



Jack's Story: Using an Education Personal Budget

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Jack is now 20 years old. He has high functioning autism but severe mental health problems which make him depressed and severely anxious.

Following attending a mainstream school with an ASD additional resource unit, Jack went to a Specialist College for young people with ASD. Jack's anxieties and depression were such that he struggled to engage in a morning and by his second year saw little relevance in the curriculum so was rapidly disengaging, often only accessing counselling sessions.

As he approached the end of his second year it was felt that there were few options open to him.

Jack however is a talented drummer, having achieved grade 8 in his music exams. Interestingly, the only exams he has managed to cope with. Through discussions with the Connexions Service it was identified that a Local Arts organisation, who work with young people with additional needs and mental health, had the opportunity for a drummer to work with their band.

The idea was introduced to Jack and his family – following visits it was agreed that Jack could do 3 sessions per week (all in an afternoon) with a total of 12 hours engagement. Alongside the band Jack would do media and performance work and start the Arts Award programme.

Jack immediately felt at home at the Arts Project and since August has only missed 3 sessions. He is rapidly working through his Bronze Arts award and is now talking enthusiastically about moving onto the Silver award.

He talks eloquently how the awards have opened up his eyes to other art mediums and helped him look at some of his own issues.

It is not always easy for him to engage but with the right support from staff at the project he is progressing and feels confident to try new experiences knowing that if he feels overwhelmed he can “withdraw and not feel judged” (his words), though he rarely does withdraw.

At his review just before Xmas Jack identified that he has enjoyed supporting others on the Project (it has been noted how supportive he is with others lacking in confidence) and now feels that he would like to teach drumming.

To fund this provision (which Mum says has turned his life around and given him such a positive focus) it was decided to use an education personal budget. Jack already had a social care budget though a direct payment, so the family were happy to use an EPB the same way.

A budget of less than £6000 funds all the sessions with the Arts Project (a massive reduction from the cost of a Specialist College). Realistically within the next 12 months Jack could be starting to teach individual lessons.

This process will be supported by the professional musicians in the Arts Project and targets relating to the required steps will go into his EHC plan at the next review.