**Youth Support Case Study**

**Families First Youth Support Service** (Consortium of West Rhyl Young People’s Project, Denbigh Youth Project, Conwy and Denbighshire Mental Health Advocacy Service, Citizens Advice Denbigh): The service supports young people and their families across Denbighshire**.** Support provided by the young people’s advocate has included helping young people to communicate the difficulties they face to their schools and agree appropriate adjustments to support their learning whilst managing neurological conditions such as ASD and ADHD.

**Case Study:** The original referral for young person ‘A’ requested support with school. ‘A’ attended Rhyl High School three days a week for one lesson (45 mins).  The goal was for ‘A’ to achieve 20 hours of education a week on a reduced timetable before September and then increase attendance to full time by the end of Year 9 to be ready for her GCSE’s.

Mum was keen for Young People’s Advocacy to be successful and felt that time at school to speak in private could help. Mum suggested that support from the school Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNCO) might help ‘A’ feel more at ease for the first session’.

‘A’ had previous issues managing emotions and behaviours at home, including self-harm, threats of suicide and emotional dysregulation.  ‘A’s previous interactions with the Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) did not go well. ‘A’ refused further interaction with CAMHS and subsequently had no support with her mental health. ‘A’ s case was open to the Neurodevelopmental Team for diagnosed Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).  ‘A’ had been pre-screened for Dyslexia, with school due to undertake a full screening.

‘A’ had managed in year 7 as Covid “bubbles” provided a calm environment. ‘A’ began to struggle as things returned to normal.  She was sent home regularly.  Pre-diagnosis, school has encouraged parents to bring ‘A’ to school, causing emotional and physical stress and leading to increased anxiety associated with school. There were issues within the family due to ‘A’s diagnosis, and a younger sibling was also going through the ASD diagnosis process. ‘A’s own ASD was creating a strain on family life, particularly around keeping her safe when dysregulated.

‘A’ suggested she would like to increase her time in school. Her Mum felt unsure this was truly the case.  ‘A’ wanted to manage her anxieties to attend school comfortably, to increase her hours in large chunks, and to continue the Dyslexia screening process.  She wished to do a BTEC in sports coaching at college, which would require 5 GCSEs. ‘A’ felt that online learning was not an option as home is her safe space. Also, with siblings and Dad working from home, ‘A’ felt she wouldn’t be able to engage properly.

The YP Advocate and ‘A’ discussed the pros and cons of either increasing school hours up to 20 a week for her GCSEs or following a lower level BTEC route. ‘A’ agreed to try increasing her school attendance by just 1 hour per week rather than in large chunks as she preferred.

The Advocate and the ALNCO explored ideas of making ‘A’s time in school more therapeutic to alleviate ‘A’s anxieties, e.g. attending groups such as ‘Lego Intervention’.  The Advocate and ‘A’ discussed structuring her school day less rigidly, and agreed with the ALNCO that she could take control of her attendance to feel more empowered and in control.

Unfortunately, due to her anxieties and over-stimulation ‘A’ was unable to manage any increase and felt unable to stay even an extra 15 minutes. ‘A’s time in school decreased over the next 5 months. Finally, following an incident in school, she stopped attending at all. ‘A’ stated that she no longer wished to go to the High School.  She wished to be in an educational setting where she felt people would understand her and her needs. ‘A’ reported that now she’s no longer going to school she feels more relaxed and is managing at home better.

Work is still ongoing with this young person. Over time, the Young People’s Advocate has built strong relationship with ‘A’ and with her Mum.  The Advocate has attended Team Around the Family (TAF) meetings to express ‘A’s views on the support she feels she requires.  The Advocate was able share how attending the school makes her feel anxious and overstimulated due to lights and noise. The school agreed to take her case to the Team Around the School (TAS) panel. The Advocate was invited to compile a report about ‘A’s thoughts, feelings and wishes.  Future meetings with ‘A’ have been arranged to discuss a plan following the TAS meeting**.**