

## Case Study:

### The Value of Flexibility in Mental Health Support Provision

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#### The context:

City of Sunderland College welcomes learners with Mental Health Difficulties

#### The challenge:

Fern was a student on the Business National Diploma Course at Bede VI Form (2007/08). She had been diagnosed as having Panic Disorder by a NHS Psychiatrist and a private therapist. Symptoms of Panic Disorder include: an abrupt surge of intense anxiety manifested through breathing difficulty, palpitations, feelings of unreality, pains or tightness in the chest, trembling, dizziness, feeling unsteady, sweating, feeling faint, a fear of losing control or even of dying, tingling in hands and feet.

Fern submitted a hand-written letter to her Personal Tutor outlining her difficulties; she wished to attend College but her profound panic attacks prevented her from doing this. Her Personal Tutor sought advice from the Disability Strategy (DS) Team.

#### What we did:

A Case Conference involving Bede VI Form management, DS Team and Business Course Leaders decided to implement the following Programme for Fern:-

- DS Team member and Business Tutor to meet with Fern at an alternative venue near to Bede Centre (Café in Barnes Park) initially once a week, increasing to twice a week.
- Fern would submit work for marking and/or advice.
- This process would be conducted on a Graded Exposure basis i.e. Fern would be gradually exposed to the idea of returning to the main college site.
- Academic progress would be monitored.

- DS Team member to liaise between the family and the VI Form

**The outcomes:**


- After initial reluctance and manifestations of Panic Disorder, Fern managed to attend the alternative venue on a regular basis.
- Re-allocation to programme more appropriate for current needs and personal and educational demands and to ensure evidence of achievement.
- Fern successfully accessing the main Bede Centre for arranged sessions.
- Completing a video of Fern talking about Panic Disorder. (This was eventually used as part of the College's World Mental Health Day activities.)
- Arrangement of mentor provision to explore bus journeys to other centres.

**The impact:**

Fern is attending the College's Science BSc Level Zero Course at Shiney Row Centre. Her attendance is 91.94%.

**Supporting documentation:**

- Please download the following link to view the [Panic Disorder DVD](#)

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