



Becca was 11 when she was involved in a road traffic accident that was not her fault. She sustained a severe traumatic brain injury and was taken to hospital by the Air Ambulance. Following her discharge from hospital to home, the family received no help or support. Her parents did not understand what had happened inside their child's head and this significantly impacted upon the health and wellbeing of both parents; particularly Dad who was showing signs of PTSD and severe anxiety. Mum was becoming depressed worrying about everyone else. The family were referred to us for help and support by their solicitor.

We met with the family at home and with the parents and Becca and we completed a brain injury screening assessment. We learned that Becca was a bright, happy, healthy child who attained high grades in her Yr6 SATS. Her parents were shocked at how very different she now was compared to before the accident. They no longer recognised their own child.

Health

Becca now had a range of physical, communication, cognitive, behavioural and emotional problems that were not present before. The Hospital staff would not know this because they did not know Becca before her accident. Our initial screening assessment also identified lots of difficulties, risks and potential issues that may yet emerge as well as several medical issues that were not being treated. Medics has assumed she was 'fine' after she was perceived to have made a good physical recovery.

More importantly, Becca also lacked understanding and self-awareness of how her brain injury was affecting her. She perceived herself to be 'fine', so if anyone who had little understanding of acquired brain injury had asked her how she was; her response would have been inaccurate.

Had we not completed our screening assessment, Becca's parents would have remained uninformed and left at a significant disadvantaged, meaning they would not be able to advocate for her needs effectively.

We discussed our findings with her paediatrician.

Outcome:

Medication was prescribed and her other emerging health issues are now being addressed. She was also referred for physiotherapy and a psychology assessment.

Education

Becca returned to school for a few weeks before the summer holidays with no support in place; nor did the school understand Becca's changed needs. Again, because she looked ok, it was assumed she could simply pick up where she left off.



We discussed our concerns with the family and the Consultant, then we contacted the school to discuss Becca's changed needs and other important safeguarding issues that had not been considered. This was due to a lack of information provided to the school and no understanding about acquired brain injury. The Consultant and the family agreed that the child could return to school until these issues are addressed and the emerging SEN needs were fully assessed and supported effectively.

Becca now had significant SEN support needs and amongst other cognitive, emotional and behavioural issues, neurological fatigue was a huge problem for her. She also lost a huge amount of self-confidence. Becca also underwent educational psychological testing to assess SEN needs, but these were not sensitive enough to pick up the complexity of all her brain injury difficulties.

Outcome:

After a few weeks Becca was able to return to school on reduced hours with a plan to increase these slowly over the next few weeks whilst monitoring the impacts and risks to her ongoing recovery. The goal was to get Becca attending school for normal hours whilst ensuring she is participating fully and getting the most out of school. She needed lots of 'brain breaks' and it took almost 18 months before she could attend full-time.

The school now understand a bit about acquired brain injury and a detailed risk assessment was put in place. Regular review meetings happened every two weeks that we attended with her parents to carefully monitor her progress. After 18 months Becca has reintegrated well and is now attending school full time. She receives no cognitive rehabilitation therapy and remains unable to maintain her previous academic levels.

The school told Becca's parents:

"MATRIX know so much about acquired brain injury. We have never had such detailed information about any child returning to school after an accident or injury like this. It was really helpful."

Family

The family now understand how their child's brain injury is affecting their child and are aware of the dangers and risks they need to manage. Working with medical professionals we explained the mechanism of injury and how that relates to the changed child they now have.

The family are now receiving regular support visits from us and Dad has received some appropriate therapy. They said:

"We don't know where we would be without you. You have told us about so many important things we weren't even made aware of."

