

5) Case Study: Building trust

This case study shows just how important it is to allow sufficient time to build meaningful relationships and the difference it makes when you do.

Layla's Story

Layla is a young lady aged 15 who has been excluded from her secondary school placement and is currently struggling in her current Pupil Referral Unit placement. She is very distrustful of professionals as previously Social Care have been involved and there have been discussions around going into care.

When I first met Layla's mum it quickly became apparent that Layla had very strong ideas of what she wanted both in relation to her current school situation and for her future. Unfortunately Layla did not have a statement, despite having been assessed by various professionals over the years, starting in nursery, and consequently reacted badly to new faces "prying into her life" and not actually helping her. She had been frequently promised that things would be done to make the situation better, however, from her perspective things only got worse.

Layla struggles with social interaction and can misinterpret what is said to her unless things are made very clear and she is told the truth. She can react very aggressively if she misunderstands someone's intentions. Following the death of her father three years ago, Layla is convinced that any new person wanting to talk to her about herself, school and social life, will take her away from her mum and into care.

Mum and a family friend worked with me over a number of weeks on the Young Person and Parent views sections of the EHCP request. As a result of this it was suggested to me that Layla may be interested in meeting me "... because what we were writing sounded like her...". As a first step before meeting her, I left a set of "all about me", "good day/bad day", "aspirations" forms with mum to show Layla and asked her to fill in anything she wanted on any of the sheets. When I subsequently met Layla she was nervous at first but hesitantly started to show me what she had written on the forms. She had struggled with writing down her ideas but by working through them and talking about her feelings, which at times was clearly a struggle emotionally, she started to gain confidence and reveal more of herself and her thoughts, feelings and aspirations.

At the end of the session Layla was much more positive about the EHCP process. Her earlier comment that "... I shout a lot because no one has ever listened to ME..." effectively sums up how she felt before the start of this process. As she couldn't see that there had been any help in the past despite numerous assessments and interviews, she couldn't see why this should be any different. Whilst it took an extended period allowing Layla time to see how things were progressing the fact that at the end of the session when we worked together on her input she felt confident enough to turn to me and say "... I feel like I'm a person and I'm being listened to at last..."

Whilst this is only the first step in the process for Layla to feel that she is being treated as a person with her own views and that these will be incorporated into "her" plan it is a major step for her to start to believe that people will listen and that she is valued.

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Without IS intervention I believe that this young lady would have been unable to contribute to her plan in any significant way. Her main concern when she eventually agreed to meet me was where was I from (ie who was I working for), the fact that I could explain that I was employed by an independent organisation and was there to work for her, to collect her views and help her to put them into “her” plan calmed her fear that I was just another person who wanted to send her away.