

Case study: SENDIASS support obtaining appropriate educational placement and resulting in IAS service improvements

This case study demonstrates how an IAS service supported a complex situation with a vulnerable family and how the service adapts to support other more complex cases.

This case study is about Laila and her mum Louise. Laila is 12 years old and in Year 8. Laila has a rare disease, similar to Parkinson's and during the time that I was working with her she was also diagnosed with ADD. She is on the waiting list at CAMHS for an assessment for ASD. Although able academically, Laila has tremors and tires easily. She can seem violent, has no sense of danger and kept running away from school. By the end of her time in primary school there were daily outbursts and incidents. Louise has five children, all of whom have SEMH and attendance issues, for which Louise had been sentenced by the court. Her life has been very challenging over the past few years, making it sometimes hard for her to engage with support.

Louise was first referred to the service in March 2017. The SEN team advised her to call us. Laila's primary school had placed her on a respite placement at the pupil referral unit the previous September. Through the routine admissions round, she had been offered a place in a mainstream secondary school, which Louise had not yet accepted. A draft EHCP was not due to be issued until the end of June. This was going to be challenging in terms of Louise responding to the EHCP and consultation with schools taking place before the end of term. Louise agreed to accept the place at the mainstream school because finding a suitable specialist placement could take time and Laila needed to have access to some education. We talked about the range of possible schools and the process involved and I encouraged Louise to use the time while she was waiting for the draft EHCP to visit schools. She felt able to manage this by herself. Louise also had a Family Support Worker and was happy for me to talk to key professionals involved with her case.

I did not hear any more from Louise for a while; I had tried to contact her several times, but was unable to leave a message and she had not contacted me. Louise then re-engaged with the service in September. Laila had started at the mainstream secondary school, but it was not going well and she was already at risk of permanent exclusion. Louise was supported by IASS in a meeting with the SENCo at the new school. She was advised of her position regarding an appeal and what was required of her to enable us to assist her with this. A plan of action was drawn up. We subsequently facilitated a meeting with the SEN Team. It transpired that there was limited professional evidence to support a special school place, but that the LA would send papers to other schools if Louise wanted this. Louise chose not to pursue an appeal at this point.

Shortly afterwards, Social Care became involved with the family and Laila stopped attending school. I persisted in trying to keep contact with Louise, always giving her the option, if she still wanted, to work with IASS.

An early Annual Review took place in January 2018 and I supported Louise. By this point she had recognised she needed help to:

- Engage with everybody
- Ensure that Laila had access to some education from home
- Get a response from some of the special schools she needed to visit
- Travel to some of the schools that were some distance out of borough
- Express her preference to the SEN Team

After a great deal of work in coordinating this, we were able to visit the two most viable options and Laila loved one of them (an out of borough independent special school). I continued to work with Louise, the SEN team and the school to ensure that everyone had all the information and responses that they needed for a place to be considered. Finally in July 2018 there was a positive outcome and a place was offered at the preferred school for September.

In September I contacted Louise and she said that Laila had settled well and was doing brilliantly at her new school. Louise said “I would like to thank you for all your help and support you have given to us, I feel it wouldn't have happened if it wasn't for you and your support so thank you.”

Conclusion

This case highlights the complexity of some of the cases that IASS deals with and how support can continue over a significant period of time in order to achieve an outcome for the child. Where we work with vulnerable families we have to be persistent, resilient and try to act as the key person who pulls together the strands and keeps people communicating. The feedback from the parent shows how much the IASS input was valued.

Summary

These types of case are labour intensive for a small service and we have many similar cases. It is for this reason that we have been adding to our pool of volunteers who can support service users in more straightforward meetings, freeing staff to carry out some of the more complex work.