



CASE STUDIES

#KNOWYOURNORMAL

MY EXPERIENCE – SEXUAL ASSAULT



In my first year of university I was sexually assaulted. In the days after the assault I reached out to the university disability service but my usual advisor, a woman, was not there. I wasn't in the state of mind that I could advocate for myself when I was invited to speak to a male advisor. I was asked in the open office what the issue I wanted help with was. My story was difficult to share with someone I didn't know very well and who wasn't who I expected to talk to. I was questioned to share the details of the incident, questioned on the words I used and whether I had consented. I didn't feel believed and no longer wanted to be telling this person what had happened to me.

Before I left, they told me to see a GP about the bleeding and pain I was experiencing. I hadn't yet registered at a local GP due to the complexity of my healthcare and not wanting to register somewhere new, so the advisor suggested a GP surgery to visit. At the GP surgery I saw a male GP, I didn't want to be examined by them, so they prescribed a cream and sent me on my way.

I lost confidence in professionals being able to support me and withdrew into myself, ignoring lectures, ignoring self-care, and not replying to family or friends. My family became concerned and contacted the university, which conducted a welfare check by asking my flatmates if I was alive (as I wasn't there at the time they visited the flat) – this satisfied their check. Sometime after, I was forced to attend a mental health appointment, as I had been under a Community Treatment Order, and due to my weight loss and condition they immediately admitted me to hospital. No one asked what triggered this downturn in my mental and physical health, and some months later, when I shared what had happened, the matter was handled poorly by the staff, and I did not get any support.

WHAT WOULD HAVE HELPED

- 1 Being able to talk to a trusted professional as a matter of priority.
- 2 Being allowed to use my preferred communication method to reduce my anxiety and the pressure of sharing a traumatic experience.
- 3 Professionals respecting my disclosure and providing the appropriate support as soon as possible.
- 4 Professionals asking what reasonable adjustments I needed to access appointments.

