

An Introduction to Neurodiversity

CASE STUDY 1: SUPPORTING A NEURODIVERGENT CHILD – MAYA

Maya is an 8-year-old child. She attends a mainstream primary school and has been displaying what teachers describe as ‘challenging behaviour’. Maya has difficulty expressing her thoughts, feelings and emotions verbally and prefers nonverbal communication, like pointing at things. Maya does not currently receive any additional support both either at school or outside of school, but her teachers have suggested to her parents that she might be autistic.

Her teachers have suggested her parents have Maya diagnosed, and subsequently, work towards her having an assessment for an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

When visiting Maya and her parents at home for the first time, the social worker observed that her parent’s see Maya’s challenging behaviour as something that needs to be fixed, and they are resistant to the idea of adjusted learning practices in her current educational setting. They talk about Maya’s “problems” openly in front of her.

From speaking with Maya’s teachers, they describe Maya as ‘naughty’ and ‘disruptive’ to others in class, and it is clear that they feel she would be better placed in a specialist educational setting, but they do not know how to approach this with her parents who feel she is just ‘behind’ compared to her peers.



Questions

- What do you observe in relation to Maya, and her parents and teachers’ perspectives of her autism, and what is the impact of these perspectives?
- Could cultural or societal influences affect Maya’s parents’ and teachers views of autism as something to be “fixed” or something that equals “disruptive” behaviour? How would this be approached sensitively during conversations?
- How can Maya’s voice and preferences be recognised in decision-making?
- How can social workers work collaboratively with Maya’s parents, teachers and school to advocate for an Education, Health and Care Plan that meets her needs?
- How can social workers advocate for schools to implement sensory-friendly spaces and neuroinclusive practices for neurodivergent children?