

Anne and Issac

Muirhead received a referral from Enable on behalf of Anne and her son Issac. They had been supporting the family for some time but felt that additional support was needed. Issac had autism and was quite anxious. Except for one day at the start of term, Issac had not attended school in a year. In fact he barely left his bedroom.

Anne was in a very low mood and felt that she had tried everything. Local mental health services were under such strain that they informed her unless he was self-harming they would not get involved.

One of our support workers met with Anne and explained the way we work. We also listened to the background and what other support had been previously offered. As Muirhead are not an organisation who specialise in working with people with autism, we recognised what the limitations of our work would be. Thankfully, Issac had a team of people who were or had previously worked with him. They knew him well and were able to share helpful information. Since Issac already had people who knew him well we took the decision to only work with Anne and not force a relationship with Issac.

Anne was very honest and open with us which allowed us to formulate ideas and techniques for her to try. We worked our way through the 8 week foundation programme – Anne being one of the only parents that term to never miss a week! Some of our work was adapted a little to take Issacs autism and level of understanding into consideration. This was achieved by working with someone from the One Stop Shop who work with people with autism and their families.

Anne began to feel more confident in her approach with Issac and understood the importance in building the relationship with him before any of their bigger goals (such as him returning to school) could be achieved. Slowly Anne felt that Issac was beginning to trust her more and found hope in the little things such as Issac starting to say 'thank you' for things or offer his mum a hug.

Issac was able to cope with a difficult situation where workmen required access to the house and he had to go and stay with his Gran. This was thought to be a worse case scenario but both he and his mum managed it very well.

Of course, it has not been (and never is) plain sailing. There has been ripped up family planners and refusal to take part in suggested activities. We were realistic about the progress that would be possible in 8 weeks. The work also finished just before Christmas which is of course a stressful time for many of our parents. Anne was able to recognise the impact her own mood had on the situation and we have continued to support her throughout that time.

With a supportive team in place, we are able to talk about ideas for further progress and continue to build on Annes confidence so that she is able to maintain progress that has been made. It has been lovely to hear about the positive interactions between them both. We know that it is important to make small sustainable changes and look forward to being part of the team that helps Anne and Issac achieve their goals.