



Impact of Exercise upon the Mental Health of Students at Sunfield

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Young people with autistic spectrum disorders are at a much higher risk of developing mental health problems than other young people (Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities, 2002). Three out of five are expected to suffer mental health problems at some stage in their lives, and these can adversely affect their education. Recent research (Department of Health, 2004; Mental Health Foundation, 2005; Messent and Cooke, 1998) suggests that exercise therapy, appropriately supervised, could ameliorate mild or moderate depression.



This research will consider the impact of exercise upon the mental health of students at Sunfield using retrospective case studies based upon documentary evidence. A review of literature is currently being carried out.

Taking these findings into account, Sunfield employed an Exercise Coordinator in September 2006. Specific students can be referred to the Exercise Coordinator by any member of Sunfield Staff, and individualised programmes are devised for them.



References

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- Mental Health Foundation (2005) *Up and Running?: Exercise therapy and the treatment of mild or moderate depression in primary care*. London: MHF.
- Messent, P.R. and Cooke, C.B. (1998) 'Physical activity, exercise and health of adults with mild and moderate learning disabilities', *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 26, 17–22.