

Learning in Lockdown | Episode 2

Liz Swanson - Sanctuary Manager, Choice Support

Liz Swanson is a qualified counsellor who works as Sanctuary Manager for Choice Support where she oversees support workers in the crisis team that covers South East Essex. This is an out of hours service for people experiencing mental health situations. This was a face-to-face service before lockdown but has now moved to telephone support. Liz is also a lecturer on a degree programme at South Essex College.

COVID 19 has caused loneliness and isolation in some young adults. Some are thriving in this situation, but many are not. These people might go under the radar; they would have been picked up by a tutor before lockdown. Overall, it is harder for tutors to notice a lack of engagement or changes in behaviour. Tutors are doing their best, with over 20 in an online lesson, it is difficult to see everyone, never mind engage them.

Going to college or a private training provider is a private life, a secret life for young adults. They think their parents do not know what they get up to, so they feel like they cannot be themselves at home. Now they are stuck at home, their secret space, their identity feels like it is being taken away. Parents do need to be more accepting and try and understand this.

What can tutors do?

We need to continue sending out information to learners, but we also need to understand that some learners need to be reached out to specifically; they do not engage with the things that the provider sends out. Safeguarding and PREVENT training needs to be adapted to support tutors and teach them what to spot via online lessons.

Tutors can learn more about interaction without facial expressions and hand movements. They should be slowing down their speech when reaching out to someone.

Signs to look out for

- Changing behaviour
- Being active in group chats, then not
- Speaking in online lessons, then not
- Speaking more when they used to be reticent
- A direct disclosure (often in the third person – my friend...)

Advice for young adults

- The internet is often a scarier place than you realise
- Avoid disclosing too much to online “friends”; if you don’t know them in real life, they may not be who they say they are
- If you want to reach out go to a site such as Mind, Rethink or the Samaritans