

THE SOCIAL WORK TOOLKIT

AUDIO CASE STUDY TRANSCRIPT

“...I should try and stretch myself beyond my comfort zone...”

Mags is a social work student and recently finished her placement at an advocacy project. Here she talks about the lessons she learned about taking advantages of learning opportunities.

I was really excited when I found out I had secured a placement at an advocacy project, but I felt pretty nervous too. At the introductory meeting with my practice educator, Shamila, I told her I don't like being put under pressure as it makes me nervous and I end up making mistakes. Shamila listened to what I had to say and it was good to hear my feelings weren't unusual, and in fact quite understandable. However, she also told me that I should try and stretch myself beyond my comfort zone where I felt comfortable, as otherwise I would lose out on the opportunity to develop personally and professionally if I didn't accept opportunities to try out new skills.

I'd been on my placement a few weeks when Shamila offered me the chance to become involved in drop-in sessions, interviewing people to find out about the problems they were facing. Having never done this before though, my nerves got the better of me and instead of interviewing people myself, I asked Shamila if I could observe someone else doing it.

I was in a seminar at uni for a study day a few weeks later and while listening to everyone else talk about their recent experiences on placement and what they felt they had learned in terms of developing competence, I realised I had nothing to contribute.

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Thankfully, hearing everyone else talk about how they were developing as social workers made me realise that it was down to me to make the most of the opportunities when they were offered. When I returned to the project and Shamila asked me again if I would like to get involved with interviewing clients, I said yes. I was of course, still nervous, but when I had finished my first session, I felt great! Over following drop-in sessions, my confidence grew and I began to push myself more and more. Actually putting skills that I had learnt into practice really helped me to develop both personally and professionally and it also meant I had something to contribute at my next seminar!