

## **Co-ordinated support for the whole family in Bromsgrove**

All names have been changed to protect identity.

The family consists of:

Jane (Mom)

Steve (Dad)

Andrew (Son)

Maria (Daughter)

Sophie (Daughter)

Harry (Son).

I received the referral from Home Start in February 2008, the family requested support as one of the parents suffers with poor mental health, which impacts upon the whole family, the youngest child (Harry), in particular, who is frequently absent from school.

I made contact with the family on February 19, to introduce myself and explain my role. Jane explained how the family had only been living on the estate for a few months, after being re-homed. Jane explained that she had no concerns with the children's development and behaviour. However, Harry would refuse to go to school if Steve was unwell or absent from the home due to hospitalisation. Jane said she felt isolated and would like to get out more and increase her confidence. Jane was also concerned about contacting Steve's social worker as Jane only had the name of the social worker, but no telephone number. Jane said that she did not feel confident speaking with the social worker because he is male and Jane is also confused about completing necessary paperwork. Jane's confidence and self esteem appeared low.

I began by giving Jane a Multi Agency Resource Centre (MARC) brochure, which I also explained, suggesting that the youth groups and homework groups may be of particular interest to Andrew, Maria and Sophie. I also discussed the other available resources such as CAB and the coffee morning.

I acted as an advocate for Jane and Steve by contacting the social worker to explain how Jane felt and suggested that Jane and Steve may require additional assistance in completing necessary paperwork.

I began to meet Jane each week, and as Jane said she did not feel ready to attend MARC, we would go into the town. This enabled Jane to complete small errands and also allowed time for coffee and a chat. Jane would often talk about her feelings, explaining how difficult family life is. Jane also expressed concern about her elderly parents who were also experiencing difficulties. This situation was adding to Jane's existing stress as Jane said she felt powerless to help them.

I was able to support Jane by visiting regularly and listening to her concerns. In a short time Jane felt ready to access MARC. Jane and I attended some

coffee mornings and Jane also accessed the CAB at MARC. I was able to alleviate some of Jane's worries by suggesting that Jane's parents contact Age Concern, CAB and an Advocacy group. I provided Jane with appropriate information and contact details for this. Jane said "That's one thing less I have to worry about".

Jane was pleased that Maria and Sophie were regularly attending and enjoying the youth group as this has increased their circle of friends. Jane had also suggested to her children that the children access the homework group. I introduced Jane to a healthy living course at Charford Children's Centre (CCC). Jane said she was interested, but due to a deterioration of Steve's health was unable to attend.

Jane was finding life very demanding due to deterioration in Steve's mental health. I suggested to Jane a support group specifically aimed at supporting carers who care for people with mental health conditions. Jane said she would like this, but was concerned about being in a large group. I contacted the service provider and arranged for Jane to meet Ann (Support worker), at CCC on a weekly basis.

Jane explained that the teachers at Harry's school are concerned with Harry's poor attendance and lack of progress. Jane asked if I would explain the family's situation to the school as Jane said she did not like speaking to them as she felt it difficult to explain herself properly.

I contacted Anita (Harry's class teacher), who appreciated being informed of the situation. Anita said that Jane could talk with her confidentially anytime she wanted too. Anita also expressed concerns regarding Harry's development, in particular Harry's lack of communication. Anita suggested I observe Harry in class one day.

I discussed with Jane Anita's concerns regarding Harry's development and I obtained permission from Jane to observe Harry in the classroom. Again I enquired about Jane's other children. Jane said that Andrew was bullied at their previous address, causing Andrew to soil himself. Jane said Andrew has settled very well and no longer soils himself and attends school more regularly. Jane is concerned about Sophie who frequently wets at night. Jane and Sophie are seeking advice from the GP and school nurse regarding this matter. Jane said that she does worry about the children at school and is aware that the children's attendance at school could improve. Jane asked if I would contact the children's schools to explain the family's situation, as she does not feel confident to do this herself. I have therefore made contact with the relevant tutors to explain the family's situation and to discuss the children's development.

After collating all the information in relation to the family, I felt that to meet the holistic needs of the family a multi agency approach was required. After discussing the situation with my manager a decision was made to approach Jane requesting permission to complete a CAF assessment on Harry due to

his developmental delay. Permission was obtained and a CAF assessment was completed.

The conclusions of the CAF assessment indicated that the family were a very loving family who try to support each other. In my opinion however, I felt that Harry's holistic development would greatly improve if the needs of Harry's parents were addressed and additional support was provided for Harry through Harry's school. Jane said that she very much wanted help. A co-ordinated support meeting was held and an action plan put into place.

The action plan has consisted of me liaising with Harry's class teacher and the schools Senco to arrange a time whereby Jane can attend class to play games with Harry to encourage Harry's communication. Jane has agreed for the school nurse to weigh and measure Harry and to discuss Harry's diet. Steve's social worker has been in regular contact with Steve and has explained Steve's treatment/action plan to Jane. The social worker has also offered to take Jane to visit Steve in hospital and has also taken messages, cards and gifts made by the children to Steve in hospital. Myself and Anne have continued to regularly support Jane through home visits and telephone contact. I have encouraged and supported Jane in applying for tax credits and financial help with the costs of school uniforms. I have liaised with the local housing trust who have donated eight free energy saving light bulbs and have also agreed a payment plan with Jane for future light bulbs. I have given Jane information regarding a trip held by MARC that the family maybe interested in attending and information relating to local events suitable for children and families. I have also stressed to Jane the importance of the children regularly attending school. Progression of the action plan has been slow due to Steve being admitted to hospital.

Steve has recently been discharged from hospital and appears very well. I will continue to support the family and intend to hold a co-ordinated support review meeting in the new term to review the family's current situation and discuss how the family can continue to make progress.