AA:

I’m back again with Neil Johnston and Richard Wood from the ‘Men into Professional Care’ 2019-20 class. They’re going to talk about support – the kind of support that might be needed, whether you were expecting to need that support or if it came as a surprise to you, or how you felt about asking for support. What kind of forms does this support take? How you go about putting that into place, whether it's formal through the college or informal through peers. So, over to you guys.

NJ:

For myself, when I thought about ‘support’ and what that meant to me and what it looked like when I started this journey, there were a few things that came to mind. The first thing was that we have a massive opportunity – and anybody does – to support each other as a team, with your classmates, when you start the journey. I think if you look at it that way it can be hugely beneficial as the year goes on, to help each other out. Talk to each other, share learning with each other, share expectations, any fears, anything that’s on your mind, and that can be a huge support. Even if it’s ten minutes before your day begins, when you’re in the canteen, or it’s ten minutes when the day ends, to discuss something that was on your mind. I think that helps. It helped *me*, anyway, massively.

RW:

So, for myself,  the support was something that was really important for me. It's something that I'm quite open about now, but hadn't been previously. I've suffered all the way through my life with some mental health issues. In my work history, it was something that I kept very, very hidden, but when I decided to come back to education and to start this process I decided that was something I wasn't going to do anymore. That's been an important part of my own recovery process.

So, for the first time, I was quite open and honest regarding the support that I may need. And all I can say is that […] there has been nothing short of good support. Based on some answers on my application, I was invited to come in for a needs assessment, which was great, no problem. And off the back of that, the college created what was called an ELS (extended learning support) assessment for me. That just basically explains any extra support that I may need and makes sure that all the tutors are aware of what I potentially might need, what has been agreed and what's available. I haven't needed to really use it so far, but it's really comforting to know that it's there.

The whole process was painless and reassuring. It was a very positive thing to do, so I would recommend that if anybody feels that they need any sort of support for anything, physical, mental, whatever, I would recommend being as open and honest about it as possible. You're not going to get anything negative from the college.

NJ:

The other thing that I thought was a huge piece of support, though I wasn't really aware of at the time, was the Prep for HE work. Looking back, I think I looked at that as it was just another class, it was what had to be done, and I had to make sure it was up to date. It wasn’t until probably the last three or four months that I looked back on that and could see the real benefit of it, how much it sat beside each unit or each class. There’s so much information there, whether it be reading, or tips for listening, research tips – there’s loads within it. If you use it really well and wisely, it can sit beside units like Comms […] or when you’re doing assessments and exams. That’s a huge piece of support we have available to us, if we use it in the correct way or if we take in as much of it as we possibly can.