

2) Case Study: Parents needing additional support

This case study demonstrates the importance of “listening conversations” if we are to really understand where parents are coming from and to know the best way to support them. It shows that parents really appreciate someone taking the time to understand their concerns and provide reassurance, which in turn can empower them to speak up on behalf of their child and ensure their voice is heard and fully participate in the EHC planning process.

Amy’s Story

Amy and her family had recently moved to the UK from abroad. Amy has severe learning difficulties and autism and had already been given a place at a local special school without an EHCP being in place. Amy’s mum was referred for an IS by Amy’s SEN Case Officer.

Amy’s mum explained to the IS that she was concerned about her daughter getting the right support in school, especially as Amy was unsettled at home and was still adjusting to living in a new place. Mum said she was unsure how to complete the paperwork she had been sent from the LA and was confused about what would happen to Amy’s support after this. English is not mum’s first language, although she explained that she didn’t need an interpreter, just someone to take the time to explain things clearly to her.

The IS met with mum and they looked at the paperwork together. The IS explained how mum would be involved in making decisions about Amy’s support from now on and that there’s no right or wrong way to complete this form. This was one of mum’s main concerns! The IS helped her realise this was an opportunity for her to explain what she would like for Amy in the future and what she felt she needed help with. This opened up a conversation with mum about her hopes for Amy and share what her skills and interests were. Amy loves music, dancing and especially trampolining! She likes to be busy and is always on the go. She likes to help out with jobs at home, like hoovering and mum would like her to become more independent, perhaps being able to make herself a hot drink or sandwich on her own. Mum’s priority for Amy’s learning is around her communication, if she could make herself understood more, then she might not get so frustrated. Mum also wanted to be able to take Amy out for day trips with her brothers and sisters; however, mum didn’t feel able to do this on her own.

After this conversation about Amy’s needs and aspirations, mum felt confident to complete the paperwork and to include important information without feeling like she was being judged for the things she and Amy were struggling with. Mum said it was about time people understood her daughter from the family’s point of view. Mum also said that it was really good to talk about the things that Amy enjoys and the things she’s good at and perhaps how she could get better at these things. It was good for mum to start thinking positively about Amy’s future and this continued when the IS went with her to Amy’s planning meeting. Mum said that it’s really hard to see beyond

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the next day sometimes, especially if Amy's having a bad day but meeting with Amy's teachers and therapists reassured mum that they understood her daughter's needs and are working together to give her the best possible future.