

The role of the child/student in ASN mediation

Scotland Case Study 2: The School Refuser

'I want to stay home with my mum'

Mary (13 years) has a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and attends a specialist ASD support base attached to a mainstream secondary school. Mary lives with her mother who is a single parent and has a history of mental health issues.

Mary's attendance rate at school is poor; her teachers believe she is achieving well enough academically but she is very anxious and has very low self esteem.

Strategies have been put in place to support Mary with these issues in school.

Currently however, Mary has been out of school for 2 weeks and shows no desire to re-engage.

Teachers say that Mary seems to be happy at school, but she goes home and shares her worries with her mother. Then her mother gets very anxious and she has developed a habit of arriving unannounced at school very angry, shouting and swearing at staff. Speaking with the mediator privately, Mary was able to acknowledge that she is giving different messages to school staff and to her mother, and that this is causing conflict among the adults. The aim of the mediation meeting is to work out a plan for Mary to return to school. Her mother will attend the mediation meeting with her mental health advocate.

Questions:

- 1. is this situation mediatable?**
- 2. what are the potential benefits of including the child/student in the mediation meeting?**
- 3. what are the potential challenges of including the child/student in the mediation meeting?**
- 4. what support may the child/student need to be able to fully participate?**