

## Case Study “ Jane” 2015

Jane, a quiet person in her early 60s, was employed as a social worker until she became unable to continue working due to her developing an enduring mental health condition.

Jane began attending the art group with extreme anxiety. Although she wanted to explore art she found it very hard being in any social space. Through years of persevering with the anxiety and working in her own way, at her own pace, she has become one of the most regular attenders and has produced many pieces of work for exhibitions. Jane has needed regular one to one support at the beginning of a group in order to attend, or would experience levels of anxiety that prevented her taking part. The art work gave her an opportunity to focus away from her problems but she needed encouragement and understanding of her condition to be able to do this. Her confidence was noticeably low but she has found the ability to work and in her own words, transform anxiety into creativity.

She has now developed her own unique style in her art work and encourages others within the group sometimes. She worked very hard at this by creating a space for herself to manage her anxiety. She has never felt able to attend an art group outing but actively engages in the group and also now uses the café which she felt unable to do.

Jane also has a diagnosis of Spondylitis , a progressive and degenerative condition affecting her lower back. She finds walking improves her overall health and sense of mobility. She describes below the benefits of attending the centre in her own words:

*I have been attending the Stafford Centre for about 5 years now. Initially I came to joining the walking group- I love- to walk-it benefits both my mental and physical wellbeing, but its not something g I can do on my own, because I feel too anxious and unsafe. It also helps relieve me of my social anxiety, in the walking group I can socialise in a gentle unpressured way.*

*I also attend the art group which stimulates me in other ways. Being in a group is extremely difficult for me but I have found a place where I can feel safe, I can interact from a distance, and with a lot of support and encouragement I have tried various forms of art. I find it therapeutic and relaxing. Through attending both these groups I am able to forget about the worries and stresses of my mental health issues at least for a couple of hours and the benefits last far beyond the actual attendance time, I feel better and more able to relax.*

*The structure and routine of attending the centre twice a week are very important in my life.*

*The centre is like a sanctuary, one of the few places I feel safe. There is a definite improvement in my life since I have come: my confidence has increased, I feel less anxious and stressed which gives me better quality of life and enjoyment of life. I've*

*been able to find my own way of getting g benefit from the centre. In short-the centre lifts my mood!*

*When I began attending I could not handle coming to the cafe ,it took me a year to cope with the “busyness” due to my anxiety. I used to get a tea from a worker and take it upstairs. Now I can cope and join the café for a break, I still find it daunting but can manage it.*

*The continuity/ reliability of support has also been crucial to my continued recovery and wellbeing. In December 2014 an organisation that I relied on for one to one support underwent some structural changes which resulted in me losing, at one weeks’ notice, the consistent support of a worker I had been seeing for 6 years. This was an enormous blow and it was extremely difficult adjusting to this sudden “hole “in my life.*

*The Stafford Centre and this one to one support are the 2 key factors which help me maintain and improve my mental and physical health.*

*I feel that without the centre’s continued support at this time I would have lost the significant ground I had gained in my mental and physical wellbeing.*

*I can’t fully express how much the centre helped me through this sudden loss of support.*

*I benefitted from the continuity of the same familiar people, the warm, caring atmosphere, the walking and art groups. I felt I wasn’t alone in my distress- The Stafford Centre was my lifeline.*