



Early interventions in Psychosis

One journey of experiencing
psychosis.



Stories of Psychosis



Aziz's story

This storyboard details Aziz's journey with psychosis and struggle to understand his symptoms while performing at school and university.

The moments in the story span 8 years

(from initial symptoms to appropriate treatment for psychosis).

"I am tired of hiding, tired of misspent and knotted energies, tired of the hypocrisy, and tired of acting as though I have something to hide."

Kay Redfield Jamison on
mental illness, "The unquiet
mind"

Moments of Aziz's story

Experience themes

Shame

Anger

Fear

At school he is impulsive and disruptive. School see this challenging behaviour as acting out. *“It’s just how I am”*. Felt a need to fit in but *“Being me isn’t acceptable”*. Lack of understanding or support from school.

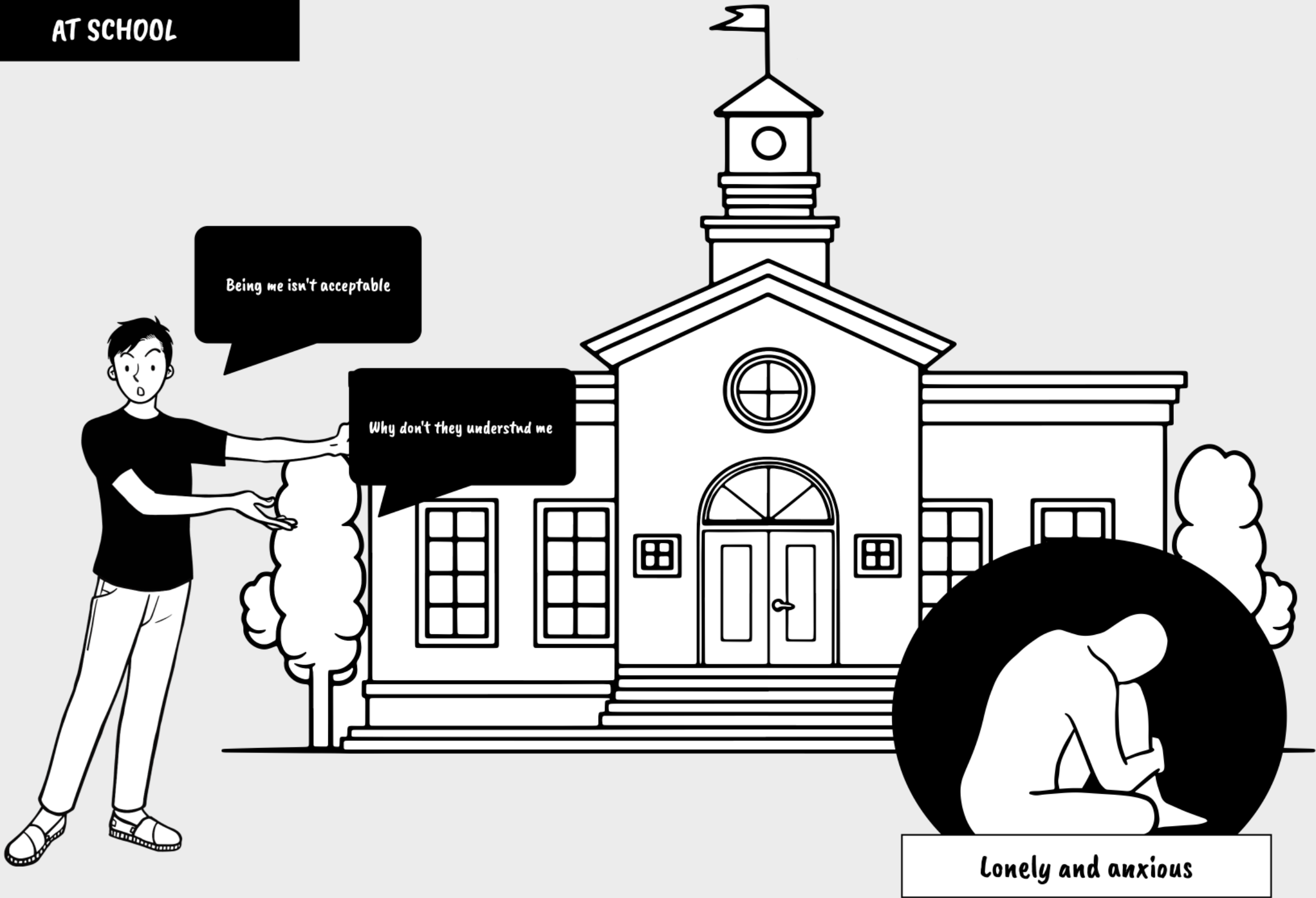
Struggling at school with impulsive behaviour and quick to anger. Struggling with the pressure of work. *“Just didn’t know what to do”*

It is possible that Aziz had psychotic symptoms that were unnoticed at this stage.

System themes

Early interventions into psychotic behaviour not present in school

AT SCHOOL



Moments of Aziz's story

Experience themes

Shame

Anger

Fear

Control

Asked for help at university and was encouraged to *“just get on with it”*.

Felt under tremendous pressure leading up to exam resit . The night before the exam **he took an overdose of paracetamol and was admitted to hospital**, where signs of his psychosis were not recognised. Was told “we all struggle” by a member of staff.

He didn’t feel that anyone understood him or could see how much they were struggling.

System themes

Lack of support at university for students under pressure or suffering with poor mental health

No follow up after overdose

AT UNIVERSITY



Admitted to hospital



Overdosed on paracetamol



They just don't take me seriously

Moments of Aziz's story

Experience themes

Fatigue

Confusion

While on break from university he wasn't sleeping and was using cannabis to calm down. He began feeling very agitated. Went to a private psychiatrist, was **prescribed diazepam** and then asked to come back in 2 weeks.

Returning to university he felt anxious and confused. He asked his GP to refer him to a psychiatrist but was told there was a long waiting list for appointments. **He went to a private clinic and was diagnosed with ADHD however signs of his psychosis were not recognised there.**

GP offered further support but sent what seemed to be an automated response that did not feel personal. He didn't feel that anyone was seeing how much he was struggling.

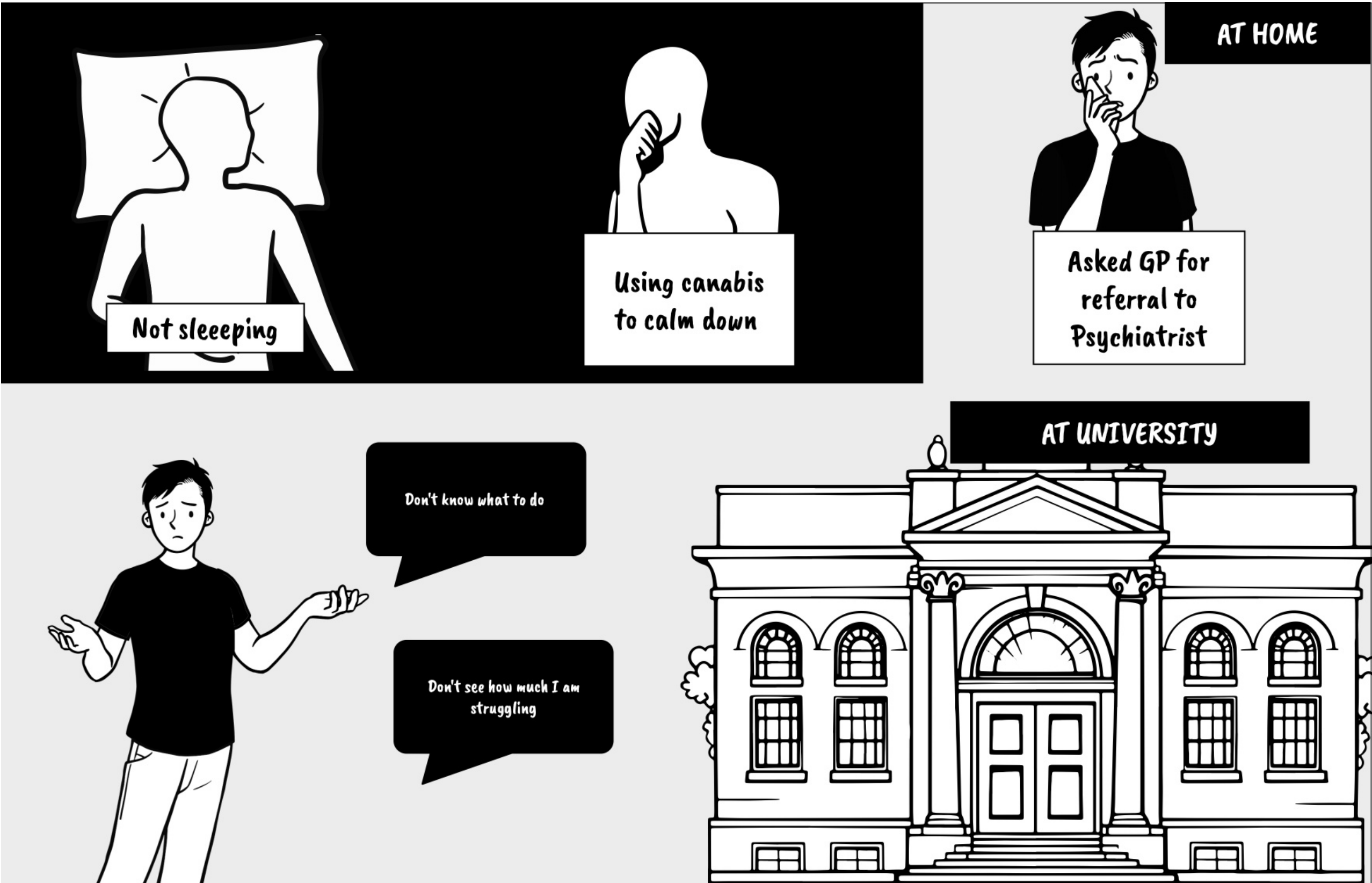
In 2020 he was **expelled from university.**

System themes

Cannabis and lack of sleep worsened symptoms

Different diagnosis given. Compounded by different prescriptions

No routine follow up after private diagnosis



Moments of Aziz's story

Experience themes

Confusion

Anger

GP prescribed stimulant which together with lack of sleep and stress resulted in increased agitation, worsening his symptoms and resulting in threatening and abusive behaviour. Police were involved, eventually leading to breach of bail and detention in prison on remand for 3 weeks. His psychosis went undiagnosed in prison. Convictions gained while experiencing undiagnosed psychosis still impact his employability.

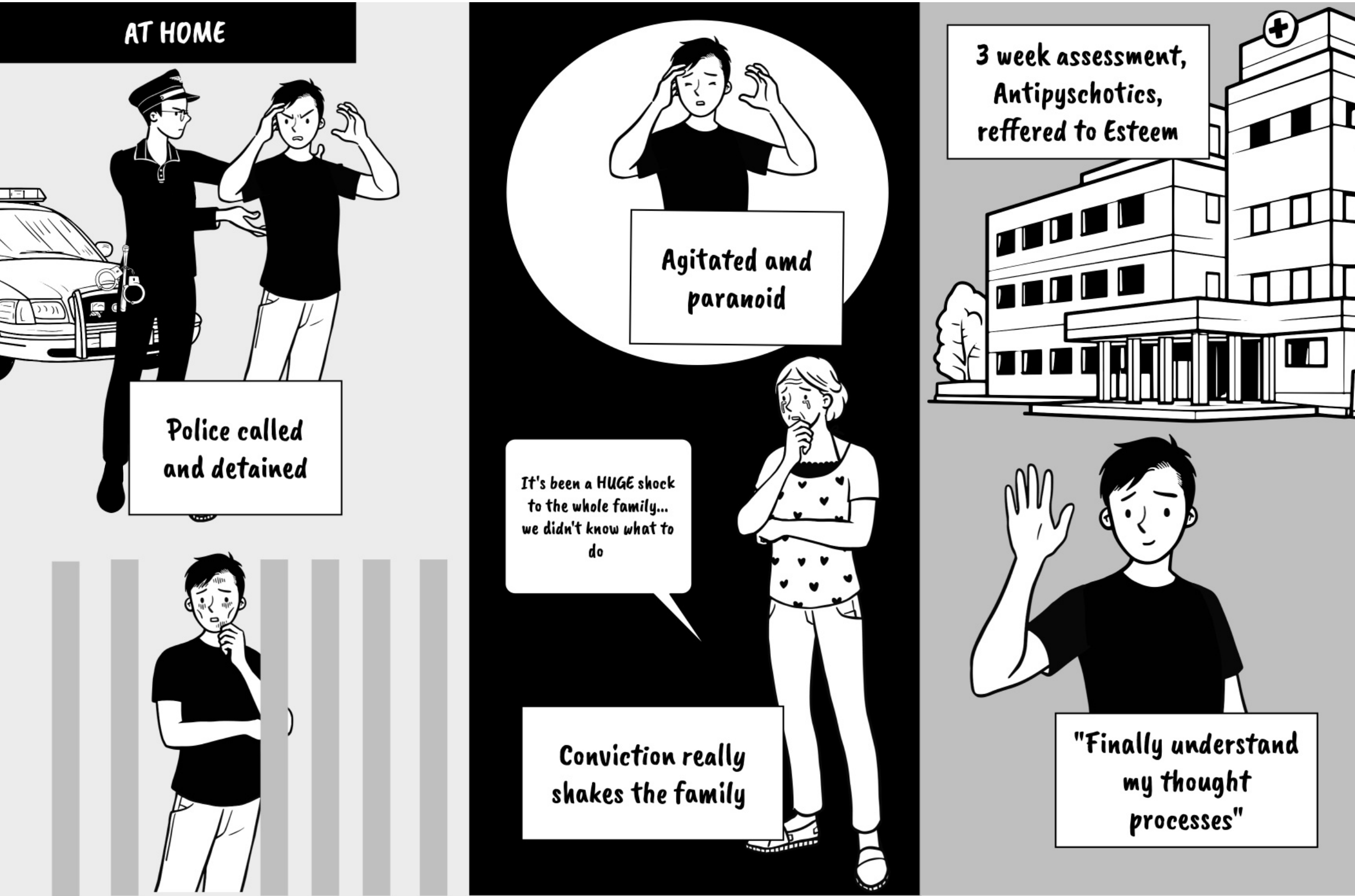
He returned home but was agitated and not sleeping, argumentative and making little sense. He was taken to hospital by family. At admission to hospital he was given a 3 week assessment. Finally, he was prescribed anti-psychotic and referred to Esteem service.

Now:
Behaviour now seen as linked to mental health. Working with Restart and SAMH who are supporting re-integration and help to get back to college. No psychotic behaviour recently and "I understand my thought processes".

Family:
The signs were there but didn't at the time know about link with ADHD and then psychosis. The situation has impacted everyone.

System themes

Undiagnosed psychosis led to convictions that still impact the family and Aziz today



Ongoing support from Community Mental Health, Third Sector in conjunction with the Esteem service has supported Aziz to go back to his studies.

Esteem service provided:

- A thorough assessment, highlighting the impact of cannabis and stress on psychosis,
- Assigned a case worker to help support a healthy sleep routine and lifestyle,
- Invited family to psycho-education support groups to learn more about psychosis,
- Set up with an employability worker to support getting a job.

The outlook for Aziz and his family looks positive from here.

System themes

Holistic lifestyle and trigger assessment

Family support and education



Emotional and system themes present in Aziz's story

Fear

- Paranoia about whether people know you're not ok.
- Fear of acceptance.
- Fear that people don't understand them.

Fatigue

- Inability to relax.
- Inability to sleep.
- Mental fatigue from racing mind.
- Fatigue from self-induced emotional pressure.

Confusion

- Confused by people's reaction to behaviour
- Confused by the lack of support.
- Confused by effects of medication.
- Confusion caused by symptoms of psychosis.

Shame

- Shame at inability to meet personal expectations around school performance.
- Perception that they have let family down.

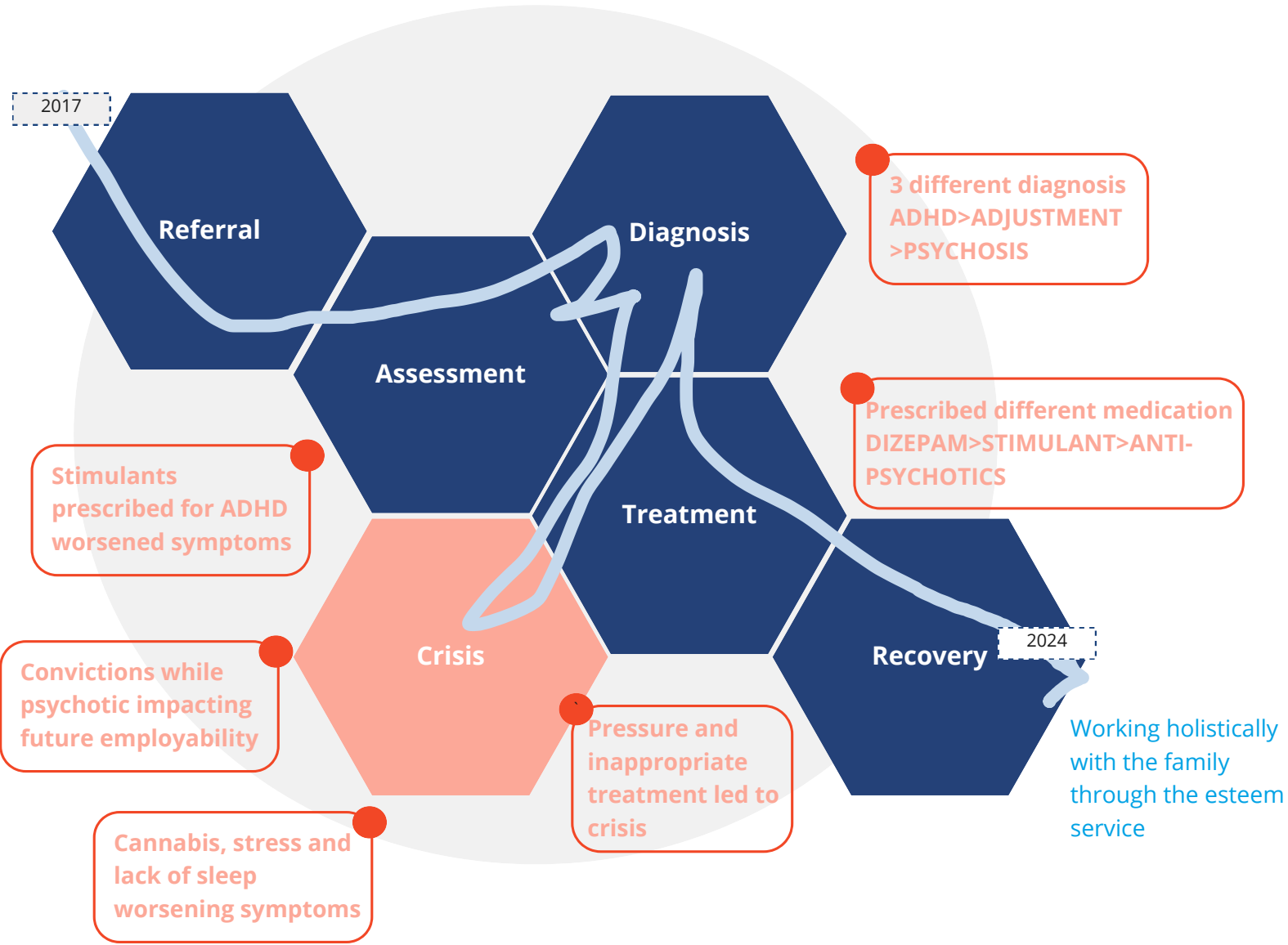
Control

- Trying to keep control of how things should be and stressed when things don't go to plan.
- Feeling out of control due to medication.
- Feeling like life is out of there control.
- Feeling anxious about the future.
- Understanding of own thought process.

Anger

- Frustration about being misunderstood.
- Annoyance that they can't be themselves.
- Frustration that they are aren't getting the time and care they need.
- Frustration that people don't care that they are struggling.
- Feeling persecuted for feeling unwell.

Aziz's story details **how important holistic family care** is to recovery and how **early signs of psychosis** can be picked up earlier in school settings.





Healthcare
Improvement
Scotland