

Discussion Points for Case Studies

Case Study 06.01

This customer appears to be anxious. This might be related to a mental health condition, but it could equally be that something has just happened which has badly shaken her – a near miss when crossing the road for example.

Possible concerns about this customer:

- She avoids making eye contact – but this could be natural shyness, or a cultural characteristic
- She is not sitting down – but maybe she has a bad back and it is less painful to stand
- She is 'scanning' the office – is she looking for someone? Is she watching for something?
- She is in the Jobcentre yet not making use of any of the services there – Internet Access Devices (IADs), asking for help etc.

How you should approach working with this customer:

- Approach slowly and gently with a smile so as not to increase her anxiety
- Avoid assumptions – do not automatically assume a mental health condition
- Ask if she is all right – does she need to sit down, take a moment to compose herself?

- Present yourself calmly
- Speak quietly, clearly and courteously. Use open body language
- Ask how you can help. If she seems overwhelmed, change to specific, closed questions to ascertain what she wants and if she needs any help (is she looking for someone, does she want to use the IADs but doesn't know how to?) etc
- Ask the customer how best to proceed – she is the expert on her condition, if she has one
- Do not rush her – allow her time to respond
- Listen
- Remain alert to the customer's behaviour/body language and respond appropriately
- Signpost to relevant sources of external support and information if required.

Should you take any further action?

- If necessary, seek guidance from colleagues such as Work Psychologists or the Disability Employment Adviser (DEA)
- If the customer has a Work Coach, inform them of the incident.

Case Study 06.02

Samantha appears to have a form of depression, but her behaviour may be the result of a difficult recent experience, such as a bereavement or a marriage break up.

How you should approach working with this customer:

- Consider all possible explanations for the behaviour you have observed, for example, poor memory could be a side effect of medication etc
- Be courteous and patient. Demonstrate supportive body language – consider mirroring the customer
- Maintain good eye contact (avoid looking at computer screen for long periods)
- Nod to show you are listening
- Remain supportive and constructive through the contact but avoid being over positive as this may not sit well with individual's doubts and insecurities and affect the rapport
- Throughout the discussion, use regular summaries and check understanding. Avoid overloading Samantha with information
- Encourage Samantha to write down any action points
- Ask if she is consulting a doctor about 'feeling bad'. If not, gently suggest that she does.

How can you help this customer progress into work?

- Ensure Samantha understands what the interview is for - explain your role and what you ideally need to cover in the interview. Ask her what she hopes to gain from the interview with you
- Ask questions i.e. 'why are you unsure about work?'
- Ask Samantha about what would help her to progress towards work
- Be positive about factual information, such as Samantha's experience, qualifications etc
- Ask questions to establish what Samantha means when she says "I'm not sure about work, when I'm feeling bad I can't do anything"
- When Samantha is positive ("that sounds good"), pick up on it and encourage her to expand, for example "how do you think that could help you?", "what do you think could develop from that opportunity? Etc
- Encourage her to talk about what she enjoys specifically about helping in the nursery, drawing out from the discussion evidence of her abilities and skills
- Ensure Samantha is participating in the discussion – do not rush her, allow her time to respond
- Jointly establish some achievable action points
- Signpost Samantha to relevant sources of external support and information if required.

Should you take any further action?

- Do not take it personally if the interview does not go well
- Prepare for Samantha's next interview: try to arrange the appointment for a quiet time in the jobcentre and record the interview and action points clearly for other JCP staff to understand
- Speak to DEA, Work Coach, Work Psychologist or your line manager about your concerns. They will advise about the best course of action.

Case Study 06.03

How you should approach working with this customer:

- Show empathy/sympathy about his lack of sleep – this is an experience most people can relate to and it helps build rapport
- Tony has given you a lot of information about himself and his condition which is helpful but you need to manage the discussion as you only have a short time with him. For example “Let’s move on to....as we only have ten minutes left, and you can tell me more about that if we have time at the end”
- Summarise the discussion from time to time to keep Tony focused on what you have agreed
- Suggest he notes down the main points of your discussion, especially his action points, this may help him to concentrate and he will have a record of what you have discussed in case his memory lets him down
- Acknowledge his pro-active approach to his sleep pattern problems.

How can you help this customer progress into work?

- Avoid being side tracked by his diagnosis in itself – discuss how it affects his capability to work and look for work
- Tony is the expert on his condition – ask specific questions to help him identify any issues it may present around jobsearch or job goals and to identify the solutions

- Keep the discussion work focused – what action has he taken so far and what can he do next to progress into work
- Ask what help Tony thinks he needs, if any, to help him into work
- Encourage Tony to use some of the experiences he has had/is having with his condition to identify qualities he can offer an employer, for example he appears pro-active, positive, open to change.

Case Study 06.04

How you should approach working with this customer:

- Be courteous, patient and open
- Don't be afraid to ask questions – Shobna is the expert on her condition
- Listen
- You know Shobna is able to talk about her condition, but you should still show sensitivity to her reactions - be aware of body language etc that shows if she is feeling uncomfortable. Don't make assumptions about what is making her uncomfortable – she may be tired, it could be the effects of medication, she may not like talking about some aspects of her condition in an open plan office etc.
- Give her time to respond – do not rush her.

How can you help this customer progress into work?

- You should discuss the issue of disclosure with Shobna, make sure she understands the pros and cons so that she can decide whether or not she wishes to inform potential employers of her condition
- Encourage Shobna to expand on ideas for work, ask specific questions to check suitability or any issues that may arise
- Keep the discussion focused on work – for example ask “What help if any do you feel you need to look for work?”

- Shobna's GP has said work would be beneficial "within limits". The GP may have the best motives for trying to 'protect' her, but in fact maybe Shobna is capable of more. Explore her skills and abilities, any drawbacks she may perceive around work and possible solutions to them
- In the same way, what is meant by "low in stress" – are these the GP's words? Explore the sort of work Shobna is interested in and capable of first, before setting limits which may not reflect the reality of her situation
- Shobna may have lost some confidence, encourage her to consider all the positives she can offer an employer
- Shobna is concerned about the 'social aspect' of returning to work. Explore this with Shobna. It can mean anything from being slightly reserved, to disliking crowds, to being very shy. Encourage her to think of what the social benefits may be for her.