

## **Bath and North East Somerset SENDIASS: Supporting a young person excluded from school which helped to ensure access to education**

### **The context**

Despite the continuing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, SEND Partnership Service (SPS) continues to offer support via telephone, email, virtual platforms and in certain circumstances face to face.

### **The issue faced**

This case study illustrates a relatively short intervention where a 14-year-old (K) with an EHCP had been permanently excluded for a second time. The family had had no previous contact with SPS.

K attended a mainstream school. Two weeks prior to the conflict with peers and teachers that resulted in the second permanent exclusion, the annual review meeting had identified there was insufficient provision in the EHCP to meet K's needs. An appointment with a paediatrician to explore possible ADHD was impending. The parent's relationship with school had become very strained and the mother's (M) disability added to frustration that communication with school had not been adjusted to meet her needs.

M was very clear that due to her sight impairment, K was 'a carer for me'. Young Carers were very supportive of K.

K had been struggling to manage in mainstream for some time. Both parents were feeling the strain of frequent calls from school to complain about K's behaviour.

### **The support provided by IASS**

The support provided by SPS concerned firstly acknowledging the impact on the family of the permanent exclusion. Listening to the built-up frustration they expressed, feeling K was not getting the support needed and not being treated fairly and then SPS explained how they could assist them and the way to proceed.

SPS described how they could support if the decision was to uphold the permanent exclusion, reassuring the parents that they could be supported to put their questions and challenges to the Governors' Disciplinary Committee (GDC) in the form of written representations.

There was a lot going on for the family with many professionals involved. SPS explained how their role is distinct from other services and how they proposed to guide them through the legal process so they felt their contribution to the process would be a valid one; one which gave them the voice that they currently felt they did not have.

At the Zoom GDC meeting it was evident to SPS that the parents had not passed on the written representations they had prepared together and made no reference to them. Due to her visual impairment M felt more comfortable relying on spontaneous verbal challenge to the head teacher.

The head teacher read out a long and detailed list of daily incidents at school. A failed managed move, a possibility of a permanent exclusion in year 7, 133 negative incidents.

The parents were facing a school that when consulted (to name it in EHCP) had informed the LA they could not meet K's needs but the LA went ahead and named the school in the EHCP.

It was a very short GDC meeting which upheld the headteacher's decision.

SPS called M a few days later and was informed by M she had 'good news'. That day, the paediatrician had diagnosed ADHD and K would like to try medication.

M explained she felt 'overwhelmed by the process' of challenging the permanent exclusion and she felt discriminated against and wanted to request an Independent Review Panel (IRP).

SPS support took the form of guiding M through the option of going to IRP with the potential of a requested SEN expert in attendance with the expectation it would be held at the start of the academic year. SPS met with K's dad to discuss the SEN expert request letter, the written representations prepared for GDC and the impact of K's defiant behaviour at home.

In September SPS called M who confirmed they hadn't got a date yet for the IRP. Two days later SPS called again. The IRP had been held the day before. The parents had not checked their emails and therefore, had not been able to contact SPS for support prior to the meeting. K's dad had found the meeting upsetting. The permanent exclusion was upheld.

## The difference made

By the time of the IRP K had been attending a new Alternative Provision for 3 days.

M told SPS that there was a noticeable change in K. 'He is so much happier there'. K was talking to them about his day. Today he had bought her flowers. M said she felt much less stressed.

The Alternative Provision had suggested a dual placement to M. SPS explained what this might mean and suggested she contact her SEN Lead Practitioner (SEN Team Case Officer) to propose the idea.

At the end of the conversation, M made it very clear how grateful she was for all the support SPS had given her and her partner.

If the parents had been under less stress SPS felt they might have been more receptive to take up their advice and had a greater degree of involvement earlier. M's disability probably meant that the planned face to face meeting would have allowed far more detailed preparation.

In a relatively short period of time, SPS and the parents had built up a relationship of trust and confidence. M expressed to SPS that she now felt less stressed and more informed about the legal process of exclusion. M was very grateful for the support and guidance SPS had provided.

SPS believe M now has a better understanding about the function of IASS and will return to the service if further advice and guidance is required.

M was still expressing her immense relief that K was in a setting where he was settled and enjoying it. K was already building great relationships.

M also reflected on the impact of the permanent exclusion experience for K; how K felt he had let everyone down and how ADHD had been making it very difficult for him to manage in school.

After years of stress in years 7, 8 and 9 the family were now hopeful that K could at last achieve and aspire to training and paid employment on his pathway to adulthood.

### Contact details

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