



Newcastle: IASS supporting children and young people to have a successful transition back into education as some schools re-open

The context

Child A is a primary school pupil with an EHCP who had been at home since the lockdown started. His parents are both keyworkers, although one parent has been working from home. They contacted IASS for advice and support to help get their child back in to school following the issuing of the Government guidance on risk assessments for children with EHCPs.

The story

Child A's parents contacted IASS as they wanted to clarify what their rights were under the Coronavirus Act, in order for their child to attend school. They explained that they are both keyworkers, with one parent able to work from home. Child A has an EHCP and had originally been attending school as "a child with an EHCP" until the Government guidance on risk assessments was issued. They explained that due to A's needs it was not possible to work from home and to simultaneously support his safety and education. The parents had had a conversation with school explaining their position as keyworkers and requesting a school place but had been told that due to the risk assessment school were not able to offer a place at this time.

It became apparent during this conversation with parents that there was some confusion over who has responsibility for the risk assessment, the school or the LA. It sounded like the guidance had not been fully understood by either party or was being misapplied. The parents gave permission for IASS to do some fact finding. This included a discussion between the service and an LA officer. The LA explained they had had some conversations with the school, who had led them to believe that both parents were working from home. Given A's needs, they had agreed with the school that the child would be safer at home and therefore, he should not be offered a school place. The service explained the child's eligibility under the new guidance as a child with an EHCP and with parents who are key workers and provided details regarding the risk assessment process i.e. that responsibility sits with the LA to carry out the risk assessment in collaboration with settings and parents. The service also clarified that the guidance notes that if the risk assessment determines that the child is equally safe at school as they are at home then they should attend. The officer was grateful for the clarification and felt they had a better understanding of their responsibilities. They offered to speak to school to review the decision.

The service then updated the parents regarding the conversations that were happening between school and the LA, we offered to facilitate a meeting to discuss how they can support A back into the school setting.

The service hosted a virtual meeting with A's parents and the school and were able to keep the meeting positive with the focus on moving things forward. School and parents were able to come to an agreement of a phased return for A starting with an offer of 3 mornings per week with a package of support.



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Part of the family

The outcome

When the parents contacted the service, they were incredibly frustrated and described it as “hitting a brick wall” when trying to make their point to the school. They were incredibly grateful that the service had been able to progress the conversations, remove the barriers and the result left them with the provision they were eligible for and with them still having good relationships with all parties.

This approach enabled the service to provide clarity and understanding to all parties which helped to resolve the issues, and to facilitate the different parties coming together to work out a solution. By keeping A central to everything and coming back to his eligibility and way in which the guidance supports this, helped clarify the true meaning of the guidance for the LA and helped the school to deepen their understanding and change their perspective and position.

At the meeting the service promoted a solution focused model to facilitate the discussion regarding the next steps and how to integrate A back into school. The parents commented afterwards that they felt really supported but were also really reassured at how positive the meeting was and how everyone was focused on their child’s best interests and getting it right.

The week after the meeting Child A’s parents contacted the service to offer their thanks for the support they’d received and to report that A had successfully gone into school as the first part of his phased re-integration.

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