

From isolated and anxious to settled, supported, and thriving

Background

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

Names have been changed.

'R' is a 13-year-old girl who was referred to the Intervention Team in November 2022.

At that time, R had not attended school for around six months due to persistent bullying at her previous school, mainly focused on her appearance.

The bullying left R feeling anxious, scared, and unable to face school.

R's mam shared that she felt let down by the previous school's handling of the bullying and the advice provided around elective home education.

The family felt isolated and unsure how to support R's learning at home, and R's anxiety grew as she withdrew from friends and family.

R has no SEND or EHCP but was clear that she wished to return to mainstream school — somewhere she felt safe and supported.

Team around the child and family

Support for R and her family came from:

- Early Help Intervention Team
- School staff (pastoral team, key staff)
- School admissions team
- Hart Gables (advice and guidance on LGBT+ issues)
- Tuned In (LGBT+ youth group)

What were the main reasons for R not attending school?

R's absence was due to her experience of ongoing bullying at her previous school, which left her feeling frightened and anxious about returning.

R said:

"I felt scared to go to school. I locked myself away in my room. I didn't want to face it anymore."

R's mam said:

"She was so anxious and upset. We felt stuck — we didn't know how to help her, and we couldn't teach her at home."

What has made the difference to R attending?

A carefully planned and supportive transition to another school helped R regain her confidence:

- **Gradual and personalised school start**, designed with R and her family, allowing her to build up time in school slowly and at her own pace.
- **Placement in Year 7**, despite being Year 8 age, so that R could catch up on missed learning and build confidence.
- **Strong pastoral support**, with named staff available at any time to help with worries.
- **Peer support**, with R matched with friends she already knew in school.
- **Open communication**, with regular updates and praise shared with R's mam.

R said:

"The staff really listen to me, and I have good friends now. It's a place I want to be. I even go to clubs after school."

How is R doing now?

- ✓ R has not missed a day of school since starting at her new school.
- ✓ She attends after-school and homework clubs and enjoys being part of school life.
- ✓ R is happier, more confident, and no longer isolates herself at home.
- ✓ She spends quality time with her family and friends and feels supported.

R said:

"I think I'm getting back on track. I try my best, and I'm happy at school."

R's mam said:

"She's a different young person. She's socialising, enjoying life, and so much happier."

School staff shared in the final Team Around the Family meeting that they had no concerns about R and rated her start at school as 8 out of 10.