

From close to permanent exclusion to confident performer and positive role model

Background

This case study was completed in August 2023 by a member of Redcar & Cleveland Council's Early Help Intervention Team. Names have been changed.

This is about 'M,' a 15-year-old girl who was referred to the Intervention Team in February 2023. The referral came via M's nurse at the Complications in Children with Excessive Weight clinic, as M's mam was struggling to manage M's behaviour at home and was very concerned about M's risk of permanent exclusion from school.

M's mam, who has her own health challenges, shared that this was having a significant impact on her mental wellbeing.

At that time, M was on stage 6 of the school's behaviour system, very close to permanent exclusion. She had experienced multiple suspensions, regular detentions, and periods in isolation.

M has a SEND plan in school and was under assessment for possible Autism and ADHD via the neurodiversity CAMHS pathway.

M describes herself as a big personality — confident, loud, and passionate about singing and performing arts, with ambitions for a career in this field.

Team around the child and family

Support for M and her family came from:

- Early Help Intervention Team
- School staff including the SENDCo and Year Manager
- Complications in Children with Excessive Weight clinic
- The Junction charity (young carers support)
- RCBC's Attendance and Welfare Service.

What were the main reasons for M not attending school?

M's attendance was affected by multiple suspensions and detentions, not by a desire to avoid school. In fact, M has always said she enjoys school and wants to be there every day.

M shared:

"It's like people don't get me. I get told off for being myself – being loud, laughing, singing. Then I argue back, and it gets worse. I feel like some staff just look for me to tell me off."

M's mam said:

"She's not listened to. They punish her for who she is, not for doing anything bad. It just gets worse when they don't follow her SEND plan, and she ends up in isolation or suspended."

What has made the difference to M attending?

M herself was central to the positive change. With support, she began to reflect on how to manage her big personality in school while staying true to herself.

Key changes included:

- M leading her own Team Around the Family (TAF) meetings, helping her to feel in control and listened to.
- School adapting their approach, especially after TAF meetings, by following the SEND plan more closely and allowing more flexible use of the Time Out card.
- Support at home and at school for M's efforts to manage her weight, including cycling daily and controlling her eating habits.

- M working with teachers to focus on positive feedback. M said:

"I ask them to write comments when I've done well. Makes the green bits bigger on the app so it looks better."

How is M doing now?

- ✓ M has been moved down from stage 6 to stage 4 in school, no longer at risk of permanent exclusion.
- ✓ She performed as a lead singer at the Sage Gateshead in front of 2,500 people, earning praise from the Trust's senior leadership:
"M absolutely nailed it. I am so proud and so happy for her." (Year Manager)
- ✓ M won a talent competition at Comic Con and has been invited to open a future event.
- ✓ M has become a positive influence in school, helping younger pupils and receiving recognition for her kindness.
- ✓ She has lost over a stone in weight and is more physically active.

- ✓ M's relationships at home have improved. She now gets on better with her stepdad, Andy, and talks more openly to her mam about her feelings and worries.

Reflections on change

M said:

"It's going great to be honest. I feel happier. I'm getting out more, seeing friends, and school is better."

M's mam said:

"She's working so hard. I'm proud of her. She's thinking about her future now and letting people help her."

M's intervention worker reflected:

"M has always seemed confident, but now there's a genuine brightness to her. She's using her confidence in positive ways, and she's letting people in to support her. She's on a good path."