

Ben's story

Ben is 14 years old and likes playing games on his smartphone, Xbox and computer. He is a good-natured boy, shy by nature and prefers his own company. Ben has been in care from the age of five and has lived with three different foster carers. On each occasion when Ben was moved he was required to change schools. Due to unexpected circumstances, Ben's last placement ended and he is to be moved into the care of Neil and Anne.

- What are the important issues for Ben?
- What are the main considerations and challenges for Neil and Anne?
- What can they do to help?
- What support could they gain from professionals?



Image posed by model

Facilitator's notes/points to cover

Ben is solitary by nature. Friendship may not be Ben's priority while he is managing change/disruption, the loss of familiar routines and dealing with his diagnosis of dyslexia.

Consider Neil and Anne's strengths: their local knowledge and experience of caring for teenagers. However, they might be challenged by Ben's reluctance to leave the home, his possible low self-esteem and apparent unwillingness to make new friends.

Neil and Anne might want to start by finding an activity-based group. They might investigate local children in care youth groups where Ben could feel safe to build friendships around a shared experience.

Could Ben's school do more to encourage new friendships? Could their pupil premium be used to set up a new activity or pupil mentoring service? Are there any appropriate out of school or lunch time clubs not known to Ben, for example a computer club where like-minded friendships could emerge? Speak to Ben about it! Has Ben always preferred his own company. He might want to change that. Does Ben want to stay at the same school. Is there a reason he doesn't have friends there? He has not told them he doesn't have friends. Using a smartphone and computer he could have a whole online network of friends which he considers important. Xbox can also be used for socialising when connected to the internet, so it might not appear that Ben has friends when he does.