

9) Case Study: Empowering

This case study demonstrates the importance of parents being signposted from the outset to the right avenue of support and advice. When suspicion and mistrust occur so early on in the process it can cause long-term damage. By the IS managing to inform and empower the parents, she managed to turn things around and a better outcome is now looking possible.

Malcolm has been diagnosed with ASD, ADHD and Global Processing disorder.

Malcolm's Story

Malcolm has a statement and is in Y6 at his local primary school. The Annual review was being used to transfer Malcolm's statement to the new EHCP in addition to discussing his move to high school.

Malcolm's parents requested an IS to help them with the parent and child's section of the EHCP. During our first meeting it became apparent that they were very concerned that the LA had unilaterally chosen the high school for Malcolm. As a consequence, they had fallen out with the LA's assigned caseworker. I explained that during this process, they had a right to choose a school, and that could include requesting a school/setting from outside the LA where they lived. I felt obliged to inform them that this path was potentially a difficult one, which may lead to rejection and the need to appeal.

As Malcolm's next educational setting was to be part of his plan I advised them to make an appointment to meet with the caseworker and I agreed to attend and support them. In the meantime, they really did their homework and visited some 21 schools both within and out of the Borough. The meeting was held with 2 department managers. Malcolm's parents rejected the LA's preferred school in favour of an out of borough setting. After much discussion, they agreed to look into the parental choice.

During my follow up meetings with Malcolm's parents, I helped draft and finalise the parent section of the EHCP application in preparation for the annual review/transfer meeting. I advised them that because this new process is to be person centred it required a high level of detail and honesty from both of them and Malcolm. This would enable those making decisions to be in possession of all the key information relating to Malcolm and his life. I also explained that this new process requires, whenever possible, to have the child attend the meeting with their parents and take an active part in decisions being made for them. We agreed that Malcolm would attend.

The annual review/transfer meeting was attended by the head teacher, SENCo (deputy head), class teacher, teaching assistant, the 2 previously met LA managers, myself and Malcolm's parents. At times the meeting became tense and emotional. The school and the LA managers did agree that mainstream education was not going to be able to meet Malcolm's needs. Malcolm was called in, and I have to say he made a tremendous contribution. The tension in the room melted away as Malcolm sat on his dad's lap, charming everyone as he answered questions from around the room. What do you enjoy about school? What do you find difficult? What is your favourite lesson? What do you like to do at home? etc.

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Some weeks later, I received a call from Malcolm's dad informing me that their preferred school had been included in the final plan.

Malcolm's parents were an extremely capable couple but like so many other parents, they were somewhat stumped by the Application/transfer process. They wrongly, but understandably assumed that the school would advise them. When this misconception became apparent, they felt lost until they contacted the IS service who helped them find the most productive and constructive way forward.