

From feeling trapped and unheard to confident, engaged, and building a positive future

Background

This case study was completed in September 2023 by a member of Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council's Education Service. Names have been changed.

'F' is a 17-year-old young person who left school in summer 2022. During his time in mainstream secondary school, F found it difficult to cope in a large, noisy environment.

He struggled with confidence, particularly in reading and writing, and felt embarrassed when asked to read aloud or complete written tasks in front of others.

F received frequent exclusions — sometimes weekly — for what he felt were minor issues such as uniform or timekeeping.

He felt unheard and unsupported with the bigger issues, like his anxiety in class. F used earphones to manage noise but felt trapped when he couldn't leave a classroom, leading to incidents where he pushed past others in distress, resulting in exclusions.

In Year 11, F moved to the Eston Centre, a smaller, quieter alternative provision. Here, F built trust with a key member of staff and his behaviour improved. He gained GCSEs at grades 1 and 2. However, leaving school was disappointing for F as he was not accepted at college, which affected his confidence.

Team around the child and family

Support for F came from:

- MFC Foundation – the Chances Programme
- A trusted key worker
- Counselling services
- Learning support assessment team

What were the main reasons for F not attending school?

F shared that the main reasons were:

- Frequent punishment for minor things like uniform rather than support for bigger challenges.
- Feeling trapped and overwhelmed in classrooms, with no opportunity for time out, which led to negative behaviours and exclusions.
- Anxiety about reading or writing in front of others and feeling embarrassed in class.
- A sense that no one was really listening to his worries or helping him in ways that worked for him.

What has made the difference to F attending and progressing?

- A smaller, quieter learning environment — fewer people and less noise made it easier for F to cope.
- A key person who listened — F built trust with a member of staff who understood his needs.
- Practical support — following an assessment, F was provided with a laptop for written work, extra time in exams, and access to counselling.
- A nurturing post-16 environment — through the MFC Foundation Chances Programme, F had one-to-one support, developed confidence, and was able to engage in training and employer placements.

F's mum said:

"Once F had that assessment and they gave him the right support, it changed everything. He wanted to go to school."

F said:

"Having someone who understands your worries and gives you a chance — this can have a great impact on your life."

How is F doing now?

- ✓ F is attending and engaging in a small, supportive training setting, with 100% attendance, travelling daily from Redcar to Hartlepool.
- ✓ He has completed and passed a CSCS course on his own initiative.
- ✓ F received positive feedback from an employer placement.
- ✓ At home, F is more sociable, helps out, and has taken an interest in learning to cook. He enjoys going out with friends.
- ✓ F is building confidence and is able to engage in a classroom with peers and tutors.