

Case Study

SARSAS provide an art therapy service. This case study provides an example of art therapy.

Jane is 19 years old and has a diagnosis of ADHD and emotional developmental delay. She experienced sexual exploitation as a child and several sexual assaults in her school alongside peer abuse at college. Jane received four months of specialist 1:1 support followed by art therapy.

Jane wanted to have a space where she could think about thoughts and feelings related to the sexual exploitation and process what had happened in her past.

Jane used the space to express her anger towards the people who had hurt her. She used paint expressively whilst she verbally shared these angry feelings. As the therapeutic relationship developed Jane also discussed her sad and more complex feelings related to the memories of the sexual violence she had experienced throughout her life. The therapy was also an opportunity to discuss difficult feelings related to being hurt and let down by important attachment figures.

As trust progressed, Jane produced larger more expressive paintings. The artwork combined words and images and incorporated collage and a variety of materials. In the therapy review Jane thought about how the artwork had changed over the time and recognised how her initial safe art making had progressed to making more free and expressive images that encapsulated her angry and sad feelings.

Towards the final session Jane talked about making good friends and shared her excitement about forming positive relationships with peers who were empathic and reliable, for the first time in her young adulthood.

Jane was able to call out and recognise the main perpetrator for what he had done and reflected that the abuse was not her fault. Jane expressed that because of the therapy, she was finding ways to be able to advocate for herself to other professionals to get her social and educational needs met.

Jane talked about really benefitting from the art making in therapy, specifically the combination of art and talking, as Jane likes to do something with her hands whilst she talks. Jane also stated that the art therapy helped her find her "creative voice" and has concluded taking time to journal her thoughts and feelings beneficial for her mental wellbeing.