



Family Action Small Steps

Case Study



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Background information: (to protect confidentiality, all names have been changed)

Child A is a 7-year old boy, who at the time of the referral coming into the Family Action Small Steps service was on the pathway for assessment for Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). He had a confirmed diagnosis of Sensory Processing Disorder, which significantly impacts his ability to regulate his emotions and responses to sensory input.

At the time of the referral, child A presented with challenging behaviour at home and school, including physical aggression such as hitting, biting, kicking and spitting. These behaviours often occurred without warning, and could pose a risk to both peers and adults. He has been excluded from school on two separate occasions, due to incidents involving throwing heavy objects and causing injuries to peers and school staff. A also experienced frequent emotional outbursts and had ongoing issues with continence, regularly soiling and wetting himself, which added to his distress and could exacerbate behaviour episodes.

Child A lives with his mum, dad and older sister. Mum, has had to give up working full-time so she can support A. Child has been awaiting for change of placement ensuring a school able to meet his SEN needs is identified. Dad, works away from home Monday to Friday. The impact of his behaviour and managing the challenges around this was felt across the whole family. His mother, in particular experiencing a decline in her mental health due to the ongoing stress, lack of respite, and ongoing toll of managing his complex needs. The family was in need of strategies and advice to help A and support his needs. Shortly after receiving the referral into the service and commencing assessment and delivery of interventions, child A has been diagnosed with ADHD and autism.

Assessment outcome and support plan

The assessment identified the child and his family would benefit from the following:

Parenting support programme- enrol parents onto the Cygnet programme that the service offers to build understanding of ASD and develop practical strategies for supporting A's needs. This is 6 week course where parents meet with Small Steps staff once a week for two and a half hours, to teach, in depth, about autism. With this support, then parent would gain an increase confidence and knowledge in managing behaviours associated with ASD, child's triggers would reduce and



he will be supported with managing these. The reduction in challenging behaviour would reduce the stress at home that the whole family experiences.

Attending a behaviour clinic: advice for parents from our project workers to gain a more personalised insight in to boy's behaviour and needs/support and engagement with other agencies that would help multi-agency support.

Parenting support programme: Attending the New Forest Parenting Course offered by the service: 6 week course where parents meet online (including an evening offer) to fit around working parent's schedule. The programme is delivered by Small Steps staff once a week for two and a half hours, to teach an in depth parenting course about ADHD. This is to provide targeted support to parents in managing behaviours linked to ADHD, including improving attention, managing impulses in his behaviour, and tips and strategies for the parent-child interaction. This will support parent to learn more about why the child does the things he does and what to do when he does them.

Home-based support to also include the child: sessions with a practitioner to model and advise on strategies such as visual timetables, reward system, sensory breaks, and de-escalation techniques, social stories and strategies (a collection of these also based on Positive Behaviour support). This offer will support child and parents to gain skills, strategies and support to implement behaviour changes at home, improve home routines, reduce the frequencies and intensity of outburst, and increase positive engagement in daily activities.

For the other needs of the child and family, referrals and signposting: continence support ERIC UK (The Children's Bowel and Bladder Charity) ; signposting to the Medway SENDIAS Special Educational Needs Advice and Support Service to understanding legal right of child with SEND needs and what are the next steps of ensuring a suitable school is identified; school multi-agency support involving parents and child in support needed from all professionals such as SENCO, health, Early Help for coordinated multi-agency meetings around the child's and family needs; sensory support strategies to support with self-regulation, reduce sensory related behaviour challenges, aggression; emotional wellbeing support and signposting for parent to improve mental health and enhance overall family resilience (Family Action Family Line and counselling) , MPCF (Medway Parent Carer Forum) signposting to reduce isolation and to engage with peer support.

Interventions delivered and support provided to the CYP and family

Attending a behaviour clinic: advice for mum so she can gain a more personalised insight in to the boy's behaviour and needs/support and engagement with other agencies that would help the multi-agency support needed. Advise on strategies such as visual timetables, reward system, sensory breaks, and de-escalation techniques.

Cygnets Parenting Programme attended by mum, who was very engaged throughout the course. The delivery comprised of: Week 1: Discovering autism; Week 2: An Overview of autism incl. strengths; Week 3: Sensory; Week 4: Communication; Week 5: Behaviour; Week 6: Strategies

Making Happy Memories social Event delivered by Small Steps for children, young people accessing the service and their parents/carers and siblings : mum attended with both children.

New Forest Parenting Programme: Mum was very engaged throughout the course. Attended the virtual offer. The course comprised of: Week 1: Brain development & What is ADHD; Week 2: Time, behaviour, routines, play & teachable moments ; Week 3: Choices, "WE" and not "You," house rules, behaviour charts & emotions; Week 4: Goals & expectations, Meltdowns & distraction techniques, Quiet time v's time out, Cueing, Coping with delay & Holding their emotions; Week 5: Dialogue, Calming your child, Earshotting & Repetition of Instructions; Week 6: Review previous weeks, Think about the future & How to keep up the strategies.

Home-based support directly to child and mum with a worker undergoing additional Positive Behaviour Support training: Visit 1: Introductions, discussed how Positive Behaviour Support works and additional assessment as the child in attendance. Visit 2: Introduce strategies. Teaching how not to invade personal space with a social story "Don't be a Space Invader." Social story supplied and role played acting out the story. Encouraged mum to role play with sister, then with A and with and his sister. Visit 3: Mum stated the social story was working well and A was enjoying it however A became upset when others invaded his space. Visit 4: Introduced social story "When Others Do Not Follow the Rules" as well as a "Making Friends" social story. Explained to mum once again how to read them with A and role play as before.

Outcomes and impact:

A is now able to make friends successfully without causing distress to other children and adults. He has started a new school, which is specialist school with staff equipped with the skills and additional knowledge to support A and children with SEND. He has made some new friends. A's relationships both inside and outside the home have improved. Mum's mental wellbeing is no longer declining, she had received wellbeing support (Family Action Family Line and counselling); mum is linked with MPCF, her resilience improved and she reports to be much happier, connected with other parents with children with neurodiversity, and attended events for children and young people with SEND needs meeting with other families. Mum also stated she observed positive impact on her daughter too.

Mum reported what she had learned and relayed to her partner from the parenting programmes and the additional support offered by the service has had a huge impact on family life, improving relationships both in the home and outside. Mum stated she understood her son better and why he did certain things and this made things more manageable. The strategies, including improving attention, managing impulses in his behaviour, and tips for the parent-child interaction have helped. The support was also aimed at child and parents to gain skills, strategies and support to implement behaviour changes at home, improve home routines, reduce the frequencies and intensity of outburst, and increase positive engagement in daily activities. Mum also stated that she is no longer feeling low and "Everyone is happier".

Feedback from child A:

A was present at all worker's visits. He excitedly greeted her at the door on each visit. The social story books were personalised for A with his name and age in them. Mum reported that A loved



the stories, especially as he saw his name in them, and was eager to share them with Dad when he came home for the weekends. He even told his dad, frequently, "Don't be a space invader."

Feedback from the family:

The Small Steps worker and team have been a wonderful support not only to my family, but to me on a personal level. The worker supporting us went above and beyond with the level of support she gave, going as far as making social stories for my son to support with some of the things he finds the most difficult. I really couldn't have got this far without her help. I feel I have changed as a person in my understanding of behaviours in everyone, not just my son and feel that the support has given me the strength to move forward and now don't struggle to get out of bed every day. I am so grateful for everything. I can't thank you enough."

Referral closed March 2025