

CASE STUDY

Working to support children and families living with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder

Jonny is a 9 year-old boy, who has been living in his current foster home for one year. His foster parents have brought him in for support due to concerns about impulsive and explosive behaviour, poor sleep and poor memory and learning. They are concerned he will be kept back a grade next year as his teachers report that he has difficulty following directions, staying focussed, completing assigned tasks and is falling behind his peers academically. He is now beginning to refuse school, frequently claiming to be too tired to attend. He has trouble fitting in with groups, preferring to play with younger children. His foster parents are concerned that he is becoming more isolated due to his social difficulties.

Jonny and his foster parents have been involved in family therapy: focussing on building attachment between Jonny and his carers, however his behaviour remains impulsive and his parents report that they need to be constantly vigilant about where he is and what he is doing. Jonny has lots of difficulty calming down once he gets distressed, and can sometimes break his belongings; something he is very sorry about once he has calmed down. Jonny is keen to please them, and tries to do the right thing, but seems to frequently forget what it is he is supposed to be doing.

Jonny's parents indicate that he seems to listen to instructions, but appears unable to carry them out. He enjoys computer games, drawing and painting. He is often distressed by his sensory

environment, especially fluorescent lights, which he says hurt his eyes. His developmental history indicates that he was underweight as a young child, and began showing difficulties with emotional regulation and social behaviour around age five. He was previously assessed for Autism, but this was ruled out. He has recently been diagnosed with ADHD, and takes stimulant medication prescribed for this condition, however his foster parents describe this as having very little impact.

Jonny has experienced two prior placements since entering care at age five. Jonny's mother also had a baby girl that was removed by social services at birth.