

## **Working collaboratively to support students experiencing exam anxiety**

Jessica is a 17 year old high school student studying year 12. She has an older brother James, who has just finished school and is commencing an apprenticeship in carpentry. Jessica's dad Warren works for a phone company as a contractor. Her mum Leanne, after being a stay at home mum for 20 years, has just started working part time at a real estate agent. Leanne also helps with the bookkeeping for Warren's contracting business.

Jessica has always been a conscientious student. Since year 10, it has not been uncommon for Jessica to study until midnight every night of the week and be locked away in her bedroom most of the weekend. Jessica also has weekly piano lessons and only has a small circle of close friends. She has just started working part time job in a newsagency for 5 hours on a Saturday afternoon.

In year 11, Leanne started to notice Jessica was becoming quite withdrawn. Every time Leanne approached Jessica to ask if she was okay, Jessica would snap at her mother and say "I'm fine". More recently Leanne has noticed that Jessica is not studying so much. She sleeps more and is difficult to wake in the mornings, she doesn't want to eat with the family in the evening and is very grumpy.

On a recent visit to her GP, Leanne discussed Jessica's behaviour and the doctor said that it would be good if Jessica could come in to see her so she could screen for potential depression. Leanne explained that there is no history of depression in the family and "we have a very happy home and family life". Leanne asked Jessica if she would like to see a doctor and Jessica refused. After persistent encouragement, Jessica finally said she would see the GP.

At the doctor's, Jessica explained that she was always tired and just wanted to sleep. She also explained that she is always worried about getting good marks for her school work; "I really want to be a dentist and you have to get high marks to get into that course". The doctor referred Jessica to her local headspace centre to see a psychologist.

At the first visit to the psychologist, Jessica explained that she was always tired and her mum and dad are always going on about how important it is to get good marks so she can go to Uni. Jessica said "I'm really not sure what I want to do now, but I'm the only girl and mum keeps telling me it is important for girls to go to Uni. I think mum and dad want one of their kids to go to Uni, and James is doing an apprenticeship, so I'm it. When I'm in my room studying, I find it hard to concentrate and I just want to sleep. Sometimes I cry a lot too." Jessica also explained that when she has an assignment to finish, she really worries about getting high marks. "Sometimes I worry so much that I feel sick and that's why I don't want to eat".