evaluation of Service

All specialist study skills tutors are formally observed annually. PAToSS, the Professional Association for Teachers and Assessors of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties, has recognised the University of Cambridge's assessment model for SpLD as an example of best practice in the higher education sector. <https://www.patoss-dyslexia.org/Resources>

"I found that my conditions required different methods of studying, which I had not been familiar with. My highly experienced study skills tutor has helped me immensely in this regard."

"So brilliant - it has really helped me feel much more comfortable in myself and much more confident in my work and my potential"

"The advice I was given on how to collate my readings was really useful! Also so helpful to be given some coloured overlays!"



## Autism Support

The DRC has one full-time adviser assigned to supporting students with Autism (kindly funded by the Colleges).

### Service Demands

One of the two cohorts of disabled students where the steepest annual increase of disclosures was recorded were students with **Autism** (an **increase of 25% from 66 to 208, between July 2018 and July 2019**). Student survey feedback reflected this increased demand with a rise in dissatisfaction about lengthy waiting and response times.

### Service Development

Given the steep increase in workload due to high levels of disclosure, in 2018/19 the operation of the Autism Adviser role was adapted in that the adviser now works with other disability advisers to support the overall cohort of students with Autism, but has direct case-work responsibility for only those students where more specialist support is required. A Transition Event for incoming students with Autism Spectrum Conditions and their families/guardians is held every year before the beginning of Michaelmas Term.

### Service Evaluation

'In many ways my DRC appointment (an ASD screening) was very helpful and the reasonable adjustments and support offered were fantastic'

### Autism Social Groups

The DRC continues to run its weekly term-time social group for students with autism (which has been running since 2010), as well as a separate board games group.

### Pets as Therapy (PAT) Dog

Several students continued to work with the Pets as Therapy dog on a weekly or fortnightly basis. Data in appendix 3.2.

## 4. Disability Team

The Disability Team is led by the Senior Disability Adviser, Eleanor Girt-Izod. Eleanor is a highly experienced Disability Adviser who has managed disability services at other UK universities. During 2018/19 Rachel Demery was appointed to the role of Disability Adviser (Mental Health Lead) to help the DRC respond to the increasing demand for support from students disclosing mental health difficulties.

Disability Advisers carry out detailed investigations into the support requirements of incoming students who have disclosed a disability on their application. Support is then arranged in the months prior to an individual's arrival at University and communicated to academic and support staff via a Student Support Document (SSD). Disability Advisers provide on-going support and advice to students and staff after admission. They also work closely with students who become disabled or are diagnosed after admission. Advisers respond to initial enquiries from prospective students and set up pre-admissions visits to Cambridge for some prospective students.

### Service Demands

Student disclosures from those with a diagnosed **mental health difficulty** saw the highest annual increase of any disability category (an **increase of 30% from 805 to 1043**). As reported in previous years, the most pressing issues for the Disability Advisers relate to the increase in volume of support demands and increase in cases which require significant advisory time and resources. Caseloads for individual Advisers are in excess of 680 students.

### Service Development

A transitional support event for all incoming disabled students was held for the second year before the start of Michaelmas Term 2018/19.

### Service Evaluation

The 2019 DRC student survey had two main themes, one was dissatisfaction with waiting times (for appointments and responses to emails), but the second was satisfaction with the quality of the service once it was accessed.

“Really wonderful provision from my Disability Advisor, especially with coming up with solutions/support I had never even thought of. Replies to emails can be slow but I am aware that the DRC staff work really hard to support a very large number of students.”

“It took so long to get an appointment and was very difficult, but the actual appointment itself was amazingly thorough and detailed and really took the time to talk through things.”

“My disability advisor was fantastic, both caring and knowledgeable.”

### Specialist 1-1 Support

Disabled students often benefit from the provision of Non-Medical Help (NMH), and this support is often recommended within students' specialist evidence, including independent assessments of need. Disability Advisers work with the Disability Support Co-ordinator to ensure that disabled students are matched with support workers with the appropriate skills, experience and subject knowledge (for example note-takers and mentors). The DRC put in place over 10,000 hours of NMH support in 2018/19 (see appendix 4).

## 5. Non-Medical Help (NMH) Scheme

The Non-Medical Help Scheme provides coordinated human support for disabled students who require assistance in order to access their studies effectively. These recommendations are usually detailed in the Needs Assessment Reports for students, within specialist evidence, or as a result of assessment by a specialist adviser. The recruitment, training, and matching of NMHs to students is the responsibility of the Disability Support Co-ordinator and the Disability Development Consultant. The SpLD Administrator matches students with SpLDs to specialist 1-1 study skills tutors.

### Service Demands

The 2018/19 academic year saw an increase in NMH provision, with the total number of NMH support hours delivered to students increasing by 13.5%, from 9,719 to 11,104. The number of students accessing mentoring and study skills support has increased significantly. It should be noted that library, practical, laboratory and exam support are now devolved tasks which are funded by Departments and Colleges, and though the DRC often assists with the sourcing of staff, the hours delivered for these tasks are no longer part of DRC data. Data on hours of NMH support administered by the DRC can be found in Appendix 4.

### Service Development

In 2018/19, there were 94 NMHs supporting students, and training and events were held for them throughout the year. Mentoring training has also been reviewed and developed by the Disability Development Consultant and the Disability Support Co-ordinator over the year. The 39 mentors were offered optional training courses on Mental Health First Aid, a workshop on Borderline Personality Disorder, and online training provided by BEAT followed by a discussion on eating disorders.

### Evaluation of Service

The NMH scheme is evaluated annually as part of the Annual Student Survey, with 74% of respondents rating their NMH support as helpful or very helpful. The following are comments received from the 2019 Annual Survey:

“I am extraordinarily impressed by the quality of Non-Medical Help the University provides, how easy it is to get it if I need it, and how kind and dedicated my disability mentor and study skills mentor are. I have learned so much not only about how to manage my disability, but on the nature of my ADHD itself. It has helped me understand myself more not as a 'disabled' person, but as someone who thinks and works in different ideal conditions to what is normally provided.”

“I could not have asked for a better mentor. She is understanding and patient and respectful. She has made me feel comfortable and much more confident and settled and over the past 2 terms and I do not think my Cambridge experience would have been as smooth and successful without her support”

“XX was my mentor for all three years of my PhD and she was outstanding. I'm not at all convinced I could have managed the course without her help, advice and support”

## 6. Training

The Disability Resource Centre offers interactive, responsive training in a range of formats across the University and Colleges, through bespoke training courses developed in response to requests, and in conjunction with the Cambridge Centre for Teaching and Learning (CCTL), and collaborating on courses related to mental health with the Counselling Service, and on Autism with the Careers Service. The DRC also has training materials available via Moodle.

### Training courses

The DRC delivers training in support of disabled students, staff and visitors. Sessions promote disability equality by enabling staff to meet their responsibilities under the Equality Act (2010) and to work effectively and easily with disabled people.

Work continued around the needs of individual disabled students, and to support departments. Within the DRC, workshops and training for mentors in the NMH scheme continued and were developed. The DRC supported a number of activities in Colleges including staff training and tutorial staff briefings.

The Head of Centre delivered training to new college tutors in October and May. An online course for students transitioning to Cambridge has also been developed. The DRC is also developing an online module for academic and support staff on inclusive teaching and learning which will be launched in 2020.

## 7. Assistive Technology Service

The Assistive Technology (AT) service at the DRC is managed by Darran Bryant, the Assistive Technology Manager. Darran has over 25 years of experience at the University in the field of assistive technology. The Assistive Technology Manager has responsibility for the provision of assessment, training, guidance and advisory service provided to disabled students, staff supporting disabled students, and disabled University staff in relation to assistive technology, productivity tools and accessibility.

### Service Demands

During 2018-19, 30 one-to-one Assistive Technology sessions were provided to University staff. During the same period, 3 'Dragon Professional' class room based courses were delivered to both staff and students and the Assistive Technology Manager assisted in the special requirement set up of 4 separate Examinations. Darran is also a member of the University's Sub-Committee on Accessibility and works closely with the Head of the DRC in the development of projects, policies and initiatives related to accessibility. The Assistive Technology Manager is also tasked with keeping abreast of the latest developments in productivity tools and their application by students and staff in a teaching and learning setting.

### Service Development

A course on 'How to Produce Accessible Documents' was developed and 3 successful pilots were delivered to the Disability Liaison Officers (DLOs), staff at the University Information Service and the Department of Geography. This course will be opened to all University and College staff in 2019/20 in support of the development of greater digital accessibility across the Collegiate University.



A classroom-based course was developed to help University members who experience upper mobility issues, such as Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI), to effectively utilize Dragon Professional speech to text software package.

A seminar was delivered to approximately 80 members of staff from numerous College and Departments who form the Content Creation Group, on how to produce accessible documents, hosted by Jesus College.

The Assistive Technology Manager provided support and guidance to a number of University wide projects, which included the Sensus Access project (a self-service accessibility conversion service) and further enhancing Moodle accessibility.

### **Service Evaluation**

Feedback from staff who attended the Dragon Course:

*"Thanks Darran- great course. I asked my department to buy me a licence right after - which they did. It's really saving my wrists!"*

*"I now feel more confident to use Dragon with people and begin to improve my use of it".*

*"Very informative & useful. It is now putting theory into practice"*

### **Specialist 1-1 Support**

One-to one assistive technology sessions are available to both staff and students. Sessions available include speech recognition training, help for those with upper mobility difficulties (including RSI), dyslexia/dyspraxia sessions, ergonomic advice and software training.

## **8. Donations and Bursary Funds**

### **The Disabled Students' Bursary Fund**

This Fund was established in recognition of the additional expenses incurred by disabled students and to contribute to the costs of acquiring essential services or equipment. It is funded by donations made to the DRC for this purpose. The Guardians of the Fund consider applications throughout the year, and awards are administered by the DRC. In 2018/19, 9 awards were made to fund specialist equipment, Non-Medical Help, travel and accommodation costs. These awards totalled £4,419.

### **Donations**

The Disability Resource Centre is extremely grateful for the continued support from a number of donors who help support disabled students at the University. These funds have assisted many disabled students in accessing their learning over the last year. The donors include The Lady Hind Trust for funding towards a Pet as Therapy dog and the Crane's Fund for funding towards Loan Pool equipment. The City and University of Cambridge Masonic Charitable Trust gave a second instalment of £3000, honouring their pledge to donate £3000 a year for three years starting 2017-18. Enterprise Cars gave £1000 annually for three years in 2017. We thank the donors for their generosity.

### **The Charlie Bayne Travel Trust**

This Trust was set up in the memory of Charlie Bayne (1965–90) who spent four years as an undergraduate at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1985–89. The Trust offers travel grants to disabled undergraduate and postgraduate students at the University of Cambridge and at Anglia Ruskin University. In 2019, 8 awards were made, helping students to travel to many different destinations, including the United States, Eastern Europe, Germany, Italy and Cambridge. Our sincere thanks go to the Bayne family and the Trustees for their continued support of this valuable student trust.



**Figure 4. Charlie Bayne Travel Trust recipient Carlos Terrazas on his tour of Eastern Europe.**

## 9. Student Support Funds and Equipment Loan Pool

### **The Reasonable Adjustments Fund (RAF)**

The RAF provides for a range of Non-Medical Help tasks and assistive software for UK national disabled students studying at Cambridge. The implementation of the Reasonable Adjustments Fund has been beneficial to students as waiting times for support are considerably reduced. Students are now often matched to a Non-Medical Helper within one week of seeing their Disability Adviser. This is a huge improvement on the previous waiting times and there is no longer a requirement for interim funding from Colleges.

In 2018-19, 509 awards were made to a total of £395,776. The average award per student was £782.

### **The International Disabled Students' Fund (IDS Fund)**

The IDS Fund enables international disabled students to receive support equivalent to that received by their 'home' counterparts via Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) and the Reasonable Adjustments Fund (RAF). The Fund is managed and administered by the DRC.

In 2018-19, 160 awards were made, to a total of £143,847. The average award per student was £899. Three laptops were purchased from UIS for loan to international students on one year courses, saving money for the fund as each laptop will be able to be used by three students over three years.

The RAF and the IDS fund are both supported by contributions from the University and the Colleges. Sincere thanks go to the University and to the Colleges for supporting this important source of assistance for the growing population of disabled students at Cambridge.

Separate annual reports are produced for both funds which are received by the General Board's Education Committee and the Senior Tutors' Finance & Welfare Committee.

### **Equipment Loan Pool**

The loan pool for assistive technology and ergonomic equipment is funded through donations. It provides equipment for students waiting for funding to come into place and for staff to borrow following a referral from Occupational Health or the Assistive Technology Manager.

Support for the loan pool comes from Occupational Health and Safety Service (OHSS) who provide funds for staff equipment and the Crane's Charity for student equipment. The most popular items are audio recorders for students and ergonomic mice and keyboards for staff.



## 10. Events, Communications and Networks

### Events

The DRC supports, co-sponsors and contributes to a range of events, both independently and within the University's wider Equality and Diversity programme.

- The 16th Annual Disability Lecture, '*Mental health conditions are not synonymous with failure; a personal story*' was given by Poppy Jaman OBE, an internationally respected mental health advocate, national policy adviser and social entrepreneur. Poppy explored the factors impacting the mental health of staff and students. She described the support she received during her own recovery and how work was crucial to this.



**Figure 5. Poppy Jaman OBE at the 16th Annual Disability Lecture**

- The DRC offered information sessions and one-to-one guidance appointments for prospective students and their families as part of the University Open Days for Undergraduates and Postgraduates and as part of the Sutton Trust Summer Schools programme.
- A transitional event was run for incoming students with Autism Spectrum Conditions, and a transitional support event was run for all disabled students in the 2019 long vacation.

### Disability Liaison Officers (DLOs)

There are currently 164 DLO's and the DRC ran two events specifically for them during the academic year. One was held in April on creating accessible materials and one in September focusing on the work of the Office of Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals.

### Networking and Representation

DRC staff maintain strong links with national professional bodies, such as the National Association of Disability Practitioners (NADP), (of which John Harding, the Head of the DRC, and Joanna Hastwell, Asperger Syndrome Adviser, are Directors), and the Association of Dyslexia Specialists in Higher Education (ADSHE). The Head of the DRC represents the University at the Heads of Russell Group Disability Services Forum, and the pan-European LINK network of disability practitioners. DRC staff also attend national and regional Non-Medical Help groups and Funding Body Networks. The DRC receives requests for visits from UK, European and international Universities annually.



## 11. Appendices

### Appendix 1: Student Data

<b>Current disabled students (total)</b>	<b>3268</b>
Undergraduates	1970
Graduates	1298

Table 1.1 Total number of disabled students as of July 2019

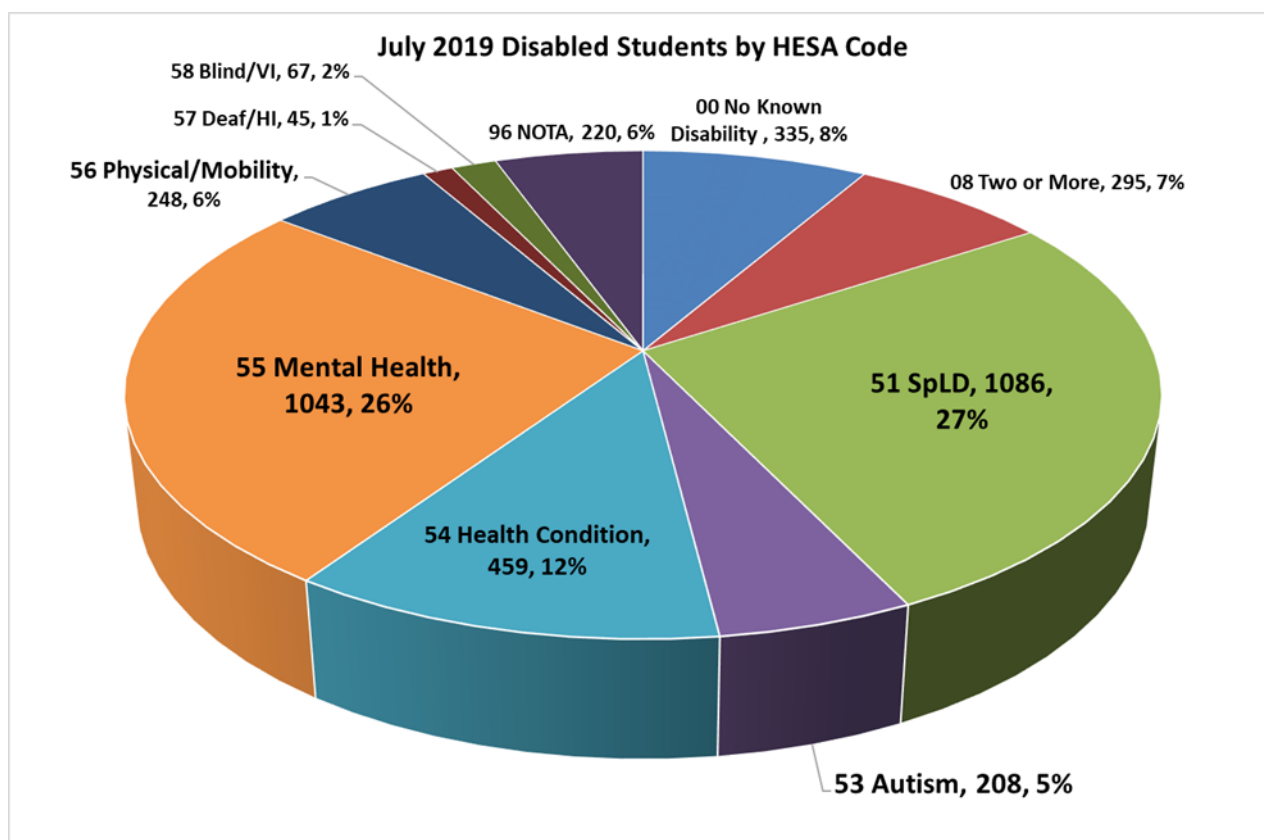


Figure 1.1 Disability Disclosures by HESA categories as of July 2019

## Appendix 2: Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) Data

Activity/Year	2017-18	2018-19
Initial interviews/screenings	245	225
Educational Psychologist diagnostic referrals	179	205
Report feedback sessions	92	115
Support review	168	168
<b>Total Appointments</b>	<b>684</b>	<b>713</b>

Table 2.1 Appointments and screenings undertaken by SpLD Advisers

## Appendix 3: Disability Data (non-SpLD)

Activity	2017-18	2018-19
Disability Adviser appointments	789	729*
Asperger Syndrome Screening	41	57
<b>Total Appointments</b>	<b>830</b>	<b>786</b>

Table 3.1 Appointments and screenings undertaken by Disability Advisers

\* Data on appointments affected by the long-term absence of one adviser during this period.

Activity	MT 2018	LT 2019	ET 2019	Total Student Attendance 18-19
Sessions Run	8	8	8	300

Table 3.2 Sessions with Pets as Therapy (PAT) dog

## Appendix 4: Non-Medical Help (NMH) Scheme Data

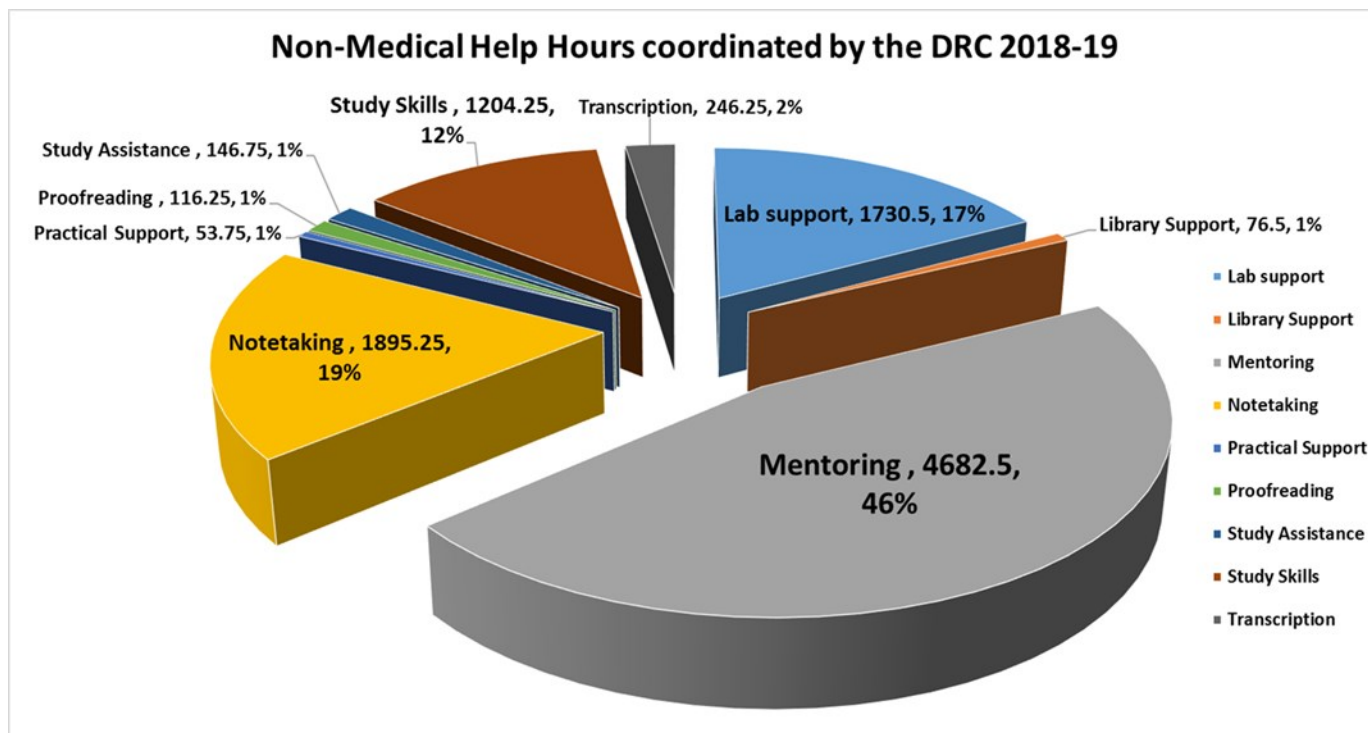


Figure 4.1 Breakdown of 2018/19 NMH hours by task

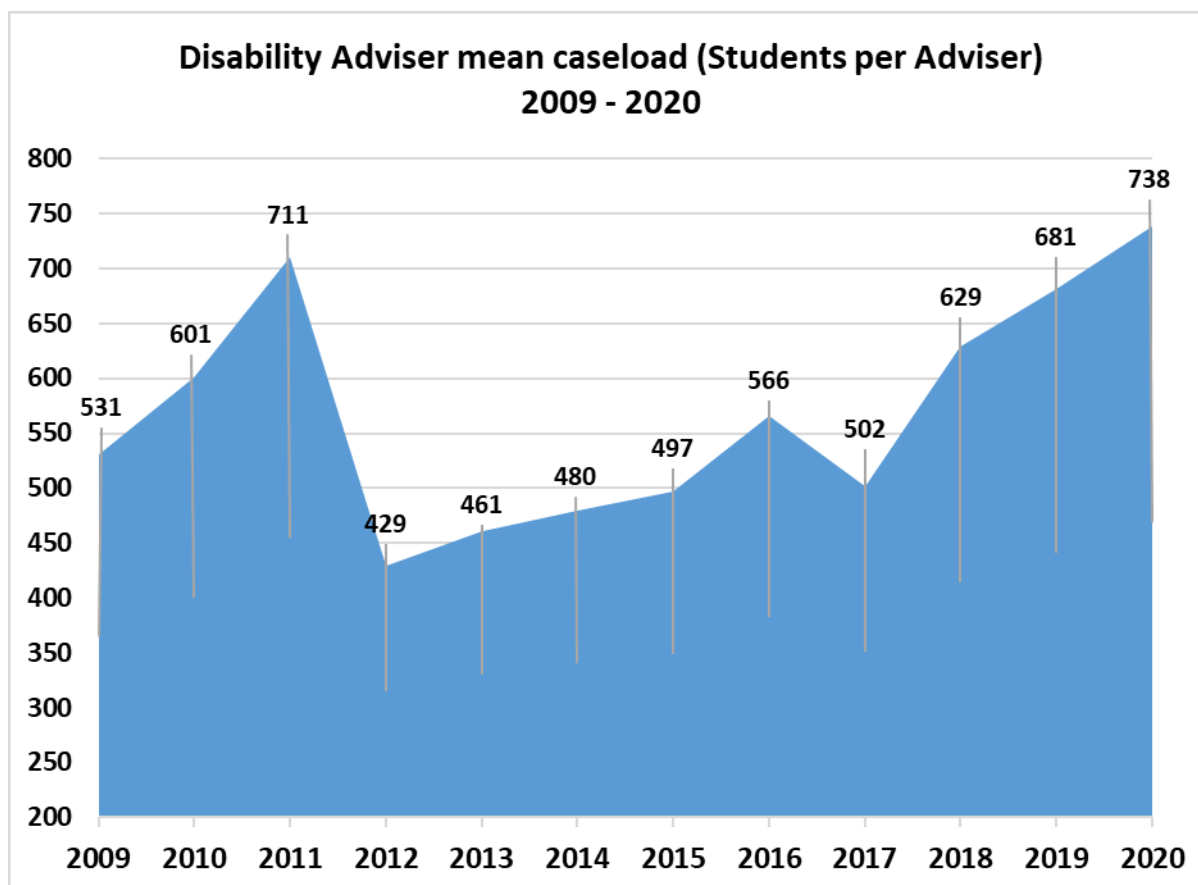


Figure 4.2 Disability Adviser Caseload 2009-2020

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