



Disabled Working Group Access And Outreach For Disabled Learners

Advice, Guide, Support

Chairs: Khasiba Omar & Laura Bradnam

2nd Meeting on Tuesday, 23rd January 2024

Between 01:00 pm to 02:30 pm

Overview



**News and
Updates**



**Summary of
your
Thoughts
and Ideas**



**Mental
Health:
Social
Anxiety**



**Good
Practice**



**Group
Activity:
Good
Practice**



Questions

News and Updates

1. Government policy

- 'disabled people must work from home to do 'their duty' or face benefits cuts.
- Lack of opportunities for fully remote roles – rushed and ill thought out.
- Sanctions causing anxiety.
- Could lose £400 per month.

2. [Disability Action Plan 2023 to 2024](#)

- Focus in next 12 months:
 - access to elected office
 - playground accessibility
 - emergency planning and resilience work
 - climate adaptations and mitigations



News and Updates

3. Disability in Higher Education Advisory Panel (DHEAP)

- New panel to provide expert advice on enhancing disabled students' experiences in higher education.
- It will consider and review how universities and colleges currently support disabled students, drawing on evidence, research and analysis from the sector to make recommendations on how to support their educational experience.
- A committee of the OfS Board and is chaired by John Blake, Director for Fair Access and Participation. Suzanne Carrie, Head of Student Equality and Welfare at the OfS, is deputy chair.
- Panel will also include:
 - Independent members who bring extensive experience of being a senior leader at a higher education provider or in a leadership position in disability policy in public, private or third sector organisations.
 - Student members representing current and future disabled students' perspectives in higher education in the work of the committee.
 - Recruitment for the panel ran from 30 November 2023 to 2 January 2024, with the first meeting scheduled to take place in spring 2024.



News and Updates

4. The transition from education to employment for young disabled people

[17th January oral evidence to the committee.](#)

- Areas for discussion will include:
- Transition support for young disabled people in education
- Links between departments and services
- Supporting disabled people to access and stay in work
- Support and incentives available for employers





Summary of Your Thoughts and Ideas

1. Social Anxiety.
2. Good practice.
3. Feedback.
4. Barriers in higher/ further education.
5. Transitional process.
6. New approaches and an exciting policy.

Hidden Disability: Social Anxiety



Mental Health Theme





Hidden Disability

Social Anxiety

“Social anxiety disorder, also called social phobia, is an overwhelming fear of social situations, being watched or judged on their social performance.

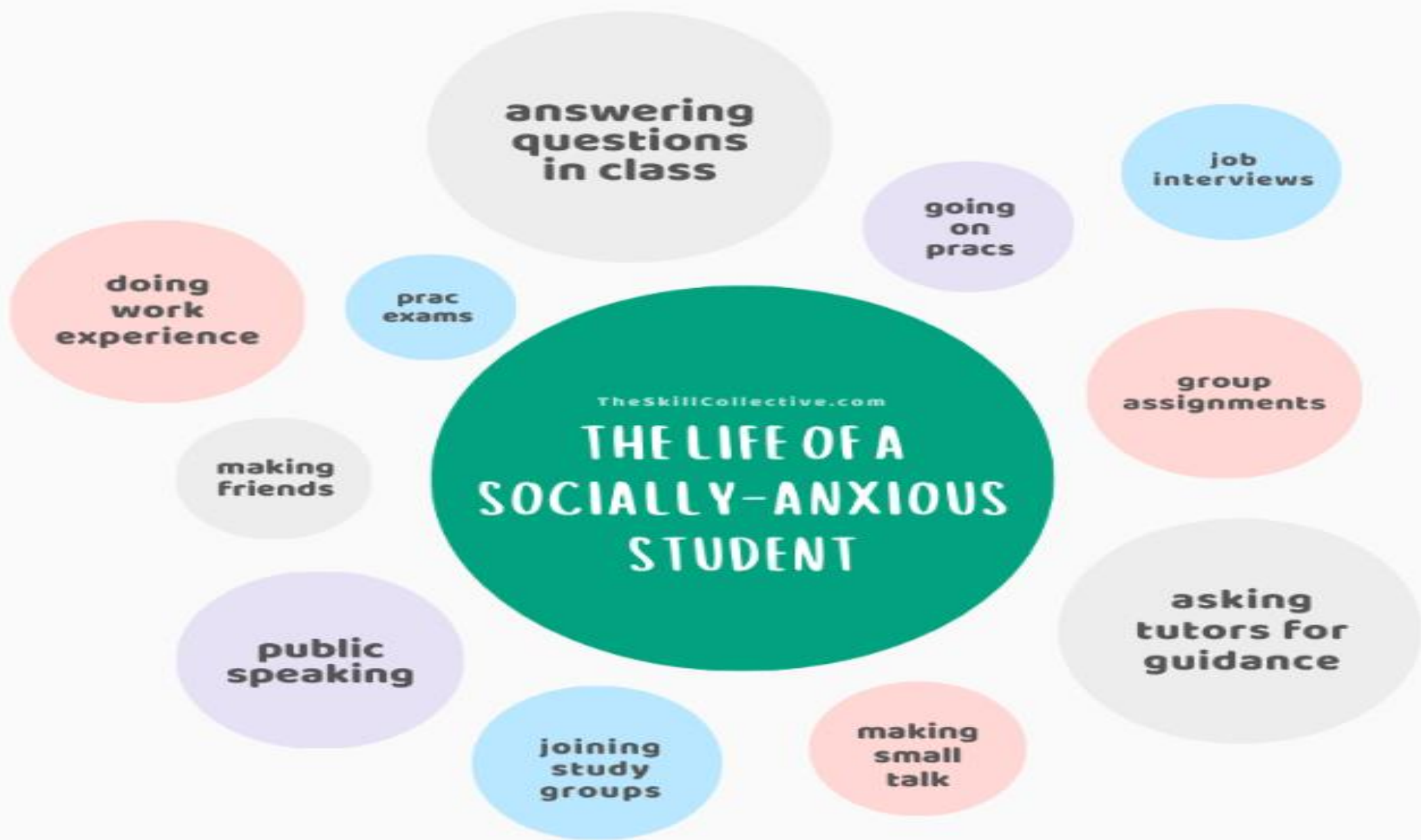
It is a common problem that usually starts during the teenage years. It can be very distressing and have a big impact on your life (NHS, 2021)”



Hidden Disability

Social Anxiety

- [Social Anxiety at University - YouTube](#)
- 22% of university students in the UK experience from some form of social anxiety.
- Social isolation and poor relationships which could lead poorer academic performance





Abrahart v University of Bristol

Content and Trigger Warnings

Please note the above case contains the following content:

- 1. Suicide**
- 2. Mental health concerns**
- 3. Indirect and direct discrimination**



Abrahart v University of Bristol: oral assessments led to suicide

- Physics student at Bristol University, studying for MSci. She had depression and **social anxiety disorder**.
- The student failed to attend most of her oral assessments.
- The student took out own life
- This case has risen the profile of mental health concerns in universities



Lessons learnt

1. Assess and understand the student's needs through the lived experience.
2. Duty of care and safeguarding concerns.
3. Alternative methods of assessments or make changes to service delivery.



Good Practice

1. Training.
2. Mental health friendly environment.
3. Internal support services.
4. External support services.
5. Disclosure and reluctant to disclose.
6. Safe space / Deliberate Acts of Kindness
7. Alternative method of assessments



Group Activity: Good practice



Notes from good practice discussion

- 'I've done some quite low-key icebreakers with autistic students who often feel this anxiety. Things like a sheet of 'guess the movie from the picture' quiz, that they can do on their own or chat with the person next to them. Maybe more of a 'warm up' rather than getting them chatting.'
- Depending on intended outcomes of particular activity, 'success' for a student attending may be quite different to what as an event organiser you might be thinking about. E.g. for someone with social anxiety, turning up to an event, even if they don't speak to anyone or ask any questions, could be a huge step and can be considered a 'success'.
- It might be worth avoiding icebreakers at the start of an event. Allow the group to 'warm up' first.
- At start of event, emphasising this isn't like school, can pop out of room if needed, etc. As event organiser/speaker, can model behaviour to 'normalise' – e.g. popping out and coming back.
- Provide event attendees with post it notes and a question box so they can pop in questions throughout the day, without needing to speak up in front of the group.
- Important to give people options, e.g. to contribute or ask questions, without putting them on the spot or forcing interaction.
- Can use online platforms like Wooclap or Menti to allow people to contribute without needing to speak in front of room.



Useful links:

1. Call 116 123, email them at jo@samaritans.org, or visit : [Samaritans | Every life lost to suicide is a tragedy | Here to listen](#)
2. Mental Health Matters (MHM): <https://www.mhm.org.uk/News/mhm-join-forces-with-chasing-the-stigma>



Any Questions



References

1. [Lived Experiences of College Students with Social Anxiety Disorder Accessing Support Services \(waldenu.edu\)](#)
2. [How to Deal with Social Anxiety in University | UWS London](#)
3. [Student mental health in England: Statistics, policy, and guidance - House of Commons Library \(parliament.uk\)](#)
4. [CBP-8593.pdf \(parliament.uk\)](#)
5. [Student mental wellbeing in higher education: good practice guide \(m25lib.ac.uk\)](#)
6. [The Profound Impact of Deliberate Acts of Kindness | Psychology Today United Kingdom](#)
7. [Abrahart v-v University of Bristol \(judiciary.uk\)](#)
8. [Court Finds Discrimination by University of Bristol Caused Tragic Death of Disabled Student | Doughty Street Chambers](#)
9. [Social anxiety in higher education | BPS](#)
10. [Lived Experiences of College Students with Social Anxiety Disorder Accessing Support Services \(waldenu.edu\)](#)
11. [Student mental health in England: Statistics, policy, and guidance - House of Commons Library \(parliament.uk\)](#)

References

1. [Abrahart v University of Bristol: oral assessments led to suicide - Stammeringlaw - Disability discrimination](#)
2. [CBP-8593.pdf \(parliament.uk\)](#)
3. [Student mental wellbeing in higher education: good practice guide \(m25lib.ac.uk\)](#)
4. [The Experience Among College Students with Social Anxiety Disorder in Social Situations: A Qualitative Study - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)
5. [University of Bristol failed to make allowances for student with severe anxiety, court told | University of Bristol | The Guardian](#)
6. [Students with social anxiety - The life of a socially-anxious student — The Skill Collective](#)
7. [What should higher education learn from the Natasha Abrahart case? | Wonkhe](#)
8. [Kindness as an Intervention for Student Social Interaction Anxiety, Resilience, Affect, and Mood: The KISS of Kindness Study II \(core.ac.uk\)](#)
9. [Students with social anxiety - The life of a socially-anxious student — The Skill Collective](#)
10. [Anxious students more likely to struggle socially and academically at university, study finds - University of Chichester](#)
11. [Student mental wellbeing in higher education: good practice guide \(m25lib.ac.uk\)](#)