



Wolverhampton SENDIASS: Supporting families when an EHC needs assessment has been refused

The context

Wolverhampton IASS offers a full casework service for parents, carers and CYP. During the pandemic and particularly after lockdown in 2020 a number of referrals were received from parents concerned about children starting school in September 2020. Transition into Reception class was particularly worrying for parents as visits to new schools were significantly disrupted during the summer term and communication was not what parents or the IASS would have expected.

The issue faced

In November 2020 the IASS received a message from a parent whose 4 year old son (in Reception year) was to have an ADHD assessment in December. The parent informed IASS that the child had an IEP and involvement form SALT and she was hoping the paediatrician appointment in December would explore the possibility of ADHD. She expressed that she felt school were not recording incidents happening there. Although being told he had made a good start to the school term, she had received a few phone calls regarding his behaviour. She had tried to raise this with the school SENCo but had not received a response.

At that time IASS explained the graduated response of Assess, Plan, Do and Review and suggested a meeting with school with IASS support, to discuss her concerns and establish what support was in place and to agree an action plan/next steps. Mum reported that she had confronted the school SENCo and after the appointment with the paediatrician she had been advised to request an EHC needs assessment.

The parent expressed that she was upset with her child's behaviour at home, and that she felt isolated and alone. She had no family close by and no support. IASS suggested an Early Help assessment to identify any other services that could offer support for the family. However, inconsistent feedback from the support worker in school and what the parent felt was a lack of communication resulted in the parent requesting an EHC needs assessment.

The support provided by IASS

IASS had offered advice and support prior to the parental request. IASS explained that the assessment process takes 20 weeks and that it would be helpful to meet with school to ensure school based support was in place whilst the assessment was carried out. Unfortunately, at that time parents had refused to meet with school. When the LA decision was a refusal to assess, the parent was understandably unhappy. The decision was based on the information the school had provided but the parent may have been unaware of.

IASS explained to parents their right to appeal the decision. Wolverhampton IASS offers a solution focussed approach which can often be mediatory in working with schools and families and sees positive communication as a key factor in finding resolution. IASS suggested parents needed to meet with the LA and school. Parents agreed and this was arranged with the school and the appropriate LA SEND officer. A local authority education psychologist was also invited. During the meeting, IASS supported parents to share their views and concerns about their child's behaviour and the incidents that had happened in school which the LA may not have been aware of. IASS challenged the LA's refusal to assess quoting Code of Practice 9.3 (A LA must conduct an assessment of education, health and care needs when it considers that it may be necessary for special educational provision to be made for the CYP in accordance with an EHCP).

The LA reversed its decision and carried out the assessment. IASS supported parents to meet with the LA education psychologist to go through her observations and assessment as they were unhappy at first with her report. IASS ensured that changes were made that parents were satisfied with, and the report was agreed. In the meantime, IASS supported parents in a meeting with school to discuss the support for their son and agree an action plan.

The difference made

It was important to ensure support was in place within school whilst the EHC needs assessment was carried out.

It was identified that the child had a speech delay and he started receiving a programme of speech therapy which school staff delivered in conjunction with SALT. This started to develop his confidence and reduced his frustration as he started to express himself more clearly within school. Consequently, having a positive impact on his learning and behaviour in school and at home.

School provided a detailed breakdown of interventions and support they were providing and by taking parental views on board were able to understand and meet the child's needs better.

Parents expressed they were relieved and happy that their views had been taken seriously.

A referral was made for the Autism Pathway due to the concerns parents had shared.

Support continued through the graduated approach and communication with school.

The child made significant improvement once the appropriate therapy and strategies were implemented consistently.

The EHC needs assessment was completed and the LA concluded it was not necessary to issue an EHCP. Parents understood this decision and were satisfied because the full assessment had been carried out and his needs were now properly identified, understood and being met effectively. They were happy with the graduated response and support their son was now receiving in school.

Feedback from the parent

Thank you again xxxxx, for being patient, kind and caring towards me when I was at my worst. Thank you for believing me....I think that's the one thing that could have broke me, thank you for believing me, thank you for hearing me

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