

## 5.4 Good Practice Example (NEET)

### **Introduction**

Alan is a White British male aged 14 who is an only child, living with mum and having no contact with his birth father. Mum has not worked for years and receives benefits for herself and Alan. They live in local authority housing in an area where unemployment is high and access to services is limited. They have some family around them who are also experiencing social and economic difficulties and who have difficulties with engaging in employment, education or training. Generally Alan and his mum do not have a great deal of social interaction with very few friends and contacts and both he and mum rarely leave the family home.

### **Current service delivery within universal provision and presenting issues**

Alan is a student in the end of year 9 at high School. He has had very sporadic attendance over the past year, with prolonged periods of absence. The Attendance Improvement Officer has made numerous efforts to engage the family but had little success at establishing an ongoing improvement in the school attendance. The school had previously excluded him on a couple of occasions for disruption, verbal abuse and suspected theft. His attitude towards schooling was often poor and he was behind in the work of his year group. A family member who was being supported by a voluntary sector organisation, Archway, asked her Connexions Personal Advisor if there was any help that the PA could offer as Alan was not attending school and his mum didn't know what to do about it.

### **Targeted response**

The Connexions PA arranged to meet with mum and Alan whilst visiting the other family member. The PA spoke with them both about their situation, school attendance, other issues at school and anything else happening at home that is making attending school difficult. The PA offers to undertake a common assessment to fully explore the issues but at this stage Mum and Alan feel unsure that this would help in any way and decline, however they agreed to the PA speaking to other professionals about the situation.

Mum speaks mainly at first and she says that she is worried that she is going to be prosecuted due to lack of attendance. She says that she hates going into school and feels intimidated by the staff there and doesn't answer the door to the AIO as she finds it difficult to talk to him. She also says that she does have problems in her relationship with Alan and that at times he can be abusive and has outbursts of anger and that she cannot control what he does at all. He doesn't go out much and stays in his room.

Alan says that he generally enjoys school and has some good friends there but he doesn't get on with all his teachers. He works well in the Inclusion Unit and with one of the support teachers. He also says that he feels targeted whenever there are disruptions in class and that he has been falsely accused of stealing.

When the PA asks about this recent long period of non attendance and anything that may have impacted or influenced this, Mum says that her brother had died about a year ago. Alan was very close to his uncle, who had died tragically in horrific circumstances and that this had had a huge impact upon Alan. After an incident at school around this time Alan was excluded and he hadn't been back to school since.

The PA establishes that Alan wants to go back to school, and that mum is willing to support this as much as she can. The PA agrees to contact the school and liaise on their behalf and try to arrange for Alan to begin to re-attend. The PA will also support generally with any school appointments and will meet Alan on a regular basis to build up a relationship and support him where possible. The PA also says that they can look into activities to keep Alan busy over the summer period so that he can meet some people and get out as he enjoys outdoor pursuits.

The PA speaks to the school Attendance Improvement Officer and his Head of year. They acknowledge being unable to establish any contact with mum who has failed to respond to home visits and letters. The school knows nothing about the family's personal circumstances and want to help A come back to school but have real concerns about how he will cope in school. They agree that he will start school after the September break as school is about to close for summer and that they will work with the PA and the family together.

### **Outcomes of targeted response**

Alan is pleased to be going back to school and mum agrees to attend a school meeting with the support of the PA to try and develop a better relationship with the school and support her son.

The PA finds an outward bound holiday opportunity for Alan to go to for 4 days over the summer holidays. The PA gets him a reduced cost rate for the trip as mum is in receipt of benefits. A Local voluntary agency pays £25 and mum pays £25 for Alan to access the activity holiday. He had a fantastic time on the trip and comes back refreshed and excited about going back to school and being busy.

Mum, Alan, PA and Head of year all meet just before term starts and negotiate for Alan to join his year group again and also to spend some time with the support teacher he likes to try and catch up. Alan starts on a reduced timetable to get him re-established into the routine.

School and PA remain in contact and PA meets Alan outside of school to see how he is getting along. Soon it becomes clear that Alan is finding it difficult to attend and missed school on several occasions and avoids certain classes. School is concerned that he is really struggling with the classroom environment.

### **Further actions leading to coordinated targeted response**

The PA decides to meet with Alan to look more closely at what aspects of his school life and home life are both the most successful and the most difficult. She again offers a Common Assessment and this time Mum and Alan agree it might help. This detailed assessment is able to happen comfortably as the PA has developed a good relationship with him and he feels more able to open up. The PA also meets with mum and she also feels she is able to open up to difficulties at home.

The assessment identifies that Alan enjoys being outdoors and finds classroom life difficult unless he is working in a focussed way with one to one support. He feels he is a practical person and enjoys wildlife and fixing things. He finds a full week at school very hard and only enjoys a couple of his subjects. Mum admits having financial difficulties that are impacting on them at home. She has large debts to all the utilities companies and to private debt companies. She is struggling to give Alan his bus fare to school and she suffers from depression for which she is receiving medication. It also emerges that Alan has problems with alcohol and substance misuse and that this may also be contributing to his isolation at home and anger outbursts. He takes speed and smokes cannabis at home in his room at weekend and occasionally goes out with friends and drinks large amounts of alcohol. The PA is concerned about Mum's appearance and presentation together with her acceptance of Alan's and asks directly if Mum also has a substance issue she states that this is not an issue for her. PA also concerned about the unresolved issues of loss that Alan has experienced with both the loss of his father's engagement in his life and the death of his uncle who was a positive male role model and also provided support for his Mum.

At the multi agency meeting called by the PA and attended by both Mum and Alan school agrees that things are not working out and that they are struggling to keep him engaged. The PA advocates that for Alan alternative curriculum provision, with shorter hours in school may be more suitable, with increased support from the support teacher. A placement is arranged with local organisation one day a week to develop his confidence and gain some practical skills. The school also look to find Alan a college placement that is very practical and also covers one day a week.

The PA also attempts to engage the family with a local agency offering targeted support to look at Alan's substance misuse, and the local youth centre for activities. The PA and mum consider various options for getting help and advice on parenting a teenager, bereavement and loss using the Family Hub. However mum and Alan are very wary about approaching any services including Social Care and will not consider referrals to any additional agencies at this point. Mum has been involved with mainstream social services in her youth and has had very negative experiences with them. The PA in her capacity as Lead Professional, agrees not to refer to any other agencies at this time and that she will continue to engage with the family as much as possible and encourage them to reconsider extra support from other agencies on an ongoing basis.

### **Outcomes of coordinated targeted response**

Alan attends local work placement successfully and regularly. Alan is finding the placement more manageable than school. He attends 2 days a week at the placement but his school attendance continues to be erratic.

PA is able to get a bus pass for Alan to travel to school and placement by negotiating with the school.

Alan still uses substances occasionally and he admits this is affecting his confidence and attitude at home and also in school. PA continues to attempt to engage Alan with agencies who can help him address around this substance misuse however he is still unwilling to engage with them. The situation is still unstable and the PA has to encourage Alan to attend school regularly and is often advocating with school following occasional incidents. Alan and his mother can be difficult to contact and engage at times with frequently changing mobile phone numbers. PA remains concerned that there are wider substance misuse issues in the family.

### **Further actions leading to specialist response**

Alan's placement loses its funding and this means that Alan can only attend if school will now pay for his placement. School are also looking to exclude Alan following an incident of theft in his class from a teacher.

Things deteriorate at home and Alan looks more unkempt and is withdrawn. In discussions mum's behaviour is also concerning as she is often distant, feels threatened and intimidated and avoids meetings with school and the PA. The PA manages to keep engaging the family despite the fact that they are increasingly difficult to contact and visit. Alan then becomes involved in a robbery of a house whilst drunk with older friends and is arrested by the police and charged with aggravated burglary. The PA finally manages to establish from mum and Alan that mum is using heroin, and though not registered with her doctor for this, is struggling with addiction. Mum's debt is related to this and she reveals a family history of drug use, bereavements and depression. Alan's substance misuse is partly related to his anxieties about his mum's drug use and the offence of

burglary was committed on the anniversary of his uncle's death. It becomes apparent that certain patterns of behaviour revolve around mum's use of drugs. As the situation deteriorates rapidly a meeting is called before the review date to establish the best possible way forward attended by Mum and Alan.

### **Specialist response**

There are discussions between school, the PA and the recently involved Youth Offending Officer. There are concerns about Alan's wellbeing so a referral to Children and Young People's Social Care is made. An Initial assessment is undertaken by CYPSC. The outcome of the assessment is to refer the case back to the CAF process with Social Care attending the multi agency meeting and the other agencies continuing to coordinate support.

Following Alan's conviction for burglary the Youth Offending Service conduct a specialist assessment informed by the Common Assessment. This ASSET assessment is then used to inform the pre sentencing report. Specialist drug agencies are contacted and Alan is referred to help him address his substance misuse. Mum is encouraged to access her GP to manage her addiction and receive extra support. She declines and makes the decision to attempt to stop using on her own. She is supported to access a debt advice worker to help her overcome her financial difficulties.

### **Outcomes of specialist response**

The PA helps lead the assessment with the family as they have a good and established relationship and the assessment takes place at home, in a supportive way that engages mum and Alan. Mum agrees with the PA it is better to be completely honest about her situation and lets the PA write a supportive statement for the pre sentencing report outlining all her difficulties and how these have had a real impact upon Alan and are the underlying reasons for his offending and behaviour in school.

Alan accepts a referral for support on his substance misuse and is allocated a buddy. A buddy can spend social time with young people who are affected by their parents drug use and provide a positive role model and social time. Alan meets his buddy every couple of weeks to play pool.

The PA liaises with the school about all that is happening with the family and YOS and is able to ensure Alan is not excluded and that the school will provide funding for him to continue in his alternative curriculum placement. The PA also works with the school to set up a work placement with the council in joinery and construction 1 day a week so that Alan can gain valuable work experience.

At the court appearance that the PA and family attend it is acknowledged that Alan has experienced real difficulties in his personal circumstances and that a custodial sentence should be avoided. Alan becomes subject to a Supervision

Order with a condition to comply with the Intensive Surveillance Supervision Programme (ISSP). This includes an electronically monitored curfew. YOS acting as Lead agency for the period of their statutory involvement, convene a multi agency planning meeting and working in partnership with the PA and other colleagues the YOS worker puts together a programme of activities that includes Alan's work placements, school and a referral to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, (CAMHS) by the YOS nurse to address the loss and bereavement issues.

At this point the CAF is closed as a specialist service plan is in place. All agencies who are currently involved continue to work together with Alan and his Mum within the statutory framework.

After 3 months Alan is still attending all of his appointments and everyone is pleased with his commitment. He still needs lots of encouragement and emotional support from his PA and YOS worker but remains engaged. He has not broken his curfew and has significantly reduced his drug and alcohol intake to minimum amounts.

### **Appropriate maintenance within universal provision**

After several months the ISSP begins to reduce as Alan comes close to completing his order and has not re-offended. One work placement ends and Alan attends school, college and a second work placement although these become increasingly difficult to maintain as he still finds it difficult to engage fully. Things are more stable between Alan and mum but they need continued support and intervention from the PA to encourage them to continue accessing provision available. As statutory involvement comes to an end a final review meeting identifies the benefit of undertaking a new common assessment to clarify the ongoing need in the current situation as an exit strategy. This was undertaken by the YOS worker and the PA as the previous Lead Professional.

Mum states that she has reduced her drug use and is finding life more manageable. The PA has given mum information about a course at the local learning centre and she is considering it. Mum and Alan are getting on better.

The PA resumes the role of Lead Professional following the end of YOS involvement and remains in close contact with the school, the council work placement, drugs agencies, CAMHS and the family as A and mum are still vulnerable and circumstances at home could deteriorate.

A is due to sit his exams and the PA needs to be in close contact with school. She makes special arrangements for him to have some focussed lessons and provision to sit the exams as he needs extra help with his exam preparation. The PA helps A apply for college places for September as he is leaving school in the next 3 months.