



**Prepare for Life**  
Boscombe, BH5 1DD

**Tutor:** Rachel  
**Learner:** AL

### **The learner starting point**

AL had been out of education for some time and has suffered with his anxiety and confidence since. Due to this anxiety, he rarely left the house, so the initial engagement meeting had to be held at his home. AL struggled to communicate and engage with people he did not know.

### **The learner journey**

Natalie (Engagement Manager) and Jon (Mentor) both attended the initial engagement meeting at AL's home. It was identified that AL would need support transitioning to centre as he was incredibly anxious about change.

AL would rarely leave his home so to begin Jon (mentor) would just take him on local walks around his estate. AL was anxious and lacked confidence around new people, so these short walks were designed to not only get him out of the house but to also get him used to Jon.

AL soon became more comfortable around Jon and would have open and honest conversations, talking about his situation and his hope to improve this. AL also discussed situations that made him anxious and, together, Jon and AL set targets to help improve his confidence in these areas. A couple of things that AL identified that he struggles with is travelling away from home and going into large busy shops. Through targets set Jon looked to support AL in improving his confidence in situations like this.

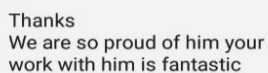
Mudford Quay was near AL's home so was a good place to start. By this point, AL was more confident with Jon so was happy to travel a short distance away from home in Jon's car. Whilst at Mudford Quay Jon took him into a large busy shop. AL expressed that he was worried everyone would be looking at him. Jon managed to encourage him into the shop and then pointed out to AL that no one was looking at him. This experience was a big step for AL, and it seemed to make him feel a lot happier and more confident in these situations.

Jon was then able to take AL further afield to Sandbanks and also for a walk at Badbury Rings. This was an outcome that would not have been achievable during the first meeting with AL considering that AL would rarely leave his home then.

Due to COVID it was not possible to take AL out in the car but Jon still met with him and they would go for long walks instead. Jon encouraged AL to have conversations and this, not only, helped improve his communication skills but also really helped to build his confidence and self-esteem.

AL was initially due to start the Pathways programme in November 2020 but on the day of the induction, his anxiety was too high so Jon and Joanne (AL's mum) agreed that the mentoring programme should continue.

The long-term plan was for AL to have enough confidence and to be able to deal with his anxiety so he could start attending the SWRAC Pathways programme. To work towards this Jon would start by driving past the centre with AL and then progressed to walking around the outside of the building. As time went on, AL's confidence grew and he was able to go into the centre to have a look round, to see where his classroom would be and to meet other staff and learners. This all helped AL build up a picture of how pleasant and relaxed the centre was and he was getting excited to start.



Thanks  
We are so proud of him your  
work with him is fantastic

Figure 2: Text from AL's mum to Jon (mentor)

AL's parents commented to Jon that they were very proud of AL and his efforts to overcome his anxiety in different situations. They said they had noticed a positive change in AL.

AL was then due to start the Pathways Programme in Feb 2021 and he had now become familiar with the setting and some of the staff. Jon supported AL when he started Pathways but, unfortunately, on his first day AL struggled with his anxiety and would not get out of the car. With encouragement from Jon and the other staff, AL came back on the second day and this time managed to make it into class. Jon continued to attend the Pathways course with AL until he felt more settled.

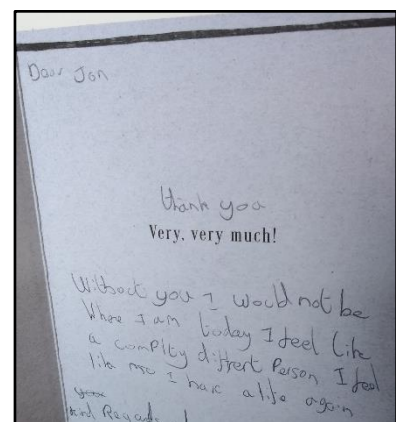


Figure 1: A thank you card from AL to Jon (mentor)

AL's attendance was not great when he first started often missing a couple of days a week. Rachel (tutor) had conversations with AL about the importance of attending whilst offering support and encouragement. After a few weeks AL's attendance had started to improve.

When AL started the programme, he was initially very quiet with the staff and other learners but soon he began to gel with the rest of the group. He was in a small Pathway's group of only 3 learners which seemed to suit him as too many people made him anxious.

To help work on their Functional Skills Maths the group played Monopoly. This also helped with their communication skills and AL was beginning to get more confident around the other learners and staff. To also help improve his social skills Rachel & Demi (LSA) would play games like UNO. AL enjoyed this game and soon started to talk more. A noticeable change that Rachel witnessed was when, during breaks, he would play UNO with the other learners whereas previously he would have just been on his phone not talking to anyone.

AL has been offered support from Kay who is SWRAC's ELSA (emotional, literacy, support assistant). Kay supports the learners with family bereavement, self-esteem, and confidence. During group sessions Kay discusses appropriate behaviour, friendships, social skills, and life experiences. AL has taken up this offer and will be speaking to Kay in the near future.

AL's confidence improved a great deal in a short amount of time, and he doesn't seem to struggle with his anxiety as much. Towards the end of March 2021, he started to learn about how to become more independent. With encouragement from staff AL was going to try and get a taxi in instead of a lift to centre. On his very first taxi ride Jon met with him with the view to go into the taxi with him to help with his anxiety. However, Jon noted that AL's confidence had grown so much by this point that he did not need to go with him in the end. AL now, confidently, gets a taxi into the centre by himself.

Lorna, from SWRAC Information & Guidance Team (!AG), has met with AL a couple of times to offer impartial advice. Lorna is a Level 6 qualified Careers Advisor and is able to offer career and personal advice to the 'GATSBY benchmark 8'. During Lorna's discussions with AL they explored different career options and AL expressed an interest in working in hospitality or becoming self-employed. Lorna will be meeting with AL again to discuss this in more detail and to plan what the next steps are.

AL can confidently join in with discussions with staff and other learners and will engage in his work. He has now completed the Pathways programme and progressed onto the Prep for Life programme.

### **The outcome for the learner**

Since AL has started at SWRAC he has managed to overcome some of his struggles with anxiety. He has gone from someone who would not leave the house or openly communicate with other people to someone, who now, confidently, gets a taxi to centre, attends regularly and engages with staff and learners. AL should be very proud with the progress he has made in a short amount of time.

This new confidence will help AL face future, potentially anxious, situations that before he would have struggled with. This will open up more opportunities for him in the future.

### **The learner voice**

AL left Highcliffe school when he was in Year 9 as he was being bullied and this knocked his confidence. He felt like the teachers at the school 'didn't really care' so he gave up going. After this he then struggled with his anxiety and confidence.

After school AL started to go to the Learning Centre at the Lighthouse but stopped going because he was too anxious.

AL met Jon at the Engagement meeting in August 2020 and then started a mentoring course with him. To start with they would go for walks around where AL lives and then drove out further. AL really enjoyed going to Badbury Rings with Jon as this was the furthest journey he had been on. He said it was 'nice to get out'.

AL thinks he was a 'little bit shy' when he first met Jon but chatting to Jon 'definitely helped' him with his confidence.

AL started the Pathways programme in Feb 2021 and admits that he initially found it 'very stressful'. He believes this is because he has not sat in a classroom for 2 years and because he

didn't know anyone else. He struggled with his anxiety initially, but Jon sat in class with him which he thinks helped him.

AL admits that his attendance wasn't very good to start with but then, he doesn't know why, but he suddenly felt 'more happy' to be at SWRAC. He still felt slightly anxious but would rather be at SWRAC than at home.

He likes attending SWRAC as it is not a normal school setting as it is a lot more relaxed and informal. He thinks it is also nice to have other people to talk too and he thinks Rachel and Demi are 'really good'.

AL has started to get the taxi to and from SWRAC. He had never been in a taxi before this but would now feel confident in getting a taxi by himself outside of SWRAC.

AL thinks that SWRAC is a 'really nice place to be'.