

7) Case Study: Empowering

This case study illustrates how delivering bite size pieces of support reassured and alleviated parents' anxieties and ensured they were able to engage in every possible way to help their child achieve a better life. Read at the end how the IS reflects on this experience with regard to their own personal development.

Cassie has a diagnosis of moderate learning difficulty and epilepsy.

Cassie's Story

Cassie is 8 and has a statement due to be transferred to an EHCP. Cassie is currently attending a mainstream primary school but due to her increasing support needs will be transferring to a local specialist provision from September 2015.

The family had very little knowledge of EHCPs; the transfer process; or of any provision and support available in the local area for Cassie or themselves. In order for Cassie's parents to be able to effectively make sense of the new system and the accompanying information and feel comfortable to ask their questions and gain a clear understanding, the IS met with them on several occasions to prevent them feeling overwhelmed. During these support sessions the IS explained the purpose of the EHCP; what's meant by being person centred; and reassured them that their views and Cassie's will be included throughout, thus ensuring its relevance and effectiveness. The IS also explained the roles of the different professionals who might be involved and the reports that would be needed, including from Cassie's current school, and how the information would be used to formulate and complete the EHCP.

During this time the IS also helped Cassie's parents share some of their views in preparation for the plan. Cassie's parents expressed their anxieties regarding having not met the SEN Officer and they still hadn't received confirmation of Cassie's transfer visits to her new school, despite the summer term coming to a close. The IS contacted the SEN Officer to arrange a time for her to meet with the family at home and also contacted the new school on their behalf to get the details of Cassie's transition dates. The IS decided to follow these up on the parents' behalf to try and alleviate some of their anxieties and allow them to feel that the process was working as well as it could for them.

The IS continued to work with the family to complete their views and following their meeting with the SEN Officer, which was again a chance for Cassie's parents to ask questions and feel included throughout the process, help them look at other support available, including the Local Offer. Cassie's parents were delighted to find that there was so much support available, which they had previously been unaware of, including community activities and provision that Cassie could access. Due to the financial cost associated with some of the activities the IS discussed with the family the possibility of a social care assessment to see if they were eligible for direct payments in relation to Cassie accessing these. This was something Cassie's parents were eager to go ahead with, so the IS raised this with the SEN Officer involved and the referral was made. The IS was able to complete the family views with Cassie's parents really well as they had engaged throughout and were more than happy to discuss how their family works; the challenges they have and their receptiveness to any new ideas on how best to support their daughter, so that she could live the most amazing life possible.

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Due to Cassie's parents being very open and honest about their feelings throughout made it easier for the IS to identify the areas where they most needed assistance, thus ensuring the support provided was as effective as possible.

NB Cassie is booked on to a local play scheme for disabled children during the summer holidays, which both Cassie and her parents are looking forward too.

Additional notes provided from the Independent Supporter:

I know that during this time I was able to have a positive impact on the family as the parents repeatedly thanked me for the support and advice I had given them but also stated "that I had made a huge difference to them as they felt included throughout and knew more about the support available locally, which they think is fantastic but had also made the transfer process a lot easier for them as they felt that I had taken away the pressure for them, which they were really grateful for".

The biggest challenge I came across during my work with the family was around alleviating their anxieties. I found this a challenge for myself too as I was desperate to make them feel more comfortable around the changes of school placement but there was nothing I could physically do to alleviate this. The parents needed to complete their open day at the school and see the provision for themselves and experience seeing their child settled during their visits, before this anxiety settled. I feel that I have learnt a lot during my time working with the family, as each family is naturally different and present with different support needs.

I was able to support the family to access support that they did not know existed and this was a big learning curve for me, to see a family's reaction and engagement with everything that was offered to them. This was a family that I feel I was able to give every bit of support possible too through my role as an IS and this felt incredibly rewarding.