

# SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES TRANSFORMATION CASE STUDIES

Surrey County Council Children and Education Select Committee: Wednesday 6 March 2019

## Abstract

*The following case studies explore some of the issues and challenges children and families face in relation to Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health, Speech and Language Therapy, and Graduated Response and how the transformation work in these areas will make things better. The cases are based on real experiences that colleagues have encountered, all personal details have been altered to protect anonymity.*

## **Emotional Wellbeing Mental Health and Behaviour: A new joined -up Pathway for Surrey's SEND and EWMH Transformation**

### **Steven's Story**

Steven is aged 12 and is an intelligent young man with lots of potential. He loves outdoor activity and wishes to join the police force. Steven's Dad has served a prison sentence in an open prison; his absence in the home has impacted on Steven's mental state and his behaviour. His Grandfather has also recently died and Steven has found it hard to deal with his grief, losing concentration in lessons and becoming angry when challenged. Steven has had over 8 school placement provisions, which were unable to meet his needs, with Steven being excluded from a high number of them. He has therefore missed a considerable amount of school. He is currently accessing Surrey's A2E provision but he wants to go back to school. He is being assessed for an Education Health and Care Plan to support his SEMH needs (social emotional and mental health needs) but he feels that no-one has really listened to him or wants him in their school.

### **How the transformation work will make things better**

The new joined-up pathway will provide wraparound support for Steven at school and in the home by connecting services across SEND, Family Resilience and CAMHs. Its emphasis on early intervention and prevention means that the issues at home impacting on Steven's EWMH and behaviour at school would have been picked up early and an immediate response provided. If this had happened the school exclusions could have been avoided and an EHCP might not have been necessary. If Steven had been offered this new pathway, his story might have looked like this:

Early intervention for Steven would probably take the form of the kind of 'activity and relationship building' offered by voluntary sector partners or police cadets, engaging Steven in the outdoor activity he loves. This could include activity that involves the whole family to strengthen relationships around Steven. At the same time, Steven could access peer support from other young people who have a parent in custody or who have suffered bereavement. Steven would be given the chance to build his own resilience, asking for more help if he needed it. 'More help' could be in the form of counselling for him, digital self-help tools, or through school staff accessing advice and training from the new EWMH services that will be offered by the Emotional Wellbeing Specialist Teaching Service. There is every possibility that immediate and positive support that focuses on building Steven's strengths and supporting his family and school to help him will result in him settling back down into school and pursuing his ambition to be a police officer. However, if he needs more help, then he or his family or his school would be able to access the next level of support from a Primary Mental Health Worker, Educational Psychologist or Emotional Wellbeing School Nurse. At every stage in this pathway, Steven and his family will be involved in decision making and building their own resilience and Steven's ambition to join the police would be on track.

## **Speech and Language Therapy: An increased offer at SEN support**

### **Ella's Story**

Ella is 12 and has just transferred to a mainstream secondary school. She was referred to speech and language therapy in Early Years due to having delayed language and disordered speech. She received a pathway of support and as was making progress she was discharged from the service. She then entered a large mainstream primary with high pupil premium and a high number of children on both SEN support and with an EHCP/ statement.

Ella found the transition to school quite challenging; she didn't always understand what people were saying and her peers found her hard to understand so she became quite isolated and withdrawn. In her reception class there were several children with challenging behaviour who took up time from the class teacher, LSA and SENCO. As Ella continued through her primary years her class teachers began to realise that she was not meeting expected levels but she didn't ever meet the threshold for an EHCP and as was not the neediest child, the SENCO did not refer to the school speech and language therapist.

Now in secondary school Ella's behaviour has changed, she has become a school refuser and her self-esteem is really low with incidences of self-harming. Now that her needs have escalated no one is worrying about her language and communication needs as they are focusing on the behaviours.

### **How the transformation work will make things better**

Increased speech and language therapy provision at the universal and targeted level (SEN support) means that schools would have training around identification of speech, language and communication needs. Ella's school having received this training would have discussed Ella at her meeting with the school link therapist during her reception year. The therapist would have been able to see Ella within that term and determine the best pathway for her, this could mean working directly with the therapist/therapy assistant or the therapist supporting the school to meet needs. Ella would have received the right support early and the school teaching team would have understood her needs sooner. She would then be supported in order to reach her expected levels of attainment, develop her language and speech, develop her confidence, wellbeing and social skills. Staff in both her primary and secondary schools would be aware of any additional support needed to support the transfer. Ella would have had a successful transfer to school.

Integration of Speech and language therapy into the Emotional Wellbeing Mental Health and Behaviour pathway will also ensure that when there are behaviours exhibited beyond what is expected that language and communication needs are explored as a potential cause and support put in place.

## Graduated Response

### Sally's Story

Sally is 7 years old and attends her local primary school. She lives with her Mum. Sally was born prematurely and the birth was traumatic. Sally spent her first year in the care of her maternal grandmother as Mum found it very hard to take care of Sally while also getting over a traumatic split from Sally's Dad. Sally didn't attend pre-school.

Starting school was difficult. Sally would cry and get very upset with other children and staff within the classroom. Sally finds the routine of school life difficult and is increasingly disruptive; e.g. calling out, distracting other children and sometimes pinching, hitting or calling other children names. She doesn't have a wide vocabulary and finds it hard to communicate how she is feeling. She finds relationships difficult. Sally's attendance is poor (72%). Reasons given for missing school are due to ill-health; coughs, flu, colds, stomach bugs and ear infections. Sally's Mum finds it hard to get Sally to come to school so she lets her stay at home instead. Sally's progress is falling significantly behind that of her peers in numeracy, reading and writing.

Sally's class teacher informs the SENCO and Sally's progress and behaviour are monitored. The SENCO suspects that Sally has communication and interaction difficulties and advises Sally's mum that a statutory Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP) should be requested so that Sally's needs can be properly assessed. Whilst the request for statutory assessment is in process, Sally's class teacher does not have a clear assessment of Sally's needs to be able to personalise her teaching strategies. Sally falls further behind in her learning and her behaviour deteriorates. This situation is very stressful for Sally's mum. She suffers from serious anxiety which has a negative impact on her parenting.

The request for an EHCP is unsuccessful as Sally's needs fall below the statutory threshold. Over the next two years Sally falls further and further behind in her learning. Her self-esteem, attendance and behaviour worsen. Sally's mum struggles with Sally's behaviour at home and their relationship becomes strained. By the time Sally is 9 years old, she has been excluded on a fixed term basis for her behaviour. Sally's mum is advised that Sally's needs have escalated to such a degree that without specialist support Sally will be unable to access the secondary curriculum. She will be vulnerable to permanent exclusion and placement breakdown. As a consequence, an EHCP is to be requested before the transfer to secondary school. Sally's mum feels angry that she has to fight so hard for her daughter's needs to be met.

### How the transformation work will make things better

In one year's time, if Sally was to demonstrate the same need, the school and Sally's mum will be confident that Sally's needs will be promptly assessed and met, without the need to request a statutory assessment. Sally will be seen as soon as concerns are raised by an educational psychologist to help identify strategies to support her learning and agree targets. This will include the identification of strategies to support Sally to develop her social skills and help her to make and maintain friendships. School will then work closely with

mum to put an Individual Support Plan in place. The school may also arrange a Team around the Child meeting to discuss the difficulties that Sally is experiencing. It may be decided that:

- The School Nursing service will provide advice and support around Sally's physical well-being as well as encouraging Sally's mum to take Sally to her G.P. with respect to her ear infections and apparent hearing difficulties. This could result in a referral to the Audiology Department in her local hospital;
- Discussion with Sally's Mum will result in an offer of parenting support, either provided within school or through a parenting course, to offer her strategies to help her when Sally doesn't want to come to school;
- Speech and Language Therapy will provide a programme to help Sally develop her communication skills with activities suggested for both home and school.

The Individual Support Plan will be revised to include all the needs and outcomes for Sally and her mum, ensuring a co-ordinated package of support. Review of the plan will show whether progress on the outcomes agreed is being achieved and ensure that everything that was agreed is happening. This will help Sally to move on to achieving her next set of outcomes.

Sally's mum will have confidence that a coordinated plan is in place and that Sally's needs are being met without the need for a statutory assessment. She will not have to fight for a statutory plan. Sally will make the progress required to ultimately make a successful transition to secondary school.

If there is limited or no progress in some or all areas of the Individual Support Plan, it might be because Sally's needs are more severe and are not fully understood. This may result in the need for a broader SEN Assessment & Support Plan to ensure that all relevant professionals understand the issues for the family and ensure the correct support is being offered. This more intensive support will be achieved without the need for a statutory assessment or plan.

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