

## 8) Case Study: Parents needing additional support

This case study illustrates how families who are not aware of the support available, or have had no personal experience of, or familiarity with the education system in the UK could potentially become disconnected from their child's education and development. They could lose sight of what they believe is best for their own child and instead would simply rely on professionals to make all the decisions and not have a voice.

### **Raj's Story**

Raj is 5 and attends a mainstream primary school along with his older brother. The family's first language is Punjabi. The family moved from Belgium to England about a year ago. Mum is at home and his father is working on his market stall. Mum understands English but does not speak it. Dad can communicate a little better in English. The school had made a request for an EHCP and an outreach worker from the council asked for IS support as she identified that the family would need assistance if they were to be able to participate effectively due to their unfamiliarity with the whole of the education system in the UK.

The IS was introduced to the family by the outreach worker at their family home. This meeting was just introductory as preparation for the meeting the following day at the school to discuss the draft EHCP. Section A was blank as parents didn't realise or understand what information they should contribute and there wasn't time to now complete this in advance of the school meeting.

The meeting at the school was attended by the EP, SEND coordinator, SEND manager, class teacher, SENCo, outreach worker, interpreter, parents and IS to discuss the first draft of the EHCP. Parents did not say anything at the meeting and shared afterwards that they didn't understand much of what was going on. Consequently, the IS arranged to meet with the parents as a matter of urgency to explain the draft EHC and the objectives and outcomes of the meeting.

When the IS met with the family she arranged for a colleague who spoke Punjabi to assist. The IS and parents were able to go through each section together and make the necessary corrections and amendments. They also spent a considerable amount of time completing Section A. It required many questions to tease the information out and to allow for the parents to talk between themselves and then agree. It was also important to know Raj's likings especially as he is non-verbal. Parents had not even thought about short-term goals or longer-term aspirations.

The real challenge was that the parents did not understand the content of the document or the process, such as the role of Education Psychologist, what Key stage 1 meant, the described methods of teaching and how it would all fit together. Discussions around mainstream and special school also took place as again the parents were not aware of these options and did not know that they could look at alternatives or visit them. The draft had to be re-written with parents' verbal input for clarity. The relationship between the family and

For more case studies and further information about Independent Support please visit [www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk](http://www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk) or email [independentsupport@ncb.org.uk](mailto:independentsupport@ncb.org.uk)

## 8) Case Study: Parents needing additional support

the IS grew from that of strangers to one of trust. The IS was also able to help the parents understand what Autism actually meant. The parents were not aware of the characteristics of the condition or how to manage the associated behaviour or how different approaches to communication might be beneficial to Raj.

The support process involved giving time to the family so that the trust could be built. It was a very steep learning curve for this family due to not even understanding what the school structure in England was actually like. Providing time and not rushing them allowed the dialogue to take place at a pace that suited the parents. This helped to build their confidence and by encouraging them to think and figure out how to apply what they were learning and discovering about their son, would hopefully enable him to make progress and thrive.