

Positive beginnings to a better life & future
Employability

1. Client story

Helen, a 36 year old single parent, was a referral from Pitsmoor surgery through SOARs GP Signposting Service.

Helen arrived 45 mins early! On her first meeting with me. It was obvious from the start that Helen, was very articulate, well presented and an intelligent lady.

Helen, explained in quite detail, her life situation, as I explained that improving someone's health was quite a complex thing, and lots of other factors come into play.

Helen explained that she had Aspergers and so had her 17 year old son, she also has a 10 year old son and is a single parent. Helen has been unemployed for over 7 years. She explained that due to recent bullying from people at her son's school and comments made about her not working, her confidence was very low.

The Asperger's had made her life feel isolated and had given her the sense of never quite fitting in.

2. Reason for support

It was quite obvious from the onset that Helen, has lost a great deal of confidence, being unemployed and at home over many years. It was also obvious that like many people Helen had a great deal to give, and had a great deal of talent that was not being used, due to her lack of confidence and self esteem.

I suggested to Helen that with her personal experience of Art Therapy classes, that she had run in the past, along with her in-depth knowledge of Aspergers, she would make a great Mental Health Champion, in her local community.

I suggested to her that volunteering would help her gain her confidence and make her see what I could see that she has so much to give. I also pointed out that this would also give her the work experience that is so necessary for any job that she will apply for in the future. Plus she would make great links and meet people in a work environment.

Helen again, took this fully onboard and seemed very motivated to make a change in her life. She praised me for being so positive towards her and Helen said;

"you have changed my life around in an hour and it is so nice to be around someone who is so positive, being around negative people has really got me down over the years. I am so glad I came here".

3. Action Taken

After explaining fully what a Health Trainer was and saying today was for us to get to know each other. Helen seemed delighted at the prospect of someone like myself working with her.

Helen's main need was emotional support, in re building her confidence. I sympathised with Helen, and indicated that as like her I had personal experience of

Asperger's in the family and had also studied it. So I was able to understand the limitation's that having this would put on her life.

From a health point of view she came with specific goals, of wanting to include more protein into her diet. We discussed with the help of leaflets, how this was possible. I gave Helen, a recipe off the slimming world website, for Chickpea Cake! This unusual recipe, being packed with essential protein for a healthy diet.

Her assessment indicated she ate very little fruit. Discussing this more indepthly, it was obvious that the main reason for this, was, Helen's weekly shopping routine, which is defined by her Aspergers. Helen hated going to the supermarket, so did it once a week on a Monday, so fresh ingredients were gone a few days later.

She also was unable to budget her money too. I was able to help Helen plan out her shopping a little better, and encouraged Helen to try smaller local shops where she would feel more at ease. I was sympathetic to the barriers, that change in routine can be quite difficult, for people with Aspergers.

Helen said;

"once it's in the routine, I will be fine, it's just getting it in I need to push myself with".

4. The nature of change

I could see Helen's self esteem building, and she said to me that she was beginning to worry less of what other's thought of her, and concentrating more on herself and her future. She was already feeling much more positive and again thanked me for being so positive and again, said it was so nice to be around such positive people. Helen is eating a much healthier diet, she now goes out cycling regularly.

5. Next Steps

SOAR 'New Brew' Social Cafe

I arranged to meet Helen, the next time at a Social Café, run by SOAR at the Learning Zone at Parson Cross.

I felt this would help Helen in several different ways; to help her get out the house and mix more within her community, meet others in a similar situation, and also see that she could end up doing some voluntary work in this lovely friendly environment.

I felt me being at The Social Café would make it easier for Helen to attend the first time. I was able to introduce Helen to several people there, including staff from SOAR and Sheffield Mind. Helen really seemed to enjoy her time there and is obviously going to be a regular.

SOAR Mental Health Champion (Sheffield Cubed/Sheffield Mind)

Helen, has now signed up to be a SOAR Mental health champion.

She was encouraged by staff at SOAR and Sheffield Mind to start her own, self help group for parents of children in Sheffield who have Aspergers. Indicating that there is a real need for this and Helen's knowledge and expertise, would be invaluable.

She is also hoping to liaise with local schools to offer art therapy workshops for parents within Burngreave schools. Again with my encouragement, Helen is considering studying, with the Open University, to further help her employability.

She is looking forward to the future in a much more positive way.

6. Interaction between Soar and NHS

I gave feedback to Helen's GP a week after the referral, indicating that Helen, had taken on enthusiastically the Health Trainer service, I will also give feedback at the end of the process, via the Soar GP feedback form.

Through meeting them at the Social café, Sheffield Mind, especially Rob Lawson, has been a great support to Helen.

SOAR Staff: Pam Daniel (Health Trainer)

Referrer: Dr Glasher

GP Surgery: Pitsmoor Surgery

SOAR Services involved:

- GP Signposting Service
- Health Trainer
- The 'New Brew' Social Café
- Mental Health Champion

Sessions:

- Client seen six times in one to one Health Trainer sessions.
- Plus accompanied visits to Soar's 'New Brew' Social Café.

