Top tips for managing exam anxiety and supporting learners through exams

1. Prepare learners by conducting a mock exam in an exam room, under exam settings and following exam rules. The thought of sitting in a large room/hall can be very daunting for learners and practice runs can help them overcome their anxiety and become accustomed to expectations and what to do on the day.

2. To 'calm' and reduce learners' anxiety, do a sort of 'walked' exam, go question by question and break down the criteria, before learners have a go at answering it. Learners really need to understand the format of the exam to be able to approach it with confidence.

3. Learners doing exams online often find the exam website/portal a cause for anxiety, so even just walking them to the room where their exam would be, and logging onto the sample exam portal and exploring the different buttons and what they do will help, so there will not be any surprises on the day.

4. Plan exams with the exams department in advance and explain some of the learners are particularly anxious; work together on providing support and solutions for individual learners.

5. At an organisational level - provide learners with a free breakfast or snack and water on the morning/day of the exam – it will encourage learners to arrive on time and ensure they are hydrated and able to focus on their exam.

6. Ensure tutor/teacher support is available prior to the exam – learners are often re-assured when they hear an encouraging voice before their exams or to answer a last-minute question.

7. Build learners' confidence by focusing on what they can do and identify their next steps.

8. Offer revision sessions to learners outside of their class times and share strategies for revision.

9. Encourage learners to plan their revision and provide spaces for them to be able to do this – many learners do not have this space at home.

10. Look at the mark scheme with learners, example answers and examiners reports, it gives them good insight into what and how they will gain marks.