



Case Study: Isaac

Isacc started Circles Farm at the end of year 9, during the summer term. The referral which was provided to us did not include a wealth of detail, which was helpful in one way as it allowed staff to have no preconceived opinions of Isacc, however also limited staff in understanding how and why Isacc had struggled with mainstream education. It was stated that Isacc had ASD and had a hearing impairment. Isacc begun his placement with us, attending the farm three days per week. On the other days, a tutor was put in place at home.

Isacc engaged well during this first summer term, with small groups and staff free. He worked well in the Animal Care group and created a rapport with another learner, Bob, which, helped him settle. With the BTEC qualifications completed for the year, the summer term was quite relaxed. Isacc presented anxiety that would appear in the way he engaged with both learners and staff, coming across quite rude in the way in he spoke, especially when sharing his knowledge about subjects and questioning why others did not have this knowledge or interest. Others became frustrated at Isacc when he asked them to repeat themselves, or to face him when the spoke so he could lip read. As Isacc told people to do this without justification, the more others became frustrated at him, the more his anxiety would increase, and he would thus interact like this repeatedly.

In September when the academic year began, Isacc returned to the farm presenting the same issues, but continued with an appetite to learn and engage. It soon became apparent that Isacc preferred routine, which would corelate to his ASD. On each day he attended, Isacc would be in a different group – Monday in Bushcraft, Tuesday in Art and Friday at the Allotment. When in these groups with the same learners each day and week, Isacc began to settle and his attitude and engagement would remain calm. Although this would sometimes change due to his preference, when it did change not on his terms, he would be frustrated and introvert into himself, not able to understand the change and why certain decisions were made. Isacc's friend Bob left Circles which led to a period of instability for Isacc in regards to his negative attitude and interactions with others. After the Christmas break, staff made an effort to sit down with Isacc to complete an ILP and to discuss any issues going on and what strategies and techniques could be used to benefit him and to make some progress. Not only had Isacc's medication been changed but he was problems trouble at home, in addition to his self-confidence being knocked. Staff reassured him that he could speak to any one of us at any time, especially at the start of the day to see how his mood was, in addition to taking some time out if needed, to prevent the frustration mentioned above. Gradually, with a routine in place to the best of our ability, staff to talk to and techniques in dealing with personal issues to prevent them overshadowing his day, Isacc began to enjoy his days again.

Isacc has adapted to changes. It is apparent working in smaller groups, with 'softer' learners is a strategy that works best for Isacc, however as he has been pushed further due to his capability, he can function in larger groups, although this still does affect the hearing aid he uses. As Isacc has opened up more to others, especially in regard to his hearing where staff have supported him, they have become less frustrated at him and more understanding. Although Isacc's previous experience in education was not mentioned on his referral, from himself and his mum, it was gathered that he did not have a positive relationship with his previous school. When mentioned at Circles, Isacc would panic and shut down; when school visits were made by staff to the farm, Isacc would let it affect his entire day negatively. Due to the continued support of staff and open conversations with Isacc about education, Isacc has gradually started to understand that these visits are systematic and a requirement. This has led to positive visits from not only his social worker but also a teacher from his previous school, therefore not allowing these visits to determine his day, allowing for a more positive attitude which reflected in work ethic and engagement with others.