

Activity Agreements Opportunities for All

Midlothian



Bell from Midlothian – My Journey

Bell was 16 when she was referred for an Activity Agreement by her Guidance Teacher. She has mental health issues and at this point her self-esteem, confidence and motivation were so low that she rarely left the house, unable to sustain mainstream school attendance or keep appointments with other professionals.

School delivered Bell's senior phase of learning, off campus. She managed to attend two days a week and achieved a Level 3 in maths and English. As part of Opportunities for All, Bell was then offered additional support to make the transition to further learning, training or employment, through an Activity Agreement. This was offered to her by a Trusted Professional, a consistent worker who would give her one-to-one support throughout her participation and help her plan and review a relevant programme of activities to meet her needs.

An Activity Agreement is not just the activities and the support, but an approach to working with vulnerable young people. Bell's Trusted Professional used a needs-led approach to engaging her in an Activity Agreement. She began by meeting Bell at home once a week. This continued for several weeks until Bell agreed to go out for a coffee. This was a huge step for Bell. Gradually, by working at her pace, Bell began to trust her Trusted Professional and opened up; beginning to talk about her interests and the things she felt was holding her back. The opportunity to go at her own pace was key to ensuring Bell's engagement and in making sure that she was ready to sustain participation once she began activities.

Bell's Trusted Professional arranged for her to attend counselling and one-to-one support through Midlothian Young People's Advice Service (MYPAS). At Bell's request, her Trusted Professional helped her travel to the sessions. These confidential sessions helped Bell to manage her mental health problems and build her self-esteem, so that she would be able to move forward with her life. Bell's Trusted Professional continued to meet with Bell, weekly, focusing on confidence building and motivation.

Once Bell felt ready, her Trusted Professional offered her the chance to take part in a Girls Group. The group gave Bell the opportunity to interact with her peers and take part in a range of activities to build her self-esteem. By the end of the group Bell could see how far she had come. Bell was now able to talk about her hopes for the future and decided she would like to pursue a career in mental health and achieve further qualifications.

With this in mind the next stage of her Activity Agreement enabled Bell to undertake a Preparation for College course and receive support from Midlothian Adult Literacy and Numeracy Initiative. Her Trusted Professional continues to offer Bell support as she makes the transition into volunteering and potentially further education.

"My Transition Support Worker was easy to talk to and I felt comfortable doing this. It has really helped me move on and it was good having lots of time to do this. I didn't feel any pressure". (Bell)