

Case study: SENDIASS – example of good service practice

This case study demonstrates how an IAS service has supported a boy age 7 with a recent ASD diagnosis over a long period time but where careful and persistence paid off, including getting the child to participate.

Ben was in year 7 with a recent ASD diagnosis and on a waiting list for the ADHD CAHMS referral and he was attending a local mainstream school. Historically, Ben had been excluded 5 times from his primary school and 3 times from his current secondary school. Relations with the school had broken down because Ben and his parents had lost trust with the school and other professionals. They felt Ben was being excluded because school wasn't fully addressing his needs. Ben was becoming increasingly anxious, angry and sometimes demonstrating some erratic aggressive behaviour.

His parents were becoming angry at the school and the 'system'. It was becoming difficult to get him ready for a school day and some days he was refusing to go. Parents felt strongly that the school did not understand Ben's needs and they did not have the expertise to meet them and therefore, felt he would be better suited to a different school.

March 2017: IASS support provided

Father contacted the service following a recommendation from a friend and previous client. Listening to the father's concerns it was felt that it would be appropriate to arrange an appointment to meet with the parents to discuss in further detail the support they may require to secure positive outcomes for Ben.

March 2017: Meeting with family

During the meeting, we encouraged the parents to share as much detail as possible about their concerns and what outcomes they were hoping for. Taking guidance from their lead, we were able to offer tailored advice, informed by CoP, to explain SEN support in school and the school's duty. The verbal information was supported by factsheets created for parents' information. Using this information, parents understood what options were available to them and were able to make an informed choice about what steps to take next.

April 2017: Meeting 1 with school

Due to the strained relationship between school and the parents, parents felt that they would benefit from IASS arranging a meeting with the school SENCo on their behalf. We were able to offer support for the parents at the initial and subsequent meetings with the school. Our role was to help support the parents to address the concerns they had around Ben's SEN support. We were able to ensure that parents were fully involved in the meeting by making sure their views and wishes were heard and by checking they understood the information the school provided.

Informed by Section 6 CoP regarding SEN Support in schools, parents were able to agree the actions discussed, targets set, review dates and have a clear understanding of the interventions that would be planned and put into practice.

May 2017: Meeting 2 with school

We suggested that it was important to try to ascertain how the child felt and spoke with the parent about how best this might be achieved working with the school. We suggested for Ben to be in some part of the meetings, his voice to be sought either in writing or recorded. We suggested for referrals to be made to other agencies for activities to help him enjoy his favourite hobbies and for support, for example referral to the local young people's service was suggested. The school agreed to make these referrals. It was suggested to the parents to reassure Ben that he needed to be there so they could find out how he felt and to help them know how to support him in going back into school. A part-time timetable was agreed and IASS was able to ensure parents were happy to agree to this knowing what the intended outcome was and how this would support Ben's needs and transition back to full timetable.

July 2017: Review meeting 3 with school

During this meeting, parents raised concerns regarding Ben's speech and language development. IASS were able to discuss the CoP to inform the discussions about involving specialists. It was agreed that the school would make a referral for an assessment. IASS supported parents at subsequent meetings and reviews with the school. Parents and Ben were encouraged to actively participate in the reviews, expressing their views.

January 2018: EHC needs assessment request

It was in these meetings with IASS providing advice and information it was suggested that an EHC needs assessment was required because despite the school taken relevant steps to meet Ben's needs, he was not making progress and his behaviour had not improved. The family was provided with detailed information on EHC needs assessment request and how the plan will help provide the right support for Ben.

February 2018: Meeting with family

We had a separate meeting with the family to go through the process making sure they understood every stage. IASS supported the family through the 20 weeks timeline of the EHCP process. Parents were guided through and supported with school visits when they needed to give the LA names of *schools to consult*.

May 2018: EHCP Meeting with professionals

IASS attended 2 draft EHCP meetings with the family where they were meeting professionals to discuss the EHC provision. There were a few back and forth issues with the draft plan around the LA's "duty to specify" IASS made sure that the parents understood this duty and how it affects the SEND provision for Ben. In this case in one of the meetings with LA the IASS advice was to have the professionals attend the meeting to clarify some of the wording that was unclear.

Impact of the IASS support on the family

The parents were pleased that time and care had been taken to gather their son's views in a way that did not cause him anxiety or lead to an angry outburst. The parents said Ben had really liked the way he was involved in meetings as he had previously lost all trust in the professionals around him. This was the first time his views had seriously been gathered. Ben sat in a corner of the room at some points during the school meetings. Ben was encouraged and IASS spoke at the meeting to help put his side across on a few points – as such, Ben participated usefully in a meeting with adults. IASS provided parents with

information of other services they could contact for support such as the local parent/carer group, ASD charity support groups and Children's Social Care where they can self-refer for short breaks and other community services they could access.

The parents were able to understand the SEND education system and ask questions of professionals. The parents felt they were empowered by IASS who enable them to stand up for their son's right to education and support.

July 2018

Ben's EHCP was finalised and a new school was allocated and named in the plan which was able to meet all of Ben's needs. Transition to the suitable school was put in place for September 2018 start. Ben now attends a specialist school out of borough where he is happy to attend and there have been no further exclusions.

Feedback from the parents

"I hope you are well and I just wanted to drop you a note to confirm that Ben finally started full time at H school with transport provided.

Thank you very much for all your knowledge, time and efforts, it was a very difficult journey for our family and it's the great work that people like yourself do to make it easier for us to get through".

Thank you Liz, Jerry and Ben

Conclusion

The situation was very fragile but the parents and the child had an opportunity to be safely supported to express their views and to have them listened to. The school also felt our intervention had a positive impact, making the communication between school and parents easier and smoother.

Summary as a result of this case

As a service we have been able to:

- Hold SEND information sessions/coffee mornings at Ben's previous primary and secondary schools providing information around SEN Support. From these sessions we picked up 5 more families to support.
- Supported a referral by a friend to our service for support from Ben's family.
- Review our support at different levels and produce some additional information sheets to give parents and YP.
- We have started working closely with our SENCo Network forum to address and highlight issues like Ben's case.