



# A Sunfield Case Study

## The importance of individualised and integrated care and education

### Introduction

Emma was placed at Sunfield because her home life had reached breaking point. Without support and intervention, Emma's prospects in adulthood were likely to be limited to residential care for very challenging young adults. However, with the flexible and tailored support offered by Sunfield, and despite coping with the severe illness of her mother, Emma has made outstanding progress.

### Background

Emma was placed at Sunfield in 2003, at the age of 9 years old. At the time, she was incontinent and would smear faeces over furniture and toys. She ate a very limited diet, with her fingers, and chewed furniture. Emma had significantly challenging behaviour and needed a padded room at home for time out. She had no functional communication and could not tolerate noise. She joined Sunfield on a 52 week care and education placement with integrated psychology and therapy, including Speech and Language Therapy, Psychology, Psychotherapy, Occupational Therapy and Play Therapy.

### The Journey

A particular feature of Emma's condition was her need for assurance that she was good, and that all was well in the world. When she perceived that this was not the case, Emma would self harm (banging her head with her hands or on a hard surface). The teams at Sunfield worked together to develop and implement a variety of integrated strategies to support her – including increasing her confidence, improving her resilience, and helping her to more effectively communicate her emotions so that she could be appropriately reassured.

Emma responded extremely well to Sunfield's interventions, and was able to readily access therapies to support her education, to the extent that she made outstanding progress. However, the real test came when Emma's mother sadly became severely ill and all was far from well in Emma's world.

The team around Emma pulled together to support her, and her family, in coping with her mother's illness – including rapidly assessing the way in which this would affect Emma, and how her identified everyday coping strategies could be further supported in order to get her through this difficult time. With support, Emma managed to see her mother in hospital, and used the social stories and therapy to both understand and express her feelings about this experience.

Through constant communication between the on-site care, education and therapy teams, Sunfield was able to respond, adapt and support Emma throughout her waking day, and at night, to deal with her heightened emotions. She was therefore able to maintain some level of progress in all aspects of her development, despite these difficult circumstances.

### The Conclusion

At the age of 18 years old, Emma now eats a wide range of foods with appropriate utensils. She is continent at all times and is more independent in all aspects of her life. She has a healthy curiosity and is achieving well in her education. Emma shows minimal disruptive behaviour and is able to communicate effectively using some words and an iPad. She tolerates noise and changes in her environment well. She also enjoys having personal items around her and is able to respect the property of herself and others.

Emma's visits home are successful and frequent, and she is able to enjoy an active life both at Sunfield and in the community. Her prospects in adulthood now look much brighter and could even include supportive employment.