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Case Study: E.D.

E.D. is a young women in her early 20’s who has had a diagnosis of autism for some years now. She had 1 to 1 support in school and has significant struggles with social interaction and communication. E.D. struggles to understand other people have different thoughts and emotions then she does and needs a lot of clarification around these areas to support her understanding of social and emotional issues. She has struggled to make friends due to her very blunt and direct way of speaking. She says, “There was nothing for me before the Hub. There was nowhere I could go in Halifax that was right for me.” E.D. had support during her school years but no support as an adult. Until the Halifax Hub opened for business there was nowhere for E.D. to get the support she needed.

E.D. first contacted SAS via email and state, “I am happy with the way things are at this moment in time but the people around me insist that I need help.” She went on to say, “I’ll possibly be coming to the Halifax SAS in the upcoming week whether I like it or not.” It was clear from this email that E.D. felt pressured to attend the Halifax Hub. I contacted her and told her that she did not have to attend if she did not want to but it would be nice to meet and talk about the Hub, the things we do and whether she would like to attend. She agreed to an initial meeting and a taster session.

E.D. presented as a happy, upbeat person who is quite self aware and understands the barriers that exist regarding her understanding and engagement with social situations. She struggles with the subtleties of language and is very literal in the way she speaks and understands. She has a monotone voice and says what she thinks which leads to inappropriate comments. She also stares at people rather then glancing or casually looking which can also cause her problems.

E.D. did not know what to expect when she attended the Halifax Hub and on her first day upset one of the members because of the way she stared at them. E.D. was good at explaining her difficulties in this area and the two of them struck up a good conversation. E.D. enjoyed her taster session and has been attending the Hub regularly since last November. We have done work around conversation skills, concepts around personal awareness and understanding autistic behaviour patterns and neuro-typical behaviour patterns. E.D. has also contributed some really valuable ideas for the animation project.

E.D. started out by being a somewhat unwilling participant in the Hub but has made friends and feels very comfortable amongst the other members. Contributing to conversations and feeling safe to engage without worrying about being judged or misunderstood. She even came to the SAS Christmas party in Bradford where, with support, she engaged with other staff and members, took part in games and competitions, won prizes and even had a dance and a sing on the Karaoke. Things E.D. would never normally do. E.D. said that she never gets the chance to do these things because people don’t, “get her.” So she really enjoyed doing something social in a safe environment.

E.D. has become more confident and relaxed since attending the Halifax Hub and we are now referring her to our employment programme(also in Halifax) to look at employment and other work related opportunities. E.D. enjoys the company of the other members and feels relaxed and safe at the Hub. She has said several times that she would not be able to engage in this way if the Hub was not there.