

10) Case Study: Parents needing additional support

This case study demonstrates well what can be achieved when families are given time; the time to be heard, time to explain, time to understand, time to build and establish a relationship based on trust and confidence and the timing of appropriate, impartial information and support to make the best decisions for themselves and their daughter's future. It also illustrates the effectiveness of coordinated services; schools, LA, IS service and the family all working together on behalf of the child's future.

Shabnam's story

Shabnam's family arrived in the UK five months earlier. Prior to their move to the UK, they were living as refugees in Spain for 10 years and are originally from Pakistan.

Shabnam's teacher realised that things were not going as expected for her. She was working at much lower levels than her peers and seemed isolated during her time in the playground. Her teacher identified that Shabnam needed extra support and potentially more specialised support to meet her additional needs.

Her school decided to request an EHCP assessment, with the possibility of finding a more appropriate placement for Shabnam. There were concerns from the school about the level of Shabnam's parental involvement in the process due to the communication barriers. Her parents are unable to speak English, only Urdu and Spanish.

The inclusion officer of the school decided to contact the IS service to ensure that Shabnam's family could understand the purpose of requesting an EHCP assessment and how they could contribute to the process.

When the IS first met Shabnam's family, there was a complete lack of understanding about the EHCP's purpose and process. However, the IS was able to communicate with the family in a language they could understand and was able to explain why an EHCP had been requested and what they should expect. The family were then able to express their concerns for Shabnam.

Shabnam's mum gave the IS documents from Spain and the documents she'd received in the UK which she did not understand. In these documents, the IS was able to see that Shabnam had been given a diagnosis in Spain. The IS ensured the Spanish documents (written in Catalan) could be included in her assessment.

Shabnam's parents shared with the IS their worries about her current school not being able to meet her needs and also shared their aspirations for her. They would like Shabnam to have the same opportunities as her sisters in future. They would also like her to be as independent as the rest of the children her age.

After meeting with the family, the IS made contact with the SEN caseworker and school. They all agreed to maintain contact throughout the EHCP process with the IS so she could continue to support the family enabling them to remain involved.

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The IS also assisted Shabnam's family look at possible specialist schools that could meet Shabnam's additional needs, and helped to arrange a meeting to visit the school they felt was most appropriate.

While viewing the school the IS was able to translate to the parents how highly the head teacher spoke about the professionals working in the school and the type and levels of support available. Afterwards Shabnam's mum was crying. She told the IS she never thought that Shabnam would have the opportunity to go to a school like that.

The latest news is that Shabnam's family are waiting for the final EHCP. All professionals and the family have worked in partnership during the EHC assessment process and to make changes to the draft EHCP. Now Shabnam's parents are happy about the plan and feel more confident as they have been able to have active involvement in establishing the direction of the EHCP for their daughter.