



HOW TO GET
THE SUPPORT
YOU REALLY NEED

ONE
SIZE
FITS
NONE



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION TO DSA
WHAT SHOULD IT BE?

WHAT IS DSA RIGHT NOW?
IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

SAYING NO
WHAT HAPPENS NEXT
THE IMPACT OF CHANGE
IMPORTANT CONTACTS

INTRODUCTION TO DSA

Applying for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) is a great move towards getting the support you need to succeed in university! But here's the thing, while DSA provides crucial help for those students who need it, it's not always a perfect fit right out of the box. Just like each person's strengths, challenges and learning styles are unique to them, so should your support be.

When it comes to support, some providers think "standard" means "sufficient". (Spoiler alert, it doesn't.)

This guide is here to help you navigate the DSA process, understand your rights and how to advocate for the adjustments that work best for you.

DSA TIMELINE



Step 1:
Apply for DSA

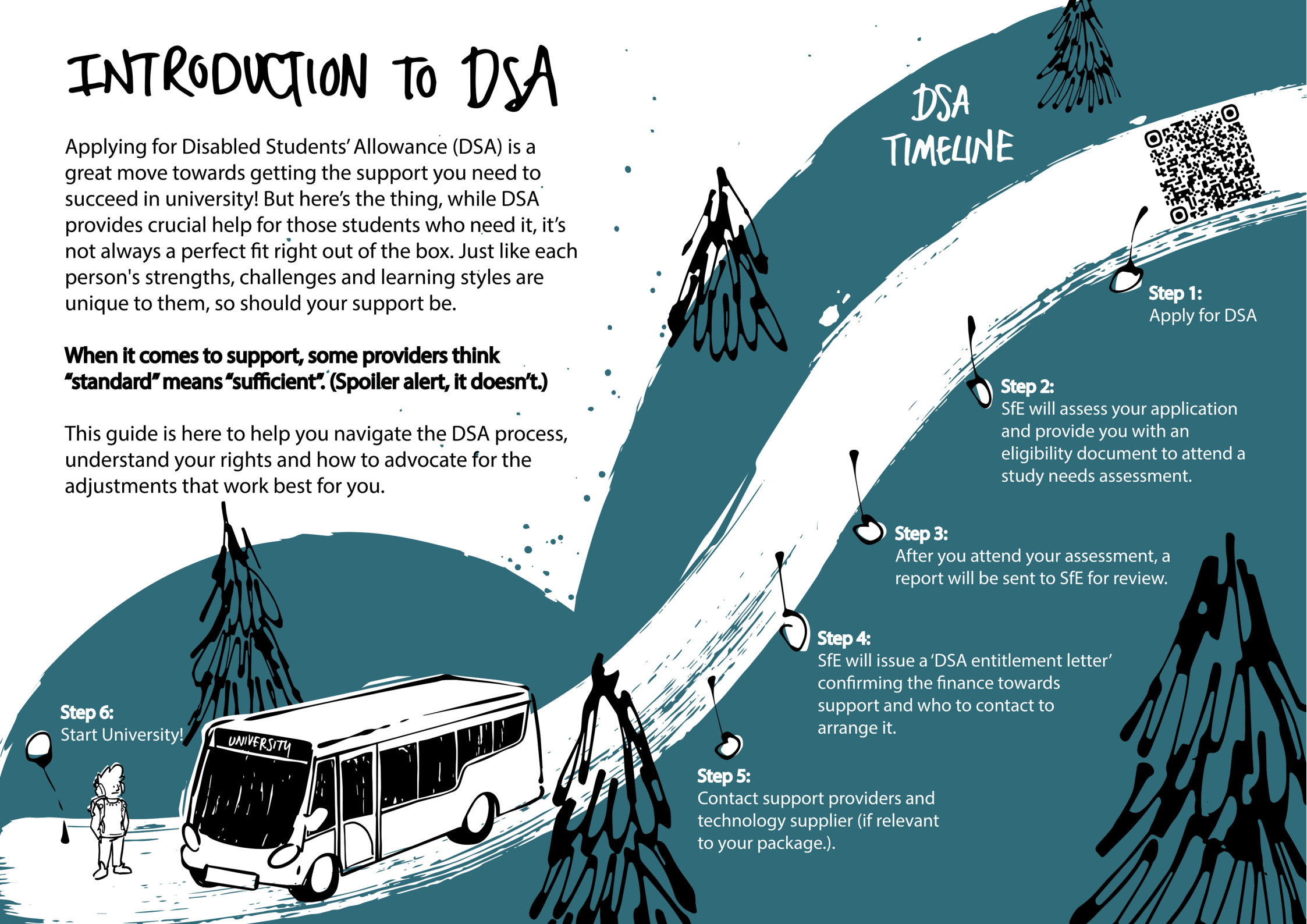
Step 2:
SfE will assess your application and provide you with an eligibility document to attend a study needs assessment.

Step 3:
After you attend your assessment, a report will be sent to SfE for review.

Step 4:
SfE will issue a 'DSA entitlement letter' confirming the finance towards support and who to contact to arrange it.

Step 5:
Contact support providers and technology supplier (if relevant to your package.).

Step 6:
Start University!



WHAT SHOULD IT BE?

When the government set up DSA, the goal was simple: provide a non-repayable grant to make higher education accessible to everyone, regardless of disability. Brilliant! Since then, they've promised "ambitious reforms" and new Access and Participation Plans (guidelines for improving equality of opportunity in higher education)¹. **In theory, the whole process should be simple, inclusive, and accessible.**

For a system designed to support disabled students, you'd expect no compromises. With 46% of non-disabled people achieving a degree as their highest qualification², shouldn't disabled students have the same outlook?

¹Bolton, P. and Lewis, J., (2023) Equality of access and outcomes in higher education in England

²Outcomes for disabled people in the UK - Office for National Statistics

³Equality Act 2010, c. 15

After all, according to the Equality Act 2010, higher education providers have a responsibility to "increase equality of opportunity..."³

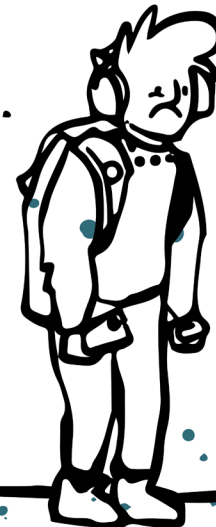


WHAT IS DSA RIGHT NOW?

DSA has undoubtedly helped many disabled students access higher education by providing essential resources for equality at university level. But for those who don't fit into the one size fits all system, what happens? Only 24% of disabled people hold a degree as their highest qualification¹, with autistic students being the least likely to complete their studies - just 21% receive the support they need².

The government recognises these disparities, noting that insufficient advice and support both before and during university is a significant barrier to equal access, participation, and outcomes for disabled students. So, what can we do?

While we wait for the government to move at its usual pace, there are actions you can take now.



¹Outcomes for disabled people in the UK - Office for National Statistics

²North East Autism Society. (2023). Autistic students most likely to drop out of university: investigation

IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

It's a common feeling when things aren't going in the right direction, that maybe you should just accept it. After all, you've been given the support, right? The truth is if it doesn't feel right, that intuition is worth paying attention to. It can be a challenging thing to address, particularly if it's your first time in higher education or engaging with DSA.

Every student is unique and what works for one student may not work for another.

Acknowledging your support package needs adjusting doesn't mean you're being difficult or causing issues, it means you are advocating for what you genuinely need to help you succeed.

*THIS
Sucks.*



SAVING NO

USE THIS
EMAIL TEMPLATE
TO CONTACT YOUR
STUDENT SUPPORT!



Subject: Request for adjustments in DSA support

Dear **(Student Support Advisors name/Student Support Services Team)**,

I'm reaching out to discuss the support I've been receiving through DSA, as I've found that certain aspects aren't effectively meeting my needs. I appreciate the assistance provided so far, but I believe a few adjustments could make a significant difference in supporting my academic success.

Currently I've encountered challenges with the following areas:

Example 1: **Specific Support Issue**

Describe issue briefly, eg. "The study assistant I have been provided isn't able to meet me in person as they aren't based locally..."

Follow up with a suggestion for how this could be improved, eg. "I would like to be referred to a new provider who could meet me regularly on campus to help with my studies"

Continue with as many examples as needed

Thank you for your time and attention to this request. I'd be grateful for the opportunity to meet in person and discuss these adjustments in more detail, as I believe they would make a meaningful difference to my experience here at University. Please let me know if there is any additional information I can provide.

Looking forward to your response.

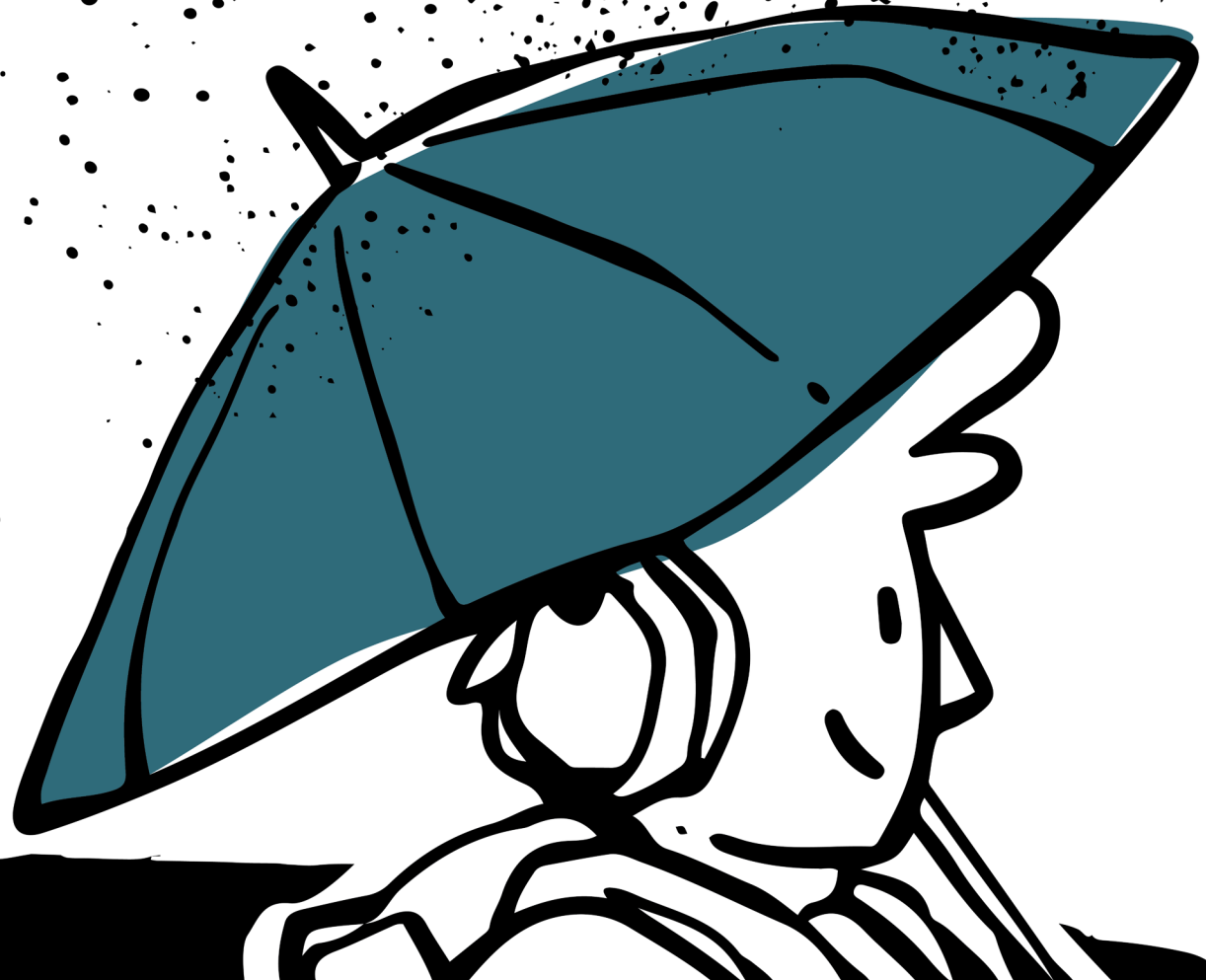
Many thanks,
(Your Name)
(University ID)

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT.

You did it! The scary part is over! After you send the email, you'll likely receive a response from Student Support Services inviting you to discuss your request further, either through a meeting or by phone.

This meeting is an important chance to talk openly about what's working, what isn't, and any adjustments that could make a difference for you. Be prepared to go over your specific needs and bring any examples of how the current support falls short.

Regularly checking and responding to emails during this process is essential. Replying promptly helps keep the conversation moving and shows that you're committed to finding the right support. Student Support Services are there to help, but the process is more effective when you're actively involved. **Staying engaged means you'll have more control over the changes made, ensuring they align closely with what will benefit you most!**

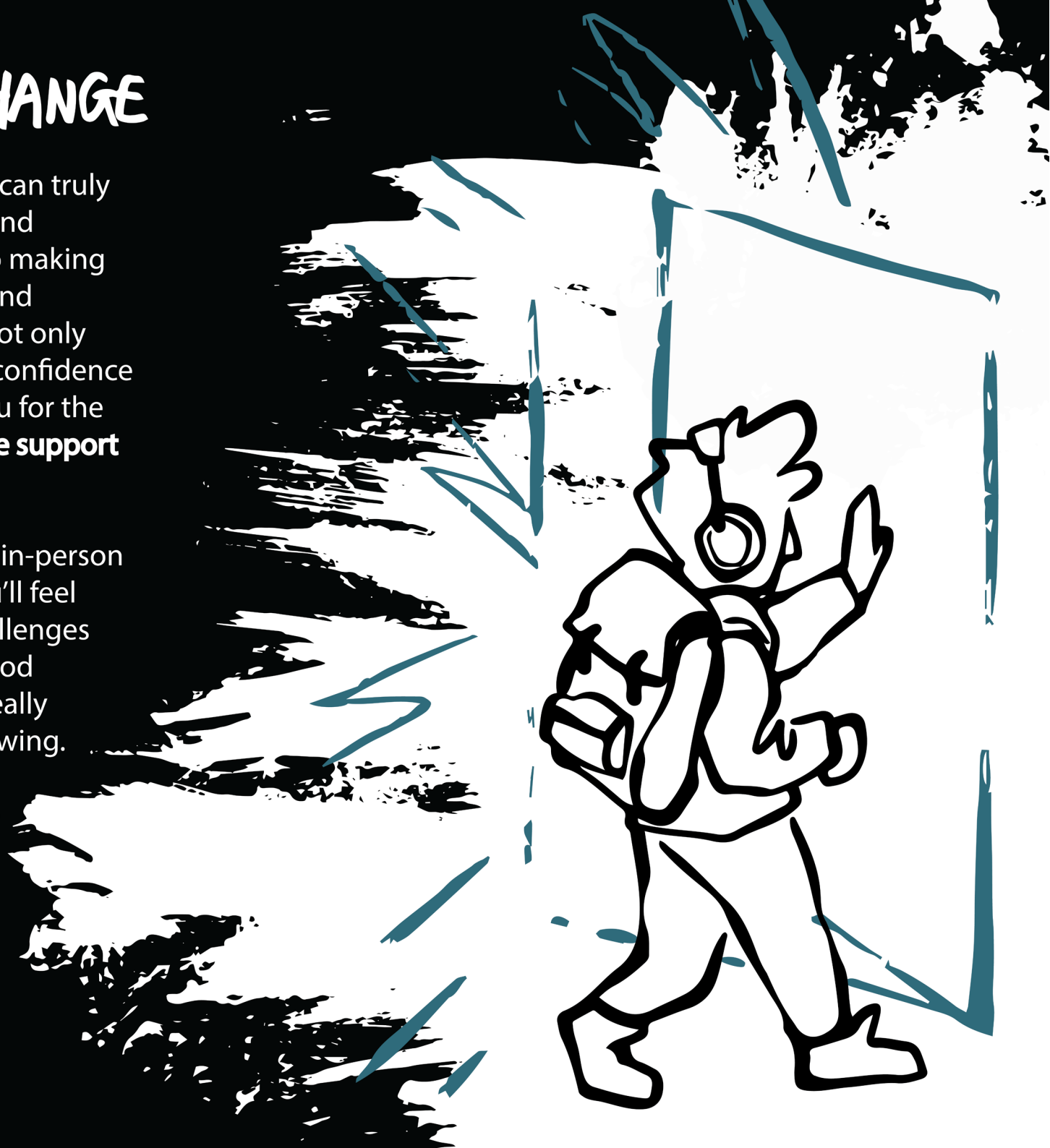


THE IMPACT OF CHANGE

Having the right DSA support in place can truly transform your university experience and advocating for your needs is the key to making that happen. When you step forward and communicate what you need, you're not only shaping your education, but building confidence and independence that will benefit you for the rest of your life. **Ultimately, you deserve support that helps you succeed.**

With the right resources in place, from in-person mentoring to assistive technology, you'll feel more prepared to tackle academic challenges and make the most of your studies. Good support allows you to focus on what really matters: learning, connecting, and growing.

Remember, your university experience shouldn't be about just getting by, it's about exploration and achieving what you set out to accomplish!



CONTACTS

NOTES + IMPORTANT INFORMATION



DSA approved in-person support provider for university students based in Devon UK



admin@f2fsupport.co.uk



07834 560573



UCAS ADVICE FOR DISABLED STUDENTS

Further information about
DSA eligibility, the
application process, and
the support available



ucas_online



03714 680468



STUDENT FINANCE
ENGLAND

Information and supporting materials for SF products and services



03001 000607

DSA CONTACT:
dsa_team@slc.co.uk



DEPARTMENT
FOR EDUCATION

Contact form for DfE to submit a question, complaint, disclosure, or FOI request