



Brighton & Hove SENDIASS: Supporting a young person without family to advocate for them

The context

The SENDIASS service for Brighton and Hove is provided by Amaze and run jointly with the service for East Sussex. Previously IASP funding had been used to pilot employing a dedicated member of staff to ensure the IAS service was accessible for children and young people. The evaluation of this pilot concluded this role should be maintained and protected as CYP need a particular approach i.e. different to that used with parents. The SENDIASS CYP post is shared across both local authority areas. The post works directly with CYP from about age 13 upwards and the majority are between 16 to 25. This work can also involve working with the YP's parents, based on the YP's wishes as well as providing a service to some YP who do not have anyone to take a parental role in supporting and advocating for them.

The issue

Ms B is now 22. She has complex speech and language difficulties and a learning disability. Ms B's family moved to the UK from a South Asian country. English is not her first language but she grew up in Brighton and Hove going first to a mainstream school and then special. Ms B is estranged from her family due to them trying to impose on her cultural expectations that she found oppressive. She lives with a Shared Lives carer. Ms B has a longstanding connection with Amaze and has used various services over the years, as did her parents when she was younger. She was internally referred to SENDIASS by the coordinator of Amazing Futures which is Amaze's peer support programme for YP with SEND. Ms B was a user of and is now a volunteer with the peer support group. Ms B wanted advice as she was unhappy in her college placement. Although Ms B's Shared Lives placement is successful, this carer does not take on the type of advocacy most parent/carers of young adults with SEND continue to provide when they run into difficulties.

The support provided by IASS

The CYP worker would normally have arranged to meet Ms B in person but due Covid-19 restrictions at the time they had an online call. Careful listening and clear, unhurried communication were essential to understand Ms B's concerns. The support offered continued to be through phone calls, texts and online meetings. Because Ms B did not have family to advise and support her, she required a higher level of casework involvement and for a longer period than usual.

Ms B was on a Supported Internship course at a local FE college. The wider background was that she was finding navigating college life hard and had high levels of anxiety exacerbated by the pandemic. The first year of the course had been significantly disrupted by Covid. The precipitating issue now was that her new job coach linked to the course had worried and upset her by saying things Ms B thought were odd and which she did not understand, for example that there was not much point to the course because there were no jobs due to Covid. Then an unexpected incident occurred where she ran into an ex-teacher from her primary school in a college corridor who said "I heard you moved from home" and this had made her feel that confidentiality might have been breached about her in college. It is very important to Ms B to know there is no risk of her family being told her current address. At the same time her college mentor had changed and she did not feel confident in speaking to the new mentor about either of these unsettling experiences. She was thinking of giving up and leaving the course altogether.

The CYP worker was able to help Ms B consider her options; do nothing, leave college, raise the issues with college and explore the potential outcomes for each choice and giving her time to process this. The CYP worker also helped Ms B identify the positives she felt about college such as liking her tutor and some of the work. They agreed as a first step that the CYP worker would email the previous mentor on her behalf. This brought a positive response and further support was provided to Ms B to prepare for and attend a meeting with the old and new mentors to discuss her worries were and a plan made, including a change of job coach.

This initial work was then used to prepare for the annual review meeting for her EHCP. It emerged that Ms B had never read her own plan despite having had one since primary school. The CYP worker took Ms B through the plan explaining each section and helped her record her views for the annual review meeting including some specific changes she wanted in the plan. The CYP worker supported Ms B at the meeting so she could participate in discussions for her future plans. Ms B decided she did not want to stay on at college after the course ended meaning the plan would be ceased at the end of the academic year. Her goal was to do voluntary work, potentially working towards paid work in the much longer term. A wider and more person-centred focus for the annual review meant that other actions were identified to support her preparation for adulthood. This included helping her apply to be on the learning disability register at her GP surgery so she could have the longer appointments she needs and get a disabled person's railcard for more independent travel. After the AR meeting and specific follow up actions, the CYP worker helped Ms B understand why the plan would not be amended to take on board the changes she wanted because it would be ceasing soon. Over the following weeks the CYP worker eased the contact by making less frequent check in calls.

the CYP worker's final piece of work before closing the case in September was to work with Ms B to write an "all about me" document that she could use to avoid having to explain her needs repeatedly, especially once her EHCP ceased. It includes things she finds hard and things she is good at. This was also shared with her social worker from adult social care responsible for the continued funding of her Shared Lives placement. Ms B continues to be part of the Amazing Futures peer support group and knows she can come back to Amaze SENDIASS if she has a future need for information and advice.

The difference made

Without sensitive support from SENDIASS, it is almost certain that Ms B would have dropped out of college without a plan for her next steps. Instead, she stayed on to complete her course. Her EHCP was ceased in a planned way. Issues relating to her health and wellbeing in adulthood have been addressed before she lost the formality afforded by an EHCP. She has successfully moved on to voluntary work that she finds interesting and satisfying and is doing a leadership course with Amazing Futures. Ms B continues to face many challenges but SENDIASS helped her get through a particularly tricky period without falling into crisis.

Contact details

Amaze Brighton and Hove

ros@amazesussex.org.uk

liam@amazesussex.org.uk