

From isolated and anxious to confident, connected, and attending every day

Background

This case study was completed in August 2023 by a Child and Family Intervention Worker from Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council.

Names have been changed.

'E' is a 12-year-old boy who started secondary school during the Covid-19 pandemic. The disruption and isolation caused by Covid left E struggling to mix with people and feeling increasingly anxious about attending school.

He spent long hours in his bedroom on his computer, which worried his mam.

In early 2023, E refused to attend school for several months. His attendance only began to improve gradually in the months leading up to the summer break of 2023.

By the end of the summer term, E was attending every day and, since returning in September, has continued with full attendance.

Team around the child and family

Support for E and his family came from:

- Child and Family Intervention Worker
- School staff (including pastoral team and teaching staff)
- RCBC's Attendance and Welfare Service
- GP (supporting mam with her health needs).

E has no SEND or EHCP.

What were the main reasons for E not attending school?

E's attendance was affected by challenges at home and difficulties settling into secondary school:

- E felt anxious and alone at his new school, describing it as "big and scary" where he didn't know any teachers or friends.
- At home, E was frightened by arguments and noise linked to mam's drinking, which often kept him awake at night and left him tired and worried in the mornings.

E said:

"Sometimes I didn't want to leave mam on her own, I was scared to go."

What has made the difference to E attending?

Key changes that helped E attend and feel settled at school included:

- Mam seeking help from her GP, stopping drinking, and managing her mental health — leading to a calmer home environment.
- E feeling reassured that mam was safe, as she began getting up in the morning and walking E to school.
- The school putting in place tailored support:
 - A **RAG-rated system** for lessons (red, amber, green) so teachers could provide extra support in subjects E found hardest.
 - Access to **The Bridge**, a nurturing space E could go to if he felt overwhelmed.
- Attendance team involvement and a contract E signed, committing to daily attendance, which helped motivate him.

E said:

"Since I got support from school, I'm thinking differently. I feel more supported and listened to."

How is E doing now?

- ✓ E has full attendance since the start of the new school year in September.
- ✓ He feels settled in school, knows where to go for his lessons, and no longer finds the school as daunting as before.
- ✓ E has a good friendship group and is taking part in after-school clubs.
- ✓ Home life is calmer, and E is enjoying more quality time with his family.

E said:

"I feel part of the school now. I have good friends and staff who really support me."

Mam shared:

"He's like a different person — more confident, part of school, and we're so proud."

Does E have any advice for other young people?

"Don't be frightened of asking for help. Since my lessons were RAG-rated, I feel much better. I know I can ask for help now."