



Thrive-to-25 Programme

Case studies

April 2025



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Case Study 1: SENsational Stay & Play

Kemi* Before SENsational Stay & Play

Kemi, now three years old, joined SENsational Stay & Play in 2024 at the age of two after her mother sought specific special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) support. Kemi is pre-/non-verbal and has high, acute needs.

Kemi attends nursery but often finds the environment overstimulating, leading to sensory overload, withdrawal and limited social interaction. She also struggles to engage with older children and unfamiliar adults. While Kemi benefits from a structured, stimulating environment, she finds it challenging to stay focused and complete tasks.

At home, Kemi is raised by a single mother, who has shared the difficulties of managing a household while supporting a child with SEND. Before joining SENsational Stay & Play, Kemi attended other local sensory provisions, but her mother felt these services were not inclusive spaces for all children, as they were primarily targeted at those with lower-level needs. The stress and cost of finding suitable activities added to the difficulty for Kemi's mother in finding appropriate support.

Kemi has been a regular participant at SENsational Stay & Play for the past year, though attendance varies from week to week. Kemi's mother attends the sessions with her and, while she trusts the staff, does not feel comfortable using the Short Breaks provision at this stage.

Kemi's Progress & Development

Improved behaviour

Kemi has made progress in developing behavioural routines. Regular participation in structured activities at SENsational Stay & Play has reinforced key daily life skills, such as sitting down for meals, washing hands after sessions, and following a routine during story time.

"It's a happy place for her. She feels welcomed, and she can have a good time and not feel judged for anything. She can just be herself."

Kemi's Mother

Kemi's mother attributes this progress to the additional support and adapted activities provided by SENsational staff, including the use of signs and visual aids, and allowing more time for Kemi to engage at her own pace. Through this, Kemi is gradually developing consistency and familiarity with important daily habits.

Improved personal, social & emotional development

Initially, Kemi was sceptical and nervous about being around new peers and adults. Hesitant to engage, she kept to herself and showed signs of discomfort when others

got too close. Over time, through regular attendance, Kemi has become more at ease around new people and is now more comfortable navigating social interactions.

She has gradually built confidence in group settings, learning to adjust to different ages in a way that feels safe and manageable for her.

Kemi has also shown enthusiasm for attending sessions, indicating her growing sense of comfort and belonging.

"At first, she put her hand out if someone got a bit too close or moved too fast. She liked to keep herself to herself... now there is one child, and they get along and play together."

Kemi's Mother

Improved family wellbeing and resilience

SENsational Stay & Play has had a positive impact on Kemi's mother, offering a structured and reliable space where she knows her child is engaged and supported. As a single parent, this has eased her mental load, making it easier to plan weekends. Although Kemi's mother remains physically present during Stay & Play sessions, the support from staff provides her with moments of relief, allowing her to step back while knowing her child is safe and engaged, sharing *"I can just have a moment to myself"*.

The support and guidance from both staff and other parents have provided valuable insights, strengthened knowledge while also offering reassurance and boosting Kemi's mother's confidence in parenting her child. By providing a much-needed sense of community, SENsational has helped Kemi's mother feel supported and understood, making outings less daunting.

"I don't have a lot of people with special needs that I know personally... We all have that anxiety, like, how is my child going to be? So, it's nice to know that no matter what, there's one place where they're not only going to be understood but embraced for who they are."

Kemi's Mother

Case Study 2: SENSational Short Breaks

James* Before SENSational Short Breaks

James, now four years old, was referred to SENSational Short Breaks at age three after being diagnosed with autism and experiencing significant speech delays. Before joining SENSational, he had not received any dedicated special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) support and was referred after attending a universal stay and play provision at Southwark's Children and Family Centres.

Before attending SENSational, James had not attended nursery. Born during the COVID-19 lockdown, he faced social and emotional challenges, often isolating himself from others. He stayed at home with his mother, who was also caring for two other children, which meant he had limited early social interaction. As a result, James struggled to follow instructions and take part in structured activities like mealtimes and story time. His speech delays made it difficult for him to express his needs and emotions, often leading to frustration. Often feeling overwhelmed and uncertain about how best to support him, James' mother sought a supportive environment to help him build communication and social skills.

James has been attending SENSational Short Breaks weekly for over a year. Through this provision, he receives support from trained staff at a 1:2 staff-to-child ratio, providing his mother a break from caring responsibilities.

James' Progress and Development

Improved communication and behaviour

Since attending SENSational Short Breaks, James' communication skills have improved significantly. The structured environment, visual aids, and supportive staff have helped him gain confidence in speaking. With gentle encouragement, he now uses words to express his needs, making it easier for his mother to understand his emotions.

While James still communicates in short exchanges, he has become more comfortable speaking and regularly greets familiar people. His mother has noticed steady progress: *"Now, I know what he's feeling. He tells me what he wants and doesn't want to do".*

Improved personal, social, and emotional development

Before joining SENSational Short Breakers, James found social settings overwhelming and often kept to himself. However, through regular participation, he has become more engaged, actively playing with other children and recognising them by name.

"He allows other people to come and show him how to do things. He's letting people in and is more open to learning with others."

James' Mother

Alongside social development, James has made significant progress in expressing emotions and understanding others' feelings. He can now verbalise emotions like sadness, say "sorry" when appropriate, and ask his mother, "Are you happy or are you sad?", demonstrating an improved ability to recognise and respond to emotional cues.

Improved confidence and wellbeing for family members

James' progress in communication, emotional regulation and independence has greatly boosted his mother's confidence in raising a child with autism and improved the overall wellbeing of the family.

Previously overwhelmed and anxious, struggling to understand his emotions and needs, James' mother now feels more in tune with him and better equipped to handle parenting challenges.

"In the beginning, I was very afraid. I was very concerned. I had anxiety about everything related to him. But now, he's made so much progress. I'm okay! Now I can say that I have a normal routine. I'm still a good momma."

James' Mother

Since attending SENSational Short Breaks, James has started nursery, and his mother feels the support he received at SENSational helped make the transition smoother. While he was initially only able to stay for short periods, he can now attend for a full day. The routines introduced at SENSational, such as toilet training and snack time, have equipped James with the confidence and skills he needs to settle into a new environment.

This structure has had a positive impact on the entire family. Knowing that James is in a safe and supportive environment, his mother has peace of mind and feels comfortable leaving him in the care of trained staff. This has freed up her mental and emotional energy, allowing her to focus on other family responsibilities and prioritise her own wellbeing. James' mother has been able to attend the gym, run errands, and take time for herself—things that once felt impossible.

"[SENSational] is amazing...it has changed me completely."

James' Mother

Overall, SENSational Short Breaks has not only helped James develop but has also strengthened the resilience and wellbeing of the entire family, creating a more balanced and positive home environment.

Case Study 3: Positive Behaviour Support

Blair* Before Positive Behaviour Support (PBS)

Blair, aged five, has been receiving tailored PBS input since December 2024. He has a diagnosis of autism with a pathological demand avoidance (PDA) profile, sensory processing disorder, and is non-verbal. Blair requires full-time 1:1 support at school from a learning support assistant.

Blair exhibits behaviours of concern both at home and at school. He has no awareness of danger and seeks adventure through actions that can be harmful, such as attempting to abscond, climbing windowsills, and running into busy roads. Due to his PDA, he has an intense resistance to demands and expectations. His family struggles to predict or understand his behaviour because of his non-verbal communication.

Blair experiences severe separation anxiety, particularly from his mother, and when he becomes unsettled it can lead to an escalation in behaviour that may cause harm to himself, others or the environment. His mother has sought further support to help manage his anxiety and develop his communication skills, aiming to improve understanding and ensure his safety.

Blair's Engagement with PBS

Blair was signposted to the council-run SENSational provision, where PBS workers attend sessions to offer advice and support to families. Following support in session, Blair was referred directly to the PBS Team to access their 12-week intervention. After reviewing Blair's behaviour at home and school, the team worked with Blair's family and school to design and implement tailored strategies to support behaviour management.

These included:

- Picture exchange communication system (PECS) – Supporting Blair's ability to communicate his needs and understand expectations using visual aids.
- Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device – Providing Blair with additional tools to support his communication.
- Gradual exposure to mother's departures – Helping Blair develop coping strategies for separation.

Blair's Progress & Development

Improved communication

A key focus of Blair's PBS plan has been to expand his communication skills helping his family better understand his needs and emotions. Although Blair had previously

*All names have been anonymised using pseudonyms

tried using PECS and an AAC device, he struggled to use them consistently due to a lack of interest.

With guidance from the PBS professional, who introduced a more child-led, positively framed approach, Blair has begun to engage more effectively with these tools. His mother has reported a noticeable improvement in his communication as a result.

“Originally, he was frustrated, but now he goes in, takes the picture off the board, and gives it to us. So, we’ve seen an improvement in non-verbal communication.”

Blair’s Mother

While this progress hasn’t yet led to a reduction in behaviours of concern, it represents a significant step toward more effective communication and has strengthened his family’s ability to connect with and support him.

Limited reduction in challenging behaviours

Blair has shown a limited reduction in behaviours of concern when his mother departs. To manage his separation anxiety, the PBS team suggested gradually exposing him to short periods of 5-10 minutes each day where his mother leaves and returns, helping Blair understand that her absence is temporary. While Blair still becomes distressed, his mother notes that these incidents have been less intense. The family is hopeful that with more consistent exposure, Blair will become more at ease.

Improved family wellbeing and resilience

Through PBS, Blair’s family has developed a stronger understanding of his needs and behaviours. Where they were once overwhelmed and confused, they now recognise that his behaviours are a form of communication and behaviours of concern is a way of communication that something is not right. This shift in perspective has helped them feel more confident and better equipped to respond in safe, creative ways.

Crucially, the PBS professional’s experience with similar families has given them hope and the resilience to keep going. Although applying strategies can be challenging and progress takes time, the ongoing support, guidance, and reassurance from the PBS team has helped the family stay committed to the journey.

“They can see how challenging it is and offer support in all areas, looking at the bigger picture of how it impacts you and the other children...you feel cared for because it’s a very isolating journey.”

Blair’s Mother

Case Study 4: Positive Behaviour Support

Robert* Before Positive Behavioural Support (PBS)

Robert, aged six, had been attending SENSational Stay & Play for one month before staff explored support from the PBS team. Staff at SENSational observed behaviours of concern that were difficult to manage within the setting, and Robert's mother reported similar difficulties at home.

The behaviours of concern included throwing objects such as toys, bikes, and chairs, as well as climbing on furniture and windows. Robert struggled with transitions, particularly when moving between indoor and outdoor play, and found it difficult to follow instructions. Robert also faced challenges with emotional regulation, often reacting with screaming, crying, and shouting when asked to end an activity.

These behaviours created challenges for other children, with some refusing to enter the room when Robert was present. As a result, staff at SENSational felt uncertain about how best to support him and required additional strategies and guidance to create a safer and more inclusive environment for both Robert and his peers.

Robert's Engagement with PBS

Robert received support from the PBS team for 12 weeks and has continued attending SENSational for over a year. To help manage his challenging behaviours, the PBS team developed a structured, step-by-step plan to support both the SENSational staff and Robert's mother.

This plan includes:

- Picture exchange communication system (PECS) – Supporting Robert's ability to communicate his needs and understand expectations using visual aids.
- Positive language – Encouraging staff and caregivers to use constructive and supportive communication.
- Understanding and managing triggers – Identifying potential triggers, recognising early signs of distress, and using proactive strategies to prevent or de-escalate behaviours of concern.

Roberts Progress & Development

Reduction in challenging behaviours

After six months of PBS support, SENSational staff observed a significant reduction in Robert's challenging behaviours within the provision. While these changes were not immediate, staff attributed this progress to their improved ability to recognise triggers more effectively and proactively de-escalate situations.

*All names have been anonymised using pseudonyms

One key adjustment involved adapting communication strategies to better support Robert. He was particularly sensitive to negative language, reacting strongly to words like "stop" or "no", so staff adopted a more positive and supportive approach, helping Robert remain calm and engaged. This shift significantly reduced distress and improved his ability to participate in activities, such as circle time.

Improved emotional regulation

Robert's mother also noted a significant improvement in his behaviour at home and school, with staff recognising the consistent use of strategies and support of the PBS team across all settings.

"PBS is most effective when applied in all areas—SENsational, home, and school. This collaboration made a huge difference."

SENsational Staff Member

Using a Picture Exchange Communication System and Makaton, a language programme using signs and symbols, SENsational staff have observed improvements in Robert's emotional regulation. These strategies have been particularly effective in helping him manage transitions, such as moving between outdoor and indoor play, by giving him time to adjust and prepare for the change.

"There have been big changes. He is much happier when coming to sessions. We now understand his interests and know how to support him better."

SENsational Staff Member

In addition, these positive strategies have contributed to noticeable improvements in Robert's overall well-being. He appears more settled and engaged during sessions, and his interactions with others have become more positive.

Increased confidence and skills amongst providers and caregivers

Both SENsational staff and Robert's parents have expressed greater confidence in supporting him. Initially, staff felt unsure about how to manage his behaviours, but through PBS support and training, they have developed the necessary skills to provide more effective and tailored support.

As a result, staff and parents feel more confident using PBS strategies, better able to communicate with Robert, and more proactive in preventing escalations. This has created a calmer environment, leading to more effective support, improved interactions, and a better experience for Robert and those around him.

"I feel much more confident approaching and supporting this child. I now know what strategies to use to help avoid challenging behaviour before it escalates."

SENsational Staff Member

Case Study 5: Positive Behaviour Support (Training)

Nicky* Before Positive Behavioural Support (PBS) Training

Nicky leads an organisation that supports children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and is also a parent to neurodivergent children. Before attending the training, Nicky had no prior experience or knowledge of PBS, although she had learned about and applied Positive Psychology—a method that focuses on drawing on people's strengths and positive experiences.

Nicky's goal for the training was to deepen her understanding of the PBS methodology and its practical applications. In the long term, Nicky aimed to embed PBS principles within her organisation by providing structured training for her staff and introducing the concept of PBS to the wider community, including parents of children with SEND involved in her provision.

Nicky attended PBS training in October, initially completing a two-day introductory course followed by a more in-depth four-day training alongside other practitioners and providers.

Nicky's Journey with PBS

Increased confidence in managing behaviours of concern

While already experienced in managing behaviours of concern, the training increased Nicky's confidence, enabling a calmer, more structured approach. This became evident when supporting a child transitioning to secondary school.

"PBS has given a structure and framework to implement principles we were already trying to use but lacked the tools for. It provided us with the tools and a new way of thinking."

Nicky, PBS Training Participant

Previously, Nicky might have relied on conversation alone, but PBS provided a clear intervention framework with various techniques, such as understanding needs and triggers, and being led by the child. The improvement in managing behaviour in turned strengthened the delivery of intervention for children in their care.

"We saw an incredible change in those young people... And I know that the attitude of the person-centred mindset makes a big difference."

Nicky, PBS Training Participant

Increased number of staff trained in PBS

The training led to a significant increase in the delivery of PBS across Nicky's organisation and team. With the practical skills and strategies gained from the training, Nicky felt more confident in training her team on PBS principles.

"We've now decided to train all of our staff so that when someone arrives in our organisation, they must receive the basics of PBS training—understanding what it is, the approach, how we work with it, and how we put the person at the centre of our work."

Nicky, PBS Training Participant

Just a few weeks after completing the training coordinated by Southwark Council, Nicky had already delivered organisation-wide training and created a requirement that all new staff at her organisation also receive training. The training approach has streamlined practices within the organisation by creating a unified framework, rather than relying on individual expertise.

Increased awareness of PBS in the wider community

Nicky has also become more confident in sharing her knowledge and introducing PBS concepts to parents through workshops, casual drop-in "coffee mornings," and organised WhatsApp groups. As a result, some parents have shared how they've implemented PBS in their daily interactions with their children. After hearing Nicky discuss the positive impact of PBS on behaviour management, three parents were motivated to sign up for the council-run training sessions to learn and apply these practices with their children.

Case Study 6: Positive Behaviour Support (Training)

Kata* Before Positive Behavioural Support (PBS) Training

Kata is the parent of a 14-year-old son with autism who displays behaviours of concern. Her son often displayed disruptive or aggressive behaviour, had difficulty following instructions, and found changes in routine particularly challenging. These behaviours became more pronounced during his transition to secondary school and throughout adolescence.

Before receiving support, Kata felt overwhelmed and unsure how to respond to the behaviours. Although she had previously attended courses to better support her son, Kata had no prior experience with Positive Behaviour Support (PBS). She hoped that the PBS course would offer practical, effective strategies to provide more structured and compassionate support.

In March 2025, Kata participated in a two-day PBS training session, which she found out about through a family support WhatsApp group.

“I didn’t know what to do. I had to quit my job because the school called every day.”

Kata, PBS Training Participant

Kata’s Journey with PBS

Increased confidence in managing behaviours of concern

Participating in the PBS training significantly improved Kata's ability to manage her son's behaviours of concern. The course provided practical tools and proactive strategies, such as the Zones of Regulation framework, which uses colour-coded methods to help individuals identify and manage their emotions. Implementing these techniques enabled Kata's son to better recognise and regulate his feelings, leading to a decrease in behaviours of concern.

This improvement also strengthened the relationship between Kata and her son. Kata now feels more confident and better equipped to handle emotional dysregulation, responding with empathy and understanding.

“He feels that I’m taking his feelings into consideration now. Before, I would react or ask things differently”.

Kata, PBS Training Participant

Expanded support network

Through the PBS training, Kata was able to connect with staff and other parents in a supportive space where ideas and experiences were shared openly. As someone for whom English is an additional language—a circumstance that's relatively common among parents accessing SEND services in Southwark—she especially appreciated that the training was delivered in an inclusive and easy-to-understand way. This thoughtful approach helped her feel more confident and able to fully engage with the material.

Since completing the course, Kata has shared PBS strategies with others in her community, particularly with parents who do not speak English, helping to spread understanding and support around positive behaviour approaches.

Improved family wellbeing

Overall, Kata's improved ability to manage change at home has led to greater calm and connection within the family. Kata reported feeling more confident, less anxious, and more empowered in the parenting role. Her son has also shown signs of feeling more understood and supported.

Implementing PBS strategies has helped reduce her son's anxiety and behaviours of concern, while also strengthening the bond between parent and child in meaningful ways.

"Since using PBS, he's more close to me now."

Kata, PBS Training Participant

Case Study 7: Gateway Award

Daniel Before the Gateway Award

Daniel is 23 years old and has a diagnosis of autism with associated learning difficulties. He began attending the Gateway Award in September 2024 and currently receives 2:1 support to help him participate in activities and manage his daily routine safely and successfully. Before attending the Gateway Award, Daniel attended a further education college for young adults with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Daniel is non-verbal but demonstrates a good understanding of questions and instructions. He communicates using a combination of Makaton signs, his communication book, and physical prompts, depending on the situation. Historically, Daniel has often struggled to maintain appropriate boundaries with staff and peers and can find it difficult to regulate his emotions, particularly in unfamiliar environments. He requires a high level of staff support and reassurance to navigate daily routines and engage safely with others.

Daniel's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) outlines key areas for development, including improving physical skills through regular movement, building early literacy and numeracy, and strengthening emotional regulation and social interaction.

Daniel's Progress and Development

Improved fitness and mobility

Daniel has made significant progress in his physical development. His stamina, mobility, and overall confidence have improved through regular participation in a variety of physical activities, including cycling, football, outdoor gym sessions, and movement-based exercises.

"We've seen a big change in his fitness, he enjoys all the outdoor activities."

Daniel's Carer

He particularly enjoys the wider range of activities available to him at the Gateway Award and benefits greatly from regular movement breaks, which help him stay focused and regulated throughout the day.

Improved literacy and numeracy skills

Daniel is making clear progress in his literacy and numeracy skills. He can match objects, recognise symbols, and is beginning to understand basic concepts such as counting and the value of money.

Since attending the Gateway Award, Daniel has learned to write his own name, a skill his carers note he was previously unable to do. He enjoys using stencils and tracing tools, which support his fine motor development and have helped to improve his focus and engagement in tabletop learning activities.

Daniel particularly enjoys creative, hands-on tasks like painting, cutting, and gluing. These sensory-rich activities keep him engaged and help strengthen his concentration and coordination. Daniel's carers note he approaches these sessions with enthusiasm and is becoming more willing to try new tasks.

Social and emotional development

Since attending the Gateway Award, Daniel has become noticeably calmer and more settled during sessions. Both his carers and Gateway staff have observed that he appears particularly relaxed and comfortable in the Gateway environment compared to other settings, which has had a positive impact on his ability to engage with activities and routines.

"He's much calmer, he's not like that everywhere but he is at Gateway."

Daniel's Carer

The use of social stories and visual supports has been particularly effective in helping Daniel understand appropriate personal boundaries and manage his emotional regulation. These tools provide clear, consistent guidance that helps Daniel feel more secure and prepared, especially when navigating new or potentially overwhelming situations. As a result, he is better able to participate in group activities and build positive relationships with those around him.

Case Study 8: Gateway Award

Nina Before the Gateway Award

Nina is 24 years old and has complex needs, including a learning disability and limited mobility. She is non-verbal and faces challenges with physical movement. Before joining the Gateway Award, Nina attended a specialised college supporting young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Nina's father noted that prior to attending the Gateway Award, Nina found it difficult to express her needs or wants, relied heavily on others to participate in daily activities, and required support to ensure her safety and wellbeing.

Nina has been attending the Gateway Award programme for two years and is due to finish in September 2025. During her time at the Gateway Award, she has received consistent 1:1 support from staff, enabling her to engage more meaningfully with her surroundings and daily routines.

Nina's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) focuses on developing her communication, social interaction, emotional regulation, physical abilities, and daily living skills. Nina's family hoped that through participating in the Gateway Award, she would gain confidence, develop more effective ways of expressing herself, improve her mobility, and gradually build the skills necessary for greater independence. Their vision is for Nina to lead a more fulfilling and active life, with meaningful connections and increased autonomy in her everyday experiences.

"She'll always be dependent, but we'd like her to be able to make her own decisions and have more control."

Nina's Father

Nina's Progress and Development

Improved mobility

Since attending Gateway, Nina has made significant progress in her mobility and physical stamina. Regular postural and movement sessions, along with participation in cycling activities, have supported her development. She is now able to move more confidently around the building, walk longer distances, and complete physical tasks

"She walks a full lap of the building when she arrives - something she wasn't able to do before."

Gateway Award Staff Member

such as pushing and pulling objects. Her flexibility has also improved, she can now pick up items from the floor that she was previously unable to reach.

Increased independence and life skills

Whilst Nina will not live independently, she is developing early functional skills that support greater autonomy in her daily life. She is beginning to understand key literacy

and numeracy concepts, such as matching, recognising symbols, and basic use of money. With support, she can now access community facilities like shops and take part in simple transactions, including locating and paying for items.

Nina is also gaining confidence in self-care routines. She is now able to wash her hands, wipe her face, and use the toilet with assistance - important steps that reflect her growing ability to participate more actively in her own care. These are new skills that Nina's father attributes to the progress she has made since attending Gateway Award.

Communication development

Nina continues to make steady progress in her communication skills. She uses a combination of Makaton signs and her communication book to express her needs. Although non-verbal, she is able to convey basic emotions, such as when she is upset or angry, and is learning to calm herself more quickly following periods of distress.

Nina is beginning to use appropriate strategies to engage with others, such as moving toward a peer to share or pass an item. Nina is also developing greater independence in decision-making. She can now make choices from a set of options and act on her decisions. For example, when she wants to leave a room, she can guide others clearly, showing both intention and preference.

Social and emotional skills

Nina is becoming more aware of social boundaries and is steadily building a broader range of social skills. This marks a significant change, as previously she showed little interest in interacting with others. She has now started to form relationships with her peers and appears more comfortable in social situations.

According to her father, Nina is actively seeking out interaction in ways she hadn't before. For example, she will now approach familiar people and choose to sit beside them, clear signs that she wants to be included and involved in the social environment around her.

"She'll now move to find others, find interactions."

Nina's Father

Case Study 9: Gateway Award

Maya Before the Gateway Award

Maya, who is 20 years old and has a diagnosis of autism, joined the Gateway Award in September 2024. Prior to joining, she was a mainstream post-16 college, where she found it difficult to build confidence and connect socially with others. Maya often isolated herself and struggled to feel comfortable in group settings, which made it challenging for her to fully engage in day-to-day college life.

Maya experienced high levels of anxiety in structured environments and had limited opportunities to develop practical workplace skills. Attendance and timekeeping were also areas of challenge, and whilst at college Maya was uncertain about her future goals and aspirations.

Maya's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) highlights key areas for development, including improving her communication and social interaction, alongside building essential life skills and increasing her readiness for the workplace. These focus areas form the foundation of her tailored support at Gateway.

"Before coming to Gateway, I didn't like talking to others."

Maya, Gateway Award Participant

Maya's Progress and Development

Increased confidence and communication skills

Maya has shown significant growth in confidence, particularly in group settings. She now actively participates in activities, engages with staff and peers, and is steadily developing her communication skills. Maya feels more comfortable expressing herself, asking for help, and contributing to group discussions.

Previously, Maya felt hesitant about attending college due to difficulties in social interactions. However, since joining Gateway, she has successfully built meaningful relationships that have positively impacted her overall wellbeing. Maya has expressed feeling comfortable and happy at the Gateway Award, noting that these new connections have greatly increased her enjoyment and sense of ease around others. Describing her time at the Gateway Award, Maya expressed "I feel happy here".

Increased readiness for employment

Whilst at the Gateway Award, Maya has been preparing for future work opportunities and developing a strong foundation of core work skills. She has taken on the responsibility of managing the front desk at the Gateway Award, where she handles tasks such as sending emails, managing registration, and designing posters.

"When I come to work and do my job, it makes me feel like I've improved...if you ask me to do a task, I just know what to do now."

Maya, Gateway Award Participant

These tasks have supported her in building essential workplace skills, particularly in the use of digital tools and completing administrative tasks with growing independence.

“[She’s had] an unapologetic growth in character and confidence. She continuously and willingly commits to her own personal development while seeking room for improvements, she has become customer focused while being able to manage reception duties with minimal supervision.”

Gateway Award Staff Member

Alongside this, Maya’s independence and self-management have developed significantly. Her timekeeping and attendance are now consistent, she arrives punctually and attends four days a week. She follows her routine with minimal prompting and transitions smoothly between activities. These changes represent a significant improvement from Maya’s previous educational experiences and reflect the confidence, skills, and independence she has developed during her time at the Gateway Award.

Since starting at Gateway Award, Maya has developed a clearer vision for her future. She has expressed an interest in working in a library, an environment that suits her strengths, interests, and preference for calm, structured spaces. Reflecting on her experience, Maya describes the Gateway Award as *“interesting, supportive, amazing”*, capturing the positive and encouraging environment that has helped her grow in confidence and independence.